

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BROOMHILL BANK SCHOOL**

Tunbridge Wells, Kent

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 119026

Headteacher: Mr P A Barnett

Reporting inspector: Mary Last  
17171

Dates of inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2002

Inspection number: 249378  
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:	Moderate learning difficulties
Age range of pupils:	8 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Girls
School address:	Broomhill Road Rusthall Tunbridge Wells Kent
Postcode:	TN3 0TB
Telephone number:	01892 510440
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Chantler
Date of previous inspection:	January, 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17171	Mary Last	Registered inspector	Design and technology, modern foreign languages, music	What sort of school is it? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
2339	Ms S Burgess	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Residential provision
2512	Mr B Emery	Team inspector	Geography, history, special educational needs	Provision for students over 16
17530	Mrs M Cureton	Team inspector	English, citizenship, religious education, educational inclusion, including race equality, English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19996	* Mr G Watson	Team inspector	Science, art and design, physical education	The school's results and pupils' achievements
18498	Mrs D Morris	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology	How well are pupils taught?

\* Co-edited the inspection report

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>10</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>POST-16 UNIT</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>RESIDENTIAL UNIT</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>29</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Broomhill Bank School is a residential and day school near Tunbridge Wells which caters for up to 66 residential and 26 day pupils from 8 to 19 years of age who are all girls. At the time of inspection there were 86 pupils on roll with 42 boarding every fortnight. All the pupils have statements of special educational needs with moderate learning or communication difficulties identified as their main learning difficulty. Since the last inspection pupils have entered the school with increasingly complex learning needs and their achievements are well below those found in mainstream schools. All pupils, bar one, are of white European heritage; no pupils have English as an additional language, but many come from backgrounds of considerable social or emotional disadvantage.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Broomhill Bank is a very effective school with many excellent features where pupils thrive and make very good progress within a supportive and developmental environment. Pupils enter the school with complex learning needs and low self-esteem. As a result of excellent relationships, support and guidance they make very significant gains in their academic and personal skills. The consistently high quality of teaching throughout the school enables the pupils to gain very good results in nationally accredited qualifications by Year 11 and a very high level of maturity when they leave school. The headteacher, senior staff and governors lead and manage the school very skilfully and provide very good role models. All staff work happily together. Financial procedures are very good and the school provides very good value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Teaching is very good throughout the school and enables all pupils to overcome their difficulties and make very good gains in learning and self-confidence.
- Teachers, support assistants and residential staff have excellent relationships with pupils and create a challenging, yet supportive, environment for learning.
- The provision for students over 16 is excellent and enables them to build on their previous learning and to broaden their vocational skills in preparation for life after school.
- The residential provision is excellent and makes a major contribution to the pupils' academic and personal achievements.
- The management and leadership are very good and the school has demonstrated, through its outstanding levels of teaching and learning, that it can improve very effectively.

#### **What could be improved**

The school has no significant weaknesses but the following minor points, all of which already feature in the school's strategic planning, should be addressed by the headteacher and governors:

- The role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring classroom teaching
- The length of the school day and the timing of lessons so that the balance is improved
- The use of pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills in all lessons as a tool for learning

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school has made very good progress in addressing the key issues found in the last inspection in January 1997. The curriculum has been improved by the addition of a good range of nationally recognised qualifications for pupils between Years 10 and 14. An integration and inclusion project promotes the part time attendance of pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools through direct support for learning and training for mainstream staff. Subject co-ordinators are responsible for identifying strengths and weaknesses but this role has not yet been fully developed to include regular

observation of teaching. The monitoring role of the governors has also been improved and their visits include informal observations of teaching and learning. The school provides very good information to parents and now ensures that its publications include all the necessary information. Daily assemblies are an enjoyable feature of school life and provide pupils with very good opportunities to reflect on spiritual, social and ethical issues.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 9	by Year 11	by Year 14	Key
Speaking and listening	A	A	A	very good A
Reading	A	A	A	good B
Writing	B	B	B	satisfactory C
Mathematics	B	B	B	unsatisfactory D
Personal, social and health education	B	A	A	poor E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	

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

Pupils and students make very good gains in learning as they grow up and progress through the school, irrespective of their particular learning difficulties or social background. Their levels of achievement are very good in English, science, information technology, art and design, physical education and personal and social education. They make good gains in learning in all other areas of the curriculum except religious education, where their levels of achievement are satisfactory. Students over 16 achieve very well in the context of their vocational coursework and in preparation for life after school. Pupils make very good progress towards their individual targets, particularly in terms of their personal development. The school is setting increasingly refined targets for improvement, and is making very good progress towards meeting them.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and are very interested in the activities. They willingly accept responsibility for their own behaviour.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The school is a very orderly community. Pupils respond very positively to instructions and to support offered.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils make very good progress in personal development and relationships throughout the school are excellent.
Attendance	Good. Attendance has improved since the last inspection. There were no exclusions last year.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 9	Years 11	Years 14
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very 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.*



Teaching is very good throughout the school and leads to very good achievement and progress within a very positive and supportive learning environment. In the core subjects of English and science teaching is very good and often excellent, in mathematics it is good. As a result pupils make very good gains in learning and achieve well. Teaching is also very good in personal, social and health education, ICT, physical education, art and design and for students over 16. This is because all lessons are very well planned to meet the pupils' complex needs. Teaching is good in all other subjects, except in religious education where it is satisfactory. Literacy skills are very well taught in English lessons, and also reinforced and used in such subjects as history, geography and French. Opportunities to promote literacy in other subjects, are however sometimes missed. Numeracy skills are taught well in mathematics lessons, but are no more than satisfactory in other subjects because there are few opportunities for pupils to apply their numeracy skills. Teachers are outstanding in the management of pupils' behaviour throughout the school, and minimise the effects of the pupils' emotional difficulties by their consistently high expectations.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school offers the National Curriculum and religious education well adapted and accessible to prepare the pupils for independent living after school. Extra-curricular activities and the residential curriculum are particular strengths.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for pupils' personal and social development is excellent and a strength of the school. There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual development which extends their thinking and reflection and improves their sense of self worth. The school's very good moral framework allows all pupils to know and apply the difference between right and wrong. There is good provision for pupils' cultural and multicultural education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school ensures that pupils are well cared for, happy and secure. Behaviour management is very good. The residential arrangements are excellent and the range of activities for pupils include opportunities for day pupils to take part in leisure time pursuits.

The school works very hard to promote an effective partnership with parents and carers. The response to these efforts is, however, disappointing, not least because many parents have long distances to travel to the school.

## 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 senior staff provide very good supportive leadership to the staff and pupils. They employ very good consultative procedures so that all staff contribute to decisions. The school runs very effectively on a day to day basis.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. The governors fulfil all their statutory duties and are highly committed to school improvement. They have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they visit frequently both to observe lessons and to talk with and support the staff informally.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has introduced a comprehensive programme of classroom observation which has been highly successful in improving the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. The role of subject co-ordinators has been strengthened but not all of them have the opportunity to monitor teaching in their subjects.

The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school manages its budget and resources very effectively. The governors have effective procedures in place to monitor the effects of spending decisions and they apply the principles of best value. Staffing and learning resources are good and the accommodation is satisfactory.
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### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential provision</li> <li>• Management of behaviour</li> <li>• Progress pupils make</li> <li>• Pupils helped to become mature and responsible</li> <li>• Their children like school</li> <li>• The school's caring ethos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amount of speech therapy available to pupils stated to receive it</li> <li>• Funding available for residential placements</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the parents' comments and support the strengths found in the school. They recognise the particular difficulties over speech therapy and the proposed changing to residential placements, but acknowledge that the school is doing all it can to address the situation.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Pupils' and students' standards of attainment are well below national expectations. However, all the pupils have moderate learning difficulties; a significant number of them also have additional complex communication difficulties, whilst others have additional emotional and behavioural learning difficulties. Comparison with national norms is, therefore, inappropriate and judgements regarding pupils' and students' achievements reflect what they know, understand and can do in relation to targets identified on their individual education plans.
2. Pupils' and students' levels of achievement are very good throughout the school. This reflects a very positive response to the findings of the last inspection, and parents are pleased with the gains in learning made by their children. The improvement is directly related to developments in the quality and consistency of teaching, and also to the establishment of a broader curriculum, reinforced by an increasingly wide range of relevant, accredited courses. These levels of achievement apply to all pupils and students, irrespective of their particular learning difficulties or their social background.
3. Pupils' levels of achievement are very good in English, science, information and communication technology (ICT), art, music, physical education and personal and social education. They make good gains in learning in all other areas of the curriculum except religious education, where their levels of achievement are satisfactory. For pupils in Year 11, achievements in English, mathematics, and art are accredited through General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, with eight pupils gaining 14 certificates. This represents a steady improvement when compared with previous years, despite the pupils having an increasingly complex range of learning difficulties. In English, mathematics and child care, the pupils' achievements are also accredited through entry level examination, with eight pupils gaining 24 awards, often at the highest level. For pupils in Year 10, achievements in science are likewise recognised through entry level examination, with nine pupils gaining accreditation. In the case of GCSE mathematics and entry level child care, this is the first year in which pupils have taken the examinations, and so these achievements are particularly noteworthy.
4. Post-16 students make very good gains in learning in the context of their vocational course-work. Eight students achieved a full National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 1 catering award, and a further five students successfully built upon their previous achievements to gain a full catering award at Level 2. Students' developing personal and learning skills are also accredited through the National Proficiency Test Council (NPTC), and their very good levels of achievement in other important key skill areas such as communication and problem solving are recognised through such bodies as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).
5. The school sets highly appropriate targets within pupils' individual education plans, and the progress made by pupils and students throughout the school towards achieving these targets is very good, notably in the area of personal and social development. The school is also setting increasingly precise and challenging whole-school targets for development, and is making very good progress towards realising them.

#### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

6. Pupils and students have very good attitudes to learning, especially in Year 11 and at Post-16. Pupils new to the school settle quickly into school routines and respond positively to expectations. They show interest and pride in their work, willingly answer questions and persevere well, even with those tasks that they find difficult. Pupils readily applaud the efforts and achievements of others, such as when starting to gain confidence in speaking French, comparing the results of a food technology lesson or celebrating a particular pupil's sporting success. They are supportive of each other when working in groups and pairs, for instance when calculating chance and probability in mathematics or preparing items for desktop publishing in ICT. Pupils also work well independently when required. For example, several were determined to improve their personal best performances in physical education and most of those asked to paint in the style of Georgia O'Keefe became thoroughly absorbed in their work.
7. As at the time of the last inspection, behaviour in class, in assemblies and around the school is very good. Pupils show consideration for others in their movement around the building. At breaktimes outside, pupils play or talk amicably together and are good-natured in their acceptance that others should have turns on the most popular playground activities. Lunchtimes in the dining room are orderly and sociable and pupils show evident enjoyment of organised activities such as traditional singing games, puzzles and board games or poetry reading in the library.
8. Attendance, at 95 per cent, is good and has improved since the last inspection. There were no exclusions last year.
9. The personal development made by pupils is excellent. Relationships between pupils themselves are very good and those between staff and pupils are excellent. This is largely due to the success of the keyworking system which ensures that every girl in the school relates closely to a designated member of staff. As pupils learn to take responsibility for their own behaviour and actions, their increased confidence and self-esteem are reflected in their positive response to the well-established behaviour management scheme. During inspection week, the annual election process for the Student Council was just getting under way, with pupils given every encouragement to put themselves forward as candidates for class representatives. The Council enables every pupil's views to be known on varying aspects of school life such as the availability of drinking water or whether pupils should be able to wear trousers as part of school uniform.
10. Pupils are enthusiastic about the very wide range of activities and challenging residential opportunities they are offered during their time at school. They also enjoy educational trips to destinations such as Herstonceux Science Centre, Tunbridge Wells Museum and the Japanese Embassy in London. All these opportunities help to broaden pupils' social and personal experience. Tributes contributed by Year 11 at their leavers' assembly are thoughtful, and reflect the way the school has helped them to overcome past difficulties and feel more confident about their future.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

11. The quality of teaching is very good across the school, resulting in very good progress and high achievement by the pupils, notably in accredited courses for those pupils in Years 10 and 11 and for students over 16. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the previous inspection. No differences were noted in the teaching between year groups or between pupils of differing abilities. The school meets the individual needs of all pupils very well. Because of this, there is full inclusion in lessons.

12. Teaching is very good throughout the school. It is good, or better, in 87 per cent of lessons, and very good or better in 57 per cent. In 16 per cent, teaching is excellent. Only one lesson was observed in which teaching was unsatisfactory. The overall high quality teaching across the school is a significant strength which is helping to raise the achievement of all pupils.
13. Teaching is particularly good in English, science, ICT, physical education, art and design and music. It is also very good in the Post-16 department. In all of these areas, many examples of very good and excellent teaching lead to very good achievement and success by pupils. Teaching is good in all other subjects, except in religious education, where it is satisfactory.
14. A major feature of very good teaching is the excellent classroom management strategies which enable pupils to work well, within ability groups, and benefit from high quality additional support where needed. The very high quality of expertise and skill of teachers and support assistants is also a strength which leads to pupils being able to articulate their experiences confidently and develop their skills in a supportive atmosphere in which they feel valued. For example, in one art and design lesson, the sensitive support that pupils received and the careful handling of their ideas, encouraged them to express themselves very well. In physical education lessons, the exceptionally able teaching motivates pupils, and the consistently clear, fair and honest comments, coupled with the very positive relationships, successfully promotes high achievement.
15. In literacy, the quality of teaching is very good and results in very confident responses from pupils, and very good progress in communication, reading and writing. Because clear learning objectives are shared with pupils, they all work towards the same goals. Their concentration is improved by the use of interesting and exciting resources, with skilful questioning encouraging them to think carefully about their answers.
16. In numeracy lessons, the quality of teaching is always good. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is having a very positive affect on pupils' achievements. For example, younger pupils are benefiting from the good use of numeracy resources as they develop their oral and mental mathematics skills. These are then helping older pupils to build on prior learning and achieve higher standards. The teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory overall, but few opportunities are planned to help further develop these skills across the curriculum.
17. The quality of teaching in the ICT suites is consistently very good, enabling the development of high levels of confidence and very good ICT skills by almost all pupils. However, the use of these skills in other subjects is only just beginning to develop and this aspect of teaching has not yet begun to affect pupils' achievements in ICT, or in other subjects.
18. Teachers make very good provision for pupils of differing abilities in all lessons. Those with additional special needs, such as autism, emotional difficulties or severe learning difficulties, benefit from additional support and specific targets so that they are fully included in lessons. Because of this, they learn very well and achieve high standards for their abilities.
19. A major strength in teaching is the high quality of teachers' planning, which is usually shared with pupils. This ensures high levels of understanding about what pupils are expected to learn. For example, in an ICT lesson, designed to develop the use of the spray can application, the excellent efforts made by the teacher to plan experiences for the pupils to observe the work of artists helped them to understand clearly what

was expected of them. Teachers' very good subject knowledge leads to detailed lessons and high quality discussions. An example of this was observed in a Year 11 English class, where the teacher's excellent knowledge and skill led to sustained and very high concentration by pupils.

20. The excellent management of pupils' behaviour is a significant strength in the quality of teaching. Outstanding support minimises the effects of pupils' emotional difficulties and results in very high quality relationships and an atmosphere in which pupils thrive. The use of the behaviour management system is consistent and regular in lessons, and this leads to mature and willing attitudes such as those noted in a French class, where the excellent management encouraged pupils to have the confidence to try new words. In physical education, excellent rapport with pupils led to success and determination by pupils who were able to achieve their personal best.
21. Very high expectations are a particular feature of science lessons, and result in pupils who are keen and eager to learn. Very open and skilful questioning encourages pupils to volunteer answers as they learn about the structure of atoms and how they are formed.
22. The use of the very good assessment procedures in English, mathematics and science, results in detailed records of each pupil's progress across the school, and enables them to work towards accredited certification. Assessment is very well used in all subjects and this helps pupils to know their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as helping teachers to plan content that is appropriate to the wide ranging needs of all pupils. A clear marking policy has been established and is used well to offer praise and guidance to enable pupils to improve their work.

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

23. The curriculum is very good. The school offers pupils a broad range of worthwhile opportunities well adapted to the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. The interests, aptitudes and special needs of pupils are very well addressed.
24. Communication is well promoted across the curriculum and supports pupils' acquisition of social skills well. It serves to maximise their capacity for independence. When therapies specified in statements are not immediately available the school makes good use of the specialist skills and previous training of the learning support assistants to make up the deficiency. Times when the whole class comes together at key points in the day are particularly effective in this regard. The school ensures that the needs of all pupils are met by basing the curriculum on the targets in pupils' individual education plans, and progress towards these is carefully monitored. The school has taken the advice of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and successfully introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in Years 7, 8 and 9.
25. The school provides an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities ranging from organised games at lunchtime to more ambitious theatre trips, all of which support some aspect of learning. There are two public performances a year, in which all pupils take part. Equality of access and opportunity for all pupils is good. The school is aware that its policy in this regard needs revision, but is alert to any unfairness, and prides itself that no pupil is denied an excursion, for example, due to financial considerations. Activities undertaken by pupils in residence are frequently

offered to day pupils. All pupils, without exception, are able to benefit from what the school provides.

26. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good. The governors have approved a policy on sex education and proper attention is paid to the dangers of the misuse of drugs.
27. The school provides very effectively for work-related education, and the quality of its provision is recognised in the Kent Quality Award for Partnership Activity for Work Experience. The standard of careers education and guidance is very good. Pupils receive specialist advice on what is available to them from Year 9; all are interviewed and receive an action plan to help in their quest for further training or employment. Particularly well-supported work experience, within and outside school, is a strong feature of provision in Years 10 to 14. By the end of Year 11, all pupils have had three work placements, and many pupils at this stage hold opinions on possible careers. Independence is promoted at this key stage by well-supported residence in the school flat, where pupils learn, to some degree, to fend for themselves.
28. The good standard of liaison with a local college enables pupils to take 'taster' courses during Year 11. This helps them in future decisions as to further training and possible career choices. The excellent standard of support provided by the school is key to the success of this procedure. When pupils are 16, they are given a survey of their academic and personal achievements as an additional basis for future life choices.
29. The school maintains good links within the community which result in the good number of work experience placements offered to pupils. Good relationships with local churches result in pastoral visits by clergy. The school uses an activity centre from a religious foundation which makes some residential experiences more readily affordable by pupils.
30. There are very good relationships with partner institutions, particularly a local secondary school which welcomes pupils who visit to take specific subjects such as history or physical education. One pupil in Year 11 is taking mathematics at GCSE level. These pupils benefit socially from the experience and gain confidence and self-esteem as a result. Curriculum continuity of these pupils is assured by careful planning. Broomhill Bank teachers visit the mainstream school to advise on teaching techniques and share good practice.
31. Despite the breadth and suitability of the curriculum offered, the school is aware that provision is unbalanced. The school day falls short of that recommended nationally. The length of lessons varies throughout the day and some valuable learning time is wasted in a few lessons when pupils are unable to concentrate. This problem is particularly apparent in the seventy-five minute lesson after lunch
32. The school promotes pupils' personal development very well. Pupils take an active part in the life of the school and see themselves as part of a community of pupils and adults. Pupils take important decisions on their own lives because they are routinely present at case conferences. Personal responsibility is encouraged in such subjects as mathematics where pupils take charge of their own learning as they mark their own work and understand their errors. The excellent relationships, both between pupils and between pupils and staff, also foster maturity.
33. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Pupils' contributions to all aspects of school life are highly valued. There are periods of reflection in assemblies

and religious education. In art and design, pupils expressed awe and wonder during the inspection as they achieved a deeper understanding of shape and form. They show genuine curiosity and amazement when they begin to understand molecular structure in science. The award-winning environmental project enables pupils to appreciate nature's work and their appreciation of the sensory garden holds an important spiritual dimension for them.

34. Pupils' moral development is very well promoted. There are clear boundaries set in all school social situations and pupils understand well the difference between right and wrong behaviour, and in such subjects as English and art and design they are encouraged to reflect on it. The whole-school behaviour policy is highly effective in promoting pupils' knowledge of fairness and justice to other people.
35. Excellent provision is made for pupils' social development, and is a strength of the school. The school council allows pupils to have a genuine say in the organisation of the school. There is sensitive and consistent use of subjects such as English and physical education as vehicles to actively and successfully promote sociability. Social occasions, such as mealtimes, are very well-organised. The school actively promotes team-building within classes, and excellent opportunities for residential experience are a particularly strong feature. The school has improved the breadth of its curriculum by including aspects of citizenship.
36. Pupils' cultural development is very well addressed. Pupils visit theatres and read novels and poems that reflect their own culture. They learn about other religions in religious education, other cultures in geography, and enjoy tales from many lands in the books they read in the whole-school reading scheme. There are residential visits abroad which further broaden pupils' horizons.
37. Since the last inspection, there has been a very good level of improvement. The continuity of pupils' learning in Years 10 and 11 now builds reliably on previous work in all subjects. Programmes of study have been well adapted to the requirements of the pupils and these are now covered in sufficient depth. Religious education is now satisfactory and opportunities for promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development have been strengthened. The needs of more able pupils are now met well. There are now good opportunities for some pupils to integrate into mainstream schools for certain subjects. The personal and academic support for these pupils is very good and enables them to widen their horizons, benefit socially, and increase their self-esteem. The whole-school curriculum is now very well reviewed and comprehensively monitored. Extra-curricular activities and sporting links continue to be varied and richly rewarding.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

38. Provision for the support and guidance of pupils is very good. As a result, the very good progress that pupils make in their social and personal development is an outstanding feature of the school's work. Every pupil has a key worker although, due to staffing constraints beyond the school's control, the ratio of pupils to staff in this respect is higher than all concerned would wish. Teachers and care staff work very well as a team, provide positive role models and know the pupils well. All relevant information is shared in the twice-daily handovers and in staff-sharing meetings. Members of staff are sensitive to the many issues that may affect behaviour and progress. The atmosphere of the school is relaxed and friendly, especially at meal times, with excellent relationships between staff and pupils. There is a good level of supervision at all times: it is suitably unobtrusive for post-16 students who are learning independence skills.



39. Teaching and care staff monitor behaviour and personal development very effectively. Pupils know that they are held responsible for their own actions and that participation in certain activities may depend on their current status in the well established behaviour management system. The results of individual performances are read out each week in assembly, and a detailed summary of each pupil's behaviour is prepared for their annual review meeting. A popular incentive to do well is the headteacher's termly outing.
40. There are detailed care plans for residential pupils, updated as necessary, that provide an effective basis for recording their progress. Any form of bullying is actively and consistently discouraged. The anti-bullying policy, which already contains clear advice and information for staff, pupils and parents, is currently being reviewed in order to improve clarity and understanding, as is the anti-racist policy. Pupils have access to an independent visitor if they wish to make a complaint.
41. Attendance is satisfactorily monitored, with administrative staff or key workers checking on any unexplained absences as soon as they occur. Child protection procedures, monitored by four designated co-ordinators, are efficient and give clear guidance for staff, while a rolling schedule ensures that staff training is kept up to date. Governors are actively involved in this aspect of the school's provision, and new staff receive training from the Area Child Protection Co-ordinator as part of their induction process. The school takes appropriate measures to ensure safe Internet access.
42. Procedures for ensuring health and safety are good. Incidents and accidents are efficiently recorded and medical arrangements are well organised. A 'surgery' operates throughout the day for the benefit of all pupils and a quiet room has been set aside for those feeling unwell. Pupils can attend 'drop-in' sessions with the school nurse and they have the option to see a female doctor from the local practice.
43. The chair of governors and the school bursar make regular health and safety checks of the school site and report to the full governing body. The school is rightly concerned about the safety of all those entering and leaving by the main entrance, since pedestrians and vehicles have to contend with fast traffic in a narrow lane. This necessarily limits the independent activities of pupils.
44. Assessment arrangements across the school are very effective. Procedures for assessing pupils' achievements and progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, are very well established and are used very well by all staff. In foundation subjects, assessment is also very good and is a natural part of teaching and learning. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Assessment and recording practices are based on clear guidelines and policies. Detailed and specific information about each pupil's achievement is collated and recorded regularly, and pupils' self-assessment in many subjects is a strong feature, ensuring they know their own strengths and weaknesses.
45. Induction to the school is of a very high standard. Pupils are enabled to become familiar with the building and the key-working system. The school collects information on the attitudes and values of new pupils, and is clear about potential strengths and weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. Because pupils arrive from a variety of institutions, however, the school undertakes its own reliable baseline tests. These inform teachers about prior attainment and help them to plan appropriate work to enable each pupil to achieve at their own level. Continuous assessment each half term builds on this knowledge and ensures that effective progress is made as pupils move through the school. For example, in a mathematics lesson observed in Year 10,

the teacher had planned a practical task to develop a greater understanding of place value, following a baseline test the previous week to find out about pupils' understanding of this aspect. Because this assessment data was available, the tasks were tailored to meet the needs and abilities of each group in the class and pupils were able to achieve very well.

46. Formal assessment of pupils' attainment and progress at the end of each key stage is in place, and the information received from these tests is analysed very well to improve future provision and to identify strengths and weaknesses. Regular testing in reading, spelling and mathematics, enables staff to predict each pupil's future achievements and guide them towards those goals. The effective use of assessment across the school is a major strength of the provision.
47. Individual education plans form an important part of these very effective assessment procedures. Regularly monitored targets are set for academic and social areas of the curriculum, related to each pupil's statement of special educational need. These become part of the annual review meeting with parents and pupils, and help to monitor progress over time. The residential provision is particularly effective in addressing many of the needs identified on pupils' statements of special educational need, but changes in the levels of local health care provision mean that the school has difficulty ensuring all the pupils' identified needs are met.
48. The range of external accreditation offered to pupils at the school is very good. For example, post-16 students take part in NVQ courses at a local catering college, several pupils are entered for English and mathematics at GCSE entry level and Key Skills tests are taken in ICT by many more pupils. Art and design is offered at GCSE level. Internal accreditation is also a strong feature. For example, in physical education, a very wide range of assessment and certification promotes high levels of achievement and helps to raise the pupils' self-esteem.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

49. In general, parents are very supportive and appreciative of the work of the school. However, many families live at some distance from the school and this inevitably limits the amount of direct involvement that is possible, although sports days and school performances are well supported events.
50. Of those who expressed an opinion, all were confident that behaviour in school was good and the vast majority felt that the school was helping their child to become mature and responsible. Parents were delighted with the progress their daughters make at the school, in many cases comparing it favourably with previous placements. There was some uncertainty about whether pupils were given the right amount of work to do at home but, as only 15 parents came to the pre-inspection meeting and 86 per cent of the questionnaires were not returned, the views of most parents or carers remains unknown.
51. The school works very hard to promote an effective partnership with parents and a parents' policy is planned to draw together the various ways in which this is done. Both the quality and quantity of information for parents are good. Written reports set clear and specific targets to ensure future progress. An informative newsletter is sent out once a fortnight and there is an additional newsletter for parents of Post-16 students. An open morning precedes the annual meeting with governors, with sports day in the afternoon. The home/school books provide a very effective means of communication, especially for day pupils. The school's web site is due to be updated as soon as the relevant staff appointment is made. Much informal contact takes place

by phone or e-mail, with key workers providing a crucial link between families and the school. Parents are fully informed and have suitable opportunities to be involved with their child's annual review meeting. A home visit is arranged prior to the review as necessary and help with transport is available. The school has recently developed useful links with an independent scheme to help the school further develop its partnership with parents.

52. The Friends Association, run by the headteacher and a very small number of parents, organises various social and fund-raising events, which enabled about £1000 to be donated to the school last year. This contributed towards the cost of the school's Christmas celebrations and the Snowdon adventure trip.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

53. There have been very good improvements since the last inspection in leadership and management. The systems for judging the school's strengths and weaknesses have become more rigorous. As a result, the quality of the curriculum, the range of accreditation and the role of the co-ordinators have all improved. All staff work as a highly effective team, providing very good role models and a clear direction for the work of the school. As the nature of the school's intake has altered, staff have equipped themselves with the necessary high level of skills needed to meet the increasingly complex needs of the pupils. The residential provision is very well managed and provides high quality activities, which are well supervised and in which children feel safe and secure.
54. Management of the Post-16 provision is also excellent. The teacher in charge provides an excellent role model, and ensures that the curriculum is flexible, yet focused, to their individual needs so that they are well prepared for life after school. The success of the Post-16 provision is illustrated in the numbers of students who gain National Vocational Qualifications while attending college part time and then go on to build upon them when they become full time students.
55. The headteacher's very good interpersonal skills enable him to maintain excellent relationships with the staff. He ensures that all staff feel confident to express their views and to participate in the school's decision-making processes. They meet regularly with the headteacher, a deputy, or other trained supervisor, raise any problems openly, and many staff identify team spirit and the opportunity to share problems as a strength of the school. As a result the school has developed into one where there is a shared commitment to continual improvement and a determination to build continually upon the school's strength. The school's capacity to succeed is excellent, and the impact of recent success is illustrated by the very good results that Year 11 pupils have recently achieved in nationally accredited courses.
56. The headteacher and senior staff have also demonstrated their commitment to inclusion through their work with the local education authority on an integration and inclusion project which is proving very effective in mainstream schools. This work includes opportunities for Broomhill Bank pupils to attend local mainstream schools on a part-time basis and for Broomhill Bank staff to provide training for mainstream staff on issues such as differentiation or the social use of language. The school is also committed to ensuring that all pupils at Broomhill Bank are included in all activities and make special arrangements where necessary.
57. Relationships are outstanding. All adults give very generously of their time to support pupils academically and socially. They continually build pupils' confidence and self-esteem through recognising their efforts and setting them challenging, yet realistic,

targets in lessons. Older pupils take responsibility for tasks around the school and the accommodation is used well to provide incremental challenges to pupils, as they get older. For example pupils gain initial experience of coping for themselves by sleeping over in a school flat for between one and four nights. As their confidence grows they work their way up to looking after themselves and living independently in the Post-16 house for short periods of time.

58. The governing body fulfils all its statutory requirements and is very well informed and active in school life. The governors and the staff share a commitment to continuing improvements, particularly in teaching and learning and in integration. They have successfully built upon the strengths found at the last inspection and addressed the key issues thoroughly. Governors frequently join the staff on training days particularly when these are focussed upon school planning. The governors' regular visits provide them with excellent opportunities to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses and to use their individual areas of expertise to focus the content of strategic planning. Less formal visits are also a regular feature of school life and governors can frequently be seen chatting to staff in the staff room.
59. The school sets challenging targets for improving its performance, and works systematically and very effectively towards meeting them. Improvements in monitoring and evaluation have had a very significant impact on raising the quality of teaching and learning and in identifying the strengths and weakness of the curriculum. Members of the senior management team have joined the headteacher in monitoring the general quality of teaching in the classroom, and fifteen or more lessons are now observed each term. This increase in monitoring has clearly helped the school and individual teachers to raise standards. Furthermore, as a result of good feedback and in-depth discussion teachers have become more self-critical and plan in more detail so that the pupils' needs are consistently addressed. However, not all co-ordinators are able to observe their colleagues teaching their subjects, which restricts the overview they have of provision.
60. Performance management procedures have been used very effectively to raise standards overall, and the school's mentoring procedures are very effective in supporting staff and enabling them to do their work well. The school's development plan is very good. It is an effective tool to manage change particularly as all staff are involved in identifying targets and working together to achieve them.
61. The daily management and routines of the school are very efficient. There is good time keeping and almost all lessons start on time, the exception being when one celebration assembly over ran into the first lesson of the same day. There is also an imbalance in the length of lessons. The school has acknowledged this problem in its current planning and is currently considering the best way to improve the situation.
62. The school has a good number of teachers for the pupils on roll and the range and complexity of their needs. A significant number of staff have additional qualifications or suitable training specific to the pupils' needs and this clearly has a beneficial impact on pupils' learning and progress. A significant number of staff are part time but, while difficult to manage, there is no evidence that this has a detrimental effect on pupils.
63. The school is generally well staffed, although the shortage of resident child care officers means that the pupil to residential staff ratio is high. The school has a good number and wide range of support staff who, like the teachers, are well qualified or suitably trained to meet the pupils' needs. A significant feature is the arrangement whereby learning support assistants or care staff can, by the nature of their own experience and training, take the lead in important aspects of the pupils' education.

For example, a resident child care officer uses his expertise in horticulture to support the business enterprise very effectively. Medically trained staff are available to support teachers and pupils, and new staff are well supported and receive information to help them in their work in line with the school's induction policy. Provision for staff development is good and ensures that staff are up to date with current requirements. For example, six care staff are on track to complete their NVQ Level 3 in July. The school regularly accepts the services of Red Cross volunteers who are well trained by senior staff and support the pupils in classes and in extra-curricular activities.

64. Although some aspects of the accommodation are very good, for example, the grounds, classrooms and Post-16 unit, other aspects are unsatisfactory. There is no resistant materials workshop for teaching design and technology, the hall doubles as a gym, and the site requires high levels of maintenance. The pupils and teachers make very good use of the extensive grounds, which are a very good source of learning opportunities for such subjects as geography, science, environmental studies and physical education.
65. Resources for learning are good. Their level and quality have improved since the last inspection and all resources are used regularly and effectively in lessons. The library, although small, has a suitable range of books and is used effectively by the pupils for research purposes. The school also has a good number of computers which are used both for teaching ICT skills and for reference purposes, for example, to inform the design element of design and technology.
66. The school makes very good use of its resources, grants and other funding, and financial planning and management is very efficient. The efficacy and effectiveness of the school's financial management arrangements are the result of the excellent teamwork of the headteacher, governors, the bursar and administrative staff. The governors' finance sub-committee monitors the effectiveness of its spending decisions very effectively and the governing body is kept regularly and fully informed. All expenditure is carefully monitored to ensure that it is related to the principles of best value and that it matches objectives set in the school development plan. Value for money is very good.
67. The result of very skilful management and leadership is a school where all feel valued, where the needs of the pupils with complex needs are well addressed, and where staff are committed to the highest academic and care standards.

#### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

68. In order to build on the school's very high quality provision the headteacher and governors should:
  - a) Provide all subject co-ordinators with opportunities to observe lessons in their subjects; and
    - i. provide them with training in classroom observation techniques if necessary; and
    - ii. identify strategies for the results of such observations to be incorporated into the school's monitoring and evaluation systems.  
(*Para refs: 59; 104; 129*)
  - b) The headteacher and senior staff should expedite their decision on lesson timings to ensure that they are more equally balanced across the day.  
(*Para refs: 31; 61; 112*)

- c) Improve strategies for the pupils' use of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in all subjects by:
- i. identifying and sharing good practice across the school;
  - ii. monitoring more closely the effectiveness of pupils' use of basic skills; and
  - iii. providing training where necessary.
- (Para refs: 16; 17; 87; 95; 96; 123; 127; 136)

## POST-16 UNIT

69. The provision for Post-16 education is excellent. The provision provides a very appropriate and relevant programme that fully meets the wide and complex needs of the students. This, along with the high quality of teaching means students achieve very well and make very good progress. The teachers and learning support assistants working within the Post-16 unit are very capable; they know the students well having detailed knowledge and understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and their personalities. This enables staff to create a learning environment which is both effective and conducted in a warm and secure environment. This generates a sense of wellbeing amongst the students so that by the time they leave, their social competence and life skills provide a solid basis for the next stage of their lives.
70. The Post-16 curriculum is very good. It provides an appropriate emphasis on life skills, but also seeks to extend those academic areas which pupils have an aptitude for or which, for example English, contribute to enhanced life opportunities for the students. In communication activities pupils are encouraged to speak and listen to a range of audiences and to write for a range of purposes. In numeracy work there is a clear focus on enabling pupils to deal with number in practical settings. Through accredited courses, for example the ASDAN Certificate in Life Skills and the OCR Basic Skills, pupils study for nationally recognised qualifications in a range of subjects which develop them academically, socially and personally. All students undertake some form of nationally accredited course but equally importantly students have access to vocational training and work experience opportunities, community and environmental studies and practical experience of independent living in the Post-16 training house. Students have the opportunity to further develop their skills and independence by attending courses off-site in local colleges of further education and an independent catering college. Students in the Post-16 unit, as part of their curriculum programme, run two mini enterprises in horticulture and a sandwich shop. Both of these activities challenge pupils to produce work of high quality due to the business nature of the work and in sessions seen, the students clearly appreciated how important high standards are in producing plants and vegetables or sandwiches for sale. Although much of the work students undertake is rightly aimed at improving their ability to cope with the practical challenges of adult life, other areas of learning are not ignored. For example, students undertake work in citizenship, community activities, European visits and sports and leisure.
71. The practical nature of the students' work is underlined by the very effective length the staff go to provide realistic settings for learning. For example, the student shop with a budget for the ingredients to prepare products for sale in the sandwich enterprise, as well as additional issues, such as profit and loss and time management. In other areas of the curriculum this realistic and challenging approach is evident when students attend a swimming course at a local leisure centre as ordinary members of an adult education class. The very wide and appropriate range of activities students undertake means that achievement and progress in personal, social and health education is very good and this along with the high quality of the relationships in the unit means that pupils are confident, relaxed, polite and mature.

72. The high standards the students achieve in all of their work whether of a practical, academic, social or vocational nature, is significantly influenced by the very high quality of teaching, whether from teachers, instructors or learning support assistants. In all activities, teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. Lessons and relevant activities are carefully planned, and relationships are excellent. Students are dealt with in a friendly, sensitive, but challenging manner by all staff. A significant feature of the high standard of teaching in the Post-16 unit is the contribution of staff who have no formal teaching qualification. For example, learning support assistants and care staff take a vital and effective lead in the business enterprise activities. Such excellent teamwork and strong relationships are a significant feature of the work of the unit.
73. The teacher in charge of the Post-16 unit manages it extremely successfully. She has created a highly effective working environment where students and staff are valued, standards are high and administration is efficient. The Post-16 accommodation is of good quality; it is separated from the main body of the school in order to provide a distinctly different learning environment, and is both suitable and attractive. This, along with the quality of teaching, the relationships and the high expectations, creates a highly positive environment in which young people are clearly thriving. The very good work of the Post-16 unit identified during the last inspection has been maintained and improved.

## **RESIDENTIAL**

74. The residential provision is excellent and is a strength of the school. It has a significant impact on the very good social and personal development of the pupils. The high standards reported by the previous inspection have been maintained. Staff give very good quality care and support to pupils and take a genuine interest in their progress. Key workers build up a special relationship with their designated pupils and provide a crucial link between school and family.
75. There is a family atmosphere in the residential units, the independent flats and the Post-16 house in the grounds. One pupil celebrating her birthday during inspection week was delighted to be presented with a cake at teatime, decorated to reflect her interest in horses. A unit meeting was postponed while she blew out the candles and the cake was cut for all to share. Mealtimes in general are relaxed and sociable. Pupils willingly undertake ordinary household chores such as clearing tables and washing up. Pupils are encouraged to take pride in their personal and shared space. They were very happy to show inspectors around their accommodation and those in the Post-16 house were delighted to find that a new kitchen had been installed during the summer holidays. Staff have worked hard to create attractive, colour-co-ordinated surroundings such as in the unit bathrooms where mobiles and starfish enhance what are otherwise rather spartan areas. Pupils will benefit from more privacy when these bathrooms are remodelled and doors replace the shower curtains. All pupils now have a lockable locker near their beds.
76. Care staff effectively monitor the needs of the pupils in terms of helping them to manage their own behaviour and increase their independence. Care plans are based on pupils' individual needs and staff are fully aware of the strategies required to manage these needs. There are hand-over times twice a day when necessary information is exchanged. Key workers contribute to annual review meetings either in person or, if teaching commitments make this impossible, by means of a written report. All staff make good, consistent use of praise and encouragement which boosts pupils' self-esteem and confidence. All incidents are carefully recorded.

77. In every communal area there are collections of photographs showing events and outings. The wide range of weekend activities is a strong feature of the residential provision and one which staff work very hard to promote by creating attractive personal invitations to different activities such as ice skating, swimming, the cinema, visits to weekend markets and seaside towns, or simply helping with practical tasks in the school grounds. Every evening pupils have a choice of two or three activities, although independent access to the village is limited to those able to cope safely with the potentially dangerous walk along a narrow lane. On one evening, pupils were eagerly looking forward to their weekly Youth Club meeting, to which boys from a neighbouring school were invited.
78. Parents are very concerned about the implications of the impending change to weekly boarding. They feel that, without the current range of social and team-building activities available at weekends, it will be even more difficult for their daughters to establish and maintain friendships. Care staff are committed to minimising the impact of the changes and plan to organise future evening activities accordingly.



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	73
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	98

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	25	18	7	1	0	0
Percentage	16	41	30	11	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	86
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	12

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	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.8

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
82	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	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: Y2 – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.65
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.53
Average class size	10.87

#### **Education support staff: Y2 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	30
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1017

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	1,246,204
Total expenditure	1,283,723
Expenditure per pupil	14,423
Balance brought forward from previous year	71,490
Balance carried forward to next year	33,971

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.45
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.4
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.6
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.6
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	87
Number of questionnaires returned	12

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	92	8	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	83	17	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	100	0	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	42	0	0	25
The teaching is good.	92	8	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	83	8	8	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	92	8	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	83	17	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	83	17	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	92	8	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	92	8	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	83	8	0	0	8

*Some rows may not add up to 100 due to rounding*

### Other issues raised by parents

In addition to the concerns raised by the parents in the questionnaires inspectors also noted parents' concerns about the change from fortnightly to weekly boarding facilities. Inspectors acknowledge that the school is working hard to minimise the impact of such a change and parents are involved in regular meetings to discuss such changes.

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

### **ENGLISH**

79. The school makes good provision for English and pupils make very good progress in both key stages. When pupils enter the school in Year 7 they commonly have difficulties with communication and their use of English particularly with reference to working with others. However, within a short time they learn that they will be supported and valued by all staff and quickly learn to overcome these difficulties.
80. By the time they are in Year 9, pupils take a lively interest in class and listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. They answer direct questions accurately and unselfconsciously. At this stage, higher attaining pupils make spontaneous and helpful oral contributions to lessons. They are able to volunteer words and phrases which are helpful in describing the positive features of other class members, and articulate the emotions shown in the pictures they are shown. Classes join in well-focused discussion with their teacher using words such as 'surprised', 'shocked' and 'angry.' They say how they are feeling themselves, and remember to accompany what they say with the appropriate facial expression. They increasingly make eye-contact when they speak. Pupils read the simple books from their reading scheme, both fiction and non-fiction, with interest and pleasure. High-achievers read aloud fluently and confidently, but lower achievers read hesitantly with limited understanding. All pupils have tackled a play by Shakespeare by the end of the key stage with at least some measure of success. Pupils write simple accounts, letters and diaries. By the end of the key stage, the simple, redrafted, work of the highest achievers can be substantially correct. All pupils are helped to make good use of ICT to present their work in striking and original ways.
81. By the end of Year 11, pupils' are capable of concentrating over comparatively long periods and listen attentively in class. In a lesson on Tennyson's 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', high-achieving pupils' spoke with empathy of the suffering of the soldiers on the battlefield, and used words such as 'chaotic', 'dramatic', and 'barbaric' to describe the scene. They learn to vary their speech according to their audience when they take part in school assemblies, for example, or when they address the class as a whole. Pupils' reading has extended to other poems by Tennyson such as 'the Lady of Shallot' and a comparison of two poems by Robert Frost. In their study of such poetry, they identify alliteration and metaphor and comment on rhyme, rhythm and imagery. They readily look up words and research topics using books from their reading schemes, library reference books, CD-Roms and supervised access to the Internet. A strong feature of pupils' writing is their very simple, but perceptive pieces of literary criticism. They have produced carefully drafted poems. They have extended their range of writing to include well reasoned responses to the novels they read in class and described events at school and at home. They have written newspaper articles for a specific audience and produced mini-books for children. They habitually redraft their work on a computer and present it to a high standard.
82. Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently very good. They learn well at both key stages because the lessons are well pitched to their abilities, and are successfully designed to catch their interest and imagination. As a result, pupils concentrate well, make good oral contributions in class and co-operate effectively in their own learning.
83. Teaching is very good and often excellent. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils. They have good knowledge of the subject, and promote the topics studied in

interesting ways. Resources are always well used. In the lessons on 'The Charge of the Light Brigade', for example, the teacher was able to explain fully about the Crimean War and how the tragic blunder occurred. She enriched the learning by playing a recording of Tennyson reading his famous poem and showed a video clip of the Charge. This gave a strong framework for pupils to understand fully, and empathise with, the suffering implicit in the poem. Teamwork between the teacher and learning support assistants is very good. They work well together to address the learning objectives of each lesson, and give a good deal of individual support and help. Class management is so skilful that it appears to be effortless. Relationships are pleasant, and there is usually a characteristic buzz of activity in the classroom.

84. The curriculum is very good. Lessons are carefully based on the targets of pupils' individual education plans so that learning proceeds at the right level and is completely accessible by the pupils. Record keeping is meticulous, and assessment procedures reliable. Pupils are left in no doubt as to what to do in order to improve. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are enhanced both by specific teaching in oral communication and by excellent specialist advice, both for individual pupils and small groups. Reading across the key stages is supported by a well-organised and carefully assessed whole-school reading scheme. All pupils have reading books which they take home. Timetabled library lessons allow pupils to browse, pursue additional reading, or tackle research. Each class is issued with packs of instructions on book retrieval, and this helps to broaden pupils' reading. Book weeks and book sales in school further support the reading curriculum. Pupils' skills in writing are supported by good access to computers for redrafting and presentation of work. A spelling policy is shortly to be introduced. Extra-curricular activities are strong and include visits to the theatre. Pupils have attended a workshop at the Globe Theatre in London. There are good opportunities for public performance.
85. Co-ordination of the subject is excellent. The co-ordinator is well informed, conscientious and energetic. The school is aware that the newly introduced reading scheme requires simplification and some additional resources to complement provision, and this is in hand. The provision of drama lessons to promote pupils' skills in speaking and listening has yet to be addressed.
86. Since the last inspection there has been an excellent level of improvement. A high proportion of pupils now make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment in speaking and listening, reading and writing. The needs of the most able are now fully met. The lack of a handwriting policy has been overtaken by the pupils' abilities in using ICT to present their work to a high standard. Teaching has improved and resources are now good. The curriculum is now nationally accredited and pupils are already achieving creditable grades in GCSE and at entry-level. The national literacy strategy has now been effectively introduced which, with the well-organised reading scheme, has already raised pupils' attainment. The department's use of the Internet has helped pupils to improve their research skills. The library has been upgraded to further support learning in a range of subjects, in addition to supporting pupils' personal reading.

## **Literacy**

87. The development of literacy is held by the school to be central to all teaching and learning. There is a strong whole-school policy which is well monitored. Programmes of study in all curriculum subjects and the resources used are carefully monitored for suitability and relevance on an ongoing basis. Provision across the school is good. The curriculum is supported by a whole-school reading scheme of good quality which contains a wide variety of genres. There is a very well-organised library. All pupils have library books in addition to their home/school readers. Good, accessible

instructions on information retrieval are available in all classrooms. Good availability of CD-Rom encyclopaedias further enhances attainment in a range of subjects. In geography and history there is wide range of reading materials. Pupils make good use of key words, which include geographical and historical terms to help understanding. In science, pupils give good extended answers in speech and writing. Pupils understand terms used in mathematics and religious education. In French, literacy is well promoted because the teacher points out the similarities between English and French vocabulary. In music, however, opportunities for the development of literacy are missed because subject specific terms do not consistently receive sufficient emphasis and pupils do not always understand the words of the songs. In design and technology, worksheets are satisfactory, but not exciting and do not sufficiently promote key vocabulary. Post 16, the wide range of literacy activities on offer support students' work experience well as they fill in their log of activities on a daily basis. Letters of application are carefully drafted and well word-processed, showing conscientious attitudes which give students the best possible chance of being accepted by an employer.

## **Library**

88. The library is very good. It has been upgraded recently to support more fully the good standard of literacy in the school. The up-to-date book stock reflects and supports the school curriculum, and there are attractive books for borrowing. The number of volumes greatly exceeds the national recommendations of the School Library Association for similar schools. Boxes of books further improve provision on specific subjects which are borrowed from the local authority's learning resource centre. Pupils visit the public library to familiarise them with procedures at least annually.
89. The school library is welcoming and well-managed. Induction for teachers and pupils is very good. All pupils have good specific instruction on the Dewey Decimal System which they readily understand when it is simplified for them. A 'theme day' to further familiarise staff and pupils with information retrieval has been planned. Pupils are also able to practise research skills on a daily basis. The library contains a good selection of CD-Roms, educational games and story tapes and there is supervised access to the Internet. Records of pupils' borrowing and Internet use are carefully kept. There is, as yet, no catalogue. Groups of pupils visit the library at lunchtime to borrow books and to listen to stories being read to them. The planned development of the library as a learning resource centre is, however, currently compromised because it is inaccessible to unsupervised pupils and thus cannot fully support independent learning.

## **MATHEMATICS**

90. Provision for mathematics is good across the school, and results in pupils' good achievement and high standards in a range of accredited courses. When they enter Year 7, many younger pupils in the school have difficulty with number skills and lack the confidence to work with resources. However, by the time they reach the end of Year 11, they have grown in confidence and achieve well in all aspects of mathematics. The good teaching and effective management have ensured that there has been good progress in the provision for the subject since the previous inspection.
91. Pupils in Year 7 develop their understanding well through focused, practical tasks. For example, they work well together as they use number lines to count on and back from 10. They enjoy finding missing numbers and identify numerals in a practical way. They show good understanding of simple calculations and use their fingers well to work out addition and subtraction to 10 orally. They are motivated to learn. As pupils move through Years 7, 8 and 9, they grow in confidence and work hard, benefiting

from the continued good teaching. This results in good progress over time so that, by Year 9, many pupils are able to count up to 1000 and undertake addition and subtraction to at least 50. Pupils work knowledgeably with money, time, measures and shape, and they show good understanding of simple fractions. In one lesson, for example, pupils double and halve numbers to 50 quickly and efficiently in their heads. They develop good strategies as they play a 'Bingo' game in which they recognise and name doubles or halves of certain numbers. Almost all pupils in the class achieve this because of good support and because they enjoy the practical approach used.

92. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue their good progress and achieve well as they work towards accredited certification such as GCSE and the entry level certificate. They show a mature and diligent attitude to their work and have the confidence to ask questions and discuss their difficulties. Many pupils in Year 10 enjoy practical tasks, and work together well to develop their understanding and skills so that, by the end of the lesson, almost all can successfully work out answers for themselves, adding three-digit numbers together accurately and placing values correctly. In Year 11, pupils begin to use wider numerical functions, such as multiplication and division of numbers to 1000. They apply their skills well to solving mathematical problems and a few are beginning to work with negative numbers. In one lesson on probability, pupils enjoyed decision-making about 'chance' and 'certainty'. They thought carefully about their answers and achieved well because of the practical approach and the good support that enabled all pupils to be fully included in each activity. Pupils in Year 11 also learn to work with data, collecting information about their favourite foods and creating simple tally charts and graphs.
93. The quality of teaching in mathematics lessons is always good, and results in well planned lessons with a good range of activities that promote good achievement. Key features of mathematics lessons are the very good behaviour management of the pupils and the very positive relationships which ensure that pupils enjoy lessons, stay on task, and show a willingness to work hard. The very good assessment of pupils' skills is also a strength which ensures that teachers and pupils are fully aware of their strengths and weaknesses. The work is pitched exactly right, enabling lower and higher attaining pupils to achieve well. The high quality support offered by staff helps pupils to receive the guidance they need to access each lesson, and ensures that mathematics skills are consistently reinforced.
94. Pupils' work is well marked with positive comments that help them to improve and understand any difficulties. Good questioning leads to the development of effective thinking skills. For example, during the lesson on probability in Year 11, pupils were required to think carefully about probable outcomes. They had to guess which coloured bead would be drawn from a bag containing four beads, each of different colour. After several opportunities to try out this problem, they were able to show good understanding of the probability of each bead being drawn. Because questions were tailored to reflect each pupil's ability, all pupils were fully included in this challenging task.
95. The development of pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum is less secure. There are few planned opportunities for pupils to consolidate and practise their numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum. A few activities were seen in science and ICT during the inspection week, but there are lost opportunities to develop skills further in other subjects.
96. Leadership of mathematics is very good, leading to a clear overview of pupils' strengths and a clear vision for future development. The effective implementation of aspects of the National Numeracy Strategy at Years 7, 8 and 9, is helping to improve



achievement, particularly in Years 7 and 8. The good practical approaches of the numeracy strategy are very appropriate to the needs and abilities of these particular groups of pupils, resulting in high levels of enjoyment, involvement and success. The overall mathematics curriculum is good, with an emphasis on number. This is entirely appropriate for the pupils' needs and is helping them to prepare well for life after school. The very good assessment and monitoring of pupils' achievements are a real strength. These are used very well to predict future achievements and to help pupils decide on their future courses. The co-ordinator has very good awareness of the need to improve the development of numeracy across the curriculum, and to develop increased use of ICT in support of the subject.

## SCIENCE

97. The school makes very good provision for science. This represents a very good improvement when compared to the findings of the last inspection. This is primarily due to very good quality teaching, which results in pupils making very good gains in their learning and a very good range of accredited learning opportunities in which pupils learn to apply their knowledge and understanding in a variety of highly relevant settings.
98. Pupils' levels of achievement throughout the school are very good. This is particularly the case with regard to pupils extending their scientific knowledge of living things, different materials, and physical forces, but their development in understanding how to approach things in a scientific way, though still good, is less well marked. Pupils are very interested in their work, their behaviour is very good, and they are mindful of health and safety issues. They are also often intrigued and fascinated by the activities, and in this respect the subject makes a positive contribution to their spiritual development. Pupils in Year 7 grow broad beans from seed, and know the basic structure of plants. They learn about parts of the body, such as the hand, and about the role played by the five senses. Pupils in Year 8 build on this understanding very effectively, and consider the skeleton and its function, describing the properties of different bones from different animals, and working out why these are important. They understand how to construct a simple electrical circuit, and why the soles of some shoes grip better than others. Older pupils gain highly commendable results in their entry level examinations, and know some of the changes that occur in the mother's body during pregnancy. They gain a very basic understanding of atomic structure and know, for example, that some metals are magnetic whilst others are not. They know that some materials dissolve and how this process may be speeded up; they can also describe how the appearance and texture of food changes when it is frozen. Post-16 students apply their knowledge of science very well in the context of their accredited vocational courses, for example in their horticultural business enterprise 'Broomhill Blooms'. Pupils and students also apply their knowledge and understanding of science extremely effectively in the highly relevant context of the Environmental Project which is run by one of the residential unit team leaders and based in the school grounds. They maintain woodland, a wild-flower meadow, and have planted a new orchard; they keep bees and gather the honey; they are involved in recycling projects. In all these various ways, the subject makes a very positive contribution to their understanding of the world around them.
99. The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school, and occasionally excellent. Staff work together very effectively and no time is wasted. All staff know the pupils very well, and there are very positive relationships between all concerned; as a result, pupils are keen to learn and activities are well organised in ways that capture the pupils' imagination. For example, in an extremely effective lesson with less able pupils in Year 10, the clever use of drama meant that pupils' understanding of the

microscopic nature of atoms was successfully reinforced. Planning is very good, particularly where the accredited course provides a framework for the activities, and built-in assessment means that pupils are clear about what they have learned. Where teaching is less successful, opportunities for pupils to hypothesise, record their findings and consider their results are not always fully exploited. For example, in an otherwise very successful Year 8 lesson on the properties of bones, resources were not presented in a methodical way that ensured pupils fully understood the difference between bones, exoskeletons and other materials. This limited the extent to which the pupils could develop their understanding and become more independent learners.

100. Science is very well managed, and benefits from the fact that the knowledgeable and resourceful co-ordinator has the time to monitor teaching in the subject. There is a very good range of learning opportunities, reinforced by an appropriate, accredited course structure, delivered in a very well equipped specialist teaching area, and supported by a very good range of high quality resources. The imaginative way in which the grounds are used for the Environmental Project is a particularly effective and positive feature. It enhances the relevance of the learning activities for the pupils and provides a good range of links with local associations, together with regular opportunities to enter local events and competitions such as the Senior Mayor's Trophy.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

101. The school makes very good provision for art. The subject endorses the aims of the school very well, and makes a particularly positive contribution to the pupils' spiritual and personal development. There has been a very good improvement when compared with the findings of the last inspection which reflects very good and often excellent teaching, based upon the sensitive handling of pupils' ideas and contributions. There is a very good range of learning opportunities, bolstered by improving results in GCSE examinations and very positive attitudes on the part of the pupils.
102. Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities make very good gains in learning in art. They enjoy the subject, are interested in the practical activities and rapidly become absorbed in their work. Pupils handle a good range of simple media such as charcoal and pastel expressively, sometimes with considerable finesse, producing highly individual pieces of work suggestive of form and texture. They make simple clay mugs, use mixed media to create lively self-portraits, and model out-size shoes and 3-pin plugs. Pupils employ simple techniques such as collage and printing, and use equipment with care and precision. Such skills are developed very effectively as pupils grow up and progress through the school, with the result that the GCSE coursework they create is both sensitive and wide-ranging and makes a very positive contribution to the daily life of the school through the displays that brighten the corridors. Post-16 students apply their skills in art very effectively in the context of their vocational course-work, and throughout the school pupils take a pride in their own work and are interested in each other's efforts; they respect equipment and are co-operative. In all these ways the subject makes a very positive contribution to the pupils' personal and social development.
103. The teaching of art is very good and often excellent. Planning is simple and flexible enough to allow for the development of the pupils' own ideas but, nevertheless, clearly show how pupils will build on what they have already achieved and develop their practical skills. There are coherent procedures for assessing what pupils have learned, and simple, but effective, classroom organisation. Simple resources and media are used very well. Consequently, lessons are extremely purposeful and

under-pinned by very positive relationships between all concerned, with the result that pupils become actively engaged, gain in confidence and develop their own ideas very effectively. Where teaching is most successful, as in an excellent lesson with Year 11 pupils on the depiction of everyday objects, the work of other artists, in this instance Oldenburg, is used to very good effect. It fires the pupils' imagination and helps to illustrate key teaching points, in this case how the commonplace can appear extraordinary when unexpectedly large and in the wrong place. On occasions, however, this strategy is less effective; the work of other artists is not used as carefully or in such an illuminating way, and opportunities to promote the pupils' understanding of art are lost as a result.

104. The subject is very well led, and liaison between the teachers involved is very effective, although the co-ordinator has no time available to monitor teaching. The development of the GCSE course effectively provides both a framework and a focus for a very good range of learning opportunities, supported by visits to such places as the National Portrait Gallery. The art room provides a pleasant, well-equipped area, although the school grounds are an under-used resource.

## **CITIZENSHIP**

105. The school makes good provision for citizenship which it has added to its work in personal, social and health education. The policy was approved by the governing body in July 2002 and the subsequent scheme of work is relevant to the needs of the pupils who are encouraged to be good citizens of the school through the range of activities organised in school time and during residential activities.
106. All the pupils visit the local community and benefit from using the library and other local amenities to enhance their work in school. They also further their knowledge of life by researching in the local museums, town hall and other places where they could learn about community affairs.
107. Current issues of local and worldwide concern are regularly discussed in lessons and pupils show their response to others' needs by contributing to charitable causes in a number of ways. During the inspection the citizenship focus was upon the democratic society. This was linked to the annual elections of the school council. In an especially lengthened assembly, pupils were challenged to identify the qualities necessary for an elected representative. Amusing, informative, and highly appropriate visual aids were used to build up a comprehensive picture of 'Miss Capability' complete with cape. By answering a range of analytical questions the pupils demonstrate their understanding of team work, free speech, voting regulations and the need for convincing argument. Most importantly they thought about the differences between persuasion to help them make choices and intimidation. Later in the day a group of pupils were heard discussing their reactions and airing their views on the process. The arrangements for this activity were very effective with an authentic ballot box provided from the local town hall.
108. Other topics currently under way include many aspects of citizenship incorporated into religious education, geography and in social activities. In lessons, pupils learn about the ways in which other people worship, the ways in which they communicate, and about their cultural dress and moral codes. These topics are given an important focus in a single gender school where all pupils are white and no other community groups feature; the school addresses this issue by ensuring that cross-cultural aspects are incorporated into lessons wherever possible and this includes elements of citizenship.

109. The headteacher and personal, social and health education co-ordinator are monitoring the effectiveness of the new subject through discussion and analysis of planning. As the school is already so committed to ensuring that pupils are well prepared for life when they leave, it has been comparatively straightforward to ensure that the subject has a high profile. At this early stage of the term there was little in the way of written work available but the evidence from pupils' discussion with inspectors and work in other lessons demonstrates their awareness of their future responsibilities.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

110. The school makes good provision for design and technology and, since the last inspection, has improved the curriculum by redrafting the schemes of work and introducing opportunities for pupils to gain national accreditation. Pupils in Year 11 studied for the entry-level qualification in child care for the first time last year, and all were successful at grades 1 or 2. The school has adapted the content of the certificate to include the essential elements of design and technology. Pupils make, for example, a child's toy or puzzle using resistant materials and prepare food suitable for young children. The success of the subject was well illustrated by a college tutor who commented on the good technical skills and awareness of health and safety in the Broomhill students now attending her classes.
111. There is a good match between the adapted curriculum and the pupils' increasingly complex needs. All pupils are included in the full range of activities in the subject, with help from support assistants when necessary to ensure their successful participation. All pupils make good progress particularly in their practical skills and benefit from the very good relationships they have with staff. Teaching is consistently good except in one shortened lesson where it was satisfactory. Here, the pupils had great difficulty peeling and coring small, hard apples and subsequently had insufficient time to enjoy actually cooking them. Generally, however, the specialist teacher and the learning support assistants give good guidance to pupils on techniques and methods. For example, they demonstrate how to use knives safely, and in a textiles lesson use a computer to improve pupils' understanding of design by referring to international flags.
112. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 study the appropriate range of design and technology activities but timetable and accommodation difficulties result in some limitations to lessons. For example, there is no workshop and some of the design and technology equipment is based in the art room, which occasionally has to be shared with another class. Pupils behave very well and have positive attitudes to the subject, but lessons after lunch are too long for some pupils to maintain their best levels of concentration, particularly when they follow the subject through to the end of the day. The school has recognised this imbalance in time-tabling and is currently seeking solutions through the implementation of the development plan.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

113. Pupils' progress and achievements in geography are good. The quality of teaching in geography lessons is at least good, and on occasions very good. Pupils are taught geography as a subject in Years 7, 8 and 9; in Years 10 and 11 and at Post-16 geography is addressed as part of other subjects and courses such as citizenship and ASDAN life skills course.
114. By Year 9, pupils' knowledge of a wide range of geographic facts is developing well and they have the beginning of good geographical skills, for example understanding maps and plans. As a result of good teaching, pupils have gained an understanding of

the British Isles and their localised knowledge is good. They compare countries such as Brazil and Kenya with their own experiences. Pupils know about the climate and produce, and one Year 8 girl remarked that she had seen avocados in Sainsbury marked 'produce of Kenya'. This ability of pupils, whose geographical knowledge is generally not very wide, to understand geographical issues is a feature of the successful teaching which makes the subject relevant and interesting to the pupils. In Year 9, pupils study Brazil and also learn about other South America countries which border it, and develop a good understanding of climate issues such as humidity and its effect on tree growth in the rain-forests. Pupils' geographical skills are not well developed but they make good progress in their ability to understand a route on a map and know the importance of accurate directions. In their studies of weather, pupils develop a good understanding of some wider issues which have links with other subjects, for example global warming with citizenship and settlements with history.

115. In Years 10 and 11 and at Post-16, pupils' work in geography is part of wider topics. For example, as part of their work experience and college links programme, pupils study maps of the town and surrounding area and work out routes and directions. During school journeys to different parts of Kent and to France, pupils are encouraged to note differences in scenery, landscape and other geographical features.
116. The good, sometimes very good, teaching in geography has impacted very positively on pupils' interest in the subject. In discussion with pupils it is obvious that they have enjoyed their geography lessons and the way in which teachers have sought to make them as interesting and relevant as possible. The lessons seen were very well planned, pupils were required to use good cross-curricular skills from literacy and history and staff have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about the subject.
117. The subject is now co-ordinated very effectively, reflecting a very positive response to the findings of the last inspection. The co-ordinator monitors the teaching of the subject across the school and has set up a resource bank with a very good range of materials. She is enthusiastic and has a good understanding of the National Curriculum requirements for the subject.

## HISTORY

118. Although only one lesson of history was taught during the period of the inspection, evidence from this lesson, from discussions with pupils and the subject co-ordinator and analysis of pupils' work shows that improvement in the subject since the time of the last inspection is good. Pupils' levels of achievement are good and, although history is not taught as a separate subject in Years 10 and 11 or Post-16, pupils work in the ASDAN courses in areas such as life skills and citizenship means they continue to study some aspects of history and maintain good standards.
119. By Year 9, pupils have a good understanding of chronology and some basic historical facts. They sequence events and the higher attaining pupils demonstrate an understanding of change, which they can relate to their daily lives. For example in work on World War Two, pupils knew that their grandfathers had in some cases been involved and one girl said 'I expect my Grandpa's father was in the First World War.' Pupils develop good enquiry techniques using books, video and CD-Roms. As a result of studying a good range of historical topics, pupils show a good understanding of the time line together with the concepts of old and new and past and present. Pupils know about the similarities and differences of different countries, traditions and cultures, and have a good understanding of local history. They have visited and drunk from the spring in the town centre; they know that Tunbridge Wells was established significantly later than Tonbridge and that it owes its existence to the spring. Pupils' work in history has given them insights into how people lived in previous times. They have, for example, written about what it would be like working in a Lancashire cotton mill; in work on World War One, pupils expressed their horror at the idea of the 'pals battalion', where whole groups of men from one small community could be killed in a single day.
120. In Years 10 and 11 and at Post-16 pupils' work in history is much less focused on events but related to work within other topics. For example, students visit various gardens and stately or historic houses as part of the horticultural programme and this gives them the opportunity to relate to their previous work in history about how people used to live. Similarly, in citizenship lessons in Years 10 and 11, pupils have the opportunity to apply their knowledge of history through, for example, their studies into the voting process and elections.
121. The good progress that pupils make in their understanding of historical facts and events is the result of good teaching. In the lesson observed, concerning World War Two, the teacher successfully addressed the difficult area of how this war started so soon after Germany's defeat in 1918. As a result, pupils understood how the German public resented the reparations they were forced to make which prompted the rise of fascism and the Nazi party. The teacher used video and other resources well to gain pupils' interest, used good questioning techniques and planned the lesson carefully, with the result that the pupils grasped these difficult concepts.
122. The subject is well managed by a co-ordinator who has an interest in history and a clear view about how the subject can be made interesting to the pupils. Good use is made first-hand experiences, for example visits to local places of historical interest. The co-ordinator carefully monitors the planning documents of other staff teaching history to ensure appropriate coverage and has established a resources bank, including topic sets.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

123. Provision for ICT is very good in all year groups and pupils have very good levels of achievement in their knowledge, skills and understanding because of the very good, and often excellent teaching that they receive. The high quality computer suites and range of exciting activities also have a very positive impact on the achievement of the pupils. This has led to very good improvement since the previous inspection. The use of ICT skills in other subjects is less successful, and too few opportunities are planned in other subjects to enable pupils to use these skills to display their work and consolidate their learning.
124. Very good achievement is seen in Years 7, 8 and 9, where pupils learn to give simple instructions quickly and efficiently. Pupils in Year 7 enter instructions into a 'floor turtle' and show high levels of enthusiasm and enjoyment as their instructions are followed. They show that they can use a mouse accurately to make choices and move objects on the screen. As pupils move through Years 7, 8 and 9, they achieve very well due to the specific, focused tasks. By the time they reach Year 9, they show good independence in their use of computers. For example, pupils enter data they had collected about their favourite authors on to a spreadsheet application. They show very good use of numeracy skills as they tally the results of their survey and describe how they hope to present their data. They use the application with very little support, producing a range of graphs and interpreting them clearly.
125. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make very good and sometimes excellent progress. In Year 10, pupils create pictures in the style of impressionist artists such as Monet and Van Gogh. They focus on the spray can application in an art package, and show excellent levels of interest in the works of art shown, looking very closely at the detail and responding well to questions about colour, tone, line and shape. Higher attaining pupils search the Internet for information about these painters, and have very good research skills that foster their independence. In Year 11, pupils develop their desktop publishing skills extremely well, amending and combining different forms of information, showing good awareness of the audience. They create, for example, high quality gift cards relating to the Jewish New Year celebrations, showing empathy and interest. Relationships in lessons are very strong and pupils are eager to take part. Mutual respect is evident in every lesson and leads to very good behaviour and attitudes.
126. The quality of teaching in the ICT suite is very good, and often excellent, and the very high expectations result in high levels of success. The very high levels of expertise available, combined with excellent planning, organisation and support, enables pupils to achieve very high levels of progress, independence and autonomy, as they move through the school. Lessons are very well adapted to pupils' individual needs, and support staff respond very well to pupils who require help with a task. This means that confidence remains high and pupils' self-esteem is fostered. Pupils' interest is engaged because the very good range of planned activities makes learning fun. The teaching in ICT has a satisfactory impact on literacy and numeracy skills, although there is sometimes a lack of emphasis on these areas of learning. Good questioning by staff enabled high achievement and very good levels of independence in learning. Very good awareness of different beliefs and cultures are effectively fostered, and make a positive contribution to the pupils' social and cultural development.
127. Excellent leadership of the subject is helping to raise the profile of ICT and develop staff skills. Major improvements in the provision over the past few years are having an important impact on raising achievement. The ICT suite is a major strength, and is well equipped in ways that promote high levels of independence in pupils. The school has made major investments in the subject recently, and this is evident in the very

good progress that pupils are making. However, classroom computers were not used well during the week of the inspection. There was little evidence in pupils' work, or in planning, of the use of ICT in other subjects. This has rightly been identified as an area for improvement.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

128. French is taught to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 but timetabling arrangements resulted in only one lesson, with Year 8 pupils, being observed during the inspection. Discussions with staff, analysis of school documents and pupils' work show that all pupils make good progress in the earliest stages of learning French.
129. Teaching was outstanding in the single lesson observed and promoted pupils' skills and knowledge of spoken French very well. Pupils improved their ability to interact with adults and their self-confidence in speaking and singing in French was quite evident by the end of the lesson. The French curriculum is highly suitable to the pupils' needs and makes a good contribution to their cultural and multicultural understanding especially the opportunity to visit France. The subject co-ordinator and two other teachers each teach their own group. Each term these staff meet to discuss planning, assessment and record keeping. Whilst these meetings are useful in sharing ideas and airing difficulties they are not specifically focused on raising standards overall. The co-ordinator has little dedicated time for her co-ordinating role and has not been able to observe other members of her team teaching. This responsibility had been recognised by the school as an area for improvement. French continues to be taught well, as it was at the last inspection.

### **MUSIC**

130. Music is taught in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 and all pupils achieve well in relation to their prior experience and to tasks set in lessons. Higher attaining pupils have good auditory memories and have a wide repertoire of songs which they sing tunefully, with confidence. Lower attaining pupils have some difficulty with the language of some songs. However, as a result of very good teaching and relevant tasks, they build upon their skills of playing, singing and listening. By Year 10 pupils accurately follow the teachers simplified notation to play 'Rock Around the Clock' on keyboards, and one in particular makes good progress towards playing the melody in tune with a pre-recorded bass part.
131. Teaching is good overall. It was very good in two lessons where the teaching provided a very wide variety of opportunities which motivated the pupils to sing, listen, play and discuss their ideas with confidence. With Year 8 pupils, the teacher linked her presentation of a dance melody to the fashions of the day. Using a well-designed information sheet she demonstrated the dance so that the pupils could understand how the dancers' movements were limited by the restrictions of dress. She then challenged the pupils to learn the dance for homework and a subsequent performance at the next lesson. Where teaching was no more than satisfactory the teacher missed opportunities to promote improvement in the pupils' quality of singing and presentation during a karaoke sing-along because they sat very casually behind tables without supporting their breathing and using good posture. Although highly skilled musically, the teacher did not make best use of these skills to ensure that the pupils were confident in their knowledge of the melody or to reinforce the meaning of the lyrics thereby ensuring complete understanding of some key words.



132. Music plays a significant part in the life of the school through concerts and Christmas productions. Musical activities also contribute well to pupils' evening and weekend activities. However, all music lessons take place on two half days and further opportunities to develop music across the school are limited. Resources are very good and based within the specialist room which, although small, provides a stimulating environment for learning. The school has improved its provision and teaching since the last inspection. Music makes a good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

133. Provision for physical education is excellent and the subject is a strength of the school. It endorses the aims of the school particularly well, notably in respect of the extremely good personal and social development shown by the pupils and students, and reflects a very positive response to the findings of the last inspection. This is due to excellent teaching and a very good range of activities, both in and out of school which enthuse the pupils and help them develop particularly positive attitudes. The quality of this provision has been recognised, and the school gained the Sportsmark Award in 2002.
134. Pupils and students of all abilities make very good gains in learning throughout the school. In swimming, younger pupils gain fluency and confidence in the water so that, by the time they are in Year 10, they can enter the water from the poolside, and are sufficiently relaxed as to be able to push off and glide on their backs. They can surface-dive, swim through submerged hoops, and retrieve a brick from the bottom of the pool. They use floats to develop a front crawl style which, while not particularly graceful is certainly effective, and gain recognition for such skills through Amateur Swimming Association Awards. In cross-country running, pupils show considerable determination in completing the circuit, showing a thorough understanding of what it means to improve on ones personal best. One girl, for example, showed justifiable pride when she completed the run for the first time. In games such as netball, pupils know how to pass the ball to each other, understand the virtues of teamwork, and make reasonable use of space, skills that were recognised in the award of the silver medal at a local tournament. Pupils also develop poise and grace through dance and gymnastics, and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of physical education in a wide range of adventurous pursuits such as cycling, trampolining and abseiling to very good effect. Post-16 students apply their learning to leisure activities as part of their vocational, personal development programmes. Throughout the school, pupils learn the principles associated with fitness routines and understand such issues as the need to warm up and cool down. They have a sensible attitude towards health and safety issues, and behave in a mature, responsible way alongside the public in settings such as the local community swimming pool.
135. The quality of teaching is at least good and is usually excellent. Lessons are very well organised, and founded upon the excellent relationships between all staff and pupils. The specialist teacher knows her pupils extremely well, and employs an extremely effective, quiet teaching style that brooks no nonsense but which nevertheless gives all pupils the support and encouragement they need. There is a very good range of strategies and clear demonstrations with the result that all pupils understand and can apply the points under consideration. There is also a simple but very effective approach to assessing pupils' personal performance, although opportunities for pupils to record and evaluate their own performance, particularly in mathematical terms, are sometimes under-exploited, and there is a good range of awards and certificates which are valued by pupils. Excellent opportunities for pupils' personal and social

development are created and exploited, as with the pupil who was entered for, and achieved, the Carl Andrews Award for special achievement in athletics.

136. The co-ordinator, who is very well qualified and experienced, has worked very hard to develop provision, and monitors provision in the subject very effectively. There is a very good range of learning opportunities, supported by an impressive range of extra-curricular activities, sporting links, and visits to such venues as the local education authority's outdoor pursuits centre in North Wales. Resources are very good. The hall is also used for assemblies but is satisfactory for indoor activities; outdoor facilities are very good and the school uses the local community very effectively.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

137. Provision for the subject is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a basic knowledge of Islam, and realise that for Muslims prayer is fundamental to their religious practice. They recall their prayer rituals. They know that Muslims are obliged to make a pilgrimage to Mecca if at all possible, and have learned the symbolism of the religious rituals when they arrive there. They consider the nature of long journeys and say what they would take to sustain them, physically and spiritually, on such a journey. By the end of Year 11, pupils have knowledge of the Ten Commandments. They write some other rules they recollect, including some school rules, and say why we have them, and in what ways they are helpful or unnecessary. They make brief, but accurate answers to specific questions about Commandments, laws and rules, but are unable to sustain a coherent argument as to their use.
138. Teaching is consistently satisfactory for all year groups. Lessons are invariably well-planned and give pupils good opportunities to recollect what has gone before, and so build reliably on previous learning. The aims of the lessons are clear to the pupils, the atmosphere is supportive, and the teacher and learning support assistants work well together to give a good deal of well-focused individual help. Activities are simple and practical. Commercially produced worksheets are suitable and of good quality, and encourage pupils to think about other people's religions. The teacher explains things carefully in an accessible way, and checks pupils' understanding at the end of the lesson. Pupils respond well. They are interested, co-operative, and well behaved.
139. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory, and the school has made a good response to the findings of the last inspection. The curriculum accords with the locally agreed syllabus, there is now a satisfactory scheme of work, and statutory requirements are now met. The religious education room is decorated by a multicultural display of excellent quality. Resources are good, but religious artefacts that would add interest to the lessons are lacking. The school regards the subject as an area for development and hopes to appoint a specialist co-ordinator in the near future.