

INSPECTION REPORT

DOUCECROFT SCHOOL

Kelvedon, Colchester

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115426

Headteacher: Kathy Cranmer

Reporting inspector: Judith Charlesworth
21501

Dates of inspection: 5th – 8th November 2001

Inspection number: 193696

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:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	5 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	163 High Street Kelvedon Colchester Essex
Postcode:	CO5 9JA
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Appropriate authority:	The Trustees of the Essex Autistic Society
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John M Jones
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21501	Judith Charlesworth	Registered inspector	Art Modern foreign language Music Science Equal opportunities	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management Key issues for action
9282	Clare Lorenz	Lay inspector		Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers The residential aspect
11239	Sue Flockton	Team inspector	English Geography History Religious Education	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development The Further Education department
22620	Bob Wall	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology Mathematics Physical education	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Doucecroft is a small, independent school which caters for up to 38 pupils and students with autism coupled with varying degrees of learning difficulty. There are currently 24 pupils aged 5 to 16, and 10 students aged 16 to 19. The school provides weekly boarding for about two thirds of the pupils and students. Whilst there are pupils and students from across the ability range, an increasing number are admitted with more complex needs. Two come from minority ethnic backgrounds, but neither have English as an additional language. All pupils and students have difficulties with communication and social relationships, and their levels of attainment on entry to Doucecroft range from below average to very low. There is a heavy weighting towards boys which reflects the greater incidence of autism in males. Doucecroft is funded and managed by the Essex Autistic Society. Pupils and students come from a wide catchment area, and several London Borough and Home Counties Local Educational Authorities purchase places at the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The provision for students aged 16 to 19 is good and they achieve well in this department. They also make good progress in the class for the youngest pupils (5 to 8 years). However, although Doucecroft looks after the rest of the pupils well, and their behaviour, communication and social skills improve as a result of its efforts, the school fails to provide an adequate standard of education in the other three classes. The pupils in these classes do not do as well as they should. Overall, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The provision and teaching for students aged 16 to 19 in the Further Education department is good.
- Teaching is good in Class 1, for pupils aged 5 to 8 years.
- Parents have very positive views of the school, and the school's partnership with them is good.
- Pupils' and students' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and relationships are all good.
- The commitment and work of the support and care staff are good

What could be improved

- The leadership and management of the school are unsatisfactory overall; the school managers, trustees and governors are not effective in supporting high standards of education and learning.
- Teaching is unsatisfactory overall because the teaching in the three classes for pupils aged 9 to 16 years is unsatisfactory, and the pupils are underachieving.
- In the main school, there is no formal curriculum on which teaching can be based. Pupils aged 9 to 16 do not have suitable opportunities for learning overall, and unsatisfactory planning means that not all pupils can benefit from the activities put on.
- Assessment is not used systematically to help promote pupils' learning or to plan teaching.

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

In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspection Act 1996 I am of the opinion, and HMCI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school. The leadership and management of the school are unsatisfactory. Over forty percent of teaching is unsatisfactory and there is no planned curriculum or systematic assessment of pupils' skills; consequently, the majority of pupils are underachieving.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

There has been some improvement in two of the three previous key issues identified in the last inspection of June 1996. A suitable programme of evening activities has now been established, and the school now has more autonomy. The most significant improvement has been establishing the Further Education (FE) department. However, there has been no improvement in developing, monitoring and adequately resourcing the main school's curriculum. There is still insufficient use of information and communication technology (ICT) especially for the younger pupils, and there is still no consistent systematic use of assessment. Some previously identified weaknesses in leadership and management have not been addressed, such as clarification of the governors' responsibilities and their role in supporting the school's educational provision and development; and the school's own management and support systems. Furthermore, there has been deterioration in various aspects including: staff performance management; the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make. Overall, school improvement has been unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

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

Students in the Further Education department achieve well in all areas. Pupils in the rest of the school make satisfactory progress in the priority areas of communication and social skills, including the self-management of their behaviour. However, their achievement in all other subject areas is unsatisfactory, other than in Class 1 (for 5 to 8 year olds). This is because the school does not have a structured curriculum in place, and in classes catering for 9 to 16 year olds, there is no systematic teaching to support the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils and students are happy to come to school. When teaching is good, they show a real interest in their work, concentrate well and enjoy themselves.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Taking the complex needs of the pupils and students into account, their behaviour is generally good. They usually listen to staff and respond to instructions to stop or calm down. The staff's well-considered behaviour management helps pupils start to manage their own behaviour successfully.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between staff and pupils/students are good. Some pupils/students are developing relationships with one another, which is a considerable achievement. Personal development is good. Pupils and students take increasing responsibility for their own behaviour, and develop their independence and initiative, as they mature. They take pride in their successes.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Unsatisfactory	unsatisfactory	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.

Just under half of the 35 lessons observed were unsatisfactory, and although teaching was good for the 5 to 8 year olds and in the FE department, it is judged to be unsatisfactory overall. Teaching in the three classes for pupils aged 9 to 16 was unsatisfactory. Six of the lessons observed were taken by support assistants who worked very hard, but were generally not given clear instructions by the teachers as to what to do. Three of these lessons were consequently unsatisfactory. The school prioritises pupils' communication and social skills, and teaching and support in these areas is better than in the other subject areas. However, pupils' literacy, numeracy and science skills, and those in other curriculum areas, are not well enough addressed for pupils to learn adequately in most classes. Team work between teachers and their support staff is good throughout the school. Behaviour management is generally good, although some teachers rely too much on time out of class to solve the problem of challenging behaviour. When teaching is good, staff have high expectations of the pupils and students, and good subject knowledge and understanding of each individual which helps them meet the range of learning needs within the class. When teaching is unsatisfactory, there is little or no planning and the lesson content is thin, often ending early. The needs of the highest and lowest attaining pupils are not well met, and they often do nothing or carry out work that is too easy for them. There is a great deal of time-wasting, and the class timetable and school topic rota are not followed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum in the FE department is good and provides a well-planned, interesting range of activities that lead to accreditation. The curriculum in the main school is poor. Each class teacher does their own curriculum planning. In all classes but the first, this does not provide pupils with their entitlement to a broad, relevant range of activities that systematically promotes their learning as they move through the years. Overall, planning is poor and pupils, especially the highest and lowest attaining, do not all have equal opportunities for learning. The community is used well to supplement school-based activities.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Priority is given to pupils' personal and social development. This is very good in the FE department. The rest of the school does not have a formal programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) which limits pupils' learning in this area. Informal support, however, is effective. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is good; it is satisfactory for their cultural development but unsatisfactory for their spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Informal procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and personal development are effective. Careful procedures are in place for handing over responsibility for the pupils and students from care to school staff. Residential provision is good in the FE department, but satisfactory in the main school as some important checks and procedures, such as regular fire drills, are not in place. Procedures for assessing pupils' and students' attainment and progress are satisfactory in FE but poor in the main school. The use of the record keeping and planning systems is inconsistent because staff are unclear about what to record. There is very little evidence of pupils' work, either in their own files or in staff records. Any available assessment information is not properly used for curriculum planning or planning for individuals' educational progress. This aspect of the school's provision is unsatisfactory overall.

The school's partnership with parents is good. Parents are very happy with the accessibility and approachability of school staff, the amount of information they receive, and the effect the school has on their children's behaviour and social skills.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Unsatisfactory overall although the management of the FE department is good. The headteacher's good knowledge of how to develop the social skills of pupils and students with autism is reflected in the school's work. However there are neither the systems in place, nor a sufficiently strategic view, to ensure that a high standard of education is offered simultaneously with meeting individuals' autism-related needs. The new deputy has not been able to leave her class and take up her management role as yet which has had a negative impact on the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Unsatisfactory. The Trustees and governors do not hold the school accountable for the quality of education it provides, and do not have suitable systems in place to check upon and support the school's work and development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is poor. There are no systems in place for checking how the staff and pupils/students are doing overall, and for setting about improving performance.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory. Successful improvements have been made to the accommodation, but the use of resources is not planned to have an impact on pupils' achievements. Time is often wasted which is a poor use of resources.

The school is experiencing difficulties in the recruitment of suitable teachers, and is currently one class teacher down. Not all are appropriately skilled. This is unsatisfactory. The numbers and work of support and care staff are good. Resources are satisfactory in the FE department and accommodation is good. In the main school, both resources and accommodation are unsatisfactory overall. The school does not apply the principles of best value in all that it does, although suitable financial checks are in place.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can approach the school at any time with any problems. • The school has a very positive effect on their children's behaviour and social skills. • Their own lives, and the life of their autistic child, are greatly improved by the school's efforts. • The quality and regularity of information received about their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the inspection, a few parents indicated that they realised that there were differences in the quality of education in the various classes and departments of the school.

The inspection team supports the parents' positive comments about the school. Inspection findings also confirm parents' views that there are differences in the quality of education provided in the different classes.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

The Further Education department

1. Whilst the students' attainment varies considerably between individuals, all make good progress. They learn well in lessons, make good progress over time and against their individual targets, and overall achieve well. Students develop their communication skills, if necessary using various means of support such as signing to help them. Their reading and writing skills increase, and students are increasingly able to write for different purposes, using various forms of support such as symbols to help them. The students' mathematics skills are developed through practical activities, such as cooking their own meals and handling money in local shops as well as through more "traditional" activities like creating graphs and charts. The students follow a programme of modules leading to bronze/silver awards of the ASDAN scheme, and they work conscientiously through these modules, and achieve well. Students also achieve well in supplementary lessons, such as religious education and drama, which contributes well to the overall success they achieve in this department. Last year, three students successfully finished their course in the Further Education department. All were able to achieve some degree of independence. Two took up college courses and all three were able to live in supported housing. This was a good achievement for these students.

The main school

2. The school does not keep comprehensive records of what pupils know, understand and can do in the various curriculum subjects; nor are clear records of work covered in the various classes kept. Because of the lack of suitable records, it is difficult to assess exactly what pupils have learned at Doucecroft, and what they brought with them. Overall, it is not possible to make judgements about pupils' achievements over time based on the evidence of their work or teachers' records. However, judgements about pupils' learning and standards of attainment in the lessons observed can be made. These are set in the context of the quality of teaching in each of the classes, together with other inspection findings relating to the quality of education provided. The overall judgements show a deterioration in pupils' achievement since the last inspection.

- pupils' achievements in personal development, in relation to their social and self-help skills, and in the self-management of their behaviour, are good throughout the school;
- pupils' achievements in speaking and listening (communication) are good by the age of seven, and satisfactory by the ages of 11 and 16;
- in English overall (which includes reading and writing), pupils' achievements are satisfactory by the age of seven, but unsatisfactory by the age of 11 and 16;
- pupils' mathematical achievements are good by the age of seven, but unsatisfactory by the ages of 11 and 16;
- pupils' achievements in science are good by the age of seven and unsatisfactory by the ages of 11 and 16, although higher attaining pupils in Class 3 (12 and 13 year olds) learn from interesting investigations, and develop their understanding of scientific concepts;
- Pupils' achievements in other areas of the curriculum are unsatisfactory overall;
- The learning of the highest and lowest attaining pupils is often limited by activities that do not match their needs.

3. Overall, the lack of a systematic approach to the planning and teaching of English, mathematics and science prevents pupils from learning as much as they could, and the majority are underachieving

4. In **English**, priority is given to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills. As a result these develop systematically and pupils' achievement in communication skills is satisfactory over time. Alternative means of communication, such as signing or technological aids are used for some pupils. Where these are used consistently, they support pupils' ability to communicate well, however inconsistent use limits the achievement of many pupils. The youngest pupils learn to recognise symbols for the different activities during the day, and they are encouraged to listen to adults and each other carefully. By the age of 16, some pupils take part in discussions and conversations, showing good understanding of language and an interesting vocabulary, although others are still at an early stage in their understanding of language.

5. Younger pupils begin to develop pre-reading and writing skills, looking at picture books, enjoying stories and rhymes, mark making and colouring within boundaries. By age seven, many pupils know where to start reading a book, and that print has meaning. Some can copy their names, either over or under an adult's writing. Some recognise initial letter sounds, and recognise their names, and those of other pupils. By 11, higher attaining pupils can read simple texts, and are developing their handwriting, learning to form letters correctly and evenly. By the age of 16, most pupils' skills are more advanced. Lower attaining pupils recognise some letters and letter sounds, and continue to develop writing and pre-writing skills, with some still being at the copying stage. Higher attaining pupils read with some understanding and write independently.

6. Pupils show a range of **mathematical** skills at each age group. Higher attaining pupils in Class 1 (5 to 8 year olds) can match and sort photographs and produce simple diagrams dividing items into two groups of *same* and *not the same*. Lower attaining pupils sort items of different colours and match familiar objects. In the lesson observed for the 9 to 11 year olds, higher attaining pupils could indicate time to the half-hour, and lower attaining pupils could count to 10 with support. The higher attaining pupils in Class 3 (12 and 13 year olds) understand, write and can carry out simple calculations with numbers up to 100. The oldest, higher attaining pupils in Class 4 (14 to 16 years) are beginning to relate their mathematical skills to everyday practical situations. They make calculations using money and carry out simple division.

7. Pupils' achievements in **science** are good in Class 1, and are unsatisfactory by the ages of 11 and 16. Higher attaining pupils in Class 3 (12 and 13 years) learn from interesting investigations, and develop their understanding of scientific concepts, but the lower attaining pupils are less well provided for and do not learn as much. The 5 to 8 year old pupils show that they understand that the application of different forces can have an effect on various materials, for example *twisting and bending* malleable materials and clay. There was no evidence of the 9 to 11 year old pupils' attainment or achievement, although it was clear that some science activities had taken place. Higher attaining pupils aged 12 and 13 showed that they appreciated that different materials had different properties, and that they can therefore be used for different purposes. For example, one boy said that thin flexible plastic cups would not be suitable for holding hot drinks. These pupils recorded the findings of their investigations in a chart, with support. The lower attaining pupil in this group worked on similar activities, supplemented by manipulation of materials with different textures and properties, but was not engaged by the task and learned little. Photographic evidence showed that the class had carried out other investigations on forces and floating, however, the pupils' input and learning were not indicated.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The pupils' and students' attitudes towards their work, and to the school generally, are good. Their behaviour is also good. They develop good relationships with staff and make good gains in their personal development. This maintains the positive position noted in the last inspection.

9. Pupils and students are happy to come to school. Day pupils/students settle quickly into their classrooms, and remember their home-school diaries, which they share willingly with adults. Where teaching is good and focused on their needs, they show interest in their work, and are enthusiastic about their activities such as listening to stories, drama and out of school visits. Students in the Further Education department show much enjoyment of activities both in the school, and when they attend courses at the local college. The students are proud of their work, keen to do their best, and are pleased to show others their results

10. Given the complexity of each individual's needs, pupils' and students' behaviour is good. In classes where teaching is effective, there is a purposeful atmosphere which allows pupils and students to learn and to listen carefully to staff. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, and pupils are not given suitable work, some become restless and their behaviour deteriorates. Some pupils with particularly challenging behaviours are taken out of lessons to calm down. While this allows others in the class to continue to work, there are occasions on which pupils are out of the class for too long which limits their opportunities for learning. In general, though, pupils begin to recognise when teachers say "no" or "stop" and respond accordingly.

11. Relationships between staff and pupils and students are good. They feel secure in school and this allows them to gain confidence. Some pupils and students are developing relationships with one another and, for example, play together at break time, or chat in the classroom. As they grow older, they learn first to sit alongside one another, and then to work together in pairs or groups. This is a significant achievement for many.

12. Personal development is good. There is an atmosphere of trust and respect between staff, pupils and students. This strongly supports their gains in personal development. Where possible, pupils are helped to become more independent in their work and take pride when they succeed. Both in school time and in the residences, pupils and students of all ages are given opportunities to develop their interpersonal and social skills, for example, in self-care activities and at mealtimes. The personal and social skills of those in the Further Education department are further developed through opportunities for work and community experience. In this department, there is a very pleasant atmosphere, and mealtimes are good, social occasions in which students chat and share jokes. They help with tasks such as cooking and washing up. A variety of off-site visits during the school day further supports the developing personal and social skills of the students.

13. Attendance is about average for this type of school. Punctuality to school is satisfactory, although there are a few occasions when transport arrives late. Some lessons in the main school are slow to start.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. Teaching is polarised into two categories; that which is good – often with very good elements, and that which is unsatisfactory, with some occasional satisfactory elements. Thirty-five lessons were observed altogether. Twenty lessons (58 per cent) were satisfactory or better; of these, seven lessons (20 per cent) were good and 5 lessons (14 per cent) were very good. All the good and better teaching took place in Class 1 for 5 to 8 year olds, and in

the Further Education department. Fifteen lessons (forty-three per cent) were unsatisfactory; these took place in the three classes catering for 9 to 16 year olds. There was also some satisfactory teaching in each of these three classes.

15. Six out of the 35 lessons (17 per cent) were taken by classroom support assistants. In all these lessons, they worked very hard and tried their absolute best. However, at times, they were given no lesson plan or guidance from the class teacher, and at other times they did not have the skills needed to help pupils learn to the full. Half of these lessons were unsatisfactory.

16. The following are characteristics of teaching that made some lessons very good, and others unsatisfactory:

17. **Planning;** when good or better, lessons are well planned to meet the needs of each individual in the class. The activities are appropriate to the abilities of the individuals; the higher attaining pupils and students are challenged to make sure that they have enough suitable work to fill the time available, and the lower attaining pupils and students have work that they can access, and that promotes their learning too. Lessons are planned so that they take up the full amount of time allocated, and additional activities are immediately available for pupils and students who might finish earlier than expected. These relate to the lesson in hand, and are not just “holding” activities. One such example was observed in Class 1 where a pupil had finished his work on bending and twisting materials, and withdrew to do some drawing, a favourite activity. He was encouraged to draw what he had just created, and produced several *spirals* in different colours. This showed clearly that he had learned the basic properties of a spiral.

18. When unsatisfactory, lessons are not properly planned. The teacher does not have a clear focus and the lesson often becomes a re-run of familiar activities which occupy the pupils but do not teach them anything new. Unsatisfactory planning often leads to the lesson running out of content early, whereon the teacher “finds” something for the pupils to do. For example, on one occasion, a classroom assistant who asked what her pupil should now do, was told “just let him look back through his book.” There was still 15 minutes to go in this lesson, and the pupil did not learn anything else, or consolidate what he had just learned.

19. **Suitable subject content:** good and better lessons have a clear subject content, and are not contexts in which the main purpose is to support the pupils’ autistic needs. Whilst these important needs are properly addressed, this is effectively done by engaging pupils and students in activities that promote their learning. This has the effect of reducing their challenging behaviours and helps them concentrate and so learn more effectively.

20. In unsatisfactory lessons, the subject content is often very limited. For example, in one religious education lesson timetabled for half an hour, the subject content was over in seven minutes and was too advanced for the pupils as it covered four religions in the discussion. The rest of the lesson was spent on literacy tasks. On another occasion, a physical education lesson for one boy consisted of him sitting on a large ball in the *dome* for half an hour or more, occasionally batting back a ball thrown to him.

21. **High expectations;** effective staff have high expectations of pupils’ and students’ capabilities. They expect them to attend, behave well, comply with the tasks given and learn from them. This is because they have planned activities that they know will engage the pupils/students at an appropriate level, and that they will enjoy.

22. Where staff expectations are low, they do not give the pupils sufficiently challenging work. Pupils were observed with high-level abilities in certain areas, such as communication

and physical skills. However, the work set for them did not use or further these skills. On one occasion, a teenage boy demonstrated age-appropriate skills in football techniques, dribbling and manipulating a small ball with his feet. The work he was given during a physical education lesson, however, was to throw soft balls at some targets, and to “try out” some fitness equipment. This boy was very under-challenged.

23. **Knowledge and understanding of subject and special needs;** effective teachers have a good knowledge of the subject they are teaching. With this secure breadth of knowledge, they can select activities that pupils and students will find interesting, and that will promote learning within that subject. This means that they can make the subject accessible to the full range of pupils/students within their group. Effective teachers also have a good understanding of the challenges of autism and how to minimise and support them, and of pupils’ learning difficulties. They understand that the two go hand in hand, and that, often, if a pupil’s learning needs are properly addressed so that they are engaged and supported appropriately, their challenging behaviour will diminish.

24. Where staff have insecure subject knowledge, lessons do not have a proper focus and staff do not have enough knowledge to plan activities that will engage the pupils and support their learning. For example, one art lesson observed gave no opportunity for pupils to be creative themselves. They were heavily directed to make some *string and comb paintings*, but their involvement was very mechanical and one boy completed his work on instruction, without looking at it at all. Some staff also show that they are unsure how to meet the needs of those with more severe learning difficulties, and tend to exclude them from activities. One pupil spent much of his time away from his group with a support assistant, often in the residential area where he tended to look out of the window and largely ignore the basic equipment that he was given to use. In a class for older pupils, one boy was observed to be entirely alone for 20 minutes, without being asked to participate. When asked why this was, the teacher said that he “couldn’t do” the task. At times, the sensory room is also used to occupy lower attaining pupils when no suitable activities have been provided for them in class.

25. **Good teamwork;** this is a feature of almost all lessons at Doucecroft. The relationships between teachers and support staff, and the support staff’s commitment to the pupils and efforts to help them are clearly evident. This has a very positive effect on pupils’ and students’ behaviour, and where teaching is effective, on their learning as well.

26. The value of this teamwork is sometimes diminished by support staff not having clear instructions or a lesson plan from the class teacher. In the physical education lesson observed in the *dome*, when asked what the plan of the lesson was, the assistant replied that she did not know, as she was not usually in there with these students, but that they usually did some of these things on a Friday morning.

27. **Effective management;** most staff manage the pupils effectively when their challenging behaviour erupts, although some exclude the pupils from their class too readily, or for too long. Effective staff are calm and confident, and provide pupils and students with the security and boundaries that they need.

28. There is some very effective teaching at Doucecroft which combines all of the positive features outlined above, and which can be used as a model of good practice to support the teachers who find this difficult. For example, an ICT lesson in the Further Education department had the following characteristics: staff worked hard with a quiet, calm and confident approach. The atmosphere was purposeful with students also calm, and working hard for an extended period of time. The teacher had planned the lesson very well to make best use of the resources available – both human and physical – which was important

since there was only one computer for the students to use. The lesson plan showed a very structured approach to meeting the learning needs of each individual in the group. The teacher's assessment of each student's key skills in using the computer ensured that expectations of the students were high, but appropriate for their levels of ability. The support assistants had a clear understanding of the students' abilities and needs, and structured their language and demands to ensure that they all learned during the lesson. Relationships were very good, and students' behaviour was controlled calmly and directly, if the need arose. The students were given reminders and prompting as necessary, for example "no rocking" and "chair in" and this contributed very well to the purposeful working atmosphere. There was a high level of interaction and communication between staff and students. The teacher gave support staff instructions throughout the lesson which ensured that there was a clear structure to the lesson and that it moved on at a good pace. The lesson ended with a useful recap session in which all students were congratulated on their work and reminded of what they had achieved.

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

The Further Education department

29. The curriculum in the FE department is appropriate for the students. It consists of modules of the ASDAN Award Scheme, which lead to awards at bronze/silver level. These modules provide the students with an interesting and useful range of subjects which allows them to continue to develop key skills in communication, literacy and numeracy, as well as study aspects such as *The Environment*, *Sport and Leisure* and *The Community*. These broaden students' experiences and enable them to build up their knowledge and understanding of the wider world. In addition, other subjects are taught which support students' learning, for example, ICT, library skills, technology, drama and music.

30. The taught curriculum, and the "24-hour curriculum" practiced in the residences for those who board during the week, are enhanced by many opportunities to make visits within the local area. This supports students' learning overall, and provides them with many opportunities that the school is unable to provide itself. Most of the students attend the local college for "taster" courses. These take place weekly and last for a term, covering subjects such as catering, car mechanics, media studies and pottery. A number of students visit a local school and a leisure centre for various fitness activities. Good links with the local community allow students to develop skills such as map reading as they walk around the area. They have looked at, photographed, and visited, old houses and churches. Students go to the local shop and café and learn how to handle money, as well as develop the social skills involved in such activities. In their final year at school, there are opportunities for students to take part in both work experience and community service. Students who left last year undertook work experience in a garage, a pub, and the local residential home, while opportunities for community service included shopping for an elderly person and helping on an allotment. Positive links are being developed with local groups such as the Venture Scouts, with whom a recent "camp out" was a great success. Some students attend the local youth club on a weekly basis. Such opportunities contribute very well to students' personal development.

The main school

31. Since the last inspection the school has made unsatisfactory progress in developing its curriculum. The curriculum no longer includes all subjects of the National Curriculum; provision for personal, social and health education is not as good as it was; the school has not developed effective strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills, and there is now

evidence of inequality of access to various aspects of the curriculum. Planning for teaching subjects continues to be unsatisfactory. The provision of careers education has not improved, and there is no provision for drug education. Developing the curriculum was a key issue at the last inspection and has not been properly addressed.

32. The effectiveness of the school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are unsatisfactory. Although these areas have been identified as a priority for curriculum development for some time, the school has only recently ordered and received the documentation for the national Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Planning for mathematics and English continues to be linked to pupils' individual targets. This does not give suitable breadth to the subjects and there are no wider strategies for developing literacy and numeracy skills. There is some evidence of the implementation of the Literacy Strategy in the plans for pupils in Class 1.

33. There is no suitable timetabled structure to the day which limits pupils' opportunities for learning. Timetables are written for each class, but teachers do not always follow them. During the inspection, timetabled lessons did not happen, or were replaced by another subject. Timetables often show a given activity for all pupils, but in practice one or more may be withdrawn to do something else. Not all subjects appear on all class timetables, and insufficient thought has been given to what is appropriate for pupils at Key Stage 4. This haphazard approach to teaching subjects does not ensure pupils have their entitlement to a broad and balanced education, and is not monitored by the managers of the school.

34. The five-year topic cycle adopted by the school is a poor structure for long-term curriculum planning. The cycle only contains topics for science, history, geography and religious education. There is no difference in the topics planned for pupils in different key stages; thus five year olds cover the same topics as sixteen year olds. This topic cycle, in any case, is not followed by all classes which further limits what pupils are taught. Teachers decide on what they want to cover in their own class. However, the absence of supporting documentation for any subjects to help them plan leads to a narrow and unbalanced curriculum in some classes, and a lack of continuity in learning as pupils move through the school. At the moment, there is no efficient means of a teacher knowing what pupils know, understand and can do, or what they have covered when in the previous class.

35. Although the school devised a "scheme of work format" for termly planning two years ago, it has not been used until this term. This situation is very poor. The use of the "scheme of work" format varies between different teachers and the contents of some do not match the five-year topic cycle. Not all subjects have a "scheme of work", and at times, "schemes of work" are written for subjects that are not timetabled. There is no clear guidance as to how these schemes of work should be completed, and the system is not working.

36. The school has worked hard to develop a range of evening activities for pupils and students who board, a key issue at the last inspection. Care staff now offer a satisfactory range of physical, creative and educational opportunities in the main school, and these are good in the FE department. For example, the primary club offers a number of tabletop activities that the pupils enjoy, and older students go out into the community to use facilities such as the local swimming pool.

37. The school fails to provide equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils; this is unsatisfactory. Pupils with challenging behaviour are often taken out of lessons by support staff and are not provided with appropriate alternative activities. Timetabling changes and inaccuracies often result in lessons being shorter than planned, or not taking place at all. The result of this is that different pupils have different opportunities for learning, and the situation is not effectively monitored.

38. The curriculum provision for the higher and lower attaining pupils is unsatisfactory. Higher attaining pupils are often not given sufficiently challenging work, and if they finish early, they are given "maintenance" or "holding" tasks rather than activities planned to extend their learning further. Some staff do not adapt the work to make it appropriate for those with more severe learning difficulties and challenging behaviour; they, too, are often given tasks to "occupy" them, or are excluded from the group.

39. The school's links with the community continue to be a positive aspect of the curriculum provision of the school. The school places an emphasis on using local sports facilities for teaching swimming, ice-skating, trampolining, fitness and horse riding. However, not all pupils have equal access to these activities due to a lack of monitoring of the organisation. Pupils and students who board have additional opportunities for the use of the community in their after-school activities which broadens their experiences.

40. Good links have been made with various other educational establishments, all of which support the pupils' and students' educational and social development. A local secondary school is used for sports, and older students in the FE department benefit from attendance at the local college.

41. Informal provision for pupils' personal development is a strength and provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Pupils make good progress in learning to behave appropriately, develop positive relationships with staff and with one another, and have good attitudes to school. However, there is no curriculum structure for this subject and some aspects are under-emphasised. For example, there is no provision for drugs education. Careers guidance is available from the local education authority's careers service for some pupils. However, guidance is not always available to pupils placed at the school from other authorities. In addition, careers and vocational education is not a planned part of the curriculum for pupils at Key Stage 4.

42. During the inspection week, there was no evidence of attempts to encourage spiritual development and provision for this aspect of pupils' development is unsatisfactory although discussion with staff shows that some opportunities are encouraged. For example, the school observed a two minute silence after the New York terrorist attack on September 11th, and staff reported that the pupils were exceptionally silent and still. Nevertheless, although the school prospectus refers to daily assemblies of a broadly Christian nature, providing a forum for collective worship, the assemblies seen in the main school contained no elements of worship and had no spiritual content. In the main, they were used as "holding" sessions at the end of the day, when pupils watched videos or listened to music and staff wrote in the home-school diaries. There was little structure to these sessions, and pupils were generally restless. Because the development of the religious education syllabus is limited, the lessons based on it have little effect on pupils' spiritual development. Other opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual awareness as they arose during the day were often not followed up.

43. Provision for pupils' and students' moral and social development is good. The school aims to make them aware of the concepts of right and wrong, and pupils and students are encouraged to understand these. They are made aware of expectations of behaviour, both in classrooms and in the rest of the school. Adults are good role models, and make use of opportunities to reinforce the positive attitudes which the school promotes. Good behaviour is reinforced by use of praise and reward, but the lack of an agreed policy for promoting good behaviour means that these are not always used consistently in the main school.

44. Relationships within the school are good, and pupils and students are treated with respect. Some classes start the day with individual greetings, and with pupils posting their

names on a board, which helps them to feel valued and an important part of their small community. Good displays in some areas of the school celebrate pupils' and students' work and achievements, and help to raise their self-esteem. Pupils begin to develop responsibility as they help to prepare snacks, to clear the table or put away equipment. When they first arrive in the school, pupils are helped to tolerate sitting alongside one another, and to listen to others' contribution in lessons. They gradually progress to being able to work in pairs or groups, and to take turns. The social development of the boarders is further reinforced in the residences. By the time students reach the FE department, several have conquered the challenges of their autism, and can manage their own behaviour well, in school, in the residence and on out of school visits. The social development of pupils and students is further promoted through a large number of visits made to the local area.

45. The opportunities provided for pupils and students to develop their cultural awareness are satisfactory. Through work in English, they are introduced to a variety of literature such as stories and poetry. Some appreciation of the work of different artists is encouraged through art. Pupils learn about their local culture by visits into the community, and some benefit from the school's liaison with the Make Music Live organisation, based at the London Barbican. Pupils gain some awareness of the multi-cultural nature of society in religious education when they hear about festivals and customs of different faiths, and look at the clothes and foods of different countries. Overall, however, there is insufficient attention paid to promoting knowledge and understanding of different cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

46. This is unsatisfactory overall, but has good and unsatisfactory aspects. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for the personal care and welfare of its pupils, although it is good in the FE department. It was good at the last inspection. Parents are particularly pleased with the way the school cares for their children and say that they find staff very approachable when they have any concerns. The informal procedures for monitoring behaviour and bullying are effective and work well. Residential provision is satisfactory in the main school and good in the FE department. However, although staff guide and support pupils' personal development well, the monitoring of academic development is unsatisfactory in the main school. It is satisfactory in the FE department. In the main school, there are serious weaknesses in the way in which teachers use the information they get from assessing pupils' skills to plan the curriculum and support pupils' achievement.

47. The school has no formalised procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' and students' attendance although absences are suitably dealt with. The attendance level has traditionally been satisfactory and matches similar schools. Few holidays have been taken in term time and, with the exception of one past pupil, there has been no unauthorised absence. The managers are aware that there is a small increase in numbers of pupils being withdrawn for family holidays in term time, and that they should address this issue before it escalates.

48. There are satisfactory procedures for child protection and staff have received appropriate training. At present there is no effective health and safety policy, although one has recently been agreed by the Essex Autistic Authority, but it is not yet in practice. No regular checks and assessments of risk have been carried out, nor have there been regular fire drills in the main school. As at the last inspection, some stair carpet and carpet tiles are loose or ragged and are potentially dangerous. Staff are appropriately trained in first aid and offer caring and sympathetic support. There is good understanding of the responsibilities towards pupils who are in the 'looked after' system.

49. The personal support and guidance provided for pupils is good because all staff know the pupils well and help them to develop and mature in a supportive atmosphere. Night care

staff hand over to day staff with a thorough briefing and, in addition, make careful written records. This has a positive impact on the quality of pupils' and students' lives at school, especially in the FE department where the development of independence is highly valued and promoted. Students are encouraged to play an increasing part in the world around them which prepared them to move on to work training or independent living.

50. The school has good, informal procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' good behaviour and for providing support where this gives cause for concern. There is an anti-bullying policy and staff are clear in their expectations of what is and is not acceptable, and how incidences of bullying will be dealt with. Staff have clear expectations of pupils' behaviour, which can be very difficult. However, the lack of a behaviour policy means that staff are not entirely consistent in their approach to any lapses. Teachers, support and care staff make clear to pupils what is expected of them. They offer praise for good effort and clearly indicate what constitutes unacceptable behaviour. This results in improvement in the behaviour of the great majority of pupils' as time goes on. Training in restraint techniques for difficult pupils has been undertaken by most staff, and those who have not yet completed this training are, appropriately, not allowed to restrain pupils or students.

51. Procedures for assessing pupils' achievements over time are satisfactory in the FE department. They are poor in the main school, and practice has not improved since the last inspection. The whole school, including the FE department, has a system of individual record sheets (IRS) to record progress against targets on pupils' and students' individual education plans (IEPs). The use of the system varies widely between different subjects and members of staff, and there is no consistent record of pupils' progress and achievements. The targets on the IEPs and IRS do not always correlate. Members of staff using the IRS sheets appear to be unclear whether they should be used to record behaviour, curriculum experience or gains in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. When used effectively, the system shows improvements in pupils' personal development and behaviour over time. In the FE department, they are also beginning to show students' achievements across the curriculum. Until clarity of the purpose of the system is secured, the IRS will continue to be an unsatisfactory assessment tool.

52. Records of pupils' work are very underdeveloped in the main school, although satisfactory in the FE department. Many pupils in the main school have no work at all in the subject sections of their files. Furthermore, there is no suitable information in teachers' records to show what work pupils have covered, or what they know, understand and can do in the various subjects, as the IEP/IRS system does not reliably provide it. This makes an evaluation of how well pupils are achieving in any area very difficult.

53. Where assessment information is available, it is not well used to guide further planning in the main school. For example, one Year 8 student has a current IEP which contains targets that she was assessed as having met in 1997. No further explanation is given in the student's Annual Review report to explain this discrepancy. The use of assessment information is better in Class 1 and in the FE Department where it is closely linked to the good quality of teaching for both groups.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. Parents think the school is very good. It has a well-established place in the local community and is very popular with the families that it serves, most of whom live out of the area. The school has improved on the good links with parents that were reported at the last inspection and they are now very effective.

55. In the questionnaires and at the meeting with the Registered Inspector, parents expressed very strong support for the school and its work. They are particularly pleased with the progress that their children make in their behaviour and maturity. They feel that staff have high expectations of their children, who they say like coming to school. Parents say that they have strong links with care and teaching staff and that they feel closely involved with their children's school life.

56. Given the distance that many parents live from school, it is not surprising to find that only a handful are able to help in class alongside staff. Their contribution is good and, together with other members of the community, parents do much for the school, raising money or contributing in other ways.

57. Overall, the quality and quantity of day-to-day information provided for parents is good, and parents value this liaison greatly. Parents regularly speak to staff about their children on an informal basis. Parents may telephone or talk to staff at any time, and the very useful home-school book is a vital two-way dialogue between care staff and parents. This system also helps to ensure consistency in handling pupils' behaviour. Parents feel very secure about their children's safety and welfare, and feel that the frequent liaison keeps them fully involved in all aspects of their children's school life.

58. Consultation meetings during the year focus on the annual review of pupils' statements of special educational needs, but the quality of the reports produced for the annual review are variable. These reports do not always refer to targets set in individual education plans. As a result of undeveloped assessment and curriculum coverage, it is often unclear what real progress pupils have made in their skills, knowledge and understanding, although reports on their personal development are generally more focused.

59. No homework is set but the school encourages parents to take a part in improving their children's behaviour at home. The prospectus provides a satisfactory range of information about the work and organisation of the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

60. The leadership and management of the school are unsatisfactory, and the managers' monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance, and acting effectively to improve it, are poor. Doucecroft gives priority to: supporting pupils and students through the challenges of their autism; helping them to take their place in society as fully as they can, and to giving support and help to their families. These important priorities are achieved, and are reflected throughout the school's work and in parents' positive views of the school. However, insufficient priority is given to promoting high quality education and learning and the school does not do this job properly.

61. The manager of the Further Education department has provided good leadership in setting up and developing the provision, and continues to manage it well with good systems and checks in place. These are largely independent from the main school. Both teaching and learning are good, founded on a well-considered curriculum which extends into the evening activities and residential provision.

62. In the main school, however, insufficient emphasis is given to enabling the pupils to learn as much as they can whilst benefiting from the school's caring and supportive ethos. Consequently, school development has been insufficiently centred on improving the curriculum, teaching and learning. These aspects have deteriorated since the last inspection and are now unsatisfactory.

63. Systems to promote high standards of teaching and learning are not in place in the main school. There is still no formalised curriculum for five to 16 year olds on which teaching can be based, which was a key weakness identified in the last inspection. Teachers plan their class' work alone which does not allow pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding to be built up systematically as they move through the school. Not all staff provide work that is appropriate for the needs of each pupil in their group, which does not give pupils equal opportunities for learning.

64. There is no monitoring or evaluation of what the teachers are doing in practice, and variations in methodology have become increasingly embedded over time. This has led to a fragmented approach to teaching on which the leadership of the school has no impact, and learning in three out of the five classes is unsatisfactory as a result.

65. Appraisal of staff takes place in the FE department, and it is appropriately linked to identifying training needs. In the main school, teacher appraisal was carried out by the previous deputy head, but this came to an end when she left earlier in the year. There is now no performance management of teachers, nor mentor support for those who are new to the work or struggling. The ongoing professional development needs of all staff, including the care and support staff, are inadequately addressed. This is a considerable lack, given that the managers of the school recognise that some teachers have weaknesses, and has contributed to the high levels of unsatisfactory teaching and learning.

66. The Trustees of the Essex Autistic Society, and the governors, are highly supportive of the school and recognise its strengths, but have not put the quality of its education to the forefront. The establishment of the FE department has been a very successful development, but it is seen primarily as an improvement of the overall services offered by the Society. Much of the school's management is subsumed into the Society's management which is not always helpful to Doucecroft. For example, the health and safety policy is a Society policy which does not take into account the particular needs, requirements and legislation required of the school. The behaviour policy, although school-based, is still in draft form. The length of time taken to finalise these policies has meant that the school has had to run on informal guidelines and procedures which is not a satisfactory situation.

67. The Trustees and governors do not have clear structures in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, or to hold the headteacher accountable for what it does. Conversely, the headteacher does not have a proper point of reference with whom to share the responsibility of the education of the pupils. This leaves her in a very isolated position, especially as the new deputy head has been unable to take up her management and development role as recruitment problems have meant that no appointment has yet been made to take her place in the classroom. The Trustees, governors and head teacher know many of the weaknesses in the school, but do not have the appropriate measures in place to start to rectify them. Targets set through the development plan are not sufficiently focused on the roots of the problems within school; many of them are too trivial, for example, under *Management and Efficiency, the Governing Body*: one target is to "produce letter inviting staff to consider becoming a staff governor." Those relating to curriculum do not address fundamental issues, such as what the Doucecroft curriculum for five to 16 year olds should be.

68. The school is, as at the last inspection, directly funded and managed by the Essex Autistic Society. It has recently cleared a loss and the school is now financially viable. Much of the head teacher's time over the past year has been spent on recruiting new pupils, at the instruction of the Trustees, which has taken her away from the process of developing the school's educational provision.

69. Everyday financial administration between the Society and the school is efficient and the school makes satisfactory use of new technology. However, the school is not able to exercise autonomy in financial management and cannot choose to support educational priorities through budget management. The principles of best value are applied to purchases and the school consults with parents about some matters. However, it does not challenge itself as to whether expenditure results in appropriate outcomes, measured in the quality of teaching and the achievements of the pupils.

70. Currently, the number, experience, expertise and qualifications of the teaching staff are not well matched to the pupils' curricular and special needs in the main school, although this is good in the FE department. Staff new to the school do not receive a proper induction, and this has had a particular impact on the effectiveness of new teaching staff in the main school, some of whom came into school with no previous experience of working with autistic pupils. There are also few formal induction procedures for care and support staff, although care staff in the residential settings receive induction and support in working with individual pupils in relation to their personal care and meal times. Information is also passed on informally through discussion and by carrying out procedures alongside colleagues.

71. Organisation of the main school activities means that one teacher is out of class for prolonged periods of time, for example driving certain pupils to swimming lessons. This leaves some other pupils without a teacher for these periods, and the classroom assistants are not always given suitable guidance about what to do with the pupils during these times which contributes to their under-achievement. To a lesser extent, this happens in other classes in the main school as well.

72. Teachers are very well supported by classroom assistants and residential care workers, some of whom also give support in lessons. This helps to maintain good links between the residential unit and the school. Classroom assistants are well qualified. They all have a professional qualification and make a good contribution to pupils' and students' progress, when they are given suitable guidance and activities to carry out by the class teachers.

73. As at the last inspection, there are still no subject co-ordinators and some staff lack subject knowledge and an understanding of how to make curriculum work accessible to pupils of all abilities. This has a direct effect on the quality of teaching. Subject provision and resourcing remain very under-developed which contributes to pupils' under-achievement in most classes in the main school. Learning resources are unsatisfactory for all subjects other than for students in the FE department. Instrumental resources for music are just satisfactory, although the range of pre-recorded music is inadequate. Resources for design and technology are poor. Overall, the school is poorly resourced for secondary aged pupils and their needs. The last inspection identified lack of resourcing as a key issue for development, but there has been insufficient improvement since that time.

74. The school uses specialists to support teaching in physical education at off-site facilities. However, in the swimming lesson observed at a local pool during the inspection, the swimming instructor was not present with the result that little learning took place. Students in the FE department benefit from good college links which supplement and enhance their everyday curriculum. The school has been unable to recruit a speech

therapist for the past year which has had a negative impact on the development of some pupils' communication skills.

75. The accommodation for the school is on two sites. The addition of the FE department building is an important improvement since the last inspection and provides good accommodation for students over 16.

76. On the main school site, however, the classrooms require refurbishment. Noise from traffic detracts from learning in both classrooms for pupils of primary age. The small size and lack of a sink results in accommodation for Class 2 (9 to 11 year olds) being unsatisfactory. The school has specialist rooms for art, cookery and sensory experiences. However, access to them is through classrooms which is unsatisfactory and distracting for pupils. The sensory room is cluttered with class teaching resources, and the art room is cramped, cluttered and not well organised for materials to be easily accessible to the pupils. There are no specialist rooms for science or design and technology. The school library continues to be housed in the loft, reached only by an exceptionally steep staircase, and was not seen in use during the inspection. There are appropriate, safe, separate outside play areas for pupils of primary and secondary age, and the FE department has extensive, attractive grounds. The conversion of the school pool to provide a play/physical activities area is a very good use of the building and has provided a much needed, large covered space for the pupils. The residential accommodation is satisfactory overall, and good in the FE department.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

77. In order to develop the school and improve the weaknesses identified in the inspection, the Trustees, governing body, head teacher and school staff must:

1. **Improve the leadership and management of the school by:**

- a) establishing clear lines of responsibility and accountability for the standards of education provided, and pupils and students' achievement, between the Trustees, governing body and head teacher;
- b) developing the role of the governing body to include:
 - a full understanding of its duties;
 - an understanding of how to work in effective partnership with the headteacher in meeting its responsibilities;
 - developing a strategic view of the school and putting education at the forefront of its work;
 - steering it towards higher standards,
 - and supporting the school through its forthcoming developments;
- c) setting up and implementing suitable systems of induction, performance management, and support and training for the teachers, using the models of good teaching practice in the school as appropriate;
- d) setting clear and measurable targets for development through a well-formulated development plan which sets out achievable priorities, and identifies agreed resources to implement them;
- e) setting up and implementing suitable systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, in order to take effective action to improve it.

(paragraphs: 33, 37, 39, 60, 62-71, 73, 74, 76)

2. **Improve the teaching for pupils aged 9 to 16 years, and raise these pupils' achievement by:**

- a) putting a suitable curriculum into place (see point 3);
- b) putting a suitable timetable and planning structure into place (see point 3e);
- c) implementing performance management and other measures to improve teaching (see point 1c);
- d) ensuring that teachers become skilled in fully meeting the needs of all the pupils in their groups, in particular the lowest and highest attainers (see point 1c);
- e) setting up a suitable lesson planning system to meet both the special needs of the individual pupils, and the subject-based learning objectives of the lesson;
- f) Ensuring that support staff have suitable guidance when working with pupils on their own;
- g) Carefully monitoring the above to ensure that all are properly adhered to.

(paragraphs: 2, 10, 15, 17 – 27, 33)

3. **Put a suitable curriculum into place for Key Stages 1 – 4 by:**

Devising a suitable curriculum for the main school, using current published guidance as appropriate. This should:

- a) take account of the different requirements for the four key stages;
- b) be based on suitable long term plans which provide continuity between the classes, and ensure that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are consistently and progressively built up;
- c) ensure that all pupils have access to all subjects as required;
- d) ensure that the varying learning needs of individuals are properly catered for;
- e) be delivered through clear timetables, upon which all relevant subjects are represented, and which are adhered to;
- f) be supported by rigorous curriculum leadership;
- g) be appropriately resourced.

(paragraphs: 17, 31, 35, 37-39, 41, 73, 102, 104, 113, 122, 124, 128, 130, 132, 135)

4. Develop systematic assessment procedures to support both curriculum planning and planning for individuals by:

- a) ensuring that all targets written on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are well-defined and progress towards them is easily measurable;
- b) revising the use of the Individual Record Sheets (IRS) so that they correlate properly with the targets on the IEPs;
- c) ensuring that all staff are completely clear about what they are to record on the IRS sheets;
- d) devising a system of assessing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in the different subject areas, to correlate with the curriculum and lesson learning objectives;
- e) keeping pupils' work, and/or records of their skills, knowledge and understanding in the different subject areas
- f) using these records to contribute to: pupils' IEP targets; supporting pupils' progress and achievement over time; lesson planning in the short term and curriculum planning in the long term; and to improve teachers' own planning and practice.

(Paragraphs: 2, 51-53, 58)

The following less important issues should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Improving the quality of assemblies in the main school – paragraph 42
- Improving opportunities for the development of pupils' spiritual awareness - paragraph 42
- Improving opportunities for developing pupils' cultural and multi-cultural awareness – paragraph 45
- Improving the reporting to parents on pupils' academic progress – paragraph 58
- Improving the classroom accommodation and specialist rooms in the main school – paragraph 76

9.1 FURTHER EDUCATION (POST-16) PROVISION

78. Overall, the quality of the provision is **good**

Strengths

- Teaching is good, and often very good, which enables students to achieve well;
- There is an appropriate curriculum which gives students a wide range of opportunities for learning;
- The FE manager provides good leadership and has overseen the establishment of the provision;
- Students have very positive attitudes to the school and very good provision is made for their personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Further develop the Individual Record Sheets to ensure that progress in learning is clearly identified;
- Consider the introduction of additional accredited courses so that students have further acknowledgement of their achievements;
- Develop individual Records of Achievement for students;
- Develop resources – both equipment and books – to support students' learning.

79. The Further Education (Post-16) provision has been developed since the last inspection, and was opened in September 1999. It is situated in a separate building, about five minutes walk from the main school, and has its own residential accommodation on the top floor of the building. There are 10 students on roll at present, four of whom have joined the department from other schools.

80. Students make good progress and achieve well, both in lessons and against their individual targets. All are developing their communication and literacy skills. Some speak fluently whilst others have a limited vocabulary, but are usually able to make themselves understood by pointing, body language or vocalising. A few use signing to support their speech. Students make good progress in the development of reading and writing skills, using computer *widgit* symbols to support these where necessary. For example, students engaged in work about transport and pollution were able to indicate different ways in which they travelled to places. They recorded this in writing, either independently or with support, or by the use of *widgit* symbols. All showed good recall of their journeys, and some were able to talk about them in detail. A few were able to make a link between transport and pollution. The students learn to write for different purposes, such as letters, diaries, advertisements, and descriptions.

81. Mathematics skills are developed as students learn practical skills such as money handling. They conduct surveys, such as of local traffic, and learn to record their findings in graphs and charts. Most are able to use the computer for word processing, and know the names of various parts of the equipment. In writing letters or stories, they use correct formats and different fonts. Higher attaining students can read a map and follow a route around the local area. Some are developing a sense of history through their activities, for example when looking at information about the local area at the beginning of the twentieth century. The overall good progress made by students is exemplified by the fact that the three students

who left at the end of last year were all able to achieve some degree of independence. Two took up college courses and all were able to live in supported housing.

82. Students' personal development is very good, and the way in which this is supported is a strength of the provision. The students are interested in, and enthusiastic about, many of the activities in which they participate. They are developing the ability to concentrate well on a task, and show great pleasure when they have achieved success. They develop independence as they are given responsibility for looking after their own books and files, and for the presentation of their portfolios of work for the ASDAN modules. Students are beginning to become independent learners, finding their own resources and using the local library for books and research. They are given money each week and are expected to keep accounts. The students have very good relationships with adults which gives them confidence and security. They develop relationships with one another, which is a considerable achievement for many, and they talk to one another, or answer one another's questions. Some work successfully in pairs or small groups. Many opportunities are taken to enhance students' self esteem, including awarding certificates for credits in the ASDAN award and for college courses completed. The development of Records of Achievement, in which students could collect these, together with information about themselves developed in the careers module, could provide a useful portfolio for future reference.

83. Teaching is always at least good and often very good, which enables students of all abilities to make good progress and to achieve well. Lessons are well planned to meet the different learning needs of the individuals in the group, and language is carefully used to ensure that they understand. The aims of each session are made clear so that students know what is required of them. For example, in a lesson on the "*Wider World*" students were looking at the dress of people of different religions and cultures, and were very clear about the order in which they needed to tackle tasks. Staff establish a calm atmosphere, and provide a good learning environment in which students can settle down and concentrate on their work. Very good strategies encourage students towards independent learning. For example, they are encouraged to select their own resources for given tasks. The students respond well to the high expectations of both learning and behaviour shown by all adults; they concentrate well in lessons and try hard with different activities. For example, in an art lesson, students were challenged to explore different ways of reproducing images of buildings which they had previously photographed. They were engrossed in the task and were supported skilfully to produce a variety of images. Good use is made of support assistants to help students to make progress with tasks which they find difficult. Individual record sheets are completed for each lesson. These provide some useful information, but are not sufficiently specific when recording learning to help both with tracking students' progress and with planning to meet the needs of individuals.

84. The curriculum is appropriate for the students. It consists of modules of the ASDAN Award Scheme, which lead to students achieving awards at bronze/silver level. These modules allows them to continue to develop key skills in communication, literacy and numeracy as well as studying wider aspects such as *The Environment*. They are also taught other subjects, such as drama.

85. The school curriculum, and evening activities for the boarders, are enhanced by visits within the local area, and links with the local community, college and secondary school. For example, most students attend the local FE college for taster courses, such as *media studies*. A number of students visit a local school and a leisure centre for various fitness activities, and use the community to develop their independence and social skills.

86. The FE manager has provided good leadership in setting up and developing the provision. There are two other teachers, one of whom takes responsibility for much of the

ASDAN work. The recent appointment of a second teacher has added to the strength of the team, and provided opportunities for the delivery of a broader curriculum. The teachers are well supported by classroom assistants and care staff who work together to provide a good “24 hour curriculum” for students.

87. The accommodation is good, with pleasant individual bedrooms and communal areas for students in the residential area. There is a good-sized classroom, which allows students to work as a class, in groups or individually. This is made very attractive by the use of displays which celebrate students’ work. The dining room is also used for small group work. There is a large garden for which plans are being developed, and students have already been enthusiastically involved in restoring a pond. A large outbuilding provides an additional games and relaxation area.

88. Teaching resources are satisfactory, but not yet sufficiently developed. Additional computers have been ordered, but there is a need for further equipment and books to support students’ learning.

9.2 RESIDENTIAL PROVISION

89. The residential provision is satisfactory overall. It has recently been inspected and approved by the local authority’s Inspection Unit, with a few suggestions for improvement, largely relating to written procedures. The care provided is good.

90. The residential provision is good in the Further Education department where the sleeping accommodation is private and cheerful. The building is spacious, with a welcoming kitchen and dining room where students can help make their own meals, and then eat them. The grounds are extensive and attractive, and there are outbuildings which are used as an informal youth club for the students, to give them some extra privacy and to allow them time away from the main building. These aspects help promote students’ personal development very well.

91. Parts of the main school’s residential accommodation have been nicely refurbished since the last inspection to provide a welcoming home environment, but other parts of the building require decoration. Some carpet tiles are loose and present a minor safety hazard. Pupils do not have the easy access to outside that their older peers have as their common rooms are upstairs; however, they are given regular opportunities to play outside. At times when they are all in the common rooms, however, for example when waiting to come down at the start of the school day, it can feel crowded.

92. Meals are nutritious and balanced. There is a choice of food for those with strong preferences or dietary requirements.

93. The last inspection identified the need for a more appropriate range of activities to be developed for the evenings. This key issue has been successfully met. These offer the boarders the chance to develop independence and personal care skills whilst also keeping them busy and involved which reduces the likelihood of challenging behaviour arising. Whilst the after-school activities are planned to extend pupils’ learning, the difference between “home” and “school” is still reinforced, and pupils are not expected to be at “school” 24 hours a day. For example, pupils in the main school change out of school uniform at the end of the school day, and have a relaxing period where they do what they want to for a while before taking part in a range of planned activities, such as art club or trampolining. In the FE department, students help cook and wash up and then, accompanied by staff, often go off-site to swim, to a youth club or to attend a Venture Scouts group.

94. Staff in both the residential units are trained to look after people with autism, and their positive attitude and clear expectations support pupils' and students' personal development. They feel secure, valued and respected and have good relationships with their carers. Staffing levels for both evening care workers and night-waking staff are generous which reinforces the importance the Society places on the care of their young people. Fully trained staff attend to any medical needs. Both day and night care staff ensure that they give a thorough briefing to those who take over from them. They keep written records and care staff attend pupils' and students' annual reviews. There is a private telephone available in each building for both pupils in the main school and the FE students to use. Pupils in the main school, and their parents, are able to make complaints to the head teacher. Those recorded over the last year have been dealt with satisfactorily.

95. The staff have close links with parents, and parents are free to contact them at any time. Parents say that they are pleased with their children's emotional, physical and social development since they first attended the school and boarding facility.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	5	7	8	15	0	0
Percentage	0	14	20	23	43	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	34
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/A

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	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	8.2

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

Attainment

No SATs or public examinations were taken in the year 2001 at any Key Stage.
Students in the FE department work towards the ASDAN Bronze/silver award at the end of Year 13. The three leavers received this award at the end of last year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	1
White	
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	1	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.7
Average class size	6

Education support staff: Y1 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	37
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1260

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	Sept 1999 – Aug. 2000
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	£
Total income	774702
Total expenditure	873031
Expenditure per pupil	32279
Balance brought forward from previous year	N/a
Balance carried forward to next year	N/a

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	34
Number of questionnaires returned	19

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	37	0	0	5
My child is making good progress in school.	58	32	5	0	21
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	53	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	21	5	0	0
The teaching is good.	74	21	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	68	26	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	89	5	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	74	21	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	68	21	5	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	58	37	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	63	21	0	0	11
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	32	0	0	5

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

ENGLISH

96. The provision for English, the quality of teaching and pupils' learning have all deteriorated since the last inspection. The 5 to 8 year olds' achievements in speaking and listening (communication) are good, and achievement is satisfactory in the rest of the school. However, pupils' achievement in English overall (which includes reading and writing), in relation to their prior attainment and to their targets, is satisfactory by the age of 7, but unsatisfactory by the ages of 11 and 16. The 5 to 8 year olds' learning in lessons is often good, while in lessons in the other three classes, it ranges from satisfactory to unsatisfactory.

97. One of the main aims of the school is to develop pupils' communication, encouraging them to use speech, gesture, signing, visual cues, or technological aids as appropriate. However, there is inconsistent use of signing and of symbols through the school so that, overall, pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Many pupils enter the school with little or no communication and their skills in speaking (communicating) and listening develop well up to the age of eight. Pupils learn to recognise symbols for the different activities during the day, and some use symbols to remind them of tasks to be completed. Pupils are encouraged to listen carefully and some are able to listen attentively to story tapes and to adults reading to them. They carry out simple instructions. As they grow older, some develop their spoken language further whilst others do not move beyond gesture and vocalisation. By the age of 16, some pupils take part in discussions and conversations, showing good understanding of language and an interesting vocabulary. Some pupils are still at an early stage in their understanding of language, and have limited understanding of vocabulary. They make some progress in developing specific aspects of language such as *opposites* and *comparisons*.

98. Younger pupils begin to develop pre-reading skills, looking at picture books, listening to, and enjoying stories and rhymes. By age seven, many pupils know where to start reading a book, and that print has meaning. They begin to recognise initial letter sounds, sometimes using *Letterland* symbols. Some can recognise their names, and those of other pupils. By 11, higher attaining pupils can read simple texts, sometimes written in symbols, whilst the lower attaining pupils are learning to identify aspects of pictures in books. By the age of 16, most pupils' skills are more advanced. Lower attaining pupils recognise some letters and letter sounds, and match words to pictures, while higher attaining pupils read with some understanding. For example, they are able to read newspaper articles and answer questions about them.

99. Younger pupils develop pre-writing skills, such as mark making and colouring within boundaries. By the age of seven, some pupils can copy their names, either over or under an adult's writing. Higher attaining pupils copy over or underneath labels or short sentences, and a few are becoming more independent in recording. Higher attaining 11 year olds are developing their handwriting, and learning to form letters correctly and evenly. They begin to record their work in other subjects, for example, in writing briefly about scientific experiments. Lower attaining pupils begin to make use of computer *widgit* symbols to label their work. With support, pupils have produced simple books about bread, with pictures and explanations of varying lengths. By the age of 14, some pupils have developed good fine motor skills, and are able to write independently, while others are still at a stage of copying over or under words. Higher attaining pupils develop their spelling skills, using computer programmes. For example, they learn to spell words used in different areas of the curriculum such as science.

Pupils in Key Stage 4, aged 14 to 16, continue to develop writing and pre-writing skills. Some are still at the copying stage whilst others write independently, for example, in writing about the book they are reading.

100. Teaching, overall, is satisfactory. For the younger pupils teaching is good, while for other pupils it ranges from satisfactory to unsatisfactory. This variation has a direct effect on pupils' learning. In the best lessons, a variety of strategies is used to gain pupils' attention and to help them to respond. For example, pupils work in groups, pairs and individually to help their concentration. Well-paced lessons, with a number of different activities, help to maintain pupils' attention. Lessons are well planned and focus on each individual's needs, This then supports their progress against their individual targets. Good use is also made of display to support pupils' learning, as well as to celebrate achievements. For example, the Class 1 room has displays related to the books which the class is reading which help to remind pupils of characters and stories. Teachers use a variety of strategies to encourage careful listening, and adults listen attentively to pupils and respond to all their attempts at communication. The staff know pupils very well and can understand and respond to their non-verbal communications. Teachers and learning support assistants work well together, giving good support to pupils in group and individual work.

101. Pupils make less progress when teachers do not plan in detail and do not provide work which is appropriate to individuals' needs. Pupils are not engaged in the tasks, and teachers have limited strategies for gaining and maintaining their attention. In some classes lower attaining pupils are not well provided for and are often ignored or taken out of the room for other activities. This was commented on at the last inspection. On a number of occasions, support assistants are left to work with pupils without a teacher being present and without any plan or instructions. Although they know the pupils well and try hard to support their learning, they do not always have the strategies needed to ensure that pupils learn. Pupils' Individual Record Sheets contain limited information about their learning, so that teachers have little information on which to base their planning, or their assessment of pupils' progress.

102. There is no English co-ordinator and, as at the last inspection, no scheme of work for English. Some curriculum plans are in the early stage of development, and these make use of some of the features of the National Literacy Strategy. However, the school has only recently acquired the relevant documentation, so there has been little time to develop this further. Teachers attempt to assess pupils' progress against individual targets, but in many cases these are not specific enough to form the basis of an accurate judgement, and record keeping, overall, is unsatisfactory. There are no attempts to assess pupils' reading ages, or National Curriculum levels.

103. Resources for the subject are limited, although there has been some development of the use of reading schemes. Each class has a small library of reading books, but many of these are in poor condition. There are a few other resources to support teaching, for example, there is a commercial handwriting scheme. However, there is no indication that these resources are used systematically. The library, which is in a small room at the top of the building, contains some fiction and non-fiction books, but there is no evidence that it is used regularly.

MATHEMATICS

104. There has been unsatisfactory improvement in provision for mathematics since the last inspection. The lack of a co-ordinator to lead the subject continues to adversely affect the provision across the school, and resources are still unsatisfactory. In addition, there are now examples of unsatisfactory teaching and strategies for teaching numeracy skills are under-

developed. Pupils' mathematical achievements are unsatisfactory by the age of 11 and 16. The youngest pupils' achievement is good, due to the better quality teaching in Class 1.

105. Throughout the school, pupils show a range of mathematical skills. However, the lack of appropriate plans and records of pupils' learning means that it is difficult to judge to what extent the pupils are gaining these skills as they become older.

106. Higher attaining pupils in Class 1 (5 to 8 year olds) can match and sort photographs of animals and everyday objects. In a lesson on data-handling, pupils were able to indicate which drawings were the same and not the same, and produced simple diagrams dividing the drawings into two groups. Lower attaining pupils sorted items of different colours and matched familiar objects. It was not possible to make an overall judgement regarding pupils' achievement due to a lack of accurate assessment information. However, in the one lesson observed, pupils were making good progress in the acquisition of new skills.

107. There was very little evidence of pupils' attainment in Class 2 (9 to 11 year olds), due to a lack of assessment information. In the one lesson observed, higher attaining pupils were able to draw hands on clock faces indicating the time to the half-hour. Lower attaining pupils were able to rote count to 10, following prompting by a classroom assistant.

108. In Class 3 (12 and 13 year olds), higher attaining pupils can indicate the value of missing numbers on a 1 to 100 grid, and write the appropriate number in the place provided. Lower attaining pupils can count to three with verbal prompts from a member of staff and copy over the written numbers on a worksheet. A younger, higher attaining pupil was able to order numbers between 11 and 20 and match written numbers to words.

109. In Class 4 (14 to 16 year old) higher attaining pupils have begun to relate their mathematical skills to everyday practical situations. They can read television times from newspapers and indicate the same time on a classroom clock. They are also able to calculate what they will be able to buy from a given amount of money. The higher attaining pupils are able to carry out addition of three figure numbers and carry out simple division, for example dividing 16 ribbons between four children. Lower attaining pupils are less well taught and there is much less evidence of their attainment. However, in one lesson, a lower attaining pupil was able to place pegs in a simple number board.

110. The quality of teaching of mathematics in the main school is satisfactory overall. Out of the four lessons observed, two were satisfactory, one was good and one was unsatisfactory. Where teaching was good, classroom assistants were well briefed and the lesson was well planned to meet the abilities of all pupils. Very effective teaching strategies were a strong feature of this lesson with pupils showing high levels of concentration, good behaviour and clearly enjoying their learning. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, the lesson did not follow the times indicated on the timetables and a lack of planned activities and structure lead to pupils' exhibiting challenging behaviour. An unsatisfactory feature of some lessons is the use of "maintenance" activities, sometimes unrelated to mathematics, to occupy pupils.

111. The curriculum for mathematics is largely planned through IEPs. The introduction of a written "scheme of work" format during for the current term has been unsatisfactory as there is no long-term subject plan from which the work can be taken. There is therefore no planning for continuity or the progressive development of skills, knowledge and understanding as pupils move from class to class. The school has not yet adopted a suitable strategy for teaching numeracy.

SCIENCE

112. The provision for science is unsatisfactory and pupils do not achieve well enough in this subject. This is a deterioration from the time of the last inspection. Whilst science is an agreed part of the topic rota, and a new science topic should be covered every term throughout the main school, this is not the case. Overall, insufficient lessons were observed to make a judgement about the quality of teaching in science, or pupils' learning in lessons. There are no appropriate records of what work has been covered in the past, or what teaching has taken place. There are also no real records of what the pupils have come to know, understand and do over time. However, the overall judgement is that pupils' achievements in science are good in Class 1, and are unsatisfactory by the ages of 11 and 16 although higher attaining pupils in Class 3 learn from interesting investigations, and develop their understanding of scientific concepts.

113. All four classes have produced a "scheme of work" for the term's science. This is the first term that this has been done, and the results illustrate the underlying problem of some teachers' lack of subject knowledge, the inconsistencies in teaching and planning and the lack of a long-term plan of work from which the schemes can be drawn. Resources are also unsatisfactory as they are minimal in quantity and not suitable to support learning at the appropriate level throughout the school.

114. The topic specified on the rota at the time of the inspection was *Changing Materials*, an element of the National Curriculum. Class 1's scheme of work is appropriately based on this topic, and the lesson observed was very good. It followed on from others related to the same topic, and evidence of these was seen in the group's topic book where annotated photos showed that the class had investigated the properties of other materials - paper, water and clay - earlier in the term. The pupils' own achievements, however, were not recorded.

115. In this lesson for the youngest pupils, very good resources were used to support their understanding that materials can be changed by various forces, such as *twisting, bending, pulling and pushing*. These forces were demonstrated by all class staff using malleable collage materials, such as giant furry pipe cleaners, and the results were stuck onto stiff paper to be displayed immediately. The staff worked very hard to engage the pupils, remaining calm and focused the whole time, and were successful. Pupils of all abilities benefited to the full from the lesson. One boy, who was initially absorbed in his own activities, finally gave the support assistant his full attention and twisted the pipe cleaners together himself. Another watched the teacher intently, and then copied her, curling a pipe cleaner round on itself like a snail. The teacher made sure that the class persisted with the activity, but knew just the right moment to move on to a variation to keep the pupils interested. They clearly enjoyed this task. They concentrated and co-operated well, and sat easily with one another. At the end of the lesson, two boys demonstrated what they had learned. One said "twisting" when looking at a paper spiral he had just made with support, and another withdrew to a small white board and drew the spirals he had created. This shows very good learning in this lesson.

116. The planning for the 9 to 11 year olds in Class 2 is also based on the topic, but the science lesson timetabled did not take place. The class teacher was taking French in the upper school, a weekly occurrence, and her class was dispersed. However, evidence shows that some science work has been covered in the class; for example the pupils had made bread earlier in the term as planned, and made booklets about the process which were displayed on the wall. Pupils' work books showed some written work and nice drawings of shooting seeds, which they had studied some time previously. There were also pages of photocopied line drawings related to forces and magnetism, but the pupils' own input into

these was not evident. Pupils' books showed some coverage of aspects of weather and rain; however, this was not a scheduled science topic.

117. The "scheme of work" for Class 3 (pupils aged 12 to 14) is more detailed, but cites the main aim of the subject as being " *to support development in the areas of social development and flexibility of thought...*" Whilst this is an appropriate aim of any lesson in a school like Doucecroft, not enough emphasis is given to developing pupils' scientific skills, knowledge and understanding, and this was evident during the lesson observed. This had some good points; for example the activity of testing the properties of various cups was appropriate, and maintained the interest of the higher attaining pupils. They were asked to record their findings on a chart, and were asked to think about reasons why things happened. These two suitable scientific objectives also extended pupils' skills in communication, writing for different purposes and flexibility of thought. However, the lower attaining pupils were not so well provided for, although the support staff did their best. One boy was not "allowed" to see or join in an activity in case he copied it at home, and one other member of the class was out doing another activity altogether. The lesson petered out 20 minutes early, and the pupils were given "holding" activities which wasted their time. The end part of the lesson, where pupils were asked to describe what happened during the investigation, and give reasons why, was not successful because the teacher used complicated language, and did not have a clear purpose behind the questioning. As a result, the pupils did not understand what was required of them, and did not come to the fundamental point that different materials have different properties and so are used for different purposes. Good quality photographic evidence shows that the class has carried out other investigations on forces and floating, however, the pupils' input and learning are not recorded in any way.

118. Although a "scheme of work" for this term has been written for Class 4 (14 to 16 year olds), discussion with the teacher revealed that the class does not follow the topic cycle, and science had not been taught for at least the last year.

119. Overall, the inspection evidence indicates that although pupils achieve well in Class 1, this is not sustained as they grow older because of the haphazard approach to planning what they should learn, and to teaching it.

OTHER SUBJECTS OF THE CURRICULUM

(Art and design; design and technology; French; geography; history; information and communication technology; music; personal, social and health education; physical education; religious education)

This section refers to the provision for 5 to 16 year olds as that for students in the Further Education department is described separately. These subjects have been grouped together because they contain many similarities. The quality of teaching in these subjects is covered in the relevant section in Part B of this report.

120. It is not possible to make judgements about pupils' achievements over time based on the evidence of their work or teachers' records. However, judgements about pupils' learning and standards of attainment in the lessons observed can be made. These are set in the context of the quality of teaching in each of the classes, together with other inspection findings relating to the quality of education provided. The overall judgement is that most pupils are not doing as well as they could, and most are underachieving in these areas of the curriculum.

Subject provision, and pupils' achievements

121. Subject provision is unsatisfactory for all subjects and there has been minimal curriculum development since the last inspection. There are no relevant policies or curriculum frameworks for any of the subjects. This situation is poor.

122. All pupils have opportunities to do **art**. The subject is timetabled in all classes, and schemes of work have been written for Classes 1, 2 and 4. However, there is no curriculum for art and design, and consequently, pupils do not have sufficient breadth of experience. For example, the design element and work in a variety of media are under-emphasised. Art is often used to support other subjects, for example science was very well taught through art in Class 1, and ICT is used in some classes to give an added dimension to pupils' creative experiences. The art room is very small which makes storage and ease of accessibility for the pupils difficult. As a result, it is cluttered with piles of paper and drying paintings, and pupils using it for their art lessons have little opportunity to be creative or make choices. Resources are limited and consist mainly of ready-mixed paint, a narrow range of papers, and simple collage materials.

123. Throughout the school, pupils' skills' in **art** show great variability. No element of **design** was observed. In each class, there are pupils who can draw and paint representationally, whilst others' work is "free-form" or done under close direction. Evidence of work in Class 1 shows that some pupils' representational skills are developing. For example, one boy had drawn the bright lights of a firework display quite clearly, which was the first time he had managed to draw representationally. The detail on others' drawings of people have developed over time. Pupils in Class 2 (9 to 11 years) do a lot of art, and the results are well displayed in the classroom. They have taken part in activities involving leaf, potato and fruit printing; close observation of the inside of fruit, with pastels used to draw what they saw; collage work and comb/string painting. Some of these showed good skills. During the lesson observed, however, two pupils were supported to do comb and string paintings, and achieved little as the higher attaining pupil was over-directed and the lower attaining pupil was not interested in the task. Pupils in Class 3 (12 and 13 years) had made some large, papier mache painted fruit which was on display, and the lesson observed contained two art activities - free painting and candle-making. During these, pupils did not show the skills evident in the class portfolio of work. In this, there are examples of work in a variety of media, showing varying levels of artistic skill and understanding although the range covered and materials used are limited. Simple art work displayed in Class 4 show that the 14 to 16 year olds also take part in art activities. The display includes three pieces of *pointillism* painting which are very effective. However, there is very little other evidence of pupils' work.

124. **Design and technology** is no longer planned to be taught as a subject. It only appears on the timetables for pupils in Classes 2 and 3, but the lesson timetabled for pupils in Class 3 did not take place. The scheme of work for Class 4 includes an eight week design and technology project, but there was no evidence of work carried out on this project, and the subject is not on the class' timetable. On occasion, pupils are withdrawn from other subjects for lessons in the cookery room. This supports pupils' **personal development** and self-care skills, but is not part of a planned programme of food technology education. On one occasion during the inspection, a pupil who was timetabled to be in the cookery room was, in fact, being occupied in the playground. Resources for aspects of design and technology, other than for cookery, are extremely limited. Provision for design and technology is poor.

125. There was no evidence of pupils' attainment or achievements in **design and technology**.

126. Since the beginning of this term, **French** has been taught through an appropriate commercial scheme, and suitable resources were available for the lesson observed.

However, there is no indication of how this scheme links with what pupils were taught previously so their skills can be extended. Nor is there an indication of how it fits into the overall educational plan for the pupils in Years 7 – 9, for whom learning a modern foreign language is statutory unless they are disapplied, or for Years 10 and 11 for whom it is an option but who have it on their timetable. Discussion with staff revealed that not all pupils are taught French, despite it appearing on their timetables. This does not give them equal opportunities for learning.

127. Evidence of work carried out this term shows that pupils use simple vocabulary to answer questions, for example being able to reply: *il y a du soleil; il fait froid; il pleut* etc. During this lesson observed, the pupils' learning was satisfactory. They completed a worksheet on compass points in French, and learned the appropriate vocabulary.

128. No **history and geography** was taught during the inspection because neither subject is scheduled for this term. There was very little evidence of past work in the subject in either teachers' records or pupils' files. **Religious education** is scheduled to be taught throughout the school this term. It is taught in three classes, but the subject does not have a "scheme of work", or appear on the timetable of Class 4. Resources for history, geography and religious education are very limited with few artefacts, videos or pictures used to support pupils' understanding. Visits into the community, or further afield – such as to museums – offer some support to pupils' learning.

129. There was no evidence of pupils' attainment in **religious education**, other than that observed in the lessons. No lessons were observed in Class 1 (5 to 8 years) or Class 4 (14 to 16 years). In a lesson for Class 2 pupils (9 to 11 years), the higher attaining pupils showed that they understood the importance of saying *thankyou*, and that people of different faiths said *thankyou* for food in different ways. There was no indication that the lower attaining pupils understood this, and their work was centred on identifying pictures of food items and sticking them onto a sheet. They signed *thankyou* when prompted. During a lesson in Class 3 (12 and 13 year olds) higher attaining pupils showed an understanding of the importance of the festival of Channukah for the Jewish people, and were beginning to understand some of the associated historical facts. Their knowledge built upon that learned in a previous lesson.

130. Each class has access to at least one computer, and pupils use them to develop skills in **information and communication technology**. Pupils in Class 3 particularly benefit from the skills and subject knowledge of the class teacher. However, there is no whole-school plan to guide teaching and learning in ICT, and pupils experience a narrow range of learning opportunities. Use of the computer is often as a "holding" activity. Resources have improved since the last inspection, but the limited quality and range of software, and the unreliability of some computers and printers result in the resources being unsatisfactory overall. This affects pupils' learning; for example, one pupil operated a simple art program and spent considerable time creating a picture, but the lack of a printer attached to his computer meant that the result could not be printed out. Some new computers had just arrived in the school, but were not in use during the inspection.

131. There was no evidence of pupils' attainment in **information and communication technology** other than that observed in lessons and some isolated pieces of printed work. Most of the youngest pupils can use the basic computer hardware such as a mouse and touch screen. They all understand the cause and effect principle of how to move and change items on screen. One pupil aged 10 was observed using a mouse and the *windows* menu system. He was able to copy-type a hand-written eight-line poem, using word processing and symbols programs. Lower attaining pupils in Class 3 (12 and 13 years) used the touch screen to identify and press parts of an on-screen face when requested by the computer,

and to move objects around the screen. A higher attaining pupil used a *paint* programme to create a picture, using different effects such as line drawing and spray painting. In Class 4 for the oldest pupils, a higher attaining pupil wrote a simple script for a class play using the keyboard and mouse. He edited, deleted and inserted text appropriately. This pupil was new to the school. Records for a higher attaining pupil in his last year in the main school contained no evidence of his attainment in ICT, and no ICT targets on his IEP. There was an ICT "scheme of work" for the class, but no ICT on the timetable and no record of any ICT work undertaken.

132. Class 1 uses a commercial scheme to teach the pupils **music**, and this is successful. There is no co-ordinated approach to the teaching of music in the rest of the school, other than that groups are taken in the hall and a retired music teacher and a member of the support staff lead sessions using a keyboard and guitar. These are mainly song-based, with percussion at times, and often related to forthcoming festivals. Pupils are reported to enjoy and benefit from these sessions, but none took place during the inspection. There is a satisfactory range of percussion instruments which are well-used by the younger pupils. However, the range of pre-recorded music and other supporting materials is inadequate. The school has good links with the Make Music Live organisation at the Barbican, in London. Each year, a teacher attends a workshop, and then works in school with given pupils. A small group attends the Barbican to watch a performance. This link is positive, and extends the musical experiences of some of the pupils.

133. There was no evidence of pupils' attainment in **music**, other than that observed in the lessons. The skills of pupils in Class 1 (5 to 8 years) are good. They listen well to pre-recorded music, and clap along although they do not yet show a sense of rhythm. The pupils are familiar with a range of percussion instruments such as bells, drums and cymbals, and use them enthusiastically and appropriately. Some can moderate their playing to be *loud* or *soft*. The higher attaining pupils remember given pieces of music, and prepare themselves for what comes next. One higher attaining pupil in Class 2 (9 to 11 years) also recognised a piece of music and knew the right time to blow his instrument along with the music. During the lesson observed, the lower attaining pupils showed no active participation, and their needs were insufficiently addressed.

134. There is no curriculum for **personal, social and health education**. Whilst the school is effective in supporting pupils' personal development, including their social and communication skills, and the self-management of their own behaviour, this is all carried out through the everyday work of the school. There are no lessons in personal, social and health education with a specific focus. Consequently, elements are missing from the provision, such as those relating to health education and to pupils' future as adults. For example, there is no drugs awareness or careers education.

135. The school recognises that it must seek outside resources for pupils' **physical education** lessons. Pupils attend swimming, fitness training, ice skating and horse riding sessions at various venues in the community; however, not all pupils attend all sessions and pupils' equal opportunities for learning are not effectively monitored. During the inspection, an inspector accompanied a group of older pupils to swimming, but the instructor did not turn up and so little was achieved in the lesson. On another occasion, three pupils from Class 4 went to a fitness session at the local school, leaving two boys at school with support staff. Their physical education took place in the *dome* – a very useful, large, covered multi-purpose area – but was unplanned and did not promote the pupils' skills. Resources for use in the *dome* are limited to lightweight equipment which, in particular, is inadequate for teenage boys with age-appropriate physical skills.

136. Very little evidence of pupils' skills in **physical education** was found. Skills observed were very isolated. In swimming, observations were as follows: one 10 year old pupil showed enough confidence to put his head under water and follow directions from a support assistant. A 12 year old pupil swam 15 metres with encouragement; a 14 year old swam on his back for 10 metres and a 15 year old swam 10 metres on his back with floats grasped to his chest. This suggests that pupils learn to swim effectively. One 14 year old boy was observed to have age-appropriate football and throwing skills; however, his skills were not extended in any way in the lesson in which he was taking part.