

INSPECTION REPORT

WESTHAVEN SCHOOL

Weston-super-Mare

LEA area: North Somerset

Unique reference number: 109406

Headteacher: Mrs Jenny Moss

Reporting inspector: Dr D Alan Dobbins
27424

Dates of inspection: 9th – 12th June 2003

Inspection number: 255130

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	7 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ellesmere Road Uphill Weston-super-Mare North Somerset
Postcode:	BS23 4UT
Telephone number:	(01934) 632171
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Stephanie Martin
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
27424	Dr D Alan Dobbins	Registered inspector	Music	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9079	A Moss	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
20622	A Sydney	Team inspector	Science Information and communication technology	
3055	C Tombs	Team inspector	English Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15590	S Slocombe	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education	
23300	L Evans	Team inspector	Art and design French	
13101	M Kell	Team inspector	Design and technology History Physical education	How does the school care for its pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Westhaven School is part of the North Somerset Local Education Authority provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, but is increasingly admitting pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, including some who have autistic spectrum disorders. It provides for 73 full-time pupils and one part-time pupil from age seven to 16 years; the agreed maximum number is 75. Fifty-four pupils are boys and 20 are girls. Fifty-three pupils are white, one is Chinese and 20 parents chose not to declare the ethnic heritage of their children. No pupil is learning English as an additional language. Pupils travel to and from school by minibus or taxi from the area around Weston-super-Mare and as far north as the south side of Bristol. Twenty-eight pupils (37 per cent) are eligible for free school meals, which is slightly higher than average. All pupils have a statement of special educational need, except one who is being assessed for a statement. As a consequence of their learning difficulties, the attainment of pupils on entry to the school is below that nationally expected for their age. The headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection in September 2000.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Westhaven is a good and improving school. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and management and sets very high standards. The good quality of teaching and the very good relationships between staff and pupils help pupils to quickly develop very good attitudes to their work. Consequently, the standards they achieve and the progress they are making are very good in many subjects and in their personal and social development and better than in many equivalent schools. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from the very good quality of their curriculum and are very well prepared for life after school. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in three lessons in ten.
- The relationships between pupils and all staff are very good. These contribute to pupils' very good attitudes to their work, to the very good standards they achieve in many subjects and in their personal and social development.
- Overall, the range of learning experiences is good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to take a wide range of nationally accredited awards to demonstrate the extent of their learning over their time at school.
- The links with parents and carers are very good and they make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.
- Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher expects both staff and pupils to achieve the very high standards she sets for herself.

What could be improved

- The number of teachers so that it is line with the recommendations of Circular 11/90.
- The way in which the governing body checks on the work of the school.
- The role of subject co-ordinators so that they lead, monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in their subjects
- The curriculum in design and technology to include planned provision for food studies for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the last inspection (November 1997) has been very good. Each of the key issues for action identified then has been met in full:

- The procedures for assessing the progress pupils are making are much better and provide good information for lesson planning and curriculum development.
- The quality of teaching has improved. The percentage of good and very good teaching is higher and there is no unsatisfactory teaching.
- Over the last three years, the underspend has been used to support the ongoing provision. Very little remains to support the provision from this time onwards.

In other areas, the leadership and management of the school are much better and pupils are better at their learning because the quality of teaching has improved. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, the range of nationally accredited awards they can now take to demonstrate the extent of their learning has increased substantially and is greater than is the case for many equivalent schools.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 6	by Year 9	by Year 11	Key	
Speaking and listening	A	A	A	Very good	A
Reading	B	B	A	Good	B
Writing	B	B	A	Satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	B	A	Unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	A	A	A	Poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in EPs*	B	B	B		

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

The school's statutory targets are appropriate. Pupils' individual targets, set at their annual review, represent good challenges for their work for the next year. This is especially so for the targets that are set for personal and social development, which make a significant contribution to the very good progress they are making. In English, for the younger pupils, the focus is on speaking and listening and pupils quickly achieve very good standards. As they move through the school, the good quality of the provision in English helps them realise very good standards in all the elements and this is the same for mathematics. The standards achieved in science are very good over all the years. In geography, they are very good for pupils up to Year 6 and satisfactory thereafter. In art they are good for pupils up to Year 9 and very good for those in Years 10 and 11. In the resistant material element of design and technology, pupils achieve satisfactory standards up to Year 6 and good standards thereafter. In all the other subjects, they achieve good standards, except for information and communication technology where they achieve satisfactory standards over all years. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain more success on a wider range of accredited awards than do pupils in many equivalent schools. There is no difference in the progress of boys and girls toward their learning targets or between those with different levels of learning difficulty.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils quickly accept the school's rules and routines and realise they need to work hard at their learning to enjoy success. All staff, including the administrative assistant and the site manager, are excellent role models.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The expectations of staff, the very clear guidelines for behaviour and the regular celebration of successful learning and effort all contribute to pupils' very good behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. The well-planned programme of personal and social education is very well supported by the very good relationships between pupils and all staff. Pupils know that they are respected and valued and, increasingly, act maturely and responsibly.
Attendance	Satisfactory overall, but better than in many equivalent schools.

The ethos is for learning in an ordered, friendly and considerate environment. This, and the very good relationships pupils have with all staff, helps them be comfortable and feel valued. As a result, they are happy and enthusiastic learners who work hard in their lessons and take pride in doing their best. Consequently, they achieve high standards in many subjects and are making very good progress in their personal and social development.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 3 – 6	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good

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

Overall, the quality of teaching is good. In three lessons in ten it is very good or better. Teaching in both English and mathematics is good and benefits from the implementation into lessons of the principles of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. Teaching is very good in science and in personal, social and health education and in most of the other subjects. Learning support assistants work very well with their teachers and make a considerable contribution to the good quality of the teaching, pupils are managed very well. Planning is good and is helped by the good targets in pupils' individual education plans. Most subjects are at least satisfactorily resourced with equipment and learning materials that match well with the specific needs of pupils. The good quality of teaching promotes good learning in most lessons and very good learning in four lessons in ten.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good for pupils up to Year 9 and very good for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum focuses on the development of communication, numeracy and personal and social skills. It provides a wide range of activities that cater for pupils' learning and additional needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to learn about and understand, the wider world and to appreciate the cultures, beliefs and traditions of other people. The very good provision for social and moral development is underpinned by the very good relationships between staff and pupils.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well. Child protection procedures are known to all staff. Provision, as it is outlined in statements of educational need is being met, although more time for speech therapy would benefit many pupils.

The school links very well with parents, who provide very good support for the work of the school. Many take a full part in decisions about new targets for learning at meetings and annual reviews. The curriculum includes all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education, although the food studies element in design and technology is not being taught. This is especially disappointing as the food studies room is very good. The additional needs of pupils are being met well, although, increasingly, pupils are being admitted with more complex learning difficulties and, if this trend continues, meeting their additional needs will require greater support from speech, physio- and occupational therapists. The targets in individual educational plans are clear and precise. They contribute to the good and better quality of learning by ensuring that new learning is built on that already established.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the work of the school and the skills, experience and commitment to translate this into reality. She sets very high standards and is ably supported by the two deputy headteachers and all staff.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are committed to the success of the school and are now well placed to ensure that the quality and range of the provision continues to improve by operating more formal procedures to check all the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Procedures for checking the quality of teaching and learning and appraising the performance of all staff are now well established. They are beginning to be effective.
The strategic use of resources	Very good, although by having too few teachers the number of pupils in classes is greater than in many equivalent schools. Extra money gained from being part of a number of regional and national initiatives helps extend and enrich pupils' learning experiences.

The school is understaffed by two teachers against recommendations of Circular 11/90 and the special educational needs PANDA (2002). The number of learning support assistants is appropriate. The accommodation is good and includes a number of very good specialist teaching rooms. Very good procedures ensure that the school's money is spent with great effect, including the prudent use of the historic underspend. Westhaven is very well placed to continue to improve because of the excellent leadership and management skills of the headteacher, the commitment of all staff and the support of governors.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the school is very well led and managed. • Their children like going to school and are becoming increasingly mature and responsible. • The good quality of teaching and the expectation that children will work hard to do their best. • The ease with which they can approach staff for advice and help. 	

The judgements of the inspection team confirm the points that please parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. It is inappropriate to judge the attainment of pupils for whom this school caters against national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils know, understand and can do. Judgements about progress and references to attainment and achievement take account of information contained in pupils' statements and annual reviews.
2. In all elements of English and mathematics, the standards pupils achieve get better as they move through the school. In this, they are helped by the good planning in the lessons in the other subjects to provide opportunities to practise the skills of literacy and numeracy and to extend their vocabulary through learning keywords important in the subjects. When they leave school at the end of Year 11, pupils achieve very good standards in both subjects. In these subjects, pupils gain more success than do those in many equivalent schools over a good number of nationally accredited awards.
3. In speaking and listening, the very good relationships between the pupils and their teachers and learning support assistants encourage pupils to communicate freely so that by the end of Year 6, they greet visitors politely and answer simple questions accurately and promptly. By the time they leave school, the highest attaining pupils converse very capably with visitors and ensure that their thoughts and opinions are known. They communicate very well in social situations such as lunchtimes and when off site easily purchase goods when shopping. The curriculum for the younger pupils appropriately focuses on speaking and listening. Less time is allocated to reading and writing. Consequently, the standards pupils achieve and the progress they are making are lower than in speaking and listening, but they are still good and because of the good provision by the end of Year 11, pupils are achieving very good standards. When they leave school, pupils read and write very well. For example, the best readers do so independently for pleasure and in support of their learning. They read fluently, with good intonation and have a good understanding of what they have read. They gain information from texts and the Internet to help them in their learning. The poorest readers are aware of the pleasure that can be gained from reading but do so infrequently, although they enjoy reading magazines that use many photographs. In writing, by the end of Year 11, pupils draft and redraft their writing to produce work of a very good standard. They regularly use computers to word process their work, sometimes using the stimulus of a poem to give them ideas for their writing. The best writers complete speech bubbles and cartoons that display their skills, imagination and their sense of humour. The introduction of a wider range of accreditation including the General Certificate of Secondary Education, the Certificate of Educational Achievement and modules of the Youth Award Scheme has raised the expectations of teachers and pupils and has contributed to the better standards pupils are achieving in reading and writing in Years 10 and 11.
4. Pupils are making similar progress in mathematics. They enter school with very little knowledge of mathematics. They gain a good start over Years 3 to 6 and achieve good standards. They build on these so that by the time they leave school they achieve very good standards. At this time, even the poorest at mathematics have a good understanding of how useful mathematics is in the real world. They use the four basic procedures and their number skills well in telling time, especially when they use the digital clock, dealing with money and when they use, for example a bus or train timetable to plan a local journey. These pupils will gain credit for their progress in mathematics through success on modules of the Youth Award Scheme. The better mathematicians take the General Certificate of Secondary Education or the Certificate of Educational Achievement. The successes they achieve are indicative of the considerable progress they have made since they entered school.
5. There are a number of reasons why pupils are doing so well in English and mathematics. These include: the allocation of considerable curriculum time; the good quality of teaching that makes

good use of the targets in pupils' individual education plans; the effective use of setting into teaching groups of like capability up to the end of Year 9; the wide range of nationally accredited awards that motivate pupils and help form the curriculum for those in Years 10 and 11; and the very good implementation into lessons of the recommendations of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy. The provision for both subjects shows substantial improvement since the last inspection.

6. Pupils enter Year 3 knowing very little about science. They make very good progress over all the years so that in Year 11 they gain grades on the General Certificate of Secondary Education and the Certificate of Educational Achievement that are much better than those gained by pupils in most equivalent schools. By the end of Year 6, pupils identify a 'fair test' but need help in organising and in carrying out the test. They have learned what living things need to survive and are able to name different parts of their bodies and parts of plants. They classify materials well and explain why materials change their form, for example from solids to gas. They build well on their prior learning so that by the end of Year 9, they describe food chains, classify substances into more detailed groups and know about balanced and unbalanced forces. The highest attaining pupils explain how light enables objects to be seen. They also know that it is a subject that allows them to find out for themselves through testing a hypothesis and they take this knowledge with them into their learning in the other subjects. All pupils gain some accreditation in science, most on the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination and the Certificate of Educational Achievement. Those who have difficulties in reading and understanding examination questions take the environmental science modules of the Youth Award Scheme.
7. Throughout the school, pupils achieve very good standards and make very good progress in their personal and social development. In geography, standards in Year 3 to 6 are very good and satisfactory thereafter. In art, standards are good for pupils up to Year 9 and very good for those in Years 10 and 11. In the resistant material element of design and technology, pupils achieve satisfactory standards up to Year 6 and good standards thereafter. In all the other subjects, pupils achieve good standards, except for information and communication technology in which they achieve satisfactory standards over all the years.
8. There is no difference in the progress of boys and girls toward their learning targets or between those with different levels of learning difficulty.
9. Since the last inspection, the greater range of accreditation opportunities, the higher percentage of very good and better teaching, the good use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning and the very much improved planning documents have helped realise better learning and a consequent improvement in the standards pupils are achieving in many of the subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils continue to show the very good attitudes to their learning that were recognised at the last inspection. Parents report that their children enjoy going to school. When they arrive, they are happy and look forward to their day. Despite the difficulties they have with their learning, they try hard to meet their teachers' expectations and work to the best of their ability. This was evident, for example in a lesson for the younger pupils who were discussing different books. They were motivated and engaged by the topic and listened very well to each other and to the adults who were helping them. The ordered, caring and calm atmosphere provides an environment that encourages pupils to do their best and, generally, pupils respond very well. They are quick to celebrate their successes, as well as those of others and are willing to join in as fully as they can in all activities. For example, in a swimming lesson for pupils in the combined Years 3 to 9, they showed exemplary effort and attitudes. They listened to instructions, concentrated and persevered in completing their tasks. In a mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 8, they worked very hard in learning about decimal numbers. In an English lesson for pupils in Year 9, they did likewise in looking for books written by Roald Dahl. In each of these lessons and many others, they were fully involved throughout and worked hard to produce their best work.

11. Behaviour in and around school is very good. Lunchtimes are enjoyable occasions because pupils behave very well and show consideration to each other. Behaviour as they move around the school is equally as good. Behaviour in the achievement assembly observed over the inspection was excellent. Despite the large number of pupils in each class and the widely differing needs of the pupils who are now entering the school, the management of behaviour in lessons continues to be good.
12. The strategies to maintain and improve behaviour work well and these are helping staff maintain high standards of behaviour for pupils with increasingly complex learning needs. They are very good role models and have established very good relationships with pupils. They encourage pupils in lessons and reinforce good behaviour and effort through praise, rather than through criticism. Throughout the day, the clear expectations are that pupils will be courteous and respectful at all times. In the main they are. When behaviour is not appropriate the headteacher appropriately excludes pupils for short periods of time. In the last year there were 21 fixed-term exclusions, mainly due to the challenging behaviour of the small, but increasing, number of pupils with complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is an obvious absence of oppressive behaviour. Bullying is dealt with very firmly. Lessons in personal, social and health education are helping pupils recognise their worth as individuals and they quickly develop an understanding of the impact of their actions on others.
13. When given the opportunity, those who are able show initiative and are very willing to take responsibility. For example, a small number of pupils participate fully in meetings of the school council, by bringing ideas for discussion from their classes. Older pupils are encouraged to make their own way to school and gain from taking part in the very good opportunities for work experience and the residential visits. Over all the years, pupils are careful when using equipment and other resources and show that they enjoy each other's company by spontaneously applauding the successes of their friends. For example, in an English lesson in Year 11, they listened to each other very politely when they presented a topic, asked relevant questions and applauded when this was done well.
14. Attendance levels are satisfactory and compare favourably with the national average for attendance of equivalent schools. Registration procedures meet statutory requirements.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. It is good or better in eight lessons in ten and compares well with the quality of teaching seen in many equivalent schools. This is especially praiseworthy as class sizes are greater and more lessons are taught by teachers without specialist knowledge of the subject than is often the case.
16. Class sizes can be as large as 15 pupils. Because of this, the range of pupils' needs and abilities is substantial and reflects a range of attainment that is greater than three National Curriculum levels. Teachers and their learning support assistants are aware of this and take care when matching lesson tasks to the needs of pupils. In many lessons, this is achieved in full because of the good use of the targets in pupils' individual education plans and the very good knowledge teachers have of the pupils. In these lessons, the quality of learning is always good or better.
17. When teachers are teaching subjects in which they have little specialist knowledge or training, or when the teachers have little experience in teaching pupils with special educational needs, the quality of teaching is most often satisfactory. In these lessons, the choice of teaching method is sometimes inappropriate and this is compounded by a lack of information about what resources can be best used to promote learning. In these lessons, the contribution of the learning support assistants to pupils' progress is much less than in the good and better lessons.
18. The principles of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy are incorporated well into lessons in English and mathematics and are helping pupils achieve the good and very good standards that they do in English and mathematics and their improving standards as they progress through the school. Teachers have been trained well and apply the recommendations

effectively into lessons in the other subjects, for example through the identification of key words.

19. Long and short-term planning are better than at the last inspection. Subject policies and schemes of work are providing good help in lesson planning. Targets in individual education plans are meaningful to pupils, teachers, learning support assistants and to many parents. They provide good help in securing the good match between lesson tasks and pupils' needs that is seen in most lessons. In the best lessons, the pre-planned use of learning support assistants and specialist resources results in lessons that often excite pupils, challenge them at appropriate levels and are enjoyed by both pupils and staff. The good expectations teachers have for pupils' learning are shown in the precision of their planning and the good use they make of a variety of different strategies to promote learning, although, this is not the case for their use of new technologies. In many subjects teaching and learning could improve through the increased use of computers, for example in letting pupils find out for themselves and in using computer controlled resources, such as Roamers.
20. Routinely, pupils are managed very well. Most often learning takes place in an organised, friendly and supportive environment. However, some pupils have difficulty in controlling their behaviour and attending to their learning for extended lengths of time. When their behaviour gets in the way of their learning, generally, learning support assistants act quickly to return them to their lesson tasks, often without disrupting the learning of others.
21. The very good relationships between staff and pupils allow pupils to be confident as learners and in many lessons to actively enjoy their learning. They know that their teachers and learning support assistants like and respect them and also that they give them pleasure when they work hard and succeed in their learning. This was particularly so in a lesson in design and technology, when the isometric drawings of all pupils resulted in the teacher and learning support assistant celebrating the good quality of the work.
22. The procedures for linking the work of the school with the home are well thought through. These include the home-school book, frequent telephone conversations and the developing homework programme. Some parents and carers make good use of the directions and advice they gain from staff by continuing to promote learning in the home. Many do not.
23. The good quality of teaching motivates pupils to do well as learners. In eight lessons in ten learning is good or better and is at least satisfactory in all lessons. Pupils come to school to work hard. In most lessons they do this. They enjoy their learning and are most often successful because they most often do their best. They know that when they achieve this, they will please themselves and also their teachers and the learning support assistants.
24. Teachers and learning support assistants are doing very well in meeting the needs of pupils who challenge them year-on-year with an increasing range of their learning difficulties and they are doing this for classes that are greater in number than is the case for most equivalent schools. They are a strength of the school.

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

25. The curriculum is good. With the exception of a planned programme for food technology for pupils in Years 3 to 9, it is broad, balanced and includes a relevant range of worthwhile learning opportunities. These match well with pupils' interests, aptitudes and learning needs. The curriculum develops skills, knowledge and understanding in the key areas of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. Priority is also given to developing pupils' personal and social skills and, as they move up through the school, they are provided with an increasing number of opportunities to take responsibility, show initiative and become aware of their part in the wider community. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is especially relevant, rich and effective. It includes careers education and guidance, work-related education, college links and work experience and opportunities to take nationally accredited awards greater than is

the case for pupils in most equivalent schools. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of education and the world of work.

26. A significant amount of time is allocated to developing literacy and numeracy. The procedures for teaching the basic skills are good and are well established. Training for teachers and learning support assistants and the good direction and support from the local authority advisors, has resulted in the good implementation of the recommendations of the national strategies and the Key Stage 3 strategies. Literacy and numeracy skills are deliberately and effectively reinforced in the lessons in the other subjects. The literacy and numeracy targets in individual education plans help by providing a clear focus for teaching and learning. The recent purchase of SuccessMaker will provide very good opportunities for recognising the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Targeted teaching should then realise greater progress in learning, especially for those whose attainment is lowest.
27. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. The After School Club meets two days each week and focuses on the acquisition of literacy skills. The Breakfast Club provides a calm start to the day on two mornings of the week and lunchtime clubs give pupils chances to play pool, rehearse their numeracy skills through playing bingo and be involved in learning different dances. In addition, pupils in Year 9 spend a week in France and those in Year 10 three days at Cannington Agricultural College. Other extra-curricular activities include taking part in the programmes set up by visitors to the school, such as the artist in residence and the scriptwriter in residence. The artist in residence is an expert in the local tradition of willow weaving and besides presenting opportunities for pupils to learn about art and sculpture in particular, gives interesting information on the local culture and history. These and the sports fixtures against local special schools, add considerable richness and choice to the curriculum and make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
28. The curriculum is inclusive in its organisation and content and ensures equality of opportunity for all pupils. For example, all pupils are included in the timetabled curriculum, in assemblies, breakfast, lunchtimes and after school clubs. All have the opportunity to take part in residential trips when they reach the appropriate year group, to progress to college link courses and to take part in suitable work experience placements. Care is taken in English and mathematics to identify pupils with particular difficulties in literacy and numeracy so that appropriate work can be set for them. Pupils with additional special needs are regularly supported by the learning support assistants in lessons and by other professionals such as the speech and occupational therapists and the nurse. Access to all parts of the buildings for those with difficulties in moving is much better than at the time of the last inspection because of the addition of ramps, the new toilet and shower and the height adjustable furniture in the newly refurbished food studies room. The good links with the local college of further education enable pupils to experience inclusion in a mainstream setting. The joint workshops with mainstream pupils in music and dance helps pupils maintain regular contact with their mainstream peers.
29. Provision for personal and social education is very good and has been adapted to include relevant aspects of citizenship. A comprehensive personal and social education programme, which includes drugs, alcohol, sex and relationship education is carefully planned, resourced and taught in discrete lessons. Important aspects of personal and social education, such as care, respect, thoughtfulness and responsibility are routinely reinforced throughout the day, at meal times, during tutorials, on residential trips, at the school council meetings and through deliberate and incidental links with other subjects like science, citizenship and careers.
30. Career education and guidance and vocational education is excellent. Pupils gain information on the world of work from Year 9 onwards. Good resources, including a good software program, help pupils identify areas of interest. An advisor from Connexions attends all transitional reviews and provides pupils and their parents and carers with ongoing support and advice. Each pupil has two, two-week work experience placements with Trident approved employers, in places such as retail stores, hotels, farms and garages. When on their placement, pupils keep excellent diaries of the events that make up their days. In addition, some Year 10 pupils follow Level 1 courses in hairdressing and sports and recreation of the National Vocation Qualification and others link with a

course in drama. Pupils in Year 11 take part in day release courses leading to the Introductory Award in Vocational Practice. The school is currently being considered for the Investors in Careers Award.

31. The links with the local community are very good and include a wide range of close and supportive links with the two local Rotary Clubs that have led to the funding of the post of the nurse-therapist and the creation of a rockery in the newly formed garden area. Children's World has worked successfully with pupils and focused on their attitudes towards bullying. Very good use is made of visits to and visitors from, the local community to extend and enrich pupils' learning experiences. The school plays a full part in the Weston Family of Schools that includes the local college of further education, another special school and two specialist secondary schools in sport and in media arts. As a result, pupils and staff gain access to sports coaching and training and to music facilities. In turn, the school shares its physical education and science facilities with the pupils from the nearby pupil referral unit.
32. The curriculum is much better than was the case at the last inspection. It is broader, has greater coherence, relevancy and is more ambitious. It is better resourced and its effect on learning is more rigorously monitored. Good subject policies and schemes of work reflect the vision of the school and guide teachers' planning well. As a result, pupils at the end of Year 11 are better prepared for their life after school than was the case at the last inspection. Overall, the provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also better than at the last inspection.
33. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. Assemblies are uplifting and the tone is set with live and recorded music and with flowers provided by the parents association. Assemblies provide very good support for reinforcing the school's values of care, consideration and being respectful of other people and their opinions. Weekly assemblies celebrate pupils' achievements in behaviour, effort and quality of work. All pupils take part and some routinely make contributions, for example through singing by themselves or as part of their class. Performances are met by spontaneous applause. Visits to the local church and visitors to the school from the local religious community add to pupils' increasing spiritual awareness. Lessons in religious education help develop pupils' awareness of spirituality and give them a chance to reflect on their own beliefs and on those of others. Lessons in art encourage pupils to consider the lives and, in some cases, the suffering of artists such as Van Gogh.
34. Provision for moral development is very good. Standards are set by the headteacher. She and the staff are very good role models. Trust and honesty are evident and all pupils know the school rules. Those in Year 10 have lessons on the importance of rules as part of their personal, social and health education and as preparation for work experience. For example, they identify which of the school rules might apply in different workplaces. As pupils move through the school they show an increasingly adult response to moral situations, including recognising dilemmas that do not have a clear-cut answer. Lessons in career education prepare pupils well for making choices. For some pupils the behaviour targets they have in their individual education plans are providing very clear guidance as to what is morally and what is socially, acceptable behaviour.
35. Provision for social development is very good and this reflects the hard work of the staff in helping pupils develop their social skills. Pupils are taught to share, take turns, work in groups and listen respectfully to each other and to their teachers and learning support assistants. Working in small groups is a feature of the lessons for older classes and the concept of teamwork is reinforced in assemblies through whole-class presentations. Taking part in the activities of the lunchtime and after school clubs provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their personal and social skills. The small group of pupils that regularly meet with the nurse-therapist gain through direct discussion of how they can improve their social skills. The school council meets once a month and introduces pupils to the idea of democracy. Work experience, residential trips and courses taken at the local college of further education are making a good contribution to preparing the oldest pupils for the wider world.
36. The provision for cultural development is good. Pupils gain much knowledge about local culture and traditions from taking part in the programmes offered by the artist and the writer in residence and by regular visits to museums and art galleries, libraries and local churches. They learn about

other cultures through, for example the visit to France and through lessons such as those in religious education, which introduce pupils to the main characteristics of many religions.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. As was the case at the last inspection, pupils continue to be very well cared for. Parents and pupils appreciate this. All pupils are valued equally and the school's very good ethos helps establish the very good relationships between pupils and staff. Teachers and learning support assistants make a significant contribution to providing a caring atmosphere and a safe and calm environment, both in and out of lessons. Staff know pupils well and respond sympathetically to them as individuals by taking good account of any personal circumstances that may affect their learning and general well-being. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour, such as bullying are very good. Despite the large number of pupils in each class, staff implement the behaviour policy consistently and fairly. The system, based on merit awards, is very effective in supporting improvement in pupils' behaviour because they understand the system and see it as relevant. Good behaviour is encouraged in ways that make sense to the pupils and the occasional outbreak of inappropriate behaviour is generally handled well. A good test of the system will be its success in maintaining and improving the behaviour of those pupils who are now being admitted with increasingly challenging behaviour caused by their complex emotional difficulties.
38. Procedures for child protection are very good. The headteacher is the designated person and this is known to all staff. The academic and personal progress of 'looked after' children are carefully monitored. Staff take part in appropriate training to enable them to keep up to date with first aid and to ensure that pupils receive their medication correctly and at the right time. The health and safety policy is comprehensive and regular risk assessments are carried out with good effect.
39. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Attendance rates are satisfactory when compared with the national average, but are better than this when compared with those of pupils in equivalent schools. Procedures for registering pupils work well and meet statutory requirements. Parents know very well of the need to inform the school as to why their children are absent.
40. Procedures for assessing the progress pupils are making in developing their personal and social skills are very good. Targets in individual education plans provide good help. Expectations for behaviour and for learning are agreed by staff and pupils and these are displayed in all classrooms. When pupils fail to meet these expectations on a regular basis they trigger procedures that are very well structured and managed. These include being given a 'yellow book' that contains specific and negotiated behavioural targets, which last for two weeks and are judged by teachers at the end of each lesson and checked by form teachers at the end of the day. If yellow is not sufficient, then orange and red books are used, which progressively involve the deputy headteacher, the headteacher and parents and carers over the greater period of six weeks. If behaviour still causes concern at the end of six weeks, pupils are placed on a behaviour support programme that involves parents and carers visiting school as well as the use of linked people such as the nurse- therapist. These very good procedures are aimed at preventing inappropriate behaviour from escalating by addressing problems early and systematically. They are effective because they place the emphasis on the pupils to acknowledge their unacceptable behaviour and provide strategies that help them in dealing with their inappropriate behaviour. The merit system is also effective in supporting pupils' personal development by acknowledging and rewarding appropriate behaviour, good attendance and work.
41. Information gained on pupils' behaviour is analysed well. For example, the behaviour records of one group of pupils were looked at and showed that a double period in one subject tended to result in a disproportionate number of incidents. The judgement was that the double period was too long a teaching session for these pupils and the timetable was rearranged so that the subject could be taught as two single lessons. The incidents of inappropriate behaviour were considerably reduced.
42. The previous inspection report identified a number of areas in which the systems for assessing,

monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress were ineffective. A key issue for action was to develop further assessment practice across the school. There has been improvement and the arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' learning progress are now satisfactory. The assessment policy is good and includes clear expectations for assessing learning and a lengthy list of different approaches to assessment with a good range of examples. However, the advice is interpreted inconsistently by teachers. For example, teachers do not regularly evaluate lessons against learning objectives, record pupils' successes and feed this information into the planning of future lessons. Work is generally marked quickly, but sometimes the marking relates to pupils' level of effort, or evaluates the quality of the work with a single word such as 'good'. Comments do not always include information on what is required to gain greater success.

43. Assessment does not always result in attainment being set against P levels or against National Curriculum levels for the different attainment targets. The moderation of teachers' judgements on attainment is at an early stage and is having too little an effect on 'levelling' judgements, for example across subjects. As a result of this, the procedures for tracking pupils' progress over the full duration of a key stage, or over their time at school, are at an early stage of development.
44. All pupils have individual education plans that include targets for literacy, numeracy and behaviour. Targets are generally written so that they are sharp and precise enough to enable judgements to be made on when pupils meet them. These are effective, practical, working documents and show that teachers monitor the targets closely and amend them, when necessary, between the formal review dates. Overall, pupils make good progress in achieving these personal targets.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. The school continues to foster very positive links with parents and carers whose views on the quality of the school are very good. Those who returned questionnaires and those spoken to at the parents' meeting and during the inspection agreed that they were very happy with the school. They like the friendly, family atmosphere and its very caring attitudes and the way that their children are becoming increasingly mature and responsible. They are pleased that their children like school and with the expectation that they need to work hard to achieve their best. They believe that their children are making good progress. The inspection team agrees with these positive views.
46. The partnership with parents and carers is working very well. They like the easy way in which they can approach staff, the ways in which information is exchanged, which are very effective and include home - school diaries for the younger pupils. The considerable distance many parents live from the school makes visiting difficult, but they appreciate being able to telephone their children's teacher on matters important to them. Many parents and carers show support for their children by attending, for example, achievement assemblies. Some parents queried the use of homework in supporting learning. The inspection team found that, although the use of homework was satisfactory overall, it was provided inconsistently by different teachers. The headteacher is working to rationalise this.
47. Parents and carers receive good information on the work of the school. The governor's annual report to parents, the prospectus and the regular newsletters are clear and informative. They are gaining satisfactory information on the progress their children are making, although annual reports do not explain in detail the progress children have made in each subject. They provide too little information on what has been learned, what is known and what can be done in each subject. Also, they do not chart progress against P levels or, where relevant, against National Curriculum levels. For many parents and carers the parent - teacher consultation evenings help in clarifying how pupils are doing and expand on the information in the annual report. Most parents attend the annual review and contribute to forming their children's targets for the upcoming year.
48. The involvement of parents and carers in the school's work is satisfactory. The procedures for involving them are well formulated but only a minority of parents and carers reciprocate. The parents' association is a small but dedicated band of hardworking people who provide valuable assistance to the school and have raised money to buy, for example, vertical blinds and carpets. The parent governors make an important contribution to the governing body.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The leadership and management of the headteacher are excellent. The headteacher is very well supported by both deputy headteachers and all staff. Since her appointment, she has worked energetically and wisely in leading improvement in the quality and range of the provision. She has a clear vision for the school and understands the developments needed to convert this into reality, including extending the range of provision to meet the needs of the increasing number of pupils who are being admitted with complex learning difficulties and making sure that they are fully involved in all the work of the school. It also includes, when appropriate, pupils gaining from the provision of other schools and colleges in the area. This is being helped by the active role of the headteacher in regional initiatives such as the Weston Educational Action Zone and the Weston Family of Schools. By providing support for initiatives, both are helping to extend and enrich the learning experiences of pupils.
50. The very good improvement seen since the last inspection reflects the shared commitment of all staff to succeed. Their capacity to continue to develop the work of the school is very good. The headteacher leads by setting the highest of standards. Day-to-day teachers, learning support assistants, the administrative assistant, the premises manager and those who clean the school routinely achieve the same high standards. Consequently, the school runs very smoothly and is becoming increasingly effective in its work. For example, over the last two years the range of nationally accredited awards, that pupils in Years 10 and 11 can take, has substantially increased and is now greater than those available to pupils in most equivalent schools. Teachers have undergone training in SuccessMaker, good links have been established with the local sports college and the college for media and arts. Initiatives such as the writer in residence and the artist in residence have been set up. Each has worked well in increasing the range of learning experiences available to pupils. Pupils now attend school in uniform and this gives them a feeling of community and belonging.
51. The school aims are precise and detailed and are clearly identified in the prospectus. The improvement plan is a good document. The procedures and success criteria linked with the stated aims are reasonable and appropriate and the plan for improvement provides a good template for further developing the provision and in helping make the school fully inclusive. The plan details improvements in individual educational plans and how SuccessMaker can be used to help improve literacy and numeracy, especially for the lowest attaining pupils so that they gain improved access to their learning in the lessons in all subjects. It recognises the importance of keeping staff abreast of new ideas and initiatives, for example by promoting the specialist training of learning support assistants in different curriculum areas.
52. The headteacher has a first hand knowledge of all that occurs in the school. She is beginning to delegate her responsibilities well. The deputy headteachers effectively discharge their duties, but subject co-ordinators are not sufficiently responsible for leading, monitoring and developing the provision in their subjects. The school is small in size, with few teachers and while this is not disadvantaging the quality of the provision, having subject co-ordinators take greater responsibility for the work in their subjects increases the potential for improving the provision. Increasing their authority for knowing how well their subject is doing, for example in the range of learning experiences, the quality of teaching and the learning outcomes of pupils against appropriate criteria such as P or National Curriculum levels, will release the headteacher from being close to the detail of developments in the subjects. Teacher will benefit from being empowered with specific responsibility and the headteacher will gain increased time to explore leadership elements of her work in seeking to extend and improve the range and quality of the provision even further.
53. The chair of the governing body and the other governors are committed to the success of the school. They are wholehearted in their support for the work of the headteacher. The governing body is appropriately formed and has a sensible number of committees, including finance and curriculum. Governors know very well the quality of the work of the school because they visit regularly. Since the appointment of the headteacher, they have been able to provide valuable help and advice, for example in deciding to use underspent money to fund continuing provision. However, to meet their role as 'critical friend' fully and to gain precise information on the quality of

the provision, they need to operate more formal procedures that check: the targets for the headteacher and the other staff; the quality of teaching and learning; the range and appropriateness of the curriculum; attendance and punctuality; and the progress pupils are making in their academic, personal and social development. They should also be fully involved in developing and evaluating the priorities of the improvement plan.

54. The procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are very good. They have recently been developed and are becoming well established. Soon after her appointment, the headteacher began reviewing teacher's planning documents, including their lesson plans. This was followed by the establishment of a programme of visits to observe teaching and learning, followed by a written report discussed with teachers. To date, they have made a satisfactory contribution to the better quality of teaching seen at this inspection, but they are sufficiently rigorous to make a greater contribution over time.
55. The story is similar for appraising the performance of staff. The procedures are very good, but have been established recently and are only just beginning to have an effect on development. In time this will be greater. Teachers have been set targets that follow the model of the headteacher's and are evaluated annually. Annual interviews take place for each member of the non-teaching staff. The notion of setting targets as a process for initiating improvement is fully accepted by the headteacher. But, as yet, not all those who work in the school have been set targets. The procedures are solid enough for the school to have gained Investors in People status in March 2003.
56. Induction procedures for new staff are good and are working better than at the time of the last inspection. The small size of the staff and the very good relationships they have with each other substantially negates the requirement of a formal programme of induction as an aid to help new staff become quickly effective in their roles. Nevertheless, new staff are assigned a mentor and are formally interviewed by the headteacher after a reasonable period of time at school. Further developing these procedures that include setting agreed targets, will be of benefit, if only because newly appointed staff will be able to recognise the progress they are making against agreed criteria.
57. The school's statutory targets have been appropriately set. Targets for individual pupils, written in individual education plans, work well in informing the planning of lessons. Information is well presented at annual reviews and forms the basis for the establishment of pupils' targets for the following year. Parents are briefed well on progress against targets set at the previous review and many take a full part in setting new targets.
58. There are too few teachers. The present number is two lower than is recommended by Circular 11/90 and is well below the lowest quartile of the special educational needs PANDA (2002). The reduced number of teachers, in comparison with recommendations and against the number found in other equivalent schools, is having a significant impact on the range and quality of the provision. For example, pupils do not learn about food studies and class sizes are much higher than in many equivalent schools. The high pupil-teacher ratio does not promote a very good match between staffing, the requirements of the curriculum and the needs of pupils because the opportunity to deploy teachers innovatively is very limited. There are few opportunities for staff to carry out non-teaching duties, including meeting their responsibilities as subject co-ordinators. The small number of teachers also means that the match between their specialist training and knowledge and the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education is not as good as it could be with a fuller complement. Teachers without specialist knowledge or training are teaching more lessons in other subjects than is the case in many equivalent schools.
59. The accommodation is good and is of generous size. Staff have worked hard to make it colourful and bright. The site manager and his staff maintain a very high standard of cleanliness. The recent building programme has resulted in excellent offices for the headteacher and other staff and these provide an impressive entrance to the school that helps in setting high standards. The specialist rooms for design and technology, both resistant materials and food studies and information and communication technology, which contains a good number of computers, are very

good. The room for pupils in Years 3 to 6 is spacious and attractive. Other classrooms are less so, for example the science room and those in the other temporary buildings. The library is an unsatisfactory base in which pupils can gain the skills of investigative learning or for reading for pleasure. It is too small and is not well stocked.

60. Planning for the strategic use of resources is very good. Priorities identified in the development plan provide the focus for budget planning. The headteacher, the governing body and the finance officer currently ensure that the agreed priorities are adequately funded. This is only possible by drawing on the underspend from previous years and by the extensive fund-raising activities organised by the headteacher. The continuation of many innovative activities will not be possible in the next academic year as additional funding, from the local Education Action Zone, will not be available. The school is seriously underfunded for its present population of pupils, which include a significant number of pupils with additional and complex needs. Officers agree that the roll includes a significantly greater number of pupils who have much higher levels of special needs than was the case in the past. To date the budget has not been increased accordingly.
61. Procedures for monitoring expenditure are very effective. The finance officer provides regular, detailed information to the finance committee and to the whole governing body. Day-to-day administration is very efficient and financial procedures are followed correctly. Financial control is very good, with the records of expenditure meticulously kept. Standards grants are used very effectively in supporting developments, for example by providing additional training for teachers and learning support assistants in improving literacy and numeracy.
62. The principles of best value are applied very well. Careful attention is paid to cost effective expenditure and procedures for obtaining competitive tenders are in place, for example, as in the refurbishing of the food studies room. Comparison is made with the costs and results of other special schools, both locally and nationally.
63. At present the school provides very good value for money. This may be difficult to sustain with diminishing resources and inadequate funding.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. The governing body should:
- i. Increase the number of teachers in line with the recommendations of Circular 11/90.
(Paragraph 58)
 - ii. Operate more formal procedures to check the work of the school, including:
 - the targets for the headteacher and the other staff;
 - the quality of teaching and learning;
 - the curriculum;
 - attendance and punctuality in school and in lessons;
 - progress in academic, personal and social development; and
 - being fully involved in developing and evaluating the priorities of the improvement plan.

(Paragraph 53)

The headteacher should:

- enhance the role of subject co-ordinators so that they effectively lead, monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in their subjects; and

(Paragraphs 52, 77, 83, 88, 98, 103, 107, and 123)

- extend the curriculum in design and technology by introducing planned provision for food studies for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3.

(Paragraphs 25, 90 and 93)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	52*
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	0	17	25	8	0	0	0
Percentage	0	34	50	16	0	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.

* Two lessons were taken by instructors who were not teachers at the school. Their lessons have not been included in the judgements on the quality of teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	74
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	28

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	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	8.9	School data	0.5

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

** 20 parents refused to identify the ethnic heritage of their children.*

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll*	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
53	21	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	9.4
Average class size	12

Education support staff: Y3 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	277.7

Financial information

Financial year	2002-2003
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	£
Total income	490,120
Total expenditure	493,815
Expenditure per pupil	6,584
Balance brought forward from previous year	15,036

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Balance carried forward to next year	10,001
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Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1.3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	0.9

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	74*
Number of questionnaires returned	19

*Three families have more than one child at the school

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	84	16	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	84	11	0	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	74	21	5	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	42	37	16	5	0
The teaching is good.	84	11	0	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	84	11	5	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	16	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	84	11	0	5	0
The school works closely with parents.	84	16	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	95	5	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	89	5	0	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	68	25	0	0	5

Other issues raised by parents

No other issues were raised by parents.

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

ENGLISH

65. The provision is good and results in pupils achieving better standards as they move through the school. Pupils in Years 3 to 9 achieve good standards. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve very good standards and attain National Curriculum Level 5 in some elements of English. These judgements apply equally to girls and boys and to pupils with different levels of learning difficulties. It represents a good improvement since the last inspection when the standards achieved were judged to be satisfactory. The better standards have come about because of better teaching, which is consistently good and often very good; teachers' good understanding of the subject; the implementation of the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy into lesson planning; and better assessment procedures and resources. The introduction of a wider range of accreditation, including the General Certificate of Secondary Education, the Certificate of Educational Achievement and modules of the Youth Award Scheme, has helped by raising the expectations of teachers and pupils alike. The very good relationships between teachers and learning support assistants and the pupils and their very good behaviour and attitudes to learning English also contribute to the good progress pupils are making.
66. Standards achieved in speaking and listening are very good. There are many opportunities, both formal and informal and in the lessons in all subjects, for pupils to develop speaking and listening skills. For example, they speak to an audience and learn from their mistakes because their contributions are valued and encouraged. They talk about significant events, as they did when they told about their weekends in a lesson for younger pupils. They wait, take their turn and speak with confidence. One pupil had visited the local hospital and showed his classmates the X-ray pictures of his arm and hand. With the teacher's help, he answered their questions confidently and animatedly, using appropriate technical terms. Pupils in Year 10 improve their speaking and listening skills by taking part in a drama course at the nearby college of further education. They plan and perform as a group and are showing an increasing awareness of audience and purpose. By the end of Year 11, most pupils speak confidently and listen well. One in Year 11 gave a talk on her pet dog to the rest of her class. She spoke clearly for 15 minutes without notes, helped by photographs of the dog and by passing around the dog's favourite toy, muzzle and lead. The questions and comments showed that her classmates had listened carefully and had understood her main points. Throughout the school there are planned opportunities to encourage speaking and listening skills. For example, in the meetings of the school council, pupils present and discuss their ideas formally; in lessons in career education they learn the skills of interviewing and decision making; and in lessons, for example science, they learn to use new adjectives like 'glittering' and 'transparent' when describing sand under a microscope.
67. Standards achieved in reading are good. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made good progress because of the teacher's clear focus on developing their understanding of text, which is well supported by specific lessons that concentrate on improving phonological awareness. Pupils in Years 3 - 6 learn to follow stories in books and show an understanding of how books work. They enjoy reading stories, especially predicting how a story may end, then explaining their reasons for the ending. Regular homework in reading and spelling is contributing to their good progress. By the end of Year 9, they have learned to use the Internet to research information on, for example William Shakespeare. The highest attaining pupils are good at using their reading skills to gain information, for example by reading contents and index pages and by scanning, skimming and highlighting text. They read accurately and with good understanding, as they did when reading extracts from Shakespeare's biography. The lowest attaining pupils make equivalent progress in their understanding by reading material and handouts that are appropriate to them. By the end of Year 11, the standards in reading are very good. They take it in turn to read aloud, with clarity and confidence, for example the poem 'Excuses, Excuses, Excuses'. They use expression and intonation well in enhancing meaning. The range of reading is good and includes Golding's 'Lord of

- the Flies' and Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. The poorest readers are helped through prompts but join in readily because they feel comfortable within a supportive classroom ethos. They are aware of the pleasure that can be gained from reading but do so infrequently, although they enjoy reading magazines that use many photographs.
68. Standards achieved in writing are good for the younger pupils and very good for those in Years 10 and 11. They make good progress in acquiring skills in writing because work is carefully targeted to challenge them. By the end of Year 6, the best writers communicate meaning through simple words and phrases. Their writing is legible and they have an awareness of capital letters and full stops. By the end of Year 9, writing is well organised, imaginative and clear. They learn to enliven their writing through the use of synonyms, for example, 'crash', 'impact' and 'collision'. By the end of Year 11, it is normal for pupils to use word-processing programs to draft and redraft their writing to produce finished work of a very good standard over a range of writing, including prose, poetry, speech bubbles and cartoons that display their skills, imagination and sense of humour.
 69. The subject is very well led by a knowledgeable and enthusiastic specialist. The scheme of work is good and teaching and learning are well supported by effective assessment procedures. These include targets for literacy that are working well because they relate closely to pupils' needs in English and are reviewed regularly. Pupils' progress in English is helped in a number of ways, other than in the discrete lessons in the subject. For example, literacy skills are reinforced in other areas of the curriculum and in the After School Club. SuccessMaker has recently become available to the older pupils and this is providing a powerful additional tool, especially in helping improve the literacy skills of the lowest attaining pupils. Annual visits from actors in the Young Shakespeare Company give pupils the opportunity to study plays, to take part in workshops with trained actors and to visit the theatre to watch performances. Computers are used well in supporting learning, particularly for the older pupils. Those with specific speech, language or literacy difficulties gain the support of the speech therapist and take part in specialised programmes for reading.
 70. Lessons in English make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The library, though attractive and well ordered, is too small for large class groups and contains too few books and other resources. It does not provide a good base from which to develop the skills of investigative learning or for reading for pleasure. It has quite properly been identified as an area for development in the school improvement plan.

MATHEMATICS

71. The provision is good. The standards pupils achieve and the progress they are making are good for pupils in Year 3 to 9 and very good for those in Years 10 and 11. As in English, the good quality of the provision results in better standards as pupils proceed through the school. Boys and girls achieve equally well. The improved policy and the introduction of a new scheme of work that more closely matches the increasingly complex needs of pupils, has made a good contribution to the quality of the provision. Teachers are confident and skilled at adapting and implementing the recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy into lesson planning and in setting targets that assist in measuring the progress of pupils. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are entered for external examinations including the General Certificate of Secondary Education, the Certificate of Educational Achievement, or the relevant modules of the Youth Award Scheme. Collectively, these provide suitably challenging accreditation opportunities for all pupils and a clear focus for their studies when they are in Years 10 and 11. The very successful results gained by past pupils reflect the good progress pupils are making during their time at the school. Pupils up to Year 9 are taught in groups of like capability so that work is more closely matched to their needs. This is an effective strategy that is contributing, in part, to the good progress they are making. Improvement in mathematics since the last inspection is good.
72. By the end of Year 6, most pupils use simple mathematical terms such as 'biggest', 'smallest', 'more' and 'less', accurately and confidently. The highest attaining pupils recognise and know the value of coins and are able to complete simple numerical calculations. For instance, they understand that two 50 pence coins are equal to 100 pence, which is one pound. They identify 'left' and 'right' and follow written instructions in drawing a maze on squared paper. They record

their work with increasing accuracy, for example when they constructed a simple matrix following an activity that involved matching the correct articles to different sized bears. They are working at National Curriculum Level 2 in each of the attainment targets. The lowest attaining pupils practise counting up to ten and are developing an understanding of units of measure through practical activities, such as measuring pencils and crayons. They learn the concept of using money to purchase goods by pretending to buy articles with coins up to ten pence. They are working at 'P' Level 8.

73. By the end of Year 9, the highest attaining pupils add and subtract decimal numbers up to two decimal places speedily and accurately. They use standard units such as metres and centimetres to measure length. They record data in simple tables and bar charts, both manually and when they use computers. They have progressed to National Curriculum Level 3. The lowest attaining pupils are steadily developing and consolidating their understanding of place value for numbers up to 1,000. They demonstrated this by re-arranging three cards, each showing a single digit, to make the lowest and highest number possible. The lowest attaining pupils practise using and applying mathematical terms, such as 'forwards', 'backwards', 'right' and 'left', in practical activities and tasks.
74. By the end of Year 11, pupils are secure in their knowledge and application of simple mathematical principles and procedures. They are very well prepared to undertake their external examinations and to gain creditable awards, which compare favourably with those gained by pupils in equivalent schools.
75. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers plan interesting tasks and activities that quickly attract pupils' attention and build well on prior learning. Lessons are a satisfactory mix of whole class teaching and group and individual tasks enabling the highest attaining pupils to extend their learning. The mental mathematics sessions that start each lesson are lively, enjoyed by pupils and set the scene for their learning very well. Pupils and adults relate very well with each other and this gives pupils confidence to ask questions and to try out new activities. They understand what is expected of them and generally settle quickly to work in a calm and purposeful manner. Consequently, they concentrate well and there is little inappropriate behaviour in lessons. The quality of lesson planning is, mostly, good. All pupils, including those with additional or complex special needs, are fully involved in all lessons. Lesson tasks are appropriate for all pupils and learning support assistants are very good in helping pupils with their learning. Computers are used to improve pupils' data handling skills, but they are used inconsistently, being dependent on the skills and confidence of individual teachers. Homework is set for pupils in Years 10 and 11, but it is not provided regularly enough to contribute to the learning of pupils in the rest of the school.
76. The systems to assess the progress pupils are making are good and include end of unit tests and targets in pupils' individual education plans. They tend not to focus on identifying pupils' strengths and weaknesses in mathematics, but the arrival of SuccessMaker will help in doing this. The marking of work is inconsistent. Many comments relate to only to the pupils' level of effort.
77. The co-ordinator manages the subject very well, with a clear sense of purpose and direction, but does not play a role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. Regular meetings with those who teach mathematics consider issues, identify directions for developing the subject and discuss the achievement and progress of pupils. These meetings are helpful to staff and especially so at this time when the scheme of work is still relatively new. Resources are good and are appropriately used to support learning. Reports to parents do not always contain sufficient detail on what pupils know, understand and can do or the progress they are making.

SCIENCE

78. Provision is very good. Pupils achieve very good standards and are making very good progress over all the years. Examination results compare very favourably with those of pupils in equivalent schools. Last year, five pupils gained passes in the General Certificate of Secondary Education. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, when the provision was judged to

be satisfactory.

79. Pupils enter Year 3 knowing very little about science. By the end of Year 6 the highest attaining pupils attain at National Curriculum Level 2 in all attainment targets. They identify a 'fair test', but are not ready to carry one out without help. They observe carefully and communicate their findings in simple ways, for example in explaining why toy cars run at different speeds down ramps. Pupils in Year 6 know what living things need to survive and are able to name different parts of their bodies and parts of plants. They have learned to sort different materials and have seen how materials can change, for example when they cook pancakes. They compare the movement of different objects, but even the highest attaining cannot predict the direction of a shadow. By the end of Year 6, the lowest attaining pupils continue to have difficulty expressing their ideas but take part enthusiastically in group investigations. They observe closely and describe whether a force is pulling or pushing. They make accurate predictions from regular experiences but have difficulty doing this when experiences are new. They are at 'P' Level 7.
80. By the end of Year 9, in scientific enquiry, the highest attaining pupils attain at Level 3 of the National Curriculum. In the other attainment targets they are at Level 4. They describe food chains, classify substances and demonstrate balanced and unbalanced forces. They have covered much ground. Work is carefully recorded and pupils take pride when completing tasks in their science books. The highest attaining pupils draw diagrams and explain how light enables objects to be seen. The lowest attaining pupils still believe that changing the shape of an object will alter its mass and that it is possible to see a white object in a completely darkened room. They are working at Level 1 of the National Curriculum.
81. By the end of Year 11, the highest attaining pupils have progressed to Level 5 except in scientific enquiry where they are at Level 4. They understand that differences in environments give rise to different organisms and understand the importance of environmental diversity. They plan and perform their own experiments. Some will take the General Certificate of Secondary Education examination, others the Certificate of Educational Achievement. Environmental science is also accredited as part of the Youth Award Scheme. The lowest attaining pupils who have difficulty reading texts and recording their work take the science modules. Almost all pupils leave school with some form of accreditation in science.
82. Teaching is enthusiastic and energetic and routinely good or very good. Pupils benefit from this and in many lessons are excited about their learning, especially when they are finding out for themselves. Teachers have high expectations for learning and introduce structure to pupils' observation and problem solving in the first year. Lessons are planned well, with a focus on practical activity allowing pupils to learn to make predictions and clarify their thinking through testing. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. In the best lessons, learning support assistants are used well, mainly in helping small groups of pupils focus on their tasks. Pupils, who have difficulties in always controlling their behaviour are treated sensitively, but firmly and when they are reminded of their responsibilities as learners quickly return to their work. The increased use of information and communication technology will broaden and enrich pupils' learning experiences and make teaching and learning more effective.
83. Leadership is good, by a subject leader with specialist training. Planning reflects very well the wide range of needs of the pupils. Assessment is satisfactory, but relies heavily on recognising progress through questioning pupils in lessons. The subject leader does not observe other science teachers, but the three science teachers plan and moderate work together informally. Accommodation is good with one specialist room but timetabling constraints mean that the room is not always available for all lessons in science. Resources are satisfactory, with imaginative use made of everyday materials and the local area. There are good links with the subject co-ordinators in other special schools and the local authority advisor has given very good advice for teaching pupils in Years 10 and 11.

ART AND DESIGN

84. Provision is good. The standards pupils achieve are good up to and including Year 9 and are very

good for pupils in Years 10 and 11. All pupils take the General Certificate in Secondary Education and many achieve good success. A visiting artist and sculptor enrich and broaden pupils' experiences by providing very good opportunities for them to learn about the ancient regional tradition of weaving willow. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 have created good life-size sculptures, such as animals and design and make screens such as an arbour and other pieces in the playground. Art has made satisfactory improvement from the good standards reported last time.

85. By the end of Year 6, pupils are visiting and observing local landscapes. In lessons, they copy with care the teacher's sketch on the whiteboard and interpret it in colour using collage technique. The best artists draw with good accuracy and understand the effect of overlapping tissue paper. From their line drawings they create a landscape with sea, river and hills. The lowest attaining pupils need help to understand their drawings and guidance in using glue and sticking paper when creating their collage. By the end of Year 9, pupils are interpreting the dancing figure collages of Matisse and draw simple human figures from life and when they pose for each other. They do preparatory sketches and develop them into collages interpreting them according to the approach of Matisse. They cut and glue independently with good accuracy and concentration. The lowest attaining pupils continue to require greater encouragement and reassurance in completing their work.
86. By the end of Year 11, pupils have experienced making sculptures from sand and clay and use them as development work for their projects. They sketch features of the local environment with good accuracy. They continue to learn about colour, form and presentation from studying the styles and work of a number of artists. For example, they simplify and stylise boats after the fashion of Terry Frost, in practising composition and the use of colour. The best artists angle their boats to convey the idea of movement and have a good understanding of the emotions expressed by particular colours. In their work on Van Gogh, they incorporate the subject of guns and discuss these within today's world. They study the form of the ear and look at how Picasso simplifies it. They create their own simplified drawings by making very good white on black studies of each other's ears and heads.
87. The quality of teaching is very good in a third of lessons and good in the others. Teachers have high expectations for learning and routinely challenge pupils. Pupils respond very well and are committed to achieving their best results. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, because of the teacher's very good knowledge and enthusiasm, develop a keen interest in the lives of famous artists. They know about Van Gogh, of his depression and that he tried to kill himself and they link this with the primary colours used in his work. Basic skills are learned well, such as the use of colour and those of observational drawing. Literacy skills are practised well in lessons, especially when pupils evaluate their work, orally and when they write their evaluations and answer questions about their work. For example, one pupil summed up his work 'My work is full and lively'. Pupils with difficulty in always controlling their behaviour sometimes disrupt and slow the pace of lessons. When this happens, a brief period out of the lesson to 'cool down' is normally sufficient.
88. The co-ordinator gives good leadership and has worked hard to produce the new policy and scheme of work. This reflects the school's aims and values well and the content of the relevant programmes of study. It provides for the clear progression of skills and knowledge as pupils' progress through the school. Most units refer to the work of famous artists and this is clearly an area which pupils find very interesting. Co-ordination does not include all the responsibilities associated with leading, monitoring and evaluating all the work in art, for example, judging the quality of teaching through a programme of lesson observations. Other than through the work of the artist in residence, the local community is not well used in supporting teaching and learning. For example, local art galleries are infrequently visited. Assessing pupils' emerging skills continues to be an area for development. Although scanners and digital cameras are used, the development of digital photography as an art medium is largely unexplored and teaching and learning will benefit from more use of computers.
89. Lessons make a good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because they promote personal achievement, raise self-esteem and foster co-operation. They widen pupils' experiences by extending knowledge of multicultural art such as African art and in learning about

the styles and lives of artists, past and present.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

90. Overall, the provision is satisfactory, but narrower than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make satisfactory progress when working with resistant materials and those in Years 7 to 11 achieve well. As a result, pupils at the end of Year 11 are successful in their General Certificate in Secondary Education examination, which was introduced for the first time last year. The learning experiences of pupils in Years 3 to 9 are limited by too narrow an interpretation of the relevant programmes of study. They do not follow a planned and structured programme in food studies. This is especially disappointing because the specialist teaching room is very good and very well resourced.
91. By the end of Year 6, pupils have developed good fine motor skills. The highest attaining pupils use scissors very carefully to cut out shapes, for example when they make a mobile and colour accurately between the lines. They know about simple electrical circuits and the most competent carry out simple soldering. By the end of Year 9, pupils have extended the practical skills associated with resistant materials and they use small tools such as a tri-square and marking gauge appropriately. By now, they have a better understanding of the link between design and making. Projects, for example making an electrical device, such as a lamp or 'steady hand' game and a small device that is operated by pneumatic control, show that they have recognised the importance of drafting ideas before arriving at a final design. By the end of Year 11, the link between design and making is very well formed. They show this well when they make a clock from a precise and detailed design that they have created to meet their own requirements. They carry out research, including Internet searches, to generate ideas and evaluate current designs before developing flow charts for design and construction. The highest attaining pupils produce designs that are both creative and functional and show a good understanding of the characteristics of the materials used. They have also developed some skills in evaluating their work critically and for making suggestions for improvement.
92. Overall the subject is taught well. A teacher with good specialist knowledge provides a range of activities that allow pupils to develop, in an organised fashion their design and practical skills. A variety of teaching methods is used well in promoting observational and communication skills. Pupils are routinely challenged to consider and explain the design elements that contribute to the success of the items they are making. Learning support assistants make an effective contribution to learning because they are aware of pupils' individual skills and patterns of behaviour and respond to them skilfully and appropriately. These features of good teaching were well illustrated when a class of Year 8 pupils made wooden trolleys to see whose would travel the furthest when rolled down a ramp. At the end of the competition, the teacher led a good discussion about how the design of the winning trolley influenced its good performance. Throughout the lesson, pupils were enthusiastic and worked hard. This is not always the case because learning, especially in the workshop, is compromised by class sizes that are too big. This makes planning difficult and the drifting of attention too easy. At these times, pupils find it difficult to complete their tasks because the teacher and learning support assistant are not able to deal with all those who require their help, for example when they are sawing or filing or using a vice or cutting board.
93. Leadership and management, just resistant materials, are good. The good curriculum helps develops pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding over a good range of materials and techniques. New learning is built well on previous learning because of the good planning and good specialist knowledge of the co-ordinator. The specialist workshop is too small for teaching groups greater than ten. Learning resources are satisfactory overall although there is a shortage of equipment, such as a vacuum former, to develop work with plastics. In addition, new technology is not yet used effectively in areas such as computer-aided design and manufacture. Pupils' progress over the whole range of the subject is compromised because food studies is not taught.

GEOGRAPHY

94. Provision is good. The standards achieved are very good for pupils in Years 3 to 6 and satisfactory

for those in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not take geography. The absence, because of illness, of the co-ordinator who mainly teaches the older pupils has affected the standards they are achieving. The standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils' positive attitudes to the subject and very good relationships they have with teachers and learning support assistants make significant contributions to the progress they are making.

95. Pupils in Years 3 to 6, make very good progress in understanding the immediate environment around the school including the seashore. As part of a topic studying 'the journey of a river', they walk up a local hill that gives a clear view of the estuary of the River Axe. This is a well-planned and organised outing with clear learning objectives so pupils know what to expect. The effective use of learning support assistants ensures pupils are grouped appropriately. Aspects of personal and social education, such as care, relationships and road safety are carefully monitored over the whole of the visit. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They listen well as the teacher explains why the boat centre is ideally located and as she reads notice boards about the local wild life. They offer their own views and comments on the surroundings that interest them. They respond readily to her questions, for example, "Why do we have wildlife areas?" and 'What should we do with our rubbish?' This helps pupils understand the importance of preserving and maintaining natural areas for animals and insects. From the top of an old windmill, pupils see views of the river meandering into the estuary. They become familiar with geographical language appropriate to the journey of a river, such as 'source', 'springs', 'streams', 'waterfalls' and understand that rivers start high up in the hills or mountains and make their way down to the sea at various speeds. The good use of resources, including CD-ROMs, maps, atlases and compasses helps pupils develop an interest in and knowledge of, places beyond their immediate experience.
96. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress in understanding compass points and what countries and oceans border the British Isles. The teacher is a non-specialist and is not sufficiently familiar with the subject or a range of appropriate teaching approaches to fully involve all pupils. While the highest attaining pupils work independently and make good use of the index and contents pages of an atlas to list countries in different compass directions, the lower attaining pupils need constant prompting and support to complete worksheets that are the same for all pupils. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils make satisfactory progress in understanding the nature, causes and effects of earthquakes through watching a video on earthquakes that occurred in Japan and the United States of America. Opportunities to reinforce specialist vocabulary such as, 'plate', 'tectonic processes', 'faults' and 'heat sensors' are missed. However, pupils enjoy the lesson, are able to locate Japan and the United States on a globe of the world, as well as other countries where earthquakes occur on a world map and are better informed as to the causes and effects.
97. The quality of teaching for the younger pupils is routinely good or very good. It is characterised by good planning that is based on a very good knowledge of the pupils and good subjects knowledge that together contribute to lesson tasks matching well with pupils' capabilities. Learning support assistants are deployed well and make a significant contribution to learning. This is not always the case for the older pupils. In some lessons that were judged satisfactory, too little planning for the use of learning support assistants resulted in them acting passively and not making a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
98. Little development is occurring in geography because of the absence of the co-ordinator. The policy document is good, as is the scheme of work. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress are satisfactory and include informal ongoing assessment and end of unit tests. Geography makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as pupils explore their local environment and further afield. Resources are satisfactory. The cross-curricular links with literacy and history are good.

HISTORY

99. History is not studied by pupils in Years 10 and 11. Provision for those up to Year 9 is good. Over all years, they achieve well and make good progress. This represents satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The good standards they achieve result from good quality teaching and planning that ensures a broad subject curriculum that is balanced well over the different periods of

history.

100. The youngest pupils learn about British history, such as Roman Britain and the Victorians and the significant people and features of those societies, like Roman baths and Hadrian's Wall and the life of Queen Victoria. They also learn about some of the characteristics of early civilisations such as the ancient Greeks and features of ancient Egypt like mummification and hieroglyphics. They develop an understanding of chronology through studying different periods in the past, but they also begin to appreciate how evidence about the past can be gathered and analysed when they learn about the work of archaeologists.
101. By the end of Year 9, pupils have increased their knowledge of a number of different periods in British and overseas history. They know about the reign of Charles I and the important events that occurred in that time, such as the Civil War and understand the changes in agriculture and rural life associated with the development of factories and the growth of industry during the Industrial Revolution. They learn about the North American Indians in developing a broader view of history that helps the highest attaining pupils, especially, gain good historical skills of enquiry. They are encouraged to organise their own learning about the past by seeking clues and by comparing different sources of evidence in seeing how the same event can be presented differently. They know of the advantages of using first hand evidence and the risks of using second hand evidence, through learning, for example about the black people of North America and women in history lessons are making a very good contribution to pupils' moral and cultural development.
102. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although in many lessons especially for the younger pupils it is better. In these lessons, pupils are presented with a good mix of activities that are varied and interesting that build systematically on their previous learning. As a result, they respond well and remain attentive and enthusiastic because they have good understanding of what they are learning. These features were evident in a lesson on Victorian Britain. The lesson consolidated pupils' knowledge very well by reviewing the previous week's visit to the North Somerset Museum. The teacher presented an introductory activity that encouraged pupils to explain what they had learned over the visit using appropriate vocabulary, such as 'artefact'. A good mixture of explanation and questioning prompted pupils to recall accurately features of 'Clara's Cottage' and her life. Good relationships with staff give pupils the confidence to contribute to discussions and to reinforce their learning by describing how water pumps were used and the old toys they had seen. The lesson was skilfully planned and directed so that this discussion led on to activities in which pupils examined Victorian and modern toys and clothes. Groups were carefully chosen and the tasks presented matched their different needs well. However, not all lessons are this well planned and managed. In these lessons, teaching points and opportunities to assess pupils' knowledge are missed as lessons do not begin with effective introductions or end with useful plenary sessions.
103. Leadership and management is limited by the absence from school of the co-ordinator. Learning resources are satisfactory and, even though pupils do visit castles such as the one at Caerleon and the North Somerset Museum, too little use is made of facilities in the community to extend pupils' learning and to make history relevant. Procedures for assessing and recording pupils' achievements and progress are at an early stage of development. Information and communication technology is underused in supporting teaching and learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

104. Provision is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress, although in Years 3 to 6 this is over a narrow curriculum. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection which, in part is the result of new resources and staff training. Assessment procedures need to be further developed to provide accurate and comprehensive information on the progress pupils are making.
105. In Years 3 to 6, pupils use painting programs and develop their mouse skills using simple but appropriate software. They control a Roamer with adult help, keying in instructions to make it move and they are aware of some of the everyday uses of computers. By the end of Year 6, the highest attaining pupils are at Level 1 of the National Curriculum. By the end of Year 9, they have

learned to use the Internet for research and apply these skills to lessons in the other subjects. They have little experience of using computers for control or modelling. The highest attaining pupils reach National Curriculum Level 3 in communicating information and Level 2 in handling information. The lowest attaining pupils are working at Level 1 and find difficulty in learning to communicate information because of their literacy needs.

106. By the end of Year 11, they learn how traffic lights are controlled by a computer. They word process well and confidently select font, size, bold and underline. They format paragraphs, import text and pictures and adjust to size and location in their files. Pupils compare the use of computers with other methods, for example in a Year 8 lesson on cutting and pasting notes for a school council meeting or achieving the same poster using a publishing program. The lowest attaining pupils in Year 10 set up a database, need to follow a plan for it but are unable to design their own. The highest attaining pupils interrogate a database and redesign it to function better. These pupils have the greatest breadth of work, although there is no evidence of them using E-mail or spreadsheets. By the end of their time at school the highest attaining pupils are computer literate and attain at National Curriculum Level 3. The lowest attaining pupils progress toward Level 2. For all pupils this represents satisfactory progress in their learning, but they cannot demonstrate this because they are unable to take any nationally accredited awards in the subject.
107. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school has a new computer suite and all teachers have been trained on the national programme supported by the New Opportunities Fund. A scheme of work has been introduced and a start has been made on central record keeping. The After School Club regularly attracts pupils and SuccessMaker is beginning to be used to improve literacy and numeracy skills. Important areas of the provision require further development. Teachers without specialist knowledge teaching the subject or using it in lessons in their own subjects require ongoing support and advice. Information and communication technology resources in the classroom for the youngest pupils are unsatisfactory and all teachers and learning support assistants are not confident users of computers and computer operated equipment. The procedures for assessing the progress of pupils need to be further developed to recognise the gains they are making in the key skills of the subject against P levels or those of the National Curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

108. Provision is good. The standards pupils achieve are good by the end of Year 9 when they have a good opportunity to practise French during an annual one-week stay in a French hostel in Boulogne. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection, although French is no longer taken by pupils in Years 10 and 11 because of lack of time.
109. Pupils have good attitudes and listen carefully to the class teacher, but have difficulty recalling words and phrases and need much practice and consolidation of learning. During Years 7 and 8, pupils gradually build their vocabulary from greetings, introductions, colours and counting. They use their mathematics skills to make a tally chart and block graph entitled 'Tu as un animal'. They attempt crosswords and find them increasingly easier to complete as their vocabulary of French words increases. In Year 8, they consolidate previous work and expand their vocabulary with sports themes, farm animals, kitchen and brief descriptors. By the end of Year 9, they are more confident and the focus is towards speaking in phrases and responding better when they are questioned, for example, when answering questions such as 'Quel temp fait il?' and on the theme of leisure, 'Je joue avec'. They respond well to questions about their family, or eliminate in writing incorrect answers. When they go to France they listen and react to instructions from French people, sometimes with cues from the teacher.
110. Only a small number of lessons were observed. In these lessons, the quality of teaching was good. Relationships with pupils were good and pupils responded well and confidently in practising the pronunciation of new words and in using previously learned words and phrases. The high expectations of the teacher for pupils' learning encourages them to be fully involved and to have

fun, especially when they attempt to pronounce words that are new to them. Skilful teaching results in all pupils being appropriately challenged over a curriculum that is good because it is relevant to the pupils and focuses on developing oral skills. Assessment at the end of Year 9 is carried out when pupils are in France and tests pupils' abilities to understand and communicate with French people. Pupils have important first-hand experience of the French way of life and this makes a very good contribution to their cultural development. There are useful software programs that are used well in helping pupils learn French. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

MUSIC

111. Music is taught to pupils up to Year 9. The provision is good and has been maintained at this level since the last inspection. Pupils achieve good standards and are making good progress. Lessons were seen for pupils up to Year 6 only. Judgements are made from analysing planning documents, discussions with teachers and pupils and the observation of musical performances in assemblies.
112. By the end of Year 6, the highest attaining pupils are good at following the actions for a good number of songs. They have experimented with electronically generated sound and are able to produce a number of rhythms using an electronic keyboard. They tell which they like best and, using appropriate vocabulary, such as 'fast', 'beat' and 'rhythm' give the reasons for their choice. Their singing is good. They sing well, with gusto and accurate phrasing. They have learned to identify many instruments by their sound and know the roles of composer and conductor. When they perform as a group, they respond well, beginning and stopping on command and making louder and softer sounds when required. They have little experience of composing, but react well to signs for 'fast', 'slow', 'soft' and 'loud'. Their musical vocabulary is good and they are beginning to discuss the characteristics of different types of music and recognise music from different cultures. By the end of Year 6, the lowest attaining pupils play untuned percussion instruments with decent rhythm and have learned to start and stop on time.
113. They build well on their learning through to the end of Year 9. They have increasing opportunities to compose music and to record their compositions using non-standard notation. They are beginning to do this well, especially when they use the programmed rhythms available through electronic keyboards. By the end of Year 9, they sing confidently, even as soloists in assemblies, have a good knowledge of different types of music, of how music can be used to depict different moods and have experienced playing their own music, mostly through keyboards.
114. Too few lessons were observed to judge the quality of teaching. Co-ordination, day-to-day is satisfactory, but does not fulfil all responsibilities for leading, monitoring and evaluating all the work in the subject. Assessment procedures satisfactorily record pupils' attainment, but do not provide good guidance for lesson planning. All pupils, but especially the highest attaining pupils, are capable of learning over a wider range of musical experience than is offered by the curriculum. Especially for pupils up to Year 6, music, in the form of simple rhymes and songs, is used well by teachers to promote learning in the lessons in many of the other subjects. Music plays a visible and important role in the life of the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

115. Provision is good. Physical education was judged a strength of the school at the last inspection and the standards attained then have been maintained and the subject continues to be a strong area of the curriculum. Pupils benefit from a comprehensive, broad and balanced curriculum that is delivered through a variety of well-taught activities. They achieve well with particularly good progress being made in swimming. As a result of their overall good progress, pupils in Year 11 were able to take the Certificate of Educational Achievement for the first time in 2002. Most were successful. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also do well in the sport and leisure module they take as part of the Youth Award Scheme.
116. By the end of Year 6, they have made good progress in activities such as gymnastics and games.

They move around the hall listening to instructions, dodging and finding space and running 'slalom-like' through a series of cones on the floor. They are enthusiastic and readily join in relay competitions and small games, such as rounders. The highest attaining pupils have good hand-eye co-ordination. They use a variety of bats to strike a ball bowled to them and field and throw a ball when it is hit towards them. As they move through Years 7 to 11 they have opportunities to acquire and practise the skills of athletics and a range of ball games. By the end of Year 9, the most competent pupils field a ball moving along the ground and return it accurately to the wicketkeeper and move their feet well to position themselves for catching a ball delivered from a racquet. They know the characteristics associated with a successful sprinting style and the most accomplished runners have a good technique. At the end of Year 11, pupils have good understanding of health related fitness and know that warming up 'loosens the muscles' and exercise, in general, increases the heart rate.

117. Physical education is taught well. Lessons are very well structured and organised. This results in pupils following well-established routines with a good understanding of what they are expected to do. As a result, lesson time is used well and pupils work hard because teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations for their performance and behaviour. The good knowledge teachers have of the subject helps them select activities that stimulate pupils. They are good at using ongoing assessment of pupils' skills to provide them with targeted teaching that helps extend learning, improve performance and enhance confidence. Pupils are managed very well, in part because of the very good relationships between staff and pupils. They co-operate very well when they are in pairs, small groups and teams. Some lessons are too long and combined over classes so that there are many pupils, and as they are taken by one teacher it means that it is difficult to group pupils and continue to have good oversight over each group. In addition, when lessons are outdoors a single teacher and the learning support assistants are responsible for large numbers of pupils in an open and potentially difficult environment.
118. Provision for swimming is very good. Although pupils have to travel to a nearby leisure centre, the time is very well spent. These lessons provide very good opportunities, initially for pupils to be water confident, then they learn to move forward and backward using the four basic strokes. The generous number of teachers and learning support assistants that take part in swimming, as well as leisure centre staff, means that pupils work in a very well ordered, organised and very safe environment. All pupils behave excellently throughout these sessions, displaying exemplary effort and attitudes.
119. Physical education is co-ordinated by a subject specialist and the overall management of the subject is good. Visits to places such as outdoor activity centres and ice rinks provide good additional learning experiences and contribute well to pupils' personal and social development. The links with other special schools set up through the Somerset Special Schools Sports Association are good and enable pupils to participate in competitive matches and tournaments that include beach cricket, basketball and cross-country. Pupils gain a range of certificates issued by the school, the local leisure centre and through national schemes in activities such as swimming and athletics, which encourage and motivate them to make a great effort to improve.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

120. Provision is good and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils achieve well and they are making good progress. A new scheme of work, based on the locally agreed syllabus, has recently been developed. This is good. The subject is well planned and appropriately organised through discrete lessons up to Year 9 and through modules of the Youth Award Scheme in Years 10 and 11. Timetabling arrangements meant that only lessons in Year 9 were observed, but analysis of pupils' work, conversations with teachers and scrutiny of their records, show that pupils are developing a clear factual knowledge of Christianity and other major religions. The whole school celebrates festivals such as Christmas, Easter, Divali and the Chinese New Year.
121. By the end of Year 6, highest attaining pupils know that Jesus has special significance through his teachings and that he provides a model for relationships and behaviour. They learn about the characteristics that make people special by listening to the parable of the Prodigal Son. By the

end of Year 9, pupils identify the similarities and differences in a number of religions. They recognise the importance of the Bible to Christianity and the Koran to Islam. They are confident and respectful in discussing the similarities in Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. They are considerate to others and value each other's ideas and opinions. When discussing religious articles and artefacts they have brought from home, they make interesting and thoughtful contributions. In Years 10 and 11 pupils develop a good understanding of moral and social issues, such as why the word 'sorry' is hard to say. They study the lives of inspirational people such as Martin Luther King and Florence Nightingale, identifying their personal attributes and how their actions affected others.

122. Teaching and learning are good overall because teachers have good subject knowledge, know the pupils well and demonstrate sensitivity and concern in their teaching. Teachers and learning support assistants set good examples by their treatment of and response to pupils. In the lessons observed, good teaching was exemplified by well-chosen tasks that helped to promote pupils' interest and concentration, questioning skills of a high level and lively discussion of relevant issues. All pupils are well supported in their work by either teachers or the learning support assistants. Assessment and recording of progress is an area for development as the new scheme of work becomes embedded. The very good relationships between staff and pupils create a climate in which pupils feel confident in expressing their feelings and beliefs, knowing that teachers and other pupils listen and respect their views. Pupils are considerate and supportive of each other and their behaviour and their attitudes to their work are very good. At present, opportunities for assessment are not clearly identified and documented. Although numeracy skills are reinforced in some lessons, this is often not planned and recorded.
123. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and works closely with the other teachers of the subject. Resources have been audited and are used very effectively to support the topics in the scheme of work. Visitors to the school, and visits to cathedrals, mosques, synagogues and a Greek church interest the pupils and support their learning. As yet, there is no effective monitoring of the subject although the co-ordinator provides a written report to the headteacher. Assemblies and acts of collective worship make a strong contribution to the subject. The use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning is underdeveloped.
124. Lessons in religious education make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.