

INSPECTION REPORT

LIMPSFIELD GRANGE SCHOOL

Oxted

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125459

Headteacher: Mrs Jane Humphreys

Lead inspector: Greg Sorrell

Dates of inspection: 24th – 27th May 2004

Inspection number: 260365

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
Age range of pupils:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Girls
Number on roll:	54
School address:	89, Bluehouse Lane Oxted Surrey
Postcode:	RH8 0RZ
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Gerald Sykes
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Limpsfield Grange School is residential special school providing education for 54 secondary aged girls, approximately half of whom board part of or all the school week. Their special educational needs are wide ranging. The most common special educational needs are moderate learning difficulties and speech and communication difficulties. A smaller number have dyslexia; social and emotional needs, autistic spectrum disorder, physical and sensory impairment. Many have experienced fragmented primary education. The vast majority of pupils are of white United Kingdom heritage with very few pupils who are of ethnic minority heritage and one has English as an additional language. The school's roll draws from Surrey, nearby counties and London boroughs: their socio-economic circumstances are broadly in line with the national average. The school's character has not changed significantly since the last inspection in 1998, although in recent years the intake has a number of pupils with increasingly complex needs. It has recently received the following awards, the School Achievement Award; Artsmark (Silver); Sustainable Business Award; School Extra Award and Investors In People status. During the inspection week, Year 11 pupils were on an examination timetable and Year 7 pupils were on a week-long residential trip.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21529	Greg Sorrell	Lead inspector	English, French, citizenship and physical education.
8937	Howard Allen	Lay inspector	
21822	Helen Maskew	Team inspector	Science, art, design and technology, geography and history.
27429	Margaret Smith	Team inspector	Mathematics, ICT, music and religious education.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Limpsfield Grange is a very effective school. The school is very well led, managed and governed. It provides very good quality teaching and learning which enables the pupils to achieve very well in a wide range of subjects. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good and are evidence of their very good personal development. The boarding provision is good. Care and school staff work well together to provide very good support, advice and guidance to the pupils. The school enjoys strong parental support and provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The pupils' achievements in public examinations are very good as are their achievements in relation to their prior attainment;
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good;
- The leadership, management and governance are very good overall;
- The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and enable them to achieve very well;
- The needs of a minority of pupils with additional literacy and numeracy difficulties are not fully met in all lessons;
- The support, advice and guidance provided for pupils is very good;
- The boarding provision is good and has a very positive effect on the boarders' personal development;
- The implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy is not yet fully effective.

Overall, the school's improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The school has been successful in improving the assessment of pupils' progress in subjects and the match of targets in IEP's (individual education plans) to classroom practice has improved for all except the few pupils who additional difficulties in literacy and numeracy. Opportunities to work alongside mainstream peers exist where appropriate and parents are given very comprehensive information relating to the amount of set homework.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

The achievement of pupils is very good. The pupils achieve very well in a wide range of subjects in GCSE and other accredited courses. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school varies from year to year but is always at least below national averages due to the wide range of special educational needs that adversely affect their learning. Despite their difficulties the vast majority of pupils achieve very well by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 in view of their prior attainment.

The pupils achieve very well as a result of the very good specialist subject teaching. By the end of Year 9, the vast majority of pupils' achievement in English, mathematics, science and all other subjects is very good. The small number of pupils who have additional and significant literacy and numeracy difficulties do not achieve as well due to classroom materials not always meeting their needs. All achieve very well in art and physical educational where fewer demands are made upon literacy and numeracy skills.

At the end of Year 11, the pupils' achievement is very good as they gain success in a wide range of subjects in GCSE and Entry Level examinations. The pupils are particularly successful in art where 25% of pupils achieved grade C. All pupils are also eligible for ASDAN (Award Scheme

Development and Accreditation Network) qualifications where they enjoy success. All pupils achieve well in life skills and personal development programmes. Standards throughout the school have improved since the last inspection.

Pupils' personal qualities including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Particular strengths include pupils' **attitudes** to school and their **behaviour** which are very good. **Attendance** is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. To a large extent this is because almost all teachers are specialists in the subjects they teach. They liaise well with teaching assistants and care staff to ensure that learning is effective, although for a small minority of pupils, lessons are not always sufficiently matched to their literacy and numeracy abilities. The challenging curriculum is very good and there is a good range of extra-curricular activities. Assessment is good overall and is used well to plan future lessons. The school has a strong ethos that ensures all the pupils' receive very good support, advice and guidance. The accommodation and resources for learning are good overall; the facilities for physical education are excellent although some of the boarding provision offers too little privacy to some boarders.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHOOL

The leadership, management and governance of the school are very good overall. The governors' deployment is well matched to their skills and they provide very good support to the headteacher who has very high expectations of the staff and pupils. The care provision is well managed and there is a strong commitment to professional development. School development planning is effective and takes good account of national, local and school priorities, although the implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy has been inconsistent. Subject leadership and the management of the school is good overall. School finances and day to day administration are very well managed. All statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' & PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are very happy with the school and hold views that are very positive. The pupils know that they have someone to talk to if they have any worries or feel unwell during the school day. Parents, including those whose daughters board, feel that their children are happy to attend and appreciate the significant contribution made their children's personal and social development. Pupils enjoy the range of after-school activities, but some would like to get out of school more often and do their homework at flexible times rather than timetabled as at present.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

Ensure the additional literacy and numeracy needs of a significant minority of pupils are fully met in lessons;

Review the effectiveness of the implementation of the Key Stage 3 strategy.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The pupils' achievements are very good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils achieve very well in view of their prior attainment and gain significant levels of accreditation in a wide range of subjects;
- Pupils with additional difficulties in literacy and numeracy sometimes achieve less well due to classroom resources not always being matched to their needs;
- The pupils' achievement in art is a strength of the school.

Commentary

1. The pupils achieve very well in a wide range of subjects in GCSE and other accredited courses. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school varies from year to year but is always at least below national averages due to many factors including a wide range of special educational needs that adversely affect their literacy and numeracy development. Sometimes these special educational needs are further complicated by medical needs that have led to prolonged absence from regular schooling. Pupils who enter the school at times other than Year 7 also have a similar educational history. Despite their difficulties the vast majority of pupils achieve very well by the end of Year 9 and Year 11 in view of their prior attainment. There is significant "value added" to the pupils' achievement, particularly by the end of Year 11.

2. As a result of the very good teaching, by the end of Year 9, the vast majority of pupils' achievement in English, mathematics, science and all other subjects is very good. The small number of pupils who have additional and significant literacy and numeracy difficulties do not achieve as well due to resources not always meeting their needs. All pupils achieve very well in art and physical education where fewer demands are made upon literacy and numeracy skills. All pupils achieve well in life skills and personal development programmes.

3. At the end of Year 11, the pupils' achievement is very good. In 2003 six pupils took GCSE examinations in English, French; ICT, design and technology – textiles, history, religious education and physical education. Nine pupils took science while eight took child development. The largest entry was in art where 12 pupils sat the examination. The percentage of pupils entering and gaining passes ranging from A* - G is 100% in all subjects with the exception of history where the pass rate was 83%. Particular success was seen in art where 25% of pupils achieved grade C. At the end of Year 11, the pupils for whom GCSE is not appropriate take Entry Level Certificates in a similarly wide range of subjects. All pupils are also eligible for the ASDAN and Duke of Edinburgh awards where they enjoy success. Standards throughout the school have improved since the last inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

4. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and spiritual, moral and social and cultural development are all **very good**. Attendance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to school;
- Pupils have a very positive attitude to their work;
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school is consistently very good;
- Relationships between pupils are very good;

- Some of the courses play a significant role in the pupils' personal development.

Commentary

5. Pupils' attendance has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good overall. The school works hard to encourage all pupils to attend regularly and nearly all parents and carers support the school by ensuring their children attend unless they are unwell or need to attend hospital for check-ups. Pupils' enjoyment of school is evidenced by the significant improvement in the attendance of those pupils who had poor attendance prior to joining Limpsfield Grange.

6. The behaviour of pupils and their attitudes to school are even better than at the last inspection and these are now both very good. Pupils like being with their friends and get on well with all the adults in the school. In the classroom pupils demonstrate a real desire to learn and usually try very hard. They enjoy the extra-curricular activities such as the school shop or nature club where they can tend to the animals in the recently created smallholding. However, pupils are less keen on the after school homework clubs because they consider they should be able to do homework at more flexible times and not have to read a book rather than do "fun things" if they have finished within the scheduled time. Behaviour during lessons, at break and lunchtimes and when pupils stay after school is consistently very good. Pupils are very careful to cause as little disruption as possible when moving around the school between lessons. This was very noticeable during the inspection when the Year 11 pupils were taking part in their exams and the rest of the school made every effort to ensure they were not disturbed. Most pupils happily undertake duties such as organising drinks for break times or collecting and returning registers. Some older pupils become mentors and take on the responsibility of working with younger pupils. However, the numbers of such pupils has declined amongst the current Year 10 pupils and during the inspection it was only when Year 11 pupils were not involved with exams that older pupils were seen supporting younger ones. The responses to the pupil questionnaires that were completed as part of the inspection indicated that pupils were concerned that there was some bullying at the school. However, much of the perceived bullying was in the context of pupils "falling out" and "making up" again. There was no evidence of any bullying during the inspection and discussions with pupils confirmed that any incidents of genuine bullying were very rare and were quickly dealt with by teachers. The school procedures for handling such incidents are very good.

7. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved on the good standards of the last inspection. The relative weakness in pupils' multi-cultural opportunities has been addressed and this is now particularly strong in relation to both art and music. The strong personal development curriculum delivered by the tutor teams has a very positive effect on pupils' spiritual moral and social development. Whole school assemblies also provide pupils with opportunities to reflect on moral issues. Pupils treat everyone with respect and listen to others. They have a clear understanding of right from wrong and understand the responsibilities of living in their school community and are proud to belong to it. Within class groups pupils usually support each other very well and are sympathetic to others who are experiencing difficulties in their life outside school. Most pupils show respect for the feelings of others and through lessons such as RE understand the cultures and beliefs of others.

8. A very good contribution to pupils' personal development comes from the religious education, and personal development lessons, in addition to the Life Skills, ASDAN Youth Award and Duke of Edinburgh courses. Pupils are introduced to very good role models from a variety of ethnic groups, a range of faiths, and differing political persuasions. They learn to read and observe critically and to view world events through the eyes of these role models. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions, and give support to those weaker than themselves.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
49	1	0

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (95%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	1.5
National data	5.4	National data	1.1

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

9. The quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. There are particular strengths in the quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and in the personal support, guidance and advice given to the pupils.

Teaching and learning

10. The quality of teaching and learning is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of subject specialist teaching is a strength of the school;
- Most lessons make a good contribution to pupils' literacy skills although some opportunities to use ICT are missed in English;
- Some lessons do not always meet the needs of pupils whose have additional learning difficulties;
- The assessment of teaching and learning is good;
- The use of homework, particularly when supported by specialist teachers is very effective in raising achievement.

Commentary

11. The teaching is most effective where subject specialists plan lessons in detail that take full account of pupils' special educational needs. They prepare materials and worksheets that are appropriate to the capabilities and needs of the pupils. This motivates the pupils to attempt progressively challenging demands. Expectations of achievement are also very high which, combined with highly appropriate resources, result in pupils being stimulated to learn and wanting to make progress. These lessons also frequently contain practical activity and a good sense of fun. Role play in English and experimentation in science afford many opportunities for rich experience. Crucial to humour being an aid to learning is the presence of very good relationships between pupils and staff. In PE, the pupils are sufficiently relaxed to give their best efforts when performing in front of their peers. In ICT the pupils learn very well because of the teacher's very good subject knowledge, high expectations, and very good teaching strategies. They grow in confidence and independence, learn new skills quickly and transfer skills well from one program to another. The teaching assistants also make a good contribution to pupil's learning. When the teaching is very good pupils respond very well and are very keen to participate and show what they know, understand and can do by answering questions and offering opinions.

12. Most lessons make a good contribution to the pupils' speaking and listening development, for example, in RE where pupils can discuss and disagree, listen to each other's opinions as well as explain their own. Within English lessons, the pupils are given very good opportunities to speak and listen in pairs, small groups and when whole class teaching regularly involves them giving answers and seeking to clarify key themes in plays and texts. The use of ICT is well developed in some subjects such as science and ICT itself. Science also contributes well to pupils' numeracy skills. Resources are good overall and used very well, including an interactive whiteboard. Some opportunities to exploit its potential are missed in English. In RE, resources, especially those teacher made, interactive classroom displays, and the internet, are very well used.

13. In some lessons the resources provided do not take sufficient account of pupils who have more acute literacy and numeracy difficulties. For example, worksheets contain text that is well above their ability to understand its meaning. Teachers do compensate to a certain extent by the provision of selective teaching assistant support or writing down answers for pupils, nevertheless, there is a small number of pupils who require increasingly different work in order to meet their needs effectively. This is less of an issue in Years 10 and 11 where pupils' options have been made and the courses followed are much more closely designed to meet their needs.

14. The assessment of teaching and learning is effective. The majority of teachers' marking contains very useful feedback that assists pupils in making progress by telling them how to improve. Occasionally, too little feedback of this type is evident, although verbal feedback is regularly used in lessons. Plenary sessions within lessons also assist the teachers and pupils, themselves, to judge their progress as they respond to teachers' and assistants' questions. The school has recognised the need for continued development of the pupils' role in self-assessment.

15. The use of homework is very effective in raising pupils' achievement, particularly during supported homework clubs where subject specialists provide close support to boarding pupils. Homework is issued to all pupils, irrespective of age, special educational need or whether they are day or residential. Expectations of its completion are high and its use is most successful where pupils have a capacity to work independently.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 35 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (6%)	14 (40%)	14 (40%)	5 (14%)	0 (%)	0 (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

16. The curriculum overall is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum, very well supported by staff expertise, is broad, balanced, relevant, and enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities;
- The curriculum, particularly for Years 10 and 11, is reviewed and adjusted annually to meet changing needs, and leads to appropriate accreditation;
- Personal development and religious education lessons are effectively interlinked and prepare pupils well for life outside school;
- There are insufficient opportunities, partly related to accommodation, for older pupils to develop independence skills;
- A very few, less able pupils, in Years 7, 8, and 9, are not provided with a sufficiently differentiated curriculum, to match their needs.

Commentary

17. The breadth and balance of the curriculum provides very good opportunities for most pupils to achieve very well, in a wide range of subjects, including religious education. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Sex education and information on drug abuse are handled sensitively. The curriculum emphasis is on enabling pupils to achieve beyond previous predictions and as near as possible to mainstream levels. Teachers, teaching assistants and care staff are very well qualified and experienced to deliver the curriculum at this level. A number of teaching assistants are qualified teachers and continuing professional development has high status for teaching and care staff. A variety of visits and external speakers enrich the curriculum, especially in the arts, humanities and life skills. Good use is made of the grounds which include a smallholding housing goats and chickens which give the pupils opportunities to learn about animal welfare. At the annual curriculum review, government initiatives are discussed and put in place. Staff had training in the national strategy for pupils at Key Stage 3 strategy, and this is reflected in some subjects, for example, the planned use of subject specific language. However, the Key Stage 3 co-ordinators are fairly new to the post and have not yet monitored planning or teaching, to ensure cross-curricular numeracy or information and communication technology.

18. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good. It is reviewed and adjusted annually, and implemented through the careful planning of the timetable, to meet the specific needs of each year group. There are two basic routes, more and less academic, both culminating in accreditation, including ASDAN, Entry Level, Short Course, and Graduated Assessment GCSE. Pupils and parents are involved in the choice of direction, and the school produces an excellent handbook, with information on the range of options, for parents. When considered advantageous, pupils have the opportunity to study in a local mainstream school for certain subjects, such as history and French. Careers lessons begin in Year 9, and pupils have very good contact with their personal advisor from Connexions, who attends all their Annual Reviews. In individual interviews in Year 10, a careers action plan is created. Work experience takes place in Year 11, for one week. Further education college links begin with a taster in Year 9, and lead up to courses, such as Health and Beauty, and Floristry in Year 10, which meet the Youth Award Challenges. The needs related to English as an additional language and the very few pupils from ethnic minorities are suitably addressed.

19. Opportunities for practising independent living skills are limited by the lack of suitable accommodation, and by custom, in both the school and the residence. Accommodation in the boarding provision does not give opportunities for older pupils to study privately. Although the residential areas have been networked to accommodate computers, a lack of funding has prevented this facility being available. The compulsory homework club does somewhat compensate for this, but does not encourage the development of independent learning habits which will be necessary for college life. The accommodation and resources support the curriculum very well in science, art, information technology and physical education due to the quality of the facilities.

20. The school's aim to provide a "mainstream curriculum with support" is very largely realised and it pays close attention to data arising from pupils' achievements. The population of the school is changing, and the curriculum has adapted well overall, yet there remains room for improvement in relation to the few less able pupils in Years 7, 8, and 9. The commitment to inclusion is strong and very successful overall. However, in some lessons there are a few pupils attempting to work at a level which does not match their ability. They are often helped by teaching assistants in order to keep up with their peers. Whilst sometimes successful, more opportunities need to be provided to enable them to succeed independently and develop the basic skills they lack.

Care, guidance and support

21. Provision for pupils' care welfare, health and safety are **good**. Support, advice and guidance for pupils are **very good**. Involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good relationships between pupils and adults at the school;
- Handover arrangements between residential and school staff ensure effective communication;
- The detailed monitoring of incidents relating to pupils' well being and personal development is very good;
- The care taken to ensure pupils settle into school is very good;
- Some boarders feel their views on after school activities are not taken into account.

Commentary

22. The already good provision for support, guidance and pupil welfare has improved since the last inspection. There is a strong caring ethos and the relationships between the pupils and adults at the school are very good. Parents are happy that their children are well cared for and pupils, including those attending the residential provision, confirm they feel safe and well looked after.

23. Communications between care and education staff are very good. Regular "handover meetings" are efficient and ensure that any concerns relating to overnight or the school day are shared. Staff are very concerned for the welfare of the pupils in their care. The school is a safe place for pupils and staff. Health and safety audits are carried out regularly and issues are addressed quickly. Maintenance procedures are very good and the buildings and equipment at the school are in good condition and safe. Pupils are well supervised at all times, as a result accidents are rare. The personal needs of pupils in the form of the administration of medication and first aid are secure. Child protection procedures are secure and staff have undergone awareness training. Complaint procedures are currently being reviewed by the school and additional training for teachers and awareness for pupils is planned. All pupils have access to an independent advocate who visits the school on a weekly basis. As well as supporting the school in the classroom with the personal development programme the advocate is also available to listen to, and support, pupils on a one to one basis. This represents excellent provision and is well liked by pupils. Currently, the pressure to attend lessons means that not all pupils have sufficient time to discuss important personal issues; however, re-scheduling is planned for next term in order to resolve the problem.

24. All pupils are very well supported by tutor teams who have a very good understanding of pupils' achievements and development. Pupils receive good advice and guidance and are fully involved in the targets they are working towards, although the regular re-enforcement of these targets by staff to pupils is inconsistent. There are good relationships between pupils across all year groups. Opportunities are well used within whole school assemblies to encourage mutual support and celebrate the achievement of others. Pupils who share the boarding experience clearly get on very well together.

25. There are very good induction procedures for pupils joining the school and pupils who join after the normal start of year confirm they are made to feel very welcome and settle in very quickly. Home visits and interviews with pupils, parents and referring schools give a comprehensive basis to ensure a productive start to life at the school. The level of guidance given to older pupils about further study is good overall. Transfers to post-16 provision are well supported by the school.

26. There is a school council where pupils are able to express their views and members of the council confirm they can get things done. Pupils speak very positively about their input to tutor sessions and how they feel comfortable in discussion their problems and sorting things out. However, pupils do not have sufficient impact on the wider development of the school and on some matters pupils do not feel they are being listened to. For example, nearly all pupils consider they should be given more freedom as they move up through the school. In particular, pupils who board consider there to be insufficient age appropriate activities or opportunities for them. These views were also expressed in the questionnaires pupils completed as part of the inspection and are worthy of further review by the school management.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

27. Links with parents, the community and other schools are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' support for the school is strong;
- The annual reports parents receive about their children's progress are of high quality;
- More information could be provided to parents about how they can support their children's achievement at home.

Commentary

28. The good links with parents reported at the last inspection have been successfully maintained. Many parents live some distance from the school and this makes regular involvement very difficult. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and are confident their children are well prepared for the next step in their education. All parents report they are comfortable in approaching the school. During the inspection the parent of a former pupil returned to collect some of her child's work and spoke very positively of how her child had benefited from being at the school.

29. The school regularly sends out newsletters to keep parents informed of what is going on or is planned and pupils have diaries that enable parents to be informed of the work their children are doing and the progress they are making. The school has also arranged workshops for parents on issues such as exams and parents have the opportunity to visit the school to attend coffee mornings with guest speakers. In their response to the questionnaire associated with the Ofsted inspection a significant number of parents considered they were not sufficiently informed about the progress their children were making at school. The findings of the inspection team did not support this view as the quality of the annual reports and interim reports parents and carers receive are of a very high standard. However, more information could be given to parents of day pupils, in particular, as to how they may support their children's education at home.

30. The school is outward looking and uses the local and wider community productively. Such visits contribute well to pupils' learning and are used to support the arts, science, geography and history. During the inspection Year 7 pupils were away on a residential visit to Hastings. The headteacher was able to report to the rest of the school during an assembly that they might be surprised to hear that the Year 7 pupils had managed to sit in silence for an hour the previous evening! Their reward had been the sighting of a badger. As well as a number of visitors coming to the school to support lessons the school pool is very well used by the local community and particularly by parents with young children.

31. Links with partner schools are good overall. As well as workshops for fine art, music and dance, pupils benefit from ICT and SEN links with the local schools consortium and some are able to study for GCSE's in a local secondary school. Many of the curriculum co-ordinators link with other schools and the senior management team meets with other similar post holders within the authority on a regular basis.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

32. Leadership and governance are **very good**. The headteacher's very strong leadership is providing focused and clear direction for the school's future. Leadership elsewhere across the school is **good**. Management of the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a sharp and realistic overview of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses and a very clear vision for raising standards;
- Governors have broad and relevant experience that helps the school; they both challenge and support its work very effectively;
- The senior management team leads and manages the staff well;
- Some aspects of the national strategy for pupils at Key Stage 3 are underdeveloped;
- The school manages finances well to make improvements.

Commentary

33. Leadership is very good overall. The headteacher provides very good leadership and is creating a successful climate for learning in the school. Her clear, purposeful lead and that of her senior colleagues very effectively inspires staff in the drive to raise standards. Both the headteacher and her senior team consisting of the deputy headteacher and head of care, provide very good role models for all staff and are committed to the school's stated aim of "raising achievement by working together". There is considerable energy, enthusiasm and commitment within the team to contribute fully to the school's vision and future direction. The headteacher and deputy headteacher lead by example in their own teaching. They undertake leadership of two subjects, which ensures the rest of the staff have sufficient non-contact time to prepare lessons and manage their own subjects. This impacts positively on standards of achievement and teaching. They monitor and evaluate the school's performance and have identified features that need to be developed to ensure that the high standards and quality of education provided are developed even further. These are laid out in a clear, concise and costed development plan. Although governors are fully involved in its formulation, they are not specifically identified in the plan as to their monitoring role.

34. Governance of the school is very good. The governing body is efficient and effective in its work. Governors are strategically involved in the life of the school, and make a useful contribution to its overall direction. They visit regularly to find out for themselves what is happening. For example, the chair of governors visits pupils when they are on their residential experiences to see for himself the quality of provision. This enables a rigorous contribution and more probing approach to discussions at governors' meetings. Individual governors monitor all core subjects, including RE and consequently have a clear view of standards of literacy, numeracy and ICT across the school. The governing body is very effective in its statutory obligation to undertake the headteacher's performance management and checking the progress towards agreed improvements by the required time. It ensures that the school fulfils all its statutory duties and governors join staff on training days.

35. Management of the school is good. The school's senior management places a very strong emphasis on academic achievement and this is reflected in the quality of the subject specialists on the staff, some of whom are part-time. The timetable has the necessary flexibility to make best use of the teachers' expertise and availability. These are features of very effective management and have a major impact on the quality of learning and achievement. There is a united and cohesive team across the school whose members recognise the need for further change and are willing to move forward swiftly in their own professional practice for the overall benefit of the pupils.

36. The management of the Key Stage 3 Strategy is not so secure and this impacts on its consistent application. Literacy has been and remains the prime focus of whole school development and much of the work required to identify literacy across the curriculum has been achieved, however, this has yet to be achieved for numeracy and ICT. Other aspects of the strategy, such as subject audits and co-ordinators' observation of teaching and learning are yet to become fully established in all subjects.

37. The school's resources are managed very efficiently and finances are tracked closely over time. The chair of the finance committee has a very good understanding of the principles of best

value. Consequently the budget is well managed and clearly linked to the school development plan. Effective systems ensure that money is well prioritised and spent to improve provision.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004.

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	935,282	Balance from previous year	25,231
Total expenditure	933,198	Balance carried forward to the next	27,314
Expenditure per pupil	17,281		

38. The main part of the large sum carried forward in March 2003 was committed to planned and costed refurbishment and building development.

Boarding

The boarding provision is **good**.

- The provision makes a very good contribution to the boarders' academic achievement;
- The leadership and management of the boarding provision is good and has the boarders' welfare at its heart;
- The quality of relationships between care staff and boarders and between boarders themselves is very good;
- There is a good range of after school activities available that serves the boarders' personal development well, although some of the boarders would like to make greater use of the local community;
- The residential accommodation affords too little privacy for boarders.

39. The boarders' academic achievements are very well supported by the provision of homework clubs after school. These run on a daily basis for set times according to the age of the pupils. Good use is made of the school's facilities, notably the ICT suite where studies include English, mathematics, science and ICT. These sessions are supported by teachers who are often subject specialists who provide excellent support and links between the school day and extra-curricular teaching. Day pupils sometimes take advantage of this additional support which has a positive impact on their academic achievement.

40. The boarding provision is well managed and provides well for the boarders' welfare and social development. The most recent care standards reports arrived at similar overall judgements. Issues related to accommodation, complaints, medicines and care plans have either been addressed or are in the process of being so. For example, the further development of individual care plans where boarders have an increased involvement and awareness of their targets. The head of care, a member of the school's senior management team and also an associate governor, provides very good support to care staff seeking additional qualifications related to their roles. Lines of responsibility, accountability and health and safety issues are well understood, although there is no specific care handbook to which care staff can refer. Communications between teaching and other staff are very good as a result of regular meetings such as the morning and afternoon "handovers". Care staff are regularly involved in reviewing the life skills curriculum and personal development programmes in light of the boarders' changing needs. Records and assessments of boarders' needs are comprehensive and readily available for all staff. Effective links with parents are secured via regular correspondence and tutor team attendance at parents' meetings. Induction interviews and home visits are also offered to ensure a smooth transition to residential schooling. Parental satisfaction is evident in their interview and questionnaire responses. There is regular access to medical expertise and most staff are fully qualified in first-aid and have a good knowledge of child

protection procedures. The freshly cooked food ensures the all pupils have access to a nutritious diet that promotes a healthy lifestyle.

41. The relationships between boarders and care staff are very good. The staff are good role models and do their best to see that the residential experience is a balance between guaranteeing their welfare as well as promoting their personal development. The staff give the boarders space in which to relax in the residential accommodation, although in practical terms, there is little scope to do so. The role of care staff during the school taught-day is largely based around their presence in tutor periods where they form a vital part of the tutor-team.

42. After school activities, are not exclusively academic, they also include leisure and recreational pursuits such as music, dance, trampolining, art, cycling, and youth club. Prioritised access to these activities is based on year groups to ensure that the content is as age-appropriate as possible. An on-site youth club is under construction and due to open in next term will provide another welcome facility. Occasionally, pupils make use of local amenities such as Guides, the cinema and a judo club. Some take part in "The Adventure Service Challenges" where they can learn skills in first-aid and camping. The pupils who board consider that they are treated well and know who to turn to should they experience any difficulties. They take advantage of the activities offered, although they express a wish to "get out" more often. Whilst the care staff seek to extend social opportunities, long-term staffing absence has affected the school's ability to provide more frequent use of the wider community.

43. The residential accommodation is satisfactory overall. It is extremely well maintained by the on-site manager and recent refurbishment has addressed weaknesses identified in earlier care standards reports, for example, the showering facilities. Despite the best efforts of the school to afford privacy to boarders, for example, the red telephone booth for private calls, there are too few areas for boarders to have privacy. One bedroom contains five beds with very little room for personal belongings. The common room is comfortable and there are opportunities for boarders to make drinks and snacks, but there is a lack of a quiet place or somewhere to read or listen to music should television have little to offer.

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

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and assessment make a significant contribution to pupils' overall achievement;
- The curriculum is well planned and offers pupils a wide experience, although in some lessons, work does not always adequately match the needs and abilities of a small number of pupils with additional learning difficulties;
- The subject is very well led and managed;
- Some opportunities to use ICT are missed.

Commentary

44. The overall quality of teaching and assessment is good and this is a major influence on the good standards the pupils achieve. The vast majority of pupils achieve very well with a good proportion gaining passes in GCSE. In the most recent examinations for which results are available, all pupils made good progress and nearly all achieved grade E which represents very good achievement.

45. Most pupils' speaking and listening skills are good. They listen well in class and are able to respond well to the contributions of teachers, teaching assistants and peers. In the best lessons, the teachers provide a wide variety of opportunities for pair and group work as pupils prepare answers which are later presented to the whole class. Good account is taken of pupils' special educational needs where these relate to a reluctance to engage in whole-class discussions and debates. For example, skilful changes of pace prompt the pupils to give quick verbal responses whilst those who need more time to reflect before speaking are able to do so. A particularly strong feature, as seen in Year 8 working on text from the "Two Grandpas", is the use of role-play where pupils adopt moods similar to characters they have just read about. Most pupils display good reading skills. However, a minority is insecure in their reading comprehension skills, so that they do not always understand the full meaning of what they are reading. In preparation for GCSE, critical reading skills are well taught although some still have problems understanding the layers of meaning in the demanding texts which form part of their course work, for example, "A Midsummer Night's Dream". The most able show an appreciation of the style in which Shakespeare wrote and can describe the intended effect. Most pupils improve their basic skills of punctuation, spelling and grammar and use them well in an imaginative range of writing activities. The teaching is frequently very engaging with very good use of age-appropriate humour to which the pupils respond well and re-enforces their positive attitudes to the subject. There are good assessment procedures, with all pupils getting individual targets for improvement. The quality of marking is very good and provides pupils with comprehensive feedback. Additional targets for improvement are posted in the classrooms which assist the pupils in becoming familiar with what they need to do to improve their attainment. A significant contribution to the overall achievement of the pupils is the use of homework. This is most pronounced where pupils attend the after school sessions supported by teachers whose specialist knowledge of the subject ensures that the support provided is very effective.

46. The pupils have a wide range of special educational needs that affect their literacy levels to varying degrees. The work planned in Years 10 and 11 is largely determined by whether the pupils are to be entered for GCSE. Consequently there is a closer match to the individual needs than can be seen in earlier years. The examination option is only one factor. Teachers mainly provide pupils

with an imaginative range of activities and support the range of abilities well. There are times when the same resource materials are used irrespective of the pupils' abilities. This tends to reduce the effectiveness of learning for lower attaining pupils as opposed to holding back those of higher attainment. Nevertheless, there is evidence that work provided can meet the needs of all pupils. For example, where the teaching is very good the teacher's high expectations of all pupils, regardless of their ability, contains work that is matched to their needs and abilities, including extension activities for the more able, and enables pupils to make progress in their oral, reading and writing skills within a single lesson.

47. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The well-informed, enthusiastic head of English has made a positive impact since his recent arrival. Teachers use the English strand of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy to good effect, although observation of teaching and learning by the co-ordinator has yet to become established. Liaison with part-time colleagues is very good and planned meetings focus upon the improvement of resources and tailoring schemes of work to meet the needs of pupils. Evidence from lessons showed that this is making a positive contribution to raising standards in the subject. All members of the department are committed to raising standards in the subject. Plans to improve the library facilities are appropriate and should significantly enhance the overall provision which has improved since the last inspection.

48. Some opportunities to support writing using ICT are missed. The pupils are given a wide variety of opportunities to write for different audiences. The writing is planned effectively and most have some understanding of structure and ways to persuade the reader towards a particular argument. This was evident during lessons on how to write advertisements for maximum impact. In this example, the pupils could have experimented with language, graphics and fonts to develop their ideas using desktop-publishing to create their own adverts. More generally there is little evidence the pupils regularly use ICT to re-draft or improve their work. Recent purchases of programs to support literacy development are a welcome addition.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

49. The importance of literacy across the curriculum is well established. Teachers of subjects other than English place considerable emphasis on learning specialist vocabulary relevant to other areas of study. For example, in science and physical education where pupils learn technical words that are necessary to achieve success in external examinations. Subjects such as religious education provide many opportunities for speaking and listening supported by writing. The adoption of the Key Stage 3 strategy is relatively recent and the school has yet to evaluate the success of implementation in subjects. The work done so far within English is proving to be effective.

French

50. Insufficient work was seen in French to make overall judgements about the quality of provision. The quality of teaching was good in the two lessons observed and inspectors looked at other work and discussed it with pupils. French is taught to all pupils in Years 7 to 9 and to those taking GCSE in Years 10 and 11. The pupils taking examinations achieve well with all gaining grades from C-F in 2003 tests. Pupils learn how to address each other and how to make themselves understood in shops, cafes and when using transport. The teacher uses a wide range of strategies including videos and role play to engage the pupils. In the lessons seen, the pupils responded well to the teacher's enthusiasm and expertise. They enjoyed talking about themselves and asking simple questions of each other. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as their increased awareness and understanding of another European language.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils achieve well in mathematics as a result of good teaching;
- The most able pupils benefit from the teacher's enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge;
- A very few less able pupils in Years 7, 8, and 9 underachieve;
- There has been little development of the Key Stage 3 strategy for numeracy.

Commentary

51. The majority of pupils make good progress in mathematics, achieving level 3 by the end of Year 9, and either Entry Level 3 or GCSE grades F and G by the end of Year 11. The teacher has high expectations and pupils respond well, even those who came into the school declaring a dislike of maths. Pupils are learning to think independently and solve problems. In one very good lesson in Year 9, pupils were asked to investigate a hypothesis. Working in pairs, they were required not just to complete the task, but actually design the solution to the problem. Presentation of work is very good, for example, in this exercise, they drew tables without being told to do so, because it was the logical way to record the information.

52. The very knowledgeable teacher is enthusiastic about the subject and inspires the most able pupils to achieve very well. The level of challenge for the highest attaining pupils is very good and they are encouraged to explore and investigate independently. Pupils, expected to achieve a GCSE grade A to C, who miss lessons either because they are studying other subjects in mainstream, or because of illness, receive one to one support and extra, supervised homework in maths to make sure they stay on track for accreditation.

53. Pupils who come into the school with particular numeracy difficulties do not always achieve as well others in Years 7, 8, and 9. In attempting to follow the same work as the majority of the class, they fail to understand the processes, even when, with support, they complete the tasks. This lack of understanding is very evident when they do homework independently, or are tested without support, and is exacerbated by additional literacy difficulties. The lack of formal assessment delays the identification of these pupils and results in a mismatch of task with pupil ability.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. Although staff have been trained in the Key Stage 3 strategy, numeracy does not appear in the planning of lessons in other subjects. In common with most other co-ordinators there are too few opportunities to observe lessons, check planning in order to provide a co-ordinated approach to numeracy for other subject areas. Good overall provision has been maintained since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

The provision for science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject manager has very high expectations that pupils will achieve well and improve on their previous best. For the majority of pupils, this results in very good GCSE results, grades D to F;
- The oldest pupils in the school make very good progress in developing their thinking, deductive and predicting skills because of the very good teaching they receive;
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support scientific enquiry;

- The subject specialist has very good subject knowledge, which gives pupils confidence in his teaching;
- The subject specialist uses simple, but effective resources to give good, practical experiences of science that make lessons fun.

Commentary

55. Pupils' achievements in science are very good because the subject specialist has very high expectations of what they know, understand and can do. Lessons are challenging, but also fun. As a consequence pupils respond positively and are very keen to learn. By Year 9, lower attaining pupils are developing good investigative strategies. They are able to explain why the size of a parachute affects its dropping time and complete a table to show how a leaf surface loses water. Higher attaining pupils describe the basic principles of photosynthesis and show how vehicles with extra tyres are less likely to sink into the ground.

56. These skills are built upon and developed so that, by the end of Year 11, the majority of pupils are entered for GCSE and have consistently attained 100% A* to G. Older pupils show very good knowledge and understanding in their exploration of basic scientific principles and are able to predict the outcomes of experiments. For example, in an excellent lesson they were challenged to think, reason, and predict what would happen in an experiment based on the fermentation of yeast. They drew on their prior knowledge of factors that affect fermentation and identified, with minimal intervention, how variables may change results in a fair test.

57. Overall teaching and learning are very good. The subject specialist plans lessons in detail and prepares materials and worksheets perceptively to match the capabilities and needs of the pupils. This motivates the pupils to attempt progressively challenging demands. Expectations of pupils' achievement are very high and that, combined with challenge and the use of simple, but highly appropriate resources, results in pupils being stimulated to learn and wanting to make progress. The teacher ensures lessons are practical, fun and provide very good opportunities for pupils to think for themselves. In one Year 10 lesson pupils were encouraged to use their reasoning skills to identify inaccuracies on a chart made by a former pupil carrying out the same experiment. Relationships are very good in the classroom and play a key role in maintaining the quality of learning. All pupils respond very well and are very keen to participate and show what they know, understand and can do by answering questions, making suggestions and predicting what will happen next. Good use is made of ICT to record findings, but it could be used more effectively to support scientific enquiry. Very good examples were seen in science lessons of consolidation of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to support the recording of work.

58. Subject leadership is very good. The subject coordinator has a clear vision of how the department should develop and what is needed to make it even more effective. For example, plans are in place to ensure that older, lower attaining pupils will have access to an accredited course suitable to their needs and abilities. Assessment is used very effectively, both to monitor individual pupil's progress and to ensure the science curriculum is developed appropriately. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for information and communication technology is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and gain very good accreditation;
- Teaching is very good;
- Information technology is used well in most subjects across the curriculum.

Commentary

59. By the end of Year 9, pupils can access the school network and the internet, word process, use Publisher, Excel and Powerpoint. They can use digital cameras and download their photographs. Most pupils can work independently, a few need verbal prompts. By the end of Year 11, most pupils show very good skills and considerable independence, do internet research, and have progressed beyond the basic skills in word processing and desk top publishing. They can send homework to the teacher by email, attaching a file. They can follow instructions to build a website, and can write instructions for a number of processes. All strands of ICT are covered and pupils learn about technology in everyday life. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are working towards accreditation of either GCSE Short Course B in ICT, or OCR Entry Level Certificate. Past results have been very good.

60. Pupils learn very well because of the teacher's very good subject knowledge, high expectations, and very good teaching strategies. They grow in confidence and independence, learn new skills quickly and transfer skills well from one program to another. The teaching assistant makes a good contribution to pupil's learning. Assessment is much improved since the last inspection, leading to an accurate knowledge of pupils' abilities and level of achievement. Resources are good and used very well, including an interactive whiteboard, data projectors, graphics tablets, and the services of a technician for fifteen hours a week. There has been good improvement in provision since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

61. Use of information technology in other subjects varies with the skill and interest of the teacher, but overall it is good, and most teachers use digital cameras to record events. In science, humanities, and physical education, it is very good. For example, swimming strokes are videoed and used to promote self-evaluation. Internet research is used well by teachers and pupils to enhance teaching and learning although opportunities are missed in English. As part of the Key Stage 3 strategy, the use of ICT is commonly identified in planning although focussed observation of teaching and learning by the co-ordinator has yet to become established.

HUMANITIES

History

62. Insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection to make an overall judgement on the provision for history. The curriculum for history ensures that pupils have covered a good range and variety of topics that follows areas of the national curriculum. Although there were insufficient numbers of lessons observed to make a judgement on teaching and learning, scrutiny of work shows that lower attainers have a good understanding of the meaning of 'chronology', 'period' and 'decade'. Work is modified to suit their needs through the use of visual and graphic resources. In the scrutiny of work there was evidence of pupils' involvement in a re-creation of the story of Thomas Becket, which was performed in an assembly. Higher attaining pupils understand and can demonstrate different sources and the importance of collecting evidence. They identify a range of artefacts and can place them in the correct period of history. In 2003 Year 11 pupils achieved 88% A* - G in their GCSE results, an improvement on the previous year. The very good planning and high expectation by the subject coordinator has a very positive impact on this achievement.

Geography

63. Insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection to make an overall judgement on the provision for geography. The curriculum for geography ensures that, as they move up through the school, pupils are provided with the opportunity to build up their knowledge of the world around them. Work is planned effectively to reflect aspects of the national curriculum. In Year 7, higher attaining pupils' work indicates that they develop an understanding of basic map reading, for instance, interpreting simple coordinates and analysing weather conditions. Additional literacy

difficulties mean that making good use of some worksheets is unlikely, although good achievement is possible, for example, when lower attaining pupils cut and paste a simple plan and work on a map drawing in basic features. Lessons provide the opportunity for pupils to use their numeracy skills such as graph work and completing exercises to find locations using map co-ordinates.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The provision for religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable teaching leads to very good achievement;
- The broad and balanced curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, social, moral, cultural and personal development;
- Cross-curricular links are very good.

Commentary

64. Pupils achieve very well in religious education because of the very good, enthusiastic teaching. They follow the local agreed religious education syllabus and work towards accreditation of either GCSE Short Course, or ASDAN. The teaching assistants make a significant contribution to learning, and take responsibility for completion of the ASDAN coursework. Pupils, by the end of Year 9, have learned about a variety of faiths. They learn not only the facts of the various beliefs, but how they affect thinking and behaviour. They compare this with their own experience of belief and tradition. For example, they have understood Ghandi's philosophy well enough to predict how he would react in a variety of situations. They chose the Archbishop of Canterbury as one of the people Ghandi would have approved of because, "he has strong religious beliefs and spoke out against the war." In Year 10, studying Social Harmony, discussions were thoughtful and quite deep on the subject of Nelson Mandela. Pupils can discuss and disagree, listen to each other's opinions as well as explain their own. Assessment is very good, including ongoing recording by support staff, of verbal contributions in lessons. Resources, especially the teacher made, interactive classroom displays, and the internet, are very well used.

65. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development, including the spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements, through the introduction of good role models, the promotion of critical reading and observation, and the habit of self-evaluation. Pupils develop a sense of purpose as they accept responsibility for their own actions and a belief that they can make a difference, whether it is to the school through the school council, or to the world through conservation.

66. The links to other subjects, especially PSHE, (personal, social, and health education), citizenship, English and the humanities, are very good. Through religious education, pupils learn not only what to do to be a good citizen, but why it is important. Speaking and listening are extremely well promoted in lessons. The historical and geographical background to beliefs, increases pupils' understanding of the world and helps them to understand the multicultural society in which they live. There is good improvement since the last inspection.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art & Design and Design and Technology

Art

The provision for art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is very well led and managed by the headteacher, who is very enthusiastic and committed to raising standards;
- Art provides a very good vehicle for raising self esteem and forming good relationships inside and outside the school;
- Pupils are provided with a very good range of opportunities in art, both within and outside school;
- The standards of displays around the school shows that pupils are achieving very well in art.

Commentary

67. The enthusiasm, very good subject knowledge and artistic talents of the subject specialist have a very significant impact on the high standard of achievement of the majority of pupils. This is reflected in the GCSE results at the end of Year 11, where pupils have consistently achieved 100%A*-G grades. The insistence that all pupils are given the opportunity to enter GCSE encourages them to complete a body of work and discover their own potential. Consequently, their self-esteem and confidence are raised as a result of their individual success.

68. Although there were insufficient lessons seen to make an overall judgement on teaching and learning, pupils are achieving very well in art when the evidence from displays, scrutiny of their work and analysis of examination results are considered. They are offered a wide variety of techniques and materials to work with. Younger pupils produce a variety of work based on photography, fabrics and clay, as well as landscape and portraiture. They are introduced to a range of different styles and artists. For example, they had the opportunity to view original paintings by Canaletto in a local private collection. Very good use is made of local arts venues, as well as the national art institutions such as Tate Modern and Tate Britain. Through art lessons there is very good contribution to cultural development and multi-cultural awareness. Currently the oldest pupils are preparing masks based on festival headgear from a variety of countries including Bali, Africa and India. They are researching their information on the Internet and from books, and designing their own masks and recording the process photographically for their portfolios. The teacher encourages pupils to work as independently as they can, acting as a facilitator, planning lessons very well and providing access to materials. Consequently, pupils can make choices and take ownership of their work. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils to evaluate their work and extend their learning through homework. During the week of the inspection, Year 11 pupils were sitting their GCSE examinations and their work was displayed around the school. This was of a high standard and other pupils responded well, being interested and positive about the candidates' efforts. Opportunities for all pupils to exhibit their work have a positive impact on raising self-esteem and confidence. Pupils take a pride in their efforts. The school has received the 2003 'Artsmark' silver award and is currently submitting evidence for the gold award. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

Design and technology

69. Insufficient evidence was gained during the inspection to make an overall judgement on the provision for design and technology. A scrutiny of work displayed shows that pupils experience a range of interesting activities using a wide range of materials. In one lesson seen lower attaining pupils with additional literacy and numeracy difficulties were provided with very good opportunities

to make their own decisions about designs of a flag for sports day and make selections of materials for its decoration. This had a very positive impact on improving their skills of speaking and listening skills and social interaction.

Music

70. Insufficient evidence was seen to make a judgement on the provision for music. In the two lessons observed, pupils were enthusiastic and hard working. They demonstrated good musical knowledge, including understanding of musical terms. They can listen critically, evaluate and improve their performance. All played an instrument, recorders or percussion, and could follow simple conducting to hold the rhythm. The lessons were well planned and included links to other subjects, especially history, geography and English. High expectations and well paced lessons meant that the pupils achieved very well.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and assessment are strong features and contribute very effectively to the pupils' very good achievement;
- Leadership and management are very good;
- The facilities are excellent and have a major effect upon standards achieved.

Commentary

71. The quality of teaching is very good overall and leads to the pupils achieving very well in the subject. This is partly reflected in 2003 GCSE examinations where several pupils achieved grades between D and F. As a result of the significant number of pupils who have difficulties in literacy and numeracy, performance in practical work is better than in theory. Success in sport is celebrated by a wide range of awards, including ASDAN. In other aspects of the subject, such as swimming and trampolining, the pupils' achievements are very good. The teacher is well qualified and experienced in the areas taught and is very well supported by other staff who have expertise in team sports, swimming, tennis and trampolining. The staff are good role models and transmit their enthusiasm to the pupils. A number of staff have continued to access training that has enabled them to hold additional qualifications that ensure their knowledge and skills are up to date. The pupils respond well to the generally high expectations of staff. Pupils enjoy their lessons and participate well. They have a good standard of kit. They fully understand the beneficial effects of exercise upon their cardio-vascular system. In an athletics lesson, the pupils were involved in assessing and recording their times and distances. Occasionally, lessons do not contain sufficient strenuous exercise although attention to warming up and cooling down is very good. Good attention is given to pupils' different special educational needs, for example, allowing them to choose an activity where they know they will be able to demonstrate success.

72. The subject is well led and managed. The co-ordinator has established good links with local schools to supplement expertise and resources as and when required. She uses review and assessment well to identify strengths and weaknesses in the department and takes appropriate action to ensure that high standards are retained. A good example was the observation that some pupils required additional support to fully access the theory element of the GCSE examination. There is a strong emphasis upon enabling others to take responsibility, such as obtaining life saving qualifications in order to maximise swimming pool use. Trampolining, very well led by a member of the catering staff, has now become a feature of the local community after developing rapidly from within the school. Pupils are taught after school and local residents attend further classes as part of the club.

73. The pupils' achievements are also due in part to the excellent facilities including a swimming pool, well-equipped gymnasium, an outdoor tennis/netball court and extensive grounds that contain a running track. Despite the gymnasium being out of action for significant periods during the inspection due to examination commitments, these facilities are well used on a regular basis and are also of benefit to the local community. Occasionally, the pupils take part in off-site sporting events and these visits contribute effectively to the pupils' personal and social development. The subject enjoys high status at the school and has improved since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils achieve well and are well prepared for life at school and beyond;
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good;
- The well managed programme is comprehensive and all staff work very well together.

Commentary

74. The pupils benefit from the many aspects of the personal, social, health education and citizenship programme. They have a good understanding of themselves, how others see them, health issues and local community and culture. Speaking and listening skills are also well developed as they talk enthusiastically with growing confidence in whole class discussions and when working collaboratively in small groups. Achievement is good, because teachers ensure that the activities are adapted to meet pupils' needs. Pupils are very positive about the subject's role in their personal and social development. There is a very wide range of activities, enabling pupils to consider age-appropriate responsibilities. For example, Year 9 pupils discussing the qualities needed to be a good mentor and Year 10 planning activities suitable for young children. Lessons frequently contain role play which brings the content to life.

75. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and is very well supported by the role of tutor teams, consisting of education and care staff. The personal development programme includes sex education, citizenship and life skills and is taught by the tutor teams in tutor periods in addition to timetabled lessons. The teaching is very good when the teacher supplements the original lesson plans with innovative ideas. These involve working with each small group of pupils so that they work collaboratively and all have an opportunity to express their views. Relationships are clearly very strong between teachers and pupils as they show they are sufficiently relaxed to voice their opinions, often with a sense of humour. Occasionally, pupils who have literacy difficulties do not make as much use of the texts provided or record their achievements as well as others whose reading and writing abilities are stronger. Staff sometimes "scribe" answers for pupils and some use word-processors to collect their thoughts which goes some way to address these specific difficulties. Lesson activities make good use of the school's systems for self-assessment. The celebration of success, option choice, careers and vocational education are given high priority.

76. The co-ordinator leads and manages the area well and has audited individual subject contributions to ensure the provision is enhanced by identified curriculum links. There are good examples of effective personal, social and health education and citizenship in the life-skills programme, religious education and history. Not only does the programme meet statutory requirements, it lies at the heart of the school's pastoral provision. Communications between staff are very good and as a result the programme is very effective in promoting the pupils' personal and social development. The programme is regularly reviewed by staff including the head of care to ensure that its effectiveness is extended into the residential experience for pupils. Since the last inspection the already good personal, social and health education programme has been well developed to include citizenship that takes suitable account of National Curriculum guidance.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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