

INSPECTION REPORT

CEDAR HALL SCHOOL

Benfleet

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115457

Headteacher: Mr. Peter Whelan

Lead inspector: Dr. Mick Megee

Dates of inspection: 2nd-5th February 2004

Inspection number: 258883

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:	Foundation Special
Age range of pupils:	4-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	124
School address:	Hart Road Thundersley Benfleet Essex
Postcode:	SS7 3UQ
Telephone number:	01268 774723
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Appropriate authority:	Essex
Name of chair of governors:	Fred Branch
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Cedar Hall School provides for boys and girls aged 4 to 16, although at the time of the inspection there were no pupils under five in the school. It is located eight miles from Southend in Essex and it caters for 124 pupils, most of whom have moderate learning difficulties. The remaining pupils have social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, autism, severe learning difficulties, or communication difficulties. Since the school was last inspected, pupils with increasingly complex needs have been admitted, and the number of pupils with challenging behaviours is rising rapidly. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs and when they come into the school, their attainment is below average. Pupils come from a wide catchment area of about a 12-mile radius from the school, including Canvey Island, Southend and Rochford.

Although pupils' socio-economic circumstances vary, in general they are about average. Most pupils are from white (British) backgrounds, although there are four pupils from different heritages. A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language. During the previous year, two pupils left the school other than at the usual time of leaving, which is well below the national average.

The LEA has been considering the future of special schools and five years ago the school was under threat of closure. However pupils are still being admitted to the school, and numbers are continuing to rise. Although the LEA has not yet agreed a future role for the school, it recommends the admission of an increasing number of pupils who have found learning difficult in a mainstream school. The LEA has also provided a two-year grant for the school to develop its outreach work with partner institutions such as Wintergardens Primary School, Writtle College, South East Essex College, and King John School. Pupils attend these schools each week for individual sessions, half or whole days. The school achieved the Investors in People Award in 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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23300	Lily Evans	Team inspector	English Art and Design Geography Special educational needs English as an additional language
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an **effective** and harmonious school and it provides good value for money. Most pupils, whatever their learning difficulties, achieve well in most subjects because teaching is good, behaviour is managed well and pupils are involved and engaged in their lessons. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attitudes to learning and to school life are good. Pupils' personal qualities are good, and around the school relationships are very good, especially between pupils. Good leadership from the new headteacher, a satisfactory but improving management team, and sound governance are enabling the school to successfully develop and improve the quality of education provided for pupils. The local education authority's decision to close the school five years ago and the current review of its provision for special education are barriers to raising achievement due to the uncertainty surrounding the school's future.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Most pupils achieve well in English and mathematics, and all pupils achieve well in science, music and art and design. Achievement in design and technology is very good.
- The school does not provide sufficiently for information and communication technology (ICT).
- The clear procedures for managing pupils' behaviour are strongly supported by staff.
- The new headteacher has made a good start in the school by setting a new direction and appropriate priorities.
- Senior staff and managers are becoming better skilled as leaders, but there are weaknesses in monitoring, subject planning and in whole-school management of curriculum and assessment.
- The school has very good working links with parents, other schools and colleges.
- The school has very good arrangements which ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety.
- Teaching is good in Years 1 to 6 and Years 10 and 11, but it is only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

The profile of pupils recently entering the school has changed quite dramatically and this has put pressure on the whole school community. Despite these difficult circumstances the school has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. Although further work is still needed on the provision for ICT, on monitoring and on management across the school, there have been positive improvements and developments in accommodation, outreach and other aspects of the work of the school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	good	good
Year 6	good	good
Year 9	satisfactory	good
Year 11	good	good

Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.

Achievement is **good** overall for all pupils, including those with additional special educational needs. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls, or pupils with English as an additional language. Achievement is satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 because teachers are less experienced and less skilful than their colleagues, and because the school has not yet made whole-school arrangements for monitoring the curriculum. Year 11 pupils achieve well in the extended range of accredited coursework programmes they follow.

Pupils' personal qualities are **good**. Their **moral and social development** are **good**, and **cultural** and **spiritual development** are **sound** overall. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **quality of education** provided by the school is **good**. **Teaching** and learning are **good** overall. For Years 1 and 2, teaching and learning are very good. In Years 3 to 6 and in Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are good, but in Years 7 to 9, where teachers are not so skilled, they are satisfactory. All staff understand pupils' learning needs well and know their individual targets and this helps pupils to learn quickly. Support assistants make a valuable contribution in the classroom by supporting pupils effectively. The new procedures for managing behaviour help to minimise disruption and allow all pupils to work hard.

The curriculum is good and provides well for pupils' increasingly complex needs, aptitudes and interests, but the provision for ICT is inadequate. There is good care, guidance and support for pupils. The school's links with parents, the community and other schools and colleges are very good. These partnerships provide pupils with further good opportunities to make progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Taken together, **leadership and management** are **satisfactory**. Leadership by the new headteacher is good and in a short time he has made a good start in identifying what needs to be done, and implementing effective action in priority areas: the management of pupils' behaviour and the development of a very good outreach service. He is providing senior staff with good opportunities to exercise leadership. Management is satisfactory: individual managers are skilled and very committed to the school and its pupils, but they have not yet developed whole-school approaches to major areas like subject action planning, curriculum, assessment or monitoring. The headteacher is backed by appropriately challenging governors. They have the commitment of all staff to continuing work to further raise and improve the quality of provision. Governors are very supportive and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and all statutory requirements are met, except in the inadequate provision for ICT.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school and have confidence in the new headteacher. Parents receive good information about their child's progress and about the school and written information is supplemented by good sharing of information at meetings. Parents would welcome more opportunities to meet with teachers to discuss pupils' progress, and the inspection team agrees that this would be a useful improvement. Pupils speak well of the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Continue to develop the roles of senior staff and subject leaders in monitoring teaching and learning, subject planning and curricular development across the whole school to ensure consistency in teaching and planning.
- Improve the quality of teaching for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

and, to meet statutory requirements the governing body should:

- fulfil the requirements for ICT in the National Curriculum to address pupils' underachievement.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are below those expected for pupils of this age, but are similar to those expected for pupils with moderate and more complex learning difficulties. Achievement for most pupils is good, and there are no differences in achievement for boys and girls, pupils with English as an additional language, or those with more complex needs. However the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is only satisfactory in English, mathematics, history and religious education.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils generally achieve well in English, mathematics, and science.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve less well in some subjects because the quality of teaching for those pupils is less skilful.
- Pupils make good progress against their individual personal and social targets because all staff know the pupils' needs well, and attend to these as a priority.
- Achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory because pupils are not consistently taught specific skills.

Commentary

1. There is a good climate for learning within the school, and effective teaching ensures that the individual needs of pupils are met. Pupils generally achieve well in English and mathematics, although achievement is only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. This is because of a lack of specialist or experienced teachers for that age group. ICT is not taught as a separate subject in the school and this means that pupils have little opportunity to make progress in learning specific skills, and this is a weakness.
2. Pupils make good strides against their individual social skills targets. This is because these targets are well chosen, precise and relevant and staff know the individual needs of pupils and make them a priority. Most of the targets in individual education plans (IEPs) are achieved within the predicted time-scales. Individual academic targets vary in quality: many are clear, but some have no clear measures of success. This makes it difficult to know whether pupils are making as rapid progress as they might.
3. Pupils with additional special needs and those for whom English is not the home language achieve well overall. For these pupils in Years 1 to 6, achievement is good and can be very good. In Years 7 to 9 it is satisfactory and in Years 9 to 11 it is good, following the pattern for other pupils in the school. There is no difference in the achievement of girls and boys.
4. In English, most pupils achieve well in speaking and listening, reading and writing, although writing is less well developed in Years 7 to 9 where teachers have not yet received appropriate training. The local health authority does not provide the school with a speech therapist but the school bridges the gap out of its own resources by employing its own therapist and a therapy assistant in order to provide decent support for these pupils. This means that pupils with communication difficulties make good progress in developing their expressive language.
5. In mathematics, most pupils make good progress from the very beginning of school as staff get to know pupils very well. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make only satisfactory progress because the teachers have not yet received specialist training, and the subject coordinator is not able to monitor and support other staff.
6. In science, music and art and design, pupils achieve well throughout the school, and achievement is very good in design and technology. In physical education, pupils achieve well in

sports competitions with other schools, and pupils who take part in horse-riding make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils enjoy coming to school and attitudes to learning and to school life are good. Pupils' behaviour and personal development are good because they are well supported and they have a good range of curricular experiences. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school promotes pupils' confidence and self-esteem through warm and sensitive pastoral care and guidance.
- The genuine kindness and thoughtfulness shown by some of the older pupils towards younger ones makes a strong contribution to the quality of school life.
- There is an atmosphere of orderliness in the school with many pupils moderating the behaviour of others and sharing responsibility towards the school community.
- Improved systems for managing behaviour are having a positive impact on pupils' behaviour.
- Pupils and parents trust the school to deal with any anti-social or unkind behaviour promptly and effectively.

Commentary

7. Pupils are generally enthusiastic about school life. They talk about their school with pleasure. Attitudes to learning are generally positive in lessons, particularly in design and technology and practical lessons where pupils concentrate well and ask for help from adults when they need it. These positive attitudes are displayed particularly well in Years 2, 5, 6, 10 and 11. There are clear procedures for behaviour and support from staff is strong. The positive strategies for managing behaviour help pupils to develop self-confidence and improve their self-esteem. Occasionally a few pupils are disruptive and noisy in lessons where teachers do not have effective strategies. Generally, however, staff are very sensitive to the needs of individuals. The pupils respond well in the vast majority of lessons because teachers implement the school's positive behaviour policy consistently.
8. Most pupils with additional learning difficulties have positive attitudes to learning, especially when working in class, individually or in a small group with the support of a teacher or learning assistant. Occasionally in lessons where there is no one-to-one support from a learning assistant, pupils with severe learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties are not sufficiently well engaged. Overall, however, they persevere well with appropriate and sometimes challenging tasks, and as a result, they achieve well. Pupils with learning needs associated with their behaviour are fully integrated in classes across the school. They succeed well with the effective support of teachers and support assistants. The small number of pupils with particularly challenging behaviour benefit from the new systems for managing behaviour introduced by the recently appointed headteacher, who has expertise in this aspect of special needs.
9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 co-operate well with one another and with staff and other adults. They show that they are capable of taking initiative and responsibility when they are given opportunities such as attending local colleges. These older pupils also develop their independence well through vocational opportunities, work experience and by attending and sometimes leading school clubs. All pupils have opportunities to help with a range of tasks in the school and to express their views through the School Council. They know that they can take any concerns, such as bullying, to staff. Furthermore, they are confident that they will receive appropriate help. The school is aware of the need to deal promptly and effectively with bullying and tackles this issue well. The incidence of bullying noted on the questionnaires by a significant number of parents is the result of recent admission of pupils with challenging

behaviour. Parents are confident about the school's ability to handle any incidents firmly and fairly. There were 18 fixed-term exclusions but no permanent exclusions in the last academic year, as shown in the table below. These were due to behavioural problems related to the admission of some disaffected pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. Teachers are becoming increasingly confident about managing these pupils under the guidance of the senior management team.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	120	18	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0

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

- Pupils have a very good understanding of right and wrong and respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The school makes good provision for pupils' personal development. Staff are good role models and support is given to pupils to develop their self-esteem. The School Council helps to develop pupils' understanding of democratic processes. Social development is good. School clubs are well attended and pupils take part in various projects, for example, the annual Fellowship Afloat sailing experience. Pupils have a good understanding and appreciation of their own culture. Their understanding of life in a multi-cultural society is more limited. The school has a strong stance on inclusion that is demonstrated in many ways, through work with other schools and in the community. They visit art exhibitions, work with artists, and take part in musical performances, sporting, dance and drama activities and charities. The development of self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is sound overall. Pupils' personal development is addressed distinctively in each department according to the pupils' major areas of concern.
- Pupils arrive promptly each morning and their good rate of attendance has been maintained since the last inspection. The school promotes the importance of regular attendance well and has good links with the education welfare officer. Parents show good support for the school by complying with its high expectations regarding attendance.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.0
National data	8.2	National data	2.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. The curriculum is well planned and effective, and pupils' care, guidance and support are good. The school maintains very strong partnerships with parents, the community and other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. In Years 1 and 2 there is very good practice and pupils learn very successfully. In Years 2 to 6, and in 10 and 11, pupils learn well and there is effective teaching, but in Years 7 to 9, teaching is only satisfactory and pupils do not learn as quickly as they might. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching of the youngest pupils is very well planned and very effective.
- Staff know pupils well and this helps pupils to learn.
- Support staff work well to assist pupils to make progress.
- Staff do well in managing pupils' difficult behaviour.
- Activities are not always closely matched to pupils' needs in Years 7 to 9.
- Teachers in Years 7 to 9 do not assess pupils' work as well as in other parts of the school.

Commentary

12. When pupils first enter the school, they get off to a flying start. They are taught very well by staff who have considerable expertise in seeking out and finding imaginative ways of keeping the pupils motivated. Pupils are treated with respect and kindness and are offered an exciting range of experiences, which match up well to their individual needs and interests. Teachers plan and teach the right things in very small steps and this helps the pupils to learn successfully.
13. Teachers consolidate these early successes well as pupils move up through the school. However, the teaching for pupils in Years 7 to 9, while satisfactory, does not maintain the rapid progress of the earlier years. This is because of a variety of factors. Sometimes the teaching is undertaken by temporary staff who have not yet fully developed their skills in respect of pupils who behave differently from what is expected. Sometimes teachers of these pupils do not ensure that tasks are well matched to all the pupils in the class, some of whom have very different needs from others. In Years 10 and 11, pupils again receive teaching of good quality.
14. All staff take the trouble to get to know how to approach the pupils and develop close, friendly relationships. This means that pupils learn with confidence and those pupils who find learning a challenge thrive. Support staff work skilfully alongside the teachers and they are well briefed on how to manage pupils. They use their initiative well. For example, a support assistant, who had been helping girls to get changed before a PE lesson, arrived in the hall before the teacher and the boys. She immediately got the girls into the swing of the lesson by playing "O'Grady" for a few minutes. Support is well judged: staff do not intervene unless they absolutely have to, and when they do their help is timely and effective.
15. The new headteacher's influence is found in almost every classroom. He has introduced a consistent, effective approach to managing difficult behaviour which all staff follow. Clear boundaries are set for pupils if they misbehave, but this is done in a calm, matter-of-fact and friendly way which allows the pupils to return quickly to their work.
16. Assessment is good throughout the school apart from Year 7 to Year 9, where it is satisfactory. In Year 1 to Year 2 the assessment systems make appropriate use of 'P' scales - the nationally recognised levels which precede the National Curriculum level descriptors. In Year 3 to Year 6 there is a similar provision but with greater use of the actual National Curriculum level descriptors. Formative and summative assessment procedures are very well structured and very good use is made of assessment outcomes, through teachers' lesson planning, to ensure pupils receive appropriate individual provision that enables them to learn and achieve.
17. In Year 7 to Year 9 teachers do not always make use of assessment information. There is no assessment coordinator for these years to promote such use and subject coordinators do not

yet have time to monitor their subject planning and teaching. This means that assessment procedures and their use are barely satisfactory although some tracking of pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy is taking place. In Year 10 and Year 11 programmes are in place which require external staff to measure the progress made and the skills which have been achieved. These programmes have a built-in system which ensures that effective assessment regularly takes place, such as at the end of a module, and very good use is being made of assessment data to inform planning. Through their individual education plans pupils are involved in a review of their own progress for mathematics, English, religious education and personal and social education. In the lower school, teachers use assessment of individuals' skills to plan lessons so that pupils progress at a good rate. In the upper school, teachers use assessment in mathematics and English only to plan work for individuals. From Year 7, pupils are responsible for asking teachers to record if progress has been made towards a target. This does not yet happen systematically, which means that teachers sometimes miss opportunities to note down pupils' achievements and do not have a complete record from which they can plan.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 53 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (6%)	16 (30%)	22 (42%)	12 (23%)	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good and the school provides a wide range of opportunities for learning beyond the school day. The accommodation is satisfactory and the resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides well for pupils' increasingly complex needs, aptitudes and interests.
- There is a very effective and innovative curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6.
- Older pupils receive a very good range of programmes, which are externally accredited.
- The school provides effective personal, social and health education.
- The opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in ICT are insufficient because the National Curriculum requirements are not met.
- Action plans for some subjects are not yet in place.

Commentary

18. The curriculum meets the National Curriculum requirements in all subjects, apart from ICT. This limits pupils' achievement in the subject and their skills are not used sufficiently across other subjects. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education are met. There are no timetabled lessons for the teaching of discrete ICT skills and pupils are not provided with their entitlement to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study for the subject. The school is providing well for pupils with an increasing range and complexity of needs. The school day has changed to a seven-period day to provide shorter lessons. This is a more suitable arrangement for pupils such as those with emotional and behavioural difficulties who find it difficult to remain focused on their work for long periods. The school realises the need to evaluate the effectiveness of its provision and termly meetings have recently been started to focus on particular subjects.
19. An innovative curriculum in Years 1 to 6, particularly for low achievers, based upon the curriculum for the Foundation Stage provides appropriate small learning steps and ensures pupils have suitable individual provision. There is effective planning of the development of skills

from the time they enter the school, which ensures that pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6.

20. The curriculum to help pupils prepare for the world of work and further education is developing well. There is a good range of accredited courses and examinations available to pupils in Year 10 to 11. The courses and examination boards are well chosen to meet pupils' interests and ability levels and several pupils attend mainstream schools for particular subjects. Most pupils go on to college for a year to help them further in their choice of vocational careers. Provision for work experience is very good. Staff work closely with the school's Connexions advisor to provide very good support, both before and after these placements. Staff sympathetically take into account the interests and needs of each pupil before placements are suggested.
21. Planning for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. Pupils were consulted and involved in producing the school's sex education programme. The scheme of work is good and ensures progression and continuity of learning.
22. The school provides well for pupils with additional needs. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder have well-planned and relevant development programmes. Pupils who need alternative communication are well catered for through the use of Makaton sign language. The school has tackled effectively the need for input of speech and language therapy by employing a therapist to devise special programmes and training a learning support assistant to deliver them.
23. The school offers a wide range of opportunities for trips and visits, making good use of community links and facilities. The out-of-hours programme enriches pupils' learning, particularly in sport and athletics. However, some of these are limited to 'wet play' days only and the provision of regular weekly activities is underdeveloped.
24. Most teachers are matched to the subjects they teach by qualifications, training or experience. There are some gaps however. Recruitment of staff has been difficult, especially with the uncertainties about the future of the school, and this has meant that temporarily the school has had to use unqualified staff. Teachers of English and mathematics for pupils in Years 6 to 9 have not received specialist training. The science provision would benefit from a specialist technician to free the teachers of the significant workload of preparation and cleaning. Similarly there is no-one who can give technical support for ICT, and this means that hardware problems are resolved very slowly. Support staff are skilful and well trained, but the specialist speech therapy assistant is sometimes pulled off her duties in order to provide cover for absent classroom staff. This not an effective use of her time and it affects continuity of learning support for pupils, who lose out by this arrangement. At a managerial level, there are gaps which the school plans to fill. This is now a matter of urgency. There is no assessment or curriculum coordinator for the classes in Years 7 to 11. All staff attend a good range of training programmes which link into the school's priorities and the system for performance management.
25. The accommodation is satisfactory and most of the concerns identified in the last inspection report have been addressed. The school is a bright, welcoming environment for pupils, particularly the primary classes. There is now good accommodation for art and mathematics. However, there are shortcomings that limit the delivery of some subjects. The food technology room is small and limits the range of teaching activities and size of the class. There is still no library, there is no ICT suite, and there is no space for a 'time out' area or quiet area although there are now more pupils who need such provision. There is limited space for storage of physical education equipment and for small group work and the staff room is too small. Overall, resources are good and storage space for science is now adequate.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures pupils' care, welfare, health and safety very well. It provides pupils with good support, advice and guidance and involves them well in their personal progress through seeking their contributions to annual reviews.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides good personal and learning support for pupils, whatever their needs.
- Pupils moving on to other schools and colleges are very well prepared and advised.
- The school consults with and values well the views of pupils in personal and school affairs.
- Health and safety arrangements are very good and are followed consistently.

Commentary

26. Parents and inspectors are in agreement that the school does a very good job in preparing pupils for entry to school, for transfer to other schools, for work experience and for moving on to college. The school does very well in paying attention to pupils' individual needs. Outside professionals, like the educational psychologist, are thoroughly briefed and consulted for their assistance when appropriate. Personal development is monitored well by class teachers, incidents recorded formally and the system of awards and house points monitored across all years. Formal records of personal development are maintained for those with personal education plans. Class teachers track pupils' academic progress thoroughly in Years 1 to 6, 10 and 11, but this is less developed and consistent in Years 7 to 9.
27. The School Council, consisting of pupils from older year groups, has discussions with teachers on issues such as improving the outside areas of the school, supporting pupils who have difficulties making friends, and in forming school rules and policies on sex and drug abuse. Pupils' views of their own learning are sought prior to annual reviews, at which they are present and have a voice. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are responsible for their own targets in their individual education plans, but there are difficulties with this when pupils are not fully aware of the targets or when the targets are inappropriate.
28. The governors' health and safety committee plays a leading role in ensuring the high quality level of care and arrangements for pupils' well being throughout the day and on trips. Risk assessments of the buildings and grounds are carried out very regularly and the school benefits from the professional expertise of the governors. The site manager has very high standards and repairs are identified and completed quickly. The headteacher is the named teacher responsible for child protection. Arrangements to provide for child protection are very good. The school's own policy is up to date and complements the guidance from the local authority. All members of staff are regularly informed and updated about procedures and responsibilities in this area. Many staff members are trained to administer first aid. Records of pupils' medical and dietary needs are updated regularly. Administration of medicines follows clear and personalised procedures with daily entries in logbooks. The school maintains very good links with outside support agencies and specialists provide extra support for pupils in school. Families are also referred to specialist organisations such as the Children with Disabilities Team, to extend support beyond the school day.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents and the community are very good. Outreach, extended services and links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very popular with parents and highly values its partnership with them.
- Overall, communication is good and written information is supplemented with good sharing of information at meetings.
- The school is a very popular community resource.
- The outreach programme is of high quality and works to the benefit of the school's own pupils and staff along with those of partner schools.
- Very good, ongoing links with partner schools and colleges support reintegration and the transfer of pupils very well.
- Parents would welcome more opportunities to meet with teachers to discuss pupils' progress.

Commentary

29. The school enjoys the confidence of its parents and they are very pleased with the work it does. Many parents expressed great relief that their children were now enrolled where their needs are being met and they are made to feel welcome. Parents, former parents and members of the community are pro-active in their support of the school. The parents' and friends' association organises social and fundraising activities throughout the year and raises a significant amount of extra money for the school and local charities. School concerts and productions are very well attended and families are delighted that all pupils are given the chance to perform.
30. The written information provided to parents meets requirements and is parent-friendly. Individual education plans are adequate and annual reviews are very well attended and productive. The inspection team supports the parents' request for termly meetings with class teachers as this would improve communication and make targets more relevant. The success of the open door policy is confirmed in the questionnaire results and parents agree that they feel very welcome in school and their views are valued.
31. The school has a very good reputation within the community and a full schedule of lettings makes it a hub of activity after school hours. The weekly Youth Club is very popular: it includes pupils' siblings and friends and has a waiting list for places. The school's very positive profile supports inclusion for its pupils very well. Highly productive links with the business community and local organisations extend opportunities for work experience and extra trips and activities to enrich learning very well. The school is a very popular destination for students seeking working experience. Pupils benefit from the extra help they provide in lessons and students gain valuable training.
32. The school's outreach programme is very productive and local schools highly value the expertise that staff members share with them. A number of local schools regularly request training from Cedar Hall staff members to meet the ongoing needs of their own pupils, particularly with the management of behaviour. The very close links between schools mean that pupils who attend mainstream schools for some lessons are carefully monitored and supported. There is very good sharing of information to ensure that the time spent in mainstream schools is worthwhile. The school involves outside professionals well to support and advise them on improving provision.
33. The school's very good links with local colleges and its Connexions programme ensure the smooth transition for pupils to further education or employment. Transition meetings with parents, pupils, staff and outside professionals begin in Year 9 and carry on regularly for subsequent years. The headteacher is committed to ensuring that parents and pupils are able to make informed decisions and are aware of all opportunities available to them.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The new headteacher provides effective leadership. Leadership in the school as a whole is satisfactory, but improving. Management is satisfactory and improving. The governance of the school is satisfactory. Whilst governors are very supportive and have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, the school does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in ICT.

The LEA's review of the provision for special education is a barrier to raising achievement because the uncertainty while awaiting a decision on the school's future means that it is very difficult to appoint good quality permanent staff.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new headteacher has made a good start in his first term by enabling other staff to demonstrate their leadership qualities, by undertaking a thorough and accurate review of the school's strengths and weaknesses and by creating a sense of common purpose and direction.
- Managers are becoming used to a higher level of responsibility and independence, and are in a good position to undertake their new roles more effectively, but there are still some organisational gaps.
- Systems for monitoring teaching or the achievements of different groups of pupils are not yet in place.
- Finances are well analysed and used, so the school makes the most of the money it has.

Commentary

34. The headteacher has made a good beginning since his appointment by creating a positive climate for change, motivating staff, gaining the confidence of parents and securing the commitment of all to school improvement. He is a very good practitioner and leads by example in the classroom. He has undertaken a thorough and accurate review of the school's work alongside governors and staff. The LEA has not confirmed what its expectations are for the future of the school. In the face of this uncertainty, the headteacher has taken a firm and effective lead in developing an appropriate picture of the future, which will allow the school to continue to develop. Everyone in the school understands the priorities, focussed on improving behaviour and developing outreach, and shares this vision. Staff support each other and work together as a unit.
35. The deputy head is making a growing contribution to the planned innovations, but there are some gaps in the management structure which need filling as a matter of urgency. There is no manager for the curriculum or assessment for secondary classes and there is no coordinator for food technology. Some managers who share the coordination of some subjects like English work in isolation from one another. These gaps somewhat undermine the school's ability to maximise the gains that pupils could make.
36. The school's capacity to move forward quickly in line with the new direction is seen in the arrangements the headteacher has put in place to manage the more difficult behaviour of some of the pupils who are being referred to the school by the LEA. These arrangements have been established as a matter of priority. Staff are receiving good guidance from the senior managers, and already there is great consistency between classes and among all staff in putting the system into action. As an example of this, the school administrative officer was seen on a few occasions calming down pupils who had become over-excited near her office. Adopting the management of behaviour as a priority is of benefit on a number of fronts. It helps to assimilate and include the 'new' type of pupil in to the school more easily; it gives the staff more confidence in dealing with a changing and perhaps more difficult population of pupils; and it reassures long-standing parents that the school is not changing for the worse, as a few of them have feared.

37. The school plans to improve its approaches to the monitoring of teaching and learning, and to managing the curriculum. At present, monitoring is undertaken by too few staff and, as a consequence, good practice is not shared and weaker practice is not remedied quickly. The headteacher has already been actively involved in monitoring and developing teaching and has already begun to address variations in the quality of teaching. Opportunities for managers to monitor teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility are now included in the forthcoming programme. At present there is no formal process for monitoring how well different groups of pupils are achieving. As there has been an increase in the complexity of need amongst students, this means that the school cannot be sure that the learning needs of all students are being met. Even though the inspection revealed no evidence of differences in achievement, this is a weakness.
38. Last year's school improvement plan was a weak tool for development, because priorities and their costs were not clearly spelt out. The new school improvement plan is due for publication next term and should contain a clear, measurable agenda for improving achievement, teaching and learning. The budget surplus last year was planned to cover costs of improving the accommodation, but some of this surplus has had to be used to prevent staffing redundancy following a budget which was much lower than expected. The LEA has not yet informed the school about its role in the future, so the governors have sensibly decided to await the LEA's pronouncement before making major spending decisions. The school ensures through competitive tendering that it obtains best value for money when purchasing resources and services, but has not yet introduced a formal policy for best value in line with national guidance. The school pays for and receives regular financial 'health checks' from a LEA finance support officer. No significant weaknesses have been reported in the school's accounting systems. The school has not received an internal audit for 8 years because it uses the LEA's payroll and central payments system and is regarded as 'low risk'. A full audit will take place during 2004/5.
39. The school has experienced difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified permanent teachers and this has hindered improvement in teaching quality. The systems for performance management are in place and learning support assistants are to be included from September 2004. This will help to drive through improvements even faster.
40. Governors are committed and very supportive of the school. They fully support the idea of extending the outreach provision offered by the school - a key element of the vision of the headteacher. The governors' finance committee asks perceptive questions about the effectiveness of spending decisions. Governors make regular visits to the school, and have developed a good broad understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and of what is needed to continue to take the school forward. They are willing to challenge and debate with the senior staff at the school but have not always had the background information they need to do this to full effect.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1049644
Total expenditure	1049644
Expenditure per pupil	8465

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	84083
Balance carried forward to the next	75000

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

It was not possible to observe any lessons or look at pupils' work in modern foreign languages during the inspection, and no judgements can therefore be made.

English

The provision for English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils achieve well in English, particularly in developing reading skills.
- Teaching is effective apart from in Years 7 to 9, where it is only satisfactory because the teachers have not been specially trained, and this means that pupils in those years do not achieve as well as they might.
- Literacy is very well planned in Years 1 to 6 and assessment used very well to meet the individual needs of all pupils.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to have their work externally accredited in Years 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory overall, but monitoring roles are underdeveloped.

Commentary

41. The youngest pupils enter the school with a low level of attainment in literacy. There is now a more appropriate curriculum in Years 1 and 2 and by the age of seven many children move onto Year 1 of the National Literacy Strategy. This has had a good impact on standards by the end of Year 6. A high emphasis is placed on reading, punctuation, spelling and grammar through the school but after Year 6 there are fewer opportunities to develop further extended writing skills. In Years 7 to 9, teachers appropriately place pupils into ability sets to target the appropriate pace and level of learning for all, but teachers in this part of the school have not yet developed the full range of necessary skills in planning, setting targets and tracking progress in English. These teachers have not had the updated literacy training and the National Literacy Strategy is not fully in place. In some classes there is an over-reliance on commercial worksheets. In Years 10 and 11 there are good opportunities for higher attainers to obtain external accreditation at Entry Level through the Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).
42. Achievement of pupils is good overall, but in Years 7 to 9 it is satisfactory. Learning in lessons ranges from satisfactory to very good. Pupils develop speaking and listening skills well and for those with additional communication difficulties teachers use Makaton to help pupils to develop skills in expressive language. These pupils are generally well supported by the speech and language therapist and her assistant, but this time is too often eroded when the learning support assistant is called away to cover for absent colleagues. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to questions about stories and older and more able pupils learn to offer their opinions, for example, about their role in the School Council. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work hard at suggesting why events may happen but find difficulty in identifying key points, especially if relying on memory.
43. Pupils develop good reading skills by the time they leave school. They enjoy reading books such as 'Northern Lights' by Philip Pullman, and most read with good fluency and a few read aloud with good expression, warmly encouraged by the teacher. Lower down the school,

phonic and sight vocabulary is vigorously practised, Big Books are used well and enjoyment of reading carefully is nurtured. Higher attaining Year 9 pupils visit the local library fortnightly to borrow books and many pupils enjoy reading magazines and a few read broadsheets.

44. Younger pupils make good progress in developing writing skills and by the end of Year 6 higher attainers are punctuating most sentences in their writing and spelling common words correctly. Pupils in Year 5 write poems as a group using interesting vocabulary first collected by the teacher and in Year 6 write from their experiences on frequent educational visits. In science, pupils write sentences about their work. Pupils in Year 9 write about the characters in the Roald Dahl books that they read as a class. There are many opportunities for comprehension work from reading and higher attainers write complex sentences which feature good spelling and punctuation.
45. Teaching in English is good overall but satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Very good relationships, planning, and methods used are features of high quality teaching so that pupils are very well focused on their work and make good gains in learning. Symbol timetables and TEACCH methods are used very effectively in the lower school with pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, who are responsive and co-operative. Questioning is good in most lessons but visual and recording techniques to assist pupils to recall important facts are not sufficiently exploited in Years 7 to 11. Learning support assistants give good support to pupils. Spelling and phonic software programs and 'talking books' are used appropriately for individual learning and in a few classes, word-processing of writing is a regular occurrence. Sometimes, there is some lack of challenge for higher attainers and texts are sometimes more appropriate for younger children. Pupils take pride in their handwriting and teachers encourage the development of skills. The planning of English lacks continuity and progression in teaching approaches. Teachers of pupils in Years 7 to 9 make too little use of assessment to inform planning and do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their writing. This is a weakness. Even where the National Literacy Strategy is well taught, the range of writing could be more varied.
46. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Management of English is overall satisfactory. At present the subject is managed by two coordinators but there is no unity of approach through the school. Monitoring of teaching, learning, standards and tracking of progress of pupils through the school are not in place.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

47. Pupils achieve well in this area except in Years 7 to 9, where achievement is satisfactory. Teachers of pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have a consistent approach to designing tasks to develop reading and writing skills. Reading skills are a significant strength and speaking and listening is developed well so that older pupils find it easy to read newspapers and magazines and discuss their contents. Although extended writing is underused, the careful teaching and learning of spelling, punctuation and handwriting are evident in the work that higher attainers produce in their accredited courses. In lessons, teachers listen respectfully to pupils and this helps them to develop their communication skills. Many pupils greet the teacher confidently and join in well in question and answer sessions. Pupils take turns to speak and some confidently address larger groups such as School Council, or when performing in assembly. In art and design they talk about problems of technique and about the work of artists such as Chagall and Magritte.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school except for Year 7 to Year 9, where they are satisfactory. Pupils' achievements follow the same pattern.
- The innovative curricular provision in Year 1 to Year 6 ensures individual needs are appropriately met.
- ICT is not used consistently in mathematics lessons.
- Teachers use assessment data inconsistently.
- Leadership and management are effective.

Commentary

48. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are very limited when they enter the school. By Year 2 pupils make good progress and in Year 3 to Year 6 they achieve well, reaching standards that are comparable to, and in many cases above, those of similar schools. Increases in achievement are partly due to the good teaching and learning in Year 1 to Year 6 but also to the innovative curricular provision. Pupils in Year 1 and Year 2, and lower achieving pupils in Year 3 to Year 6 have a modified curriculum based upon the Essex 'Early Learning' Foundation Stage. This provides smaller learning steps and ensures individual provision. Assessment, following the National Numeracy Strategy for reception classes, is against Performance level descriptors. Pupils in these classes enjoy their work and undertake their set tasks with confidence. By Year 9 achievement, although satisfactory, does not continue to improve. This is due to a combination of non-specialist teachers teaching a specialist subject and the subject coordinator not having the opportunity to monitor and so further support other teachers' teaching mathematics. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 achieve well and the school is appropriately preparing some pupils to take a GCSE in mathematics.
49. Where teaching is good, or better, teachers know their pupils well and make good use of this knowledge in their use of direct questioning. Further, the very good relationship between teachers and pupils provides a good learning atmosphere for learning. Teachers show high expectations of their pupils, higher achievers are appropriately challenged and questions are appropriate to age and ability. This is particularly true for pupils in Years 10 and 11 where lessons are interesting and relevant and effective learning takes place. As a result, pupils' motivation to work at their accredited courses and examinations is very good. Teaching is not so effective when teachers find themselves short of time, cutting off plenary sessions, and so leaving little or no time to assess and consolidate learning. Teachers sometimes expect too little of their pupils, and this means that pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning very well, particularly the low achievers, although in one or two cases, pupils were not given sufficient opportunities for independent learning.
50. The subject is well led and managed by two knowledgeable subject leaders, one for Years 1 to 6 and the other for Years 7 to 11. The two leaders relate well together and liaison between them is good. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. The number and type of accredited courses and examinations meet pupils' needs well. Several pupils attend mathematics classes in mainstream schools where there is joint planning with mainstream teachers. The school has changed to a new examination syllabus to help pupils to be included more easily. The National Numeracy Strategy is used effectively to meet pupils' needs. The use of ICT to support the subject's teaching and learning, although good in some years, is inconsistent throughout the school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

51. Pupils apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of mathematics well across the curriculum. All staff are aware of individual pupils' numeracy targets, and in most lessons work is well planned to support them.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of experimental and investigative work.
- Teaching is effective, which means that pupils achieve well.
- There is insufficient monitoring of the subject across the school.
- There is no technician support to prepare, maintain and clean equipment.

Commentary

52. Pupils achieve well in science, increasing their knowledge, understanding and skills from a low level of attainment on entry to the school. Their interest in practical activities and ability to understand many of the technical terms used in scientific topics and investigations have improved since the last inspection with the development of new programmes of study.
53. As a result of good planning all pupils in Years 1 and 2 learn well because they are involved in topics that include aspects of science. This term's topic 'Toys' provides a range of opportunities for pupils to sort their toys according to the materials used and the different surfaces - smooth, soft, hard etc. They are developing knowledge of forces through observing and describing what makes them move - push, pull, electricity or magnetism.
54. As a result of good teaching, pupils in Years 3 to 6 learn well in planning practical work. For example, they were excited by the challenge of moving a balloon using different methods. Good use of questioning and prompting by the teacher and support assistant encourages pupils to extend their learning. Well managed discussions at the end of the lesson allow staff to check pupils' understanding and provide opportunities for them to use their newly acquired knowledge.
55. Overall, pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well in all aspects of science. Work in pupils' books shows good coverage of all aspects. By the time they are in Year 9, pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts is extended to include checking and recording pulse rates as part of their work on humans and other animals. Teaching is good. Work is appropriate for the full ability range and teachers intervene during investigations to give specific teaching points or check pupils' understanding.
56. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 cover a wide range of topics and produce well presented coursework. Although some of the work seen was unmarked, the end of topic tests provide evidence of good progress. The high expectations of the teachers are reflected in the number of pupils who choose to follow accredited coursework in Years 10 and 11. Last year, 9 out of 11 pupils achieved an Entry Level Certificate in science.
57. Leadership and management of science are sound. The co-ordinators work hard to improve resources and opportunities for pupils of all abilities to make good progress, despite the lack of a development plan. They are aware of the need to support teaching and learning by evaluating pupils' work, teachers' planning and observing the teaching of science. There is insufficient use of ICT, but links with literacy and numeracy are effective.
58. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The science room now has additional storage and an extractor fan. However, the appointment of a technician would provide much needed additional support in preparing and maintaining materials and equipment needed for science lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

59. No lessons of the teaching of discrete ICT skills were observed during the period of the inspection, and there was little evidence of pupils' use of ICT in samples of work. Although some teaching of ICT skills is taking place through subjects, this is inconsistent. Lack of timetabling for the subject is considerably reducing pupils' entitlement to their learning of generic ICT skills as required in the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, and requirements are not met. With no continuity and progression of learning, pupils' achievements in the subject are generally unsatisfactory throughout the school. However, when using subject specific programs pupils show some competency, although these are generally basic skills such as the use of the mouse and opening and closing programs. Some pupils were observed to change fonts and size of text, and a few used the Internet. Although each class has access to the Internet, the use of it for research and information is underdeveloped.
60. When using software in other subjects, pupils show interest and are motivated by the challenge the programs present and their achievements. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, several pupils were using the program 'Successmaker' to assess and practise their subject learning and there were broad smiles of achievement when pupils achieved a high score at the end. Teachers of other subjects are confident and, in most cases, competent in their use of new technology.
61. Management and leadership in the subject are underdeveloped. The two subject coordinators are not given sufficient autonomy of the budget for the subject and the decision by the school not to provide allocated time, due to accommodation problems, for the teaching of generic skills further hinders their effectiveness. In the absence of any technical support, there is a delay in resolving computer problems. This is limiting the reliability and use of ICT. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. In the absence of a dedicated area, such as a computer suite, accommodation for the subject is unsatisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

62. Several instances of the use of subject specific programs were observed during the period of the inspection. However, such use of ICT is inconsistent and the planning of ICT in other subjects is underdeveloped.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in detail and is reported in full below. Work was sampled in history and geography.

63. In **geography** only one lesson was observed and work was sampled. Meetings with co-ordinators suggest that the geography curriculum is good through Years 1 to 9, and visits to the local area support learning well in this subject.
64. In **history**, two lessons and a sample of pupils' work were seen. There is every indication from the lessons seen and pupils' workbooks and records of work that achievement in history is satisfactory. From the work seen it is evident that historical sites in the local area, for example, museums and Hadleigh Castle, are used well to help pupils learn. Visitors and artefacts contribute to pupils' understanding, for example, when some of the youngest pupils were able to see a selection of old and new toys. In the lessons seen, good use was made of a video clip to illustrate what made Florence Nightingale so determined to improve conditions in hospitals. Good cross-curricular links are made with other subjects such as English, art and geography as pupils write about and illustrate their work, finding places around the world associated with their history topics. For example, Year 9 pupils used a map of Europe to plot the sequence of events as part of their studies of the Spanish Armada.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of artefacts and video clips to bring the subject alive.
- Visits to church, synagogue and temple add significantly to pupils' understanding of different faiths.
- Co-ordinators have insufficient time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

Commentary

65. Teaching and learning in religious education are satisfactory, which means that pupils' achievement is also satisfactory throughout the school. Teachers' planning reflects an understanding of pupils' learning needs and the needs of the subject. However, there are some inconsistencies in the long term planning of the subject and the assessment of pupils' achievements. Individual lessons are adapted to give pupils access to difficult concepts. Pupils develop an awareness of values and respect for themselves and others through the use of well told stories.
66. By the end of Year 6 pupils have an understanding of the purpose of festivals and symbols associated with the more familiar Christian celebrations. They also recognise some symbols from other religions. Older pupils begin to develop their understanding about the different viewpoints in religion and the broader ethical issues, such as the moral issues of right and wrong. Pupils make satisfactory progress in learning because teachers encourage discussion and encourage pupils to investigate beliefs and prejudices from a factual as well as spiritual perspective. Visits and visitors provide good support for pupils' learning. Pupils visit the local church and a Sikh temple; local religious leaders take part in school assemblies.
67. Religious education is linked well to personal and social education, and to assemblies. This enriches pupils' understanding of and builds well on their interpretation of the social and moral codes within the school and the wider community. Assemblies complement work in religious education, encouraging reflection and thoughtfulness about others. Pupils are helped to apply what they learn to their own lives and to celebrate all forms of success, although there is no provision for older pupils to take externally accredited courses in religious education. The school effectively celebrates religious festivals during the year.
68. The co-ordinators provide satisfactory leadership and management of the subject, but are not given time to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning and development of the subject is hampered by the lack of an action plan. The curriculum is based on the locally agreed syllabus, suitably adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. There are suitable resources including a range of artefacts related to different religions to support the programmes of work.
69. There has been satisfactory improvement in the subject since the previous inspection. Pupils' work shows they are interested in the subject and present their work well. Learning support assistants provide good support to the lower achieving pupils.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

The subjects of design and technology and music were inspected in full and are reported below. Work was sampled in art and design and physical education.

70. Pupils achieve their full potential in **art and design**. They continue to enter for GCSE examinations but because of the changing nature of the population of the school, grades achieved are not as high as before and fewer pupils produce work of a high enough standard to enter for this accreditation. The good quality of pupils' work can be seen around school and this

shows their developing skills in the subject. Observation of work shows a wide range of materials being used and teachers skilfully encourage pupils to gain inspiration from artists and craftsmen, both local and famous.

71. In the four lessons seen, the atmosphere was lively but calm, with each pupil developing work in the way that they choose. The teacher offered expert guidance and ensured that pupils' own interests were fully exploited. For example, a pupil with autistic spectrum disorder worked painstakingly using pointillist techniques whilst others explored the style and work of Bridget Riley.
72. Teaching and learning were good in one lesson and very good in the others. The teaching of skills and techniques was particularly good in all lessons seen. Very good relationships and work ethos encouraged pupils to work diligently and produce work of good quality. Pupils were making good use of sketchbooks and photocopies of their own work to try out techniques and ideas. Planning is aimed at developing individuals' techniques and recording of achievement is good. The digital camera is used very well to record pupils' work and to photograph objects when the pupils are on visits. Relationships in the art room were very good and it is clear that pupils enjoy working there and are productive at all times. Planning of work in the lower school is linked to topics and as pupils gain technical skills, these are checked off against a list of competencies. There is no set programme of art history across the school and teachers link into artists if relevant.
73. The management of art and design is satisfactory. There is a consistent plan of approach to developing skills in art and design. In the upper school, targets are set for individual pupils and they are guided to achieve them. The school has made a good link with a local secondary school which enables pupils from that school to integrate successfully and do their course work in art and design at Cedar Hall. Monitoring of teaching in the lower school is not developed and monitoring of planning and work informal. There are very good opportunities to visit artists' and craft work shops such as the recent trip to a pottery. Pupils use the local area to develop their observational skills. The school takes part regularly in art competitions and projects. GCSE pupils display their work, which is of high quality, annually to parents and visitors.
74. In **physical education** (PE), two lessons were seen. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in one of the lessons, which was for pupils in Year 4. In the other lesson seen, which was taught at short notice by a senior manager, teaching was very good. The teacher is specially qualified in this subject and this showed in the way in which he carefully warmed pupils up before the activities and gave a very clear explanation and clear demonstrations. By varying his voice, pupils knew exactly what was expected of them. There was very good encouragement of sportsmanship and co-operation with pupils working in teams, pairs or as individuals. The lesson resulted in all pupils having a good, challenging workout.
75. There are two coordinators for PE in the school, both of whom are unqualified, temporary and new to the school. They have tried their best to maintain and improve the provision, but until the staffing issues are resolved the development of the subject will not be as fast as the school would like. The coordinators have a good grasp of what is required and carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily. The resources for the subject are satisfactory, but there is not yet enough storage for equipment.
76. The school encourages pupils to attend a range of sports activities off site. The school participates and achieves well in competition with other special schools, in different sports like road relays, cross country, swimming and athletics. The school also has regular visits to riding stables. All the pupils involved last year gained Grade 1 Riding and stable management certificates, and some went on to participate in a local gymkhana where they won rosettes and a cup.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils handle a good range of different materials very competently.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils, particularly in their personal and social skills.
- Overall planning and assessment of pupils' achievements do not include food technology.

Commentary

77. Teaching is very good. Expectations are high and many activities are challenging though there was limited evidence of design in food technology during the period of the inspection. In lessons observed both in the resistant materials room and in the food technology room there was a relaxed but purposeful atmosphere in which pupils worked well, both independently and in co-operation with each other. Teachers have clearly established good routines and rules for safe working practices in classrooms and workshops.
78. Learning is also very good. Younger pupils up to Year 6 achieve very well in the understanding of designing and making as part of well planned topics. Year 2 pupils make a train out of plastic cubes. They use a template and the teacher's support to complete the task. Older pupils were happy to talk about their work and in doing so showed a very good understanding of all the materials, tools and processes involved in making a clock, using the correct tools safely to cut and shape the clock face. Another Year 10 group prepared a salad and were able to explain in detail the way to prepare the jacket potatoes and boiled eggs they were using. These responses demonstrate how effective the planning for the subject is in ensuring that the pupils' practical skills are supported by theoretical understanding.
79. Pupils' folders and teachers' planning for all aspects of the subject include a good range of well presented writing and designs for their completed and ongoing projects. Years 10 and 11 pupils are working towards the Entry Level Certificate in Materials and Graphical Studies. They have made very good progress in recording their ideas at the design stage of their work with resistant materials. Pupils' achievements are very good, and the clear designs they produce reflect the teachers' high expectations. The very good teaching most effectively encourages pupils to evaluate their work and that of others.
80. There is a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy through, for example, the learning and writing of key words and lists of materials; numeracy is developed through activities such as measuring and weighing out ingredients. Pupils' speaking and listening skills also benefit. They listen very attentively to their teachers' instructions and make confident responses to the questions which teachers use very effectively to elicit their ideas. ICT is used to describe and present the design aspects of some projects.
81. Pupils clearly enjoy their design and technology lessons. The subject is well led and managed, although it is at present unclear what leadership arrangements there are for food technology. There are very good resources provided and pupils achieve well in their knowledge and use of equipment available. They take great pride in the results of their work. Appropriately, the school offers opportunities for external accreditation in both aspects of design and technology. The good quality of the specialist teaching and resources and the very good attitudes of pupils fully justify this decision.
82. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Assessment procedures have been developed to include end-of-topic tests and an ability to measure the progress of pupils with additional special needs. However a subject development plan is needed to secure further improvements.

Music

Provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and a good range of learning experiences enable all pupils to achieve well in music.
- A committed and enthusiastic subject specialist provides very good leadership.
- The school does not take full advantage of the pupils' musical abilities in assemblies.

Commentary

83. Pupils' achievements in music are good, because the school provides a good range of experiences and because teaching and learning are good, and sometimes excellent. The subject has a high profile in the school. Parents and pupils thoroughly enjoy the school's musical performances, in which pupils at all levels of ability are encouraged to participate. At the parents' meeting, one parent said, "My son has recently come from mainstream and last year was the first time that he has been able to take part in a school performance. He even sang a solo, and it was really moving".
84. Music is taught throughout the school, mainly by the specialist teacher/coordinator, and this enables pupils with a particular talent or interest in music to achieve well. For example, a pupil in Year 11 organises a twice-weekly lunchtime club for a group of singers to sing and record pop songs. The pupil has organised these sessions every week for four years. The choir and the lunchtime clubs also enable pupils to develop their skills and to have fun making music with others, although assemblies make little use of pupils' developing musicianship. The school also makes arrangements for pupils to learn instruments. The specialist teacher teaches all pupils in Year 7 to play the recorder and she teaches keyboard skills to pupils in Year 10 and 11. Where possible she brings in professional instrumental teachers to give expert guidance and tuition on percussion, guitar or keyboards. At the time of the inspection, seven pupils were learning to play the drums. All these pupils were studying for grade examinations, which offer the pupils a good level of challenge as well as an opportunity to have their achievements accredited to a national standard. Professional musicians provide workshops for pupils on singing and playing the guitar, and there are regular visits from ensembles from a local music academy.
85. Learning is good. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are joining in with nursery rhymes and songs, and are using these to practise counting or the alphabet. They use percussion instruments and play along to well-known songs. Some pupils join in the choir, singing solos like 'Sing a Rainbow' in front of other pupils. By Year 6, pupils provide a musical background for a story on instruments like the guiro, drum and melodica, and use drums, cymbals and a rainstick to depict a storm. By Year 9, pupils in groups play chords on pitched percussion instruments to back well-known songs like 'Daisy, Daisy'. Pupils took it in turn to play the same chord on an electric piano. They also were learning to sing 'partner songs' where half the class sings 'When the saints' and at the same time the other half sing 'Coming round the mountain'. This was quite a challenge for anybody, and the pupils loved it when they managed to get it right. By Year 11, pupils follow their own interests in music – learning keyboards and developing their singing skills and repertoire.
86. In lessons, the music specialist teacher has high expectations, and pupils respond well to her. She has very good skills in musical performance both as a singer and a pianist, and she effectively models the skills and responses she requires. Because she exudes self-confidence, pupils feel very encouraged and are not afraid to try. A good example of this was in the weekly choir rehearsal where pupils were practising well-chosen songs like 'The Roses of Success'. These songs required a soloist and a chorus. Following a quick warm-up the teacher worked very hard in supporting and correcting the pupils until their singing was accurate and tuneful.

The pupils singing the solos stepped forward with great self-confidence and produced marvellous performances. All the staff and pupils sang with great zest and delight, and all the pupils clearly felt a sense of achievement.

87. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership. She has done well in continuing to improve the subject, extending the learning resources, developing a good individual assessment system and raising standards. The school has a good range of instruments, some of which are from other countries and cultures, such as Indian tabla. The subject contributes well to pupils' personal development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught to all year groups as a combined subject. Personal, social and health education and citizenship were sampled.

88. The scheme of work modules ensure a progression and continuity of learning of a wide range of relevant topics that enable pupils to build on their skills and knowledge as they move through the school. Through the teaching, pupils develop an understanding of the physical, emotional, moral and social risks of certain types of behaviour together with an awareness of their rights and responsibilities. They learn how to be safe in a different environments and circumstances. They also learn about how fortunate they are and what actions they can take to relieve suffering elsewhere in the world. For example, at Christmas, the whole school was involved in making boxes of gifts for Eastern Europe and older pupils took them to a distributor.
89. Teaching is good and sympathetic to the needs and feelings of the pupils, and as a result pupils achieve well at their individual targets throughout the school. For example, in a Year 11 lesson the teacher set up a scenario of a baby abandoned outside a hospital. Pupils were able to relate to this and collate a list of needs that the baby would have. The teacher used this scenario as an introduction to a children's charter.
90. The school has a very good relationship with the Connexions advisor. This helps to bring together elements of PSHE and citizenship and enables pupils to develop their skills and knowledge to make effective use of information and guidance available. Where possible the views of pupils and parents are sought. The sexual health policy is the result of consultation with pupils, parents and staff.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).