

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGH CLOSE SCHOOL

Wokingham

LEA area: Berkshire

Unique reference number: 110181

Principal: Mr Sandy Paterson

Lead inspector: Mrs Sue Aldridge

Dates of inspection: 21st – 23rd February 2005

Inspection number: 268577

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:	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils:	7 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	56
School address:	Wiltshire Road Wokingham Berkshire
Postcode:	RG40 1TT
Telephone number:	0118 9785767
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Appropriate authority:	Barnardo's
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Maria Featch
Date of previous inspection:	1 st March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

High Close is a mixed, non-maintained residential and day special school administered by the Barnardo's childcare charity in partnership with the school's governing body. It is approved for 44 residential pupils aged from 7 to 16. At present there are 56 day and residential pupils on roll, all of whom have a statement of special educational need. All pupils have severe social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Many have experienced trauma in their lives and have had interrupted schooling; as a result, their attainment when they enter the school is below that expected for pupils of a similar age. There are almost twice as many boys as girls, and only about a sixth of pupils are in the primary age range. Most pupils are white and a few are of mixed race; none have English as an additional language. Pupils come from a wide geographical area that stretches from the south of England to the Midlands: the school serves 20 different local authorities. Pupils are from a variety of socio-economic circumstances; five are in public care. The school is unusual in having a field social work team whose members support parents and pupils; support continues during the school holidays and for up to six months after pupils have left the school. The school's work has achieved the Investors in People Award, the CfBT Careers Guidance Enhanced Award, and the Healthy Schools Bronze Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8810	Sue Aldridge	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Religious Education; Modern Foreign Languages; Music.
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30243	Lily Evans	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Art and Design.
17855	Gordon Gentry	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Geography; History.
22178	Kate Robertson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and Communication Technology; Citizenship; Personal, Social and Health Education.
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school's overall effectiveness is good. Pupils make good progress in improving both their behaviour and their learning skills, and this enables them to achieve well by the time they leave the school. Teaching is good. The school provides very good care for all pupils, and works closely with parents to raise standards. The school is well led and managed and it provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve very well in art and design, and in mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils do not reach the standards of which they are capable in information and communication technology (ICT), which is not resourced well enough.
- Teamwork, which is most effective, is encouraged well by the principal.
- Parents hold the school and its staff in high regard.
- Good relationships, and the commitment of staff, contribute to very high standards of care; the residential provision is very good.
- Staff support pupils very well in lessons but do not involve them well enough in assessing their learning.
- The accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory.
- A small number of pupils do not have their needs for therapy met.

There has been good improvement since the previous inspection, despite difficulties in recruiting staff. Staffing has improved; members of staff are now well trained and are deployed in such a way that their skills are put to good use. Planning of the curriculum is more detailed, and the school has a wealth of information about how well individuals and groups of pupils are doing in the core subjects. Pupils are involved well in reviewing their progress each year and in setting personal targets for further improvement. The school now sets targets to reduce exclusions. Accommodation, which is good overall, has improved, but facilities for physical education remain unsatisfactory. Resolving this requires expenditure of considerable capital that the school does not have, but the development is included in a list of capital projects maintained by Barnardo's.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievements are good overall. They are good in the junior classes, and in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is satisfactory. Most pupils enter the school at this stage, and can arrive at any time in the school year. In many cases, they have not been in formal education for some time; up to two years in a few instances. It takes a while for them to settle, improve their behaviour and establish suitable learning habits. New arrivals occasionally upset the dynamics of groups, slowing progress generally. However, considering their low attainment levels on entry, pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning. In the junior classes and in Years 10 and 11, good achievement is the result of good teaching and of the greater maturity of the oldest pupils. At the end of Year 11, pupils leave school with a range of certificates, including General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and Youth Award Scheme Bronze or Silver Awards. Last summer, seven Year 11 pupils achieved a Grade C in GCSE Art (short course).

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils' attitudes to the school and to their work are good. They like coming to school, so their attendance and punctuality are also good. Behaviour is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good overall; it is good in the junior classes and in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, where a few teachers are not always successful in managing pupils' difficult behaviour. The flexible use of support assistants and staff from the residential units is a particularly strong feature of teaching. Assessment is satisfactory. The school has good information on pupils' achievements at the end of each stage, but staff do not identify different learning outcomes for pupils of different abilities in lessons, nor do they involve pupils well enough in assessing their learning at the end of each lesson. The curriculum is best in the junior classes and is satisfactory for secondary pupils. There is a good range of activities outside lessons and in the residential units. Staffing is good and the residential accommodation is very good. There are very productive links with parents and good links with the community. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory. A team of social workers gives very good support to pupils, and this continues for six months after pupils have left the school. Pupils have good opportunities to be involved in the management of the school. Induction arrangements for pupils are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The principal provides good leadership, and so do all staff in key positions. Teamwork is particularly well developed. Governance by Barnardo's, in conjunction with advisory governors, is good. Although not all the therapy needs described in pupils' statements are met, resolving this is not entirely within the school's control. Other statutory requirements are met. Induction for staff is very good, and there are good opportunities for them to extend their professional skills and expertise. Financial management is very good. The school has a good range of ways of measuring its success and knows what needs to be done to secure further improvements. School improvement planning is good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are delighted with the provision that the school makes for their children. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and are proud to show visitors around. They are unanimous in thinking that the teaching is good and that staff help them to improve their work. Most feel that they are expected to do their best. They find that they are well supported by adults, and that the school is well run.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve resources for ICT.
- Set different learning outcomes for pupils of different abilities in lessons, and involve pupils in reviewing these at the end of the lesson.
- Improve the accommodation for physical education.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that the school provides therapies described on pupils' statements.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Most pupils do not reach the levels expected for their age, because of their learning difficulties and periods when they have missed education. Pupils' achievements are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well in art and design, and in mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
- Achievement is good overall in English, mathematics, science, personal, social and health education (PSHE), citizenship and religious education.
- Pupils do not achieve well enough in ICT.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not achieve as well as those in other age groups, but their achievements are satisfactory nonetheless.

Commentary

1. Since the school was last inspected, it has developed well the practice of collecting assessment information in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. It is now able to demonstrate clearly the value that it adds by analysing this information; it could strengthen this process in Years 5 to 9 by collecting evidence of pupils' achievements in the form of annotated and dated work. The range of accreditation has also improved and, in Years 10 and 11, pupils have access to eight GCSE courses, including entry level and short courses. The range of accredited courses continues to expand, sometimes at the request of the pupils. For instance, history has been added as an option this year. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also have the opportunity to follow a vocational course in childcare.

2. The school's data shows that the school adds good value during the junior years. Good progress and achievement in the junior classes is associated with a good, broad curriculum and good teaching. The school has grouped pupils effectively at this stage, too, so that those with similar emotional needs are in a small class; this works well.

3. In 2003, the first year of national tables showing the value added from Year 6 to Year 11, the school was placed in the top five per cent of all schools on the basis of the progress made by pupils. In the most recent tables, it is placed in the top 20 per cent.

4. Good overall achievement in English, mathematics, science, religious education, PSHE and citizenship is associated with good teaching and learning. Assessment information shows that progress slows in Years 7 to 9. For instance, pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not make as much progress in English, mathematics, PSHE and religious education as pupils in the junior classes or those in Years 10 and 11. Pupils are frequently referred to the school at this stage, and they may enter at any time of the year. They often arrive following a period of disrupted education, and a few may have missed up to two years schooling. As a result, they have low attainment, little confidence and few study skills. It is the school's experience that new entrants may also upset the dynamics of class groups. Inevitably, pupils take time to settle, but once their attendance and behaviour improves, pupils start to make good progress. The school's data shows that pupils who move internally from the junior classes to the secondary years make better overall gains in Years 7 to 9 than those that enter from other schools.

5. Across the school, pupils do not reach the standards of which they are capable in ICT. The school has not been able to recruit an ICT specialist until recently, and there are few resources in classes. As a result, pupils have not acquired skills in a planned and progressive way, nor have they developed their skills in using ICT as a learning tool in other subjects. Development of ICT is a priority in the school's improvement plan.

6. In recent years, the school has steadily increased the percentage of pupils achieving at least one GCSE from 62 per cent in 2001 to 100 per cent in 2004. In 2004, two pupils gained five GCSE passes, and seven out of nine obtained a Grade C in a GCSE short course in art and design. Across the school, very good achievement in art and design is the result of good teaching and learning, the very positive attitudes of pupils, and the wide range of learning experiences that the school provides. Similarly, in mathematics in Years 10 and 11, very good achievement results from pupils' positive attitudes and the quality of teaching and learning. The school has the flexibility to give pupils an opportunity to achieve accreditation in Year 10 if they are ready for this. In 2004, several Year 10 pupils were entered for GCSE mathematics at foundation level and all were successful: three achieved a Grade D. Similarly, three Year 10 pupils achieved GCSE passes in ICT at Foundation Level.

7. Each year, the school uses assessment information to set targets for raising achievement; these are based upon prediction, taking account of past performance, and they are challenging. Although targets are not always met, the school is clear about the reasons for this, and it takes action to rectify weaknesses identified. For instance, as an outcome it has targeted reading and writing skills in Years 7 to 9.

8. Analysis of assessment information shows that boys and girls do equally well, and that pupils in public care and those from ethnic minorities do at least as well as others. Almost all pupils follow further education courses when they leave the school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to the school are good, and behaviour is satisfactory. Punctuality and attendance are good. Pupils' personal development is good, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils participate well in school life and the range of activities provided.
- Pupils are enterprising and take responsibility.
- Pupils have good confidence and self-esteem, and these enable them to tackle new work positively.
- The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct and works hard to achieve them.

Commentary

9. Pupils enjoy being at school and enjoy their learning. When they are given the opportunity, pupils are pleased to accept responsibility. For example, two pupils from each residential unit and the day unit are selected as members of the school council, and older pupils are pleased and proud to be appointed as school prefects. Pupils' behaviour both in their residential houses and throughout the school is satisfactory. Most pupils are aware of the school rules and are encouraged by staff to obey them. Occasionally in lessons, a few pupils behave badly and are rude to staff. This is mostly dealt with well by teachers, but in a few instances poor behaviour and inappropriate language are tolerated by teachers in order to avoid confrontation.

10. Most pupils are pleased to participate in the life of the school and in the range of activities outside the classroom. The school has very little bullying, but when incidents do occur they are promptly dealt with in an appropriate manner. Parents at the meeting held prior to the inspection, expressed the view that their children's behaviour had greatly improved since joining High Close,

and that behaviour management was a strength of the school. The inspection team noted that the behaviour policy was not always consistently applied and that behaviour, particularly of Year 10 and 11 pupils, was sometimes variable. However, on a visit to a childcare course at a local college, pupils' conduct was impeccable. There is no doubt that pupils know how to behave well, but they do not always choose to do so.

11. Attendance at 93 per cent is good. The school has good procedures to promote attendance. Parents are telephoned on the first day of absence, and unexplained absences are referred to the social inclusion team, who make home visits. Attendance is recorded manually, but the school is to investigate ways of installing a computerised system. Incidents involving restraints have greatly decreased from 272 in 2002 to 172 in 2003, and from January to May 2004 there were 66 restraints.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.9	School data	1.1

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

12. There have been two permanent exclusions during the previous year; these were for good reasons and were meticulously recorded.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Black or Black British – Caribbean

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
45	23	2
1	1	0
6	2	0
1	2	0

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

13. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' spiritual awareness is promoted through themed assemblies and the teaching of religious education, PSHE and Circle Time. The school arranges visits to local churches, Hindu temples, mosques and synagogues, and has good links with a local church where the annual Christmas service is held.

14. Pupils' moral awareness is promoted through participation in developing the school rules and expectations that they comply with them. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on the result of their actions and they demonstrate a thorough understanding of the need for rules in society; older pupils consider and learn about absolute and relative morality. The school has appointed a working party of pupils to re-examine the bullying policy. Year 7 organise a recycling scheme, and each class has appointed monitors to arrange a class work rota to help the teacher. The school is to introduce a 'buddy' scheme in the near future, and pupils raise money for local charities and for the Tsunami Appeal and the Macmillan Nurses Fund. Pupils have arranged sponsored events to purchase a wheelchair for a recently disabled former member of staff.

15. The school actively encourages pupils to understand the points of view and problems of others. It makes good provision for pupils' social development. Many visits have been arranged, including to football matches, local restaurants, pantomime, sports events and BBC concerts, and to swimming, skating and gymnastic events. Pupils are proud to be members of the St Johns Ambulance Brigade and a local Cadet Force, and they enjoy attending fishing, horse riding and golf lessons. Visitors to the school include chefs from the Academy of Culinary Arts, who work with pupils to provide a gala dinner for the community, local prison officers and police. Recently, the school welcomed the wife of the Prime Minister, and visiting speakers have included driving instructors and officials from the Turkish Embassy.

16. Pupils' cultural development is promoted well. In lessons, pupils study the work of authors such as Chaucer, Shakespeare, Tennyson and Steinbeck; they also study the work of a range of artists, including Van Gogh, Picasso, Hirst and Cliff. Through history, pupils learn about modern and ancient customs. Visitors to the school include the Bite Size Theatre Group, the Cragg Rats group and a drama group called Learning Through Action. In music, pupils study African musicians and have taken part in workshops on music technology, using a 'tonewall'. There is a variety of multicultural displays produced by the pupils. The school has achieved a Healthy Schools Bronze Award and is working towards a Silver Award. Weekly commendation assemblies are held in which pupils are commended for 'doing the right thing'. In planning, teachers identify how their lessons will promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are both good; assessment is satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory. A very high quality of care is provided for all pupils, and partnership with parents is very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Non-teaching staff are used most effectively to support and encourage pupils in class.
- Teaching is very good in art and design, and in mathematics in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers have good subject expertise.
- The most successful lessons feature good relationships based on mutual respect, and high expectations of work and behaviour.
- Teachers use a good range of teaching methods and learning resources to increase pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding.
- The three-part lesson is well established in the school, but teachers do not involve pupils well enough in assessment of their learning in lessons.

Commentary

17. Teaching has improved well since the previous inspection, particularly in the junior classes. Here, a fifth of teaching was unsatisfactory at the previous inspection; now the teaching is good. Although inspectors saw three unsatisfactory lessons, these were all on the Monday afternoon, when several pupils had just returned from their half-term holiday and were unsettled. Once pupils became accustomed to having inspectors in classes, no further unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Parents and pupils alike find that the teaching is good.

18. In general, staff manage pupils' behaviour well, and this is underpinned by the very good relationships that established staff have built up with pupils. Relationships are based on mutual respect, and there is a calm atmosphere in the school that is conducive to learning. Teachers make their expectations of work and behaviour crystal clear, so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Occasionally, however, they choose not to comply.

19. The deployment of non-teaching staff is a key factor in supporting pupils' learning. For instance, teaching assistants are allocated to particular teachers to ensure continuity in junior classes; in secondary classes, the deployment also allows support staff to build up their expertise in a specific subject. If pupils are experiencing particular difficulties in behaving in a class, residential

social workers join classes to provide targeted support. This was seen to be successful in supporting the learning of certain pupils. The close presence of another adult was often sufficient to improve behaviour, and well-judged intervention ensured that timely prompting or assistance was provided.

20. Very good teaching in mathematics is characterised by well-planned lessons, good subject expertise and very positive relationships. In art and design, relationships are exceptionally good; a wide range of learning experiences is provided and teaching draws well on the work of well-known artists, which inspires pupils. In class, support is very good; the learning support assistant has acquired subject expertise from the teacher and makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning.

21. The school has set out to employ teachers with specific subject expertise, and lessons are timetabled so that teachers teach their own subjects as far as possible. This results in teaching that is both secure and challenging, as teachers have a thorough understanding of how to teach particular subjects and of how pupils learn in their subject. Teachers draw attention to subject-specific vocabulary by identifying key words; they tease out meanings and use key words in context so that pupils become familiar with them. The appointment of a science specialist has been particularly successful; a more challenging curriculum is now planned and taught, and pupils' achievements have improved as a result. In certain cases, staff have demonstrated considerable commitment by engaging in suitable training to increase their expertise. For instance, the teacher of Japanese attended an evening course at a local college.

22. In those classes where teachers have access to interactive whiteboards, these are used well to aid learning. Pupils particularly enjoy using them, and will persevere with activities that help to reinforce learning. For instance, in a Japanese lesson, pupils' attention was held for quite some time while they practised recognising letters of the alphabet. In general, though, ICT is not widely used to support learning because of a shortage of resources, including software. Artefacts were used well to assist pupils' understanding in lessons observed in religious education, and in a travel and tourism session skiing clothes were used successfully to trigger discussion. In a geography lesson a bicycle focused pupils' attention on the steel industry.

23. Teachers use a good variety of methods, so that pupils learn to find things out in different ways. Explanations and demonstrations were used effectively by teachers in mathematics. Practical approaches in science and physical education helped pupils to make discoveries themselves, for example about the effect of exercise on their pulse rate.

24. Lessons are divided into three parts, and teachers generally identify clearly what they want pupils to learn. However, they rarely identify different learning outcomes for pupils of different abilities. Although the ends of lessons are used well to assess pupils' understanding, to review and confirm what pupils have learned, there is no identification of the differences in learning, even when pupils have carried out different tasks during the session. Teachers occasionally miss opportunities to set behaviour targets which are specific to particular subjects in lessons. For example, moving between screens is identified as impeding learning when pupils are on the internet in ICT lessons, yet pupils are not set a target to remain on the relevant screens throughout the lesson.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 48 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0	10 (21%)	15 (31%)	20 (42%)	3 (6%)	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.

25. Assessment has improved since the previous inspection. The use of assessment data to analyse trends in pupils' progress has now been established. Over the past two years the school has gathered data from English, mathematics and science, from which to generate whole-school targets. This data is beginning to be more meticulously analysed to reveal if strengths or weaknesses are apparent in any aspect of the three subjects, so that implications for teaching or other provision can be identified.

26. Information gathered from baseline assessment or from previous schools is also used to identify suitable targets for pupils' individual education plans (IEPs). A recently improved format for IEPs includes clear success criteria, but evaluations against them are not always carried out; this means that there is an incomplete picture of progress, which makes monitoring difficult.

The curriculum

The breadth of the curriculum is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for enrichment, and the school has good accommodation, staffing and learning resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides a very broad range of learning opportunities in art and design.
- The curriculum is good in the junior classes.
- There is good curricular enrichment from a wide range of activities; in particular there are very good opportunities for participating in sport.
- Pupils have good opportunities for PSHE, to achieve accreditation for their learning and to prepare for employment or further education.
- For a few secondary pupils with additional special educational needs, special programmes are currently unavailable.
- Residential accommodation is of a very high quality, but the school lacks an indoor physical education facility on its premises.

Commentary

27. The provision for junior classes is good. Here, all required subjects are taught. In addition, there is topic work, which helps pupils to see connections between different subjects. Grouping of pupils into classes allows for a small nurture group, and this works well. The staffing and accommodation are good. The art and design curriculum is particularly broad, and it offers pupils with artistic skills and abilities opportunities to reach their full potential.

28. Extra-curricular activities, during lunchtimes and after the school day, include a wide range of sports activities in the community, despite the lack of facilities at the school. These include basketball, snooker, table tennis, horse riding and many others. There are also competitive games of football and cricket, as well as regular visits to the cinema, tenpin bowling and the ice rink. In the summer there are outward-bound camps, and residential and day visits to support personal development, to increase independence, and to widen pupils' experiences. Residential houses arrange evening events, such as judo, at the request of pupils. Pupils in residence also go into the local community to join groups such as Cadets and St John's Ambulance.

29. A well-planned programme of personal, social, moral and health education is supplemented well by the caring ethos of the school. Personal behaviour targets help to promote mutual respect. In lessons, there is a good system of points awarded for behaviour and for work associated with IEP targets. However, in most cases the focus is on the points, with too little emphasis on progress towards targets.

30. In Years 7 to 11, programmes such as anger management and counselling are currently unavailable to those who have such needs. This is because local agencies do not accept that they are obliged to provide these services for pupils who are from other areas. For those who need speech and language therapy there is no service currently available, because the school speech and language therapist has left the school. The school is urgently seeking to rectify both situations.

31. For 16 year olds, accreditation opportunities have been extended, and the number of full courses is increasing to include art and design and history this year, as the school responds to pupils' strengths and wishes. Pupils may also do entry-level courses. All have an opportunity to

work towards the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Youth Award Scheme Bronze or Silver awards. Only two courses of vocational education are currently on offer for students attending the local college. There are no opportunities for mini-enterprise. Work experience placements are tailored to the career aspirations of pupils.

32. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement in the length of the taught day and of individual lessons. Curricular planning is satisfactory overall, because planning for ICT is being developed, having been delayed because of staffing difficulties. This has affected planning and resources for ICT across all subjects. It is currently being addressed in a robust way by a subject specialist, who will shortly be supported by a dedicated technician. Japanese has replaced French because the pupils prefer this language. Teaching accommodation has been extended and improved to provide specialist craft, design and technology facilities and a science room. The new library rooms are attractive and are well placed for the use of different year groups, and residential units have a suitable range of reading resources. The residential houses provide a very good living environment. The school has been unable to improve its accommodation for indoor physical education because it lacks the necessary capital and is not permitted to raise capital itself; this remains an issue from the previous inspection which has yet to be addressed. Overall, improvement in the curriculum provision is satisfactory.

Care, guidance and support

The school's arrangements to secure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Pupils are given good support, advice and guidance; their views are sought widely, valued and taken into account well in the running of the school.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The quality of pastoral care is very good, and is based on trusting and caring relationships between pupils and all staff.
- Mentoring of high quality provides pupils with good support, advice and guidance.
- Pupils receive good advice on further study and career opportunities for life after school.
- A very thorough induction process for new pupils is in place. This includes a pre-admission 'taster' period of six weeks.
- The field social work team greatly enhances the quality of care.
- The monitoring of pupils' IEPs could be improved.

Commentary

33. The school makes very good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Child protection procedures are thorough. The newly appointed head of care, who is also the child protection officer, is well qualified and has received full training, as have all other members of staff. He has plans to arrange for training on the school's ICT system as an urgent requirement, as this has details of pupils who are at risk or are in public care. The school has an adequate number of qualified first aiders, and all accidents are meticulously recorded.

34. Health and safety issues are addressed well by the school. Each residential unit has its own health and safety representative, and health and safety meetings are held each half term. Items of concern are immediately identified and rectified. The school has arranged for the internal building surveyor to call at regular intervals to carry out site inspections. The fire alarm is tested weekly, and fire drills are carried out at regular intervals. The school policies for child protection, vetting visitors, treatment of abused children and drugs awareness are thorough and comprehensive; they are well known to all staff, who implement them faithfully.

35. Pupils readily say that they are happy in the school. This good opinion is supported by the response to both pupils' and parents' questionnaires. Further support for day pupils has been provided by establishing a dedicated area or 'house' for day pupils. This provides them with a 'home from home' where they can socialise and have breakfast when they arrive in school. The

residential and day houses are pleasant places to be, and visitors soon sense the welcoming atmosphere. The day house has taken on many of the successful features of the boarding provision and enjoys most of the same advantages. It is intended to make more of the 24-hour curriculum available to day pupils by introducing after-school activities for them. The shared values of staff, and their commitment, underpin a very caring community. There is a strong mutual respect between staff and pupils, and all work together towards meeting the individual needs of pupils. The field social work team, who work closely with families and social work agencies, supplement the usual residential school staff team. They are very active throughout school holidays. Their work is extremely beneficial to the pupils.

36. Induction for new pupils is very good. Prospective entrants to the school come for a six-week 'taster' period and experience every aspect of life at High Close. A referral panel decides if the school is likely to be able to help the prospective pupil. If it feels that the school is a good placement, an initial care and education plan is drawn up, based on an early profile of the core needs of the pupil. Current pupils state that they find the school a very welcoming environment and readily express the view that their introduction to the school was a happy experience. The quality of care in the day and residential houses makes a major contribution to this.

37. Staff familiarise themselves with the individual needs of pupils and endeavour to find the best ways of helping each pupil. The quality of support at an individual pupil level is very good. It could be further enhanced by better evaluation of progress towards targets set in pupils' IEPs; more rigorous monitoring of these by staff would further increase support for pupils' learning.

38. There is a most effective key worker scheme in the houses, and the resulting standard of care and guidance is very good. Pupils have the greatest respect for the house staff and see them as good role models. The mentoring is enhanced by very good arrangements for form tutors during school hours. House and teaching staff work closely together in the best interests of pupils. An efficient handover of relevant information about behaviour and progress takes place as pupils move between their residence and classrooms. Ancillary staff also take a great interest in pupils and often form helpful friendships with them.

39. Designated key workers monitor pupils' progress through the school very thoroughly. Form tutors ensure that good records of academic progress are maintained. Individual pupils' files are very informative, and it is possible to identify their personal, academic and behavioural needs, as well as their progress and achievements. Good teamwork amongst staff enables a consistent approach to the support and guidance given to pupils. There are clearly identifiable gains in self-confidence and self-assurance as the boys and girls progress through the school. They feel valued, and the school's ethos nurtures a feeling of security.

40. Careers guidance begins at the age of 13 and from this time pupils begin to look ahead at their likely needs when they come to leave the school. Overall, the programme towards school leaving is good and includes work experience and college placements. It could be considerably improved by the introduction of enterprise activity.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with parents. Links with the community are good. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The school provides parents with very good information about the school, and about pupils' standards and progress.
- Staff keep parents well informed through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.
- There are very good procedures to deal with any parental concerns or complaints.
- Procedures for the transfer of pupils are very good.

Commentary

41. Parents have full confidence in the school and feel that the provision of information is very good, that their views are taken into account, and that their children make very good progress. The inspection findings indicate that these views are justified. The school sends out two reports of pupils' progress each year: the main report in February and the summer report in July. The school holds an annual parents' evening where parents are able to meet individual teachers to discuss pupils' progress or any concerns they may have. In addition, an open evening is held annually, to show the progress the school is making, and to raise awareness of the various services and the support that are available to parents. Parents are invited to the school on a six-monthly basis, for interim meetings, to review the progress that their children are making; they are also invited to the annual review of pupils' progress when action plans are drawn up after discussion and consultation. Parents are involved in target setting for pupils. Each residential unit arranges themed social evenings for parents, which are well attended.

42. The school actively encourages parents to help in the school, and a small number of parents do so, some by talking to pupils about their life experience or by helping at concerts and sports day.

43. The school regularly consults parents on policies to be implemented; for example, after receiving parents' views, the school is to amend the bullying policy and review the homework policy.

44. Parents make good contributions to their children's learning. The school has produced a home/school agreement, which parents are asked to complete, and all pupils receive a homework diary which parents are asked to check and sign as a record of work done.

45. The school has a clear complaints procedure. Parents interviewed during the open evening and after the pre-inspection meeting indicated that that the school listens to them and that they are very well supported.

46. The school has good, mutually beneficial links with the community. The principal is the past chairman of the local Children's Fund, and the town's mayor attends the school's annual carol concert in a local church. Pupils attend the local cadets and St Johns Ambulance Brigade, and pupils use the community swimming facilities. Various businesses in the community provide work experience places, and pupils enjoy raising money for local charities. Visitors from the community include the police, nurse and Healthy Schools co-ordinator. Local companies have provided food for school activities, and a supermarket's Cooking Bus has visited the school to enable pupils to acquire and develop their culinary skills.

47. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory. The deputy headteacher serves on a local education authority (LEA) working party. The assistant headteacher works with a local college to deliver courses on behaviour management, and staff liaise well with schools from which pupils are referred, thus supporting smooth transition. Pupils attend a local college for childcare and engineering courses, and Year 11 pupils attend the local Nursery for work experience. Local college students come to the school for work experience.

48. Procedures for the transfer of pupils are very good. Regular meetings take place between the staff and local colleges of further education, to ensure that pupils receive the maximum benefit from courses available to them. In addition, the Connexions service and the field social work team offer good support and guidance during and after transition.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school by the principal and by other key staff is good. Management is good. The governance of the school is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The governing body influences the work of the school well through regular focused visits, challenge and support.
- The leadership provided by the principal gives the school a clear direction, a real sense of purpose and a concern for raising standards.
- Effective teamwork at all levels in the school and in the residential units enhances pupils' academic and personal development.
- There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in many aspects of the school's work.
- The difficulty of recruiting and retaining specialist teachers in an area of expensive housing is a real barrier to raising achievement.

Commentary

49. A governing body has been constituted since the last inspection and this fulfils an advisory role. Governors form an important link with the local community and with local businesses. They operate effectively through three committees and maintain an important overview of the school's work. All governors have received induction training through Barnardo's and are aware of their responsibilities. They monitor the work of the school by focused visits, by setting targets, by checking the progress in addressing key issues in the school improvement plan, and by monitoring policies. In this way, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and know when it needs support and when challenge. The Assistant Director of Barnardo's London the East and South East England (LEaSE) also has a monitoring role, while an education consultant ensures that the school is kept up to date with local or government initiatives.

50. The leadership of the principal is good. He radiates experience and confidence, and encourages pupils and staff to feel that they are part of something very special. He clearly articulates the aims, values, purpose and vision for the school and the drive for continual improvement. Good communication systems and a shared sense of purpose ensure that the school meets its mission statement and aims. The principal's 'participative' style of leadership involves staff at all levels in the decision-making process. This requires commitment and shared responsibility. The school improvement plan is arrived at by a process of whole-school self-evaluation. The inspection confirms that this is a school that is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and knows how best to address the latter. For example, it has recognised that assessment procedures and pupils' writing skills are areas requiring further development.

51. The school benefits from the leadership and effective management of a number of teams led by key staff with complementary skills. These teams ensure that pupils' self-esteem and academic, personal and social skills are developed across the 24-hour curriculum. Importantly, they ensure that there is consistent management approach to behaviour, whereby pupils are encouraged to 'talk out' rather than 'act out' their feelings. Within the education team, the role of subject leadership has been developed; as a result, the curriculum has improved since the last inspection.

52. The school has responded positively to the key issues of the last inspection and has made significant improvements. There are good performance management systems for teachers, supervision for residential social workers, a very good induction programme, and good professional development opportunities. All these have been carefully targeted to bring about an improvement in standards. As a result, teaching and learning and pupils' achievement are now good overall and a

culture of reflection and self-evaluation has been developed. Previous recommendations about staffing levels have resulted in an increase in the number of learning support assistants and administrative assistants, and this has enhanced the quality of education and the efficiency of the school.

53. The previous inspection recommended that the school consider employing subject specialist teachers to teach in the senior school as a way of raising achievement. To some extent the school has been successful in this initiative. However, it is finding great difficulty in recruiting and retaining specialist staff because of the high cost of housing in the area. For example, the school has only recently been able to appoint an ICT specialist to address the weaknesses in ICT noted in the previous inspection.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,126,000.00	Balance from previous year	0
Total expenditure	3,126,000.00	Balance carried forward to the next	0
Expenditure per pupil	55,821.00		

54. The school, through the office of the bursar and an efficient team of administrative staff, employs a very thorough approach to its financial management in order to budget carefully for priorities. There are many examples of the school applying the principles of best value really well to ensure value for money in all its work.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **satisfactory**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Provision for careers guidance is good.
- There is a good programme of work experience in Years 10 and 11.
- There is little provision for enterprise activities.
- Opportunities for pupils to attend local colleges are limited, thus restricting vocational alternatives.

Commentary

55. The school's work in careers education has been recognised through the attainment of the CfBT Careers Guidance Enhanced Award. The good careers programme contributes significantly to preparing pupils for leaving school, and this is supported through taster courses, such as in childcare, which pupils follow at the local college. However, the school is limited in the extent to which it can provide vocational courses, as it does not have the resources to provide these itself. Careers education and guidance in lessons is supported through links with the school's Connexions personal adviser, an accessible careers library and the well-managed work experience programme. Pupils are very well prepared for their work experience placements, and are thus able to obtain maximum benefit from them.

56. Pupils have a satisfactory range of opportunities to learn about the world of work throughout the curriculum. For example, links with the local Academy of Culinary Arts has enabled pupils to gain insight into the job of a chef, in addition to developing their knowledge of food. Visits to supermarkets add to these experiences. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, there is an appropriate emphasis on preparing them for life after school, culminating in accreditation such as the Youth

Award Scheme and Preparation for Working Life, which aids their motivation and self-esteem. Careers education and work-related activities help older pupils to gain confidence and independence. An element of enterprise activity is provided, such as the making of lemonade in Year 9 food technology, but this aspect is not well developed.

57. Within the careers education programme, one week's work experience is arranged for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. The programme is well managed and supervised by a dedicated teaching assistant who ensures that pupils are well prepared for their work experience and that they record their experiences during the week. As a result, the majority of pupils complete their placements successfully.

58. The co-ordinator is currently updating schemes of work to ensure that all elements of the WRL programme are covered. The school has already identified as areas for further development the shortfall in vocational education and the limited enterprise activities.

Residential provision

The provision for residential care is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Records compiled by key workers, together with academic records, provide a comprehensive picture of every pupil.
- The residential houses are of a very high quality and are staffed by very good care worker teams.
- Life in the houses is happy and supports a lifestyle for pupils that greatly enhances learning and personal development.
- The field social work team provides first rate support to families during the term and school holidays. This is very beneficial to pupils.
- The 24-hour curriculum is well developed and makes a strong contribution to learning.

Commentary

59. Residential care is very good and greatly enhances pupils' personal development and their learning. The standard of accommodation is very good and the residential houses are friendly and welcoming. Inspectors who visited the houses were made to feel very much at home. The pupils are very communicative and enjoy entertaining visitors. They are proud of the houses and speak very highly of them. Residential care staff are key workers for the pupils and they develop very good relationships with them. These staff play a major role in monitoring the personal, social and academic progress of pupils as they move through the school. The quality of record keeping is good and is consistent across the four houses.

60. The residential staff are highly committed to their work and focus very much on the welfare of the individual pupil. Residential workers liaise closely with teaching and support staff, and ensure that all are fully informed about the needs and progress of the pupils. There is a series of handover sessions throughout the day, and staff from different disciplines exchange important information about pupils. Residential staff go into lessons if required, to help a pupil experiencing behaviour or other difficulties. The interface between the school and the houses is very well managed. Some staff are employed both as house team members and classroom assistants. The residential model has been so successful that it is being used largely as a basis for the day pupils' house. Care staff are seen as very good role models and have the respect of pupils. This respect is mutual and the pupils feel valued.

61. A recent Commission for Social Care Inspections (CSCI) inspection of the residential care gave a glowing report of the work carried out by care staff. There were a few minor recommendations for improvement and all of these have been acted upon.

62. Residential care greatly supports all that takes place in the school. It has a positive effect on many aspects of the curriculum. This is particularly strong in the area of PSHE, since this is a very important part of life in the houses. The range of activities provided for resident pupils is impressive and these activities make a strong contribution to the learning process.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2, 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good by Year 6 and in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Pupils enjoy reading, and this promotes good achievement.
- Most pupils are achieving accreditation by gaining a full GCSE, entry level, or adult literacy qualification.
- There are too few opportunities for extended writing and a narrow range of purposes for writing.

Commentary

63. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in curriculum planning, teaching and learning, resources and accommodation. Achievement and behaviour are closely linked, and this is reflected in Years 7, 8, and 9, when pupils often join the school and are unsettled. Relationships are less well established than in other parts of the school. Where teachers' management of pupils' behaviour is less firm, there are occasional disruptions, the pace slows and less work is done. In the best lessons, learning objectives are clear and related to targets on pupils' IEPs, and the three-part lesson structure is used well. Lessons start with a quiet reading period, and most pupils settle to this activity well and enjoy reading to adults. In class groups, they explore a good range of texts, including poetry, non-fiction and plays such as a version of 'Macbeth'. They have visiting drama groups to support learning, as well as regular theatre visits such as an annual summer visit to the Globe Theatre in London.

64. Attitudes to reading are good in all years. For example, in Year 6, pupils read and make bullet point notes from texts before rewriting in their own words. Pupils who have specific learning difficulties have highly effective individual sessions when they build reading skills rapidly. The most able readers read aloud accurately, with good expression, and are able to draw inference and express opinions. Texts are carefully matched to pupils' reading levels and there are good reading facilities within the residential houses. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have daily newspapers and magazines, which they enjoy discussing in class. They use their knowledge and understanding of current affairs in their writing.

65. Achievement in speaking and listening is good across the school. Teachers listen to pupils and encourage them to express opinions and discuss viewpoints, such as whether fox hunting should be banned. In Year 11, pupils plan settings for their writing, using the mood of a poem to spark ideas. At review meetings and in the school council, pupils make valuable contributions. They develop an awareness of the use of their voice, of socially acceptable language and of modifying their speech appropriately for different situations. Pupils' success in social communication can be measured by the positive feedback from employers at the end of work experience placements.

66. Achievement in writing is good by Year 6 and Year 11. In Years 7 to 9, pupils' work shows that writing is within a narrow range of styles, and the quality and length of writing indicates some lack of motivation and inspiration. Homework is used effectively to complete work and for research. Pupils and teachers alike enter school poetry competitions, with some interesting results. Information and communication technology (ICT) is underdeveloped, but interactive whiteboards, where they are installed, are used effectively to promote learning. There is some redrafting of work using ICT. Pupils with additional special educational needs have no access to special programs to help them to learn.

67. Assessment is satisfactory overall. There are good procedures for assessment and tracking achievement, but the use of assessment to plan lessons, to record progress of individuals towards IEP targets, and to involve the pupils in their own learning is less developed. The current system, in which assessment of achievement is expressed as points, focuses on the points rather than what has been achieved. Assessment on entry to school, and for annual reviews, is good. It enables staff to identify the stage pupils are at in their development of literacy skills, and to 'level' work appropriately. Tracking procedures identify achievement clearly in all aspects of English. As well as standardised tests of reading, writing and spelling, pupils enter national tests in Years 6 and 9.

68. Since taking responsibility for English, the co-ordinator has managed the subject well. Developing reading skills, establishing a spelling programme, and improving resources and accommodation have been priorities. Care has been taken over choosing books which will appeal to boys. The recently restocked libraries for the three age groups are calm and inviting, and there is good use of dictionaries in lessons. Pupils are attracted by clearly displayed books, and in the libraries for the two younger age groups there are places to sit and work. Initiatives are underway to improve speaking and listening skills further, to tackle writing skills and to develop the use of ICT. A number of staff would benefit from some up-to-date training in teaching writing skills.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

69. This is good because of the opportunities for pupils to speak and listen, and to read texts in all classes. Most staff ensure that pupils learn new vocabulary associated with their subjects. Pupils retell stories from religious education and write up experiments in science.

Japanese

70. This subject was not a particular focus for the inspection, and too little evidence was gathered to allow secure judgements to be made on the provision. One Japanese lesson was observed, and in this the teaching and learning were both good. The school used to teach French, but it reports that pupils were not keen on this; they certainly enjoyed the Japanese lesson which was observed! Pupils in the Year 7 lesson were seen practising one of the Japanese alphabets, revising their counting skills, and learning how to say large numbers, such as 165. The teacher made very good use of an interactive whiteboard to help pupils learn. For instance, she projected photographs she had taken in Japan, showing the stages in dressing with a kimono. The lesson was rounded off well with an enjoyable session in which two pupils dressed in traditional Japanese costume.

71. The teacher has demonstrated her commitment to improvement by following a course at a local college in her own time to increase her language skills. She has also been supported by the school in visiting Japan, which has enabled her to deepen her understanding of the Japanese culture and collect artefacts to assist in the teaching of the subject. She has suitable plans to introduce external accreditation and has asked the governors to consider pupils making a visit to Japan.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good overall, and it is very good in the case of pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils' positive attitudes to the subject contribute to their good achievement and progress.
- Teaching is always at least satisfactory and is most often very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop numeracy skills across the curriculum are variable.

72. Pupils achieve well in mathematics from a low base of knowledge and understanding when they start at the school. They make good progress and gain in confidence as they move through the school. This is evident from regular test scores and from work stored in pupils' profiles. For example, pupils in Year 9 use the appropriate formulae to find the circumference and area of a circle, and pupils in Year 11 draw and interpret data presented in pie charts. Pupils' good achievements and improvement are reflected in the results at GCSE and entry level of pupils in Year 10 and 11.

73. Most pupils display a real appetite and enjoyment for work in mathematics, and a sense of achievement and enjoyment when solving problems. They are usually attentive and polite, and readily respond in question and answer sessions. They sustain their concentration for long periods. They take a pride in the presentation of their work, showing good skills in the use of instruments, such as a ruler and protractor for angle measurement and triangle construction.

74. Teaching in mathematics is characterised by well-planned and structured lessons, strong subject expertise of teachers, and very positive relationships. Brisk mental starters, with tasks similar to those seen in television's Channel 4 Countdown programme, focus pupils' attention. Good reviews at the end of lessons confirm learning and understanding. A noticeable and positive feature, particularly in Year 11, is the contribution of learning support assistants (LSAs) in modelling good behaviour, in keeping pupils on task, and in ensuring that they are always fully included. Literacy skills are incidentally but regularly reinforced by emphasising key mathematical words. The management of some potentially challenging behaviour is astute, calm, patient and effective, so that neither the learning of individuals nor the learning of groups is affected. Resources, with the exception of ICT, are used well, both to motivate pupils and to aid their understanding.

75. The subject is well led and managed and there have been good improvements since the last inspection. The monitoring of teaching has been effective in ensuring a more consistent approach and high expectations from the six teachers who deliver the subject. A suitable action plan identifies priorities that will improve teaching and learning, raise standards and improve resources. Homework is consistently set and makes a good contribution to pupils' progress overall. The co-ordinator is well aware that ICT is currently underused to support and enhance this subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. While there are good examples of pupils' numeracy skills being developed in other subjects, for example counting in Japanese and drawing graphs to show predictions in science, such occasions arise incidentally and are not yet routinely identified as part of all teachers' planning.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **good**.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Teaching and learning are good; this fact, coupled with good attitudes on the part of pupils, results in good achievement.
- The breadth of curricular opportunities is good for all age groups.
- Relationships in classes are good and underpin successful behaviour management.
- At all ages, pupils participate very well in discussions.
- Leadership and management in science are good.
- Assessment has improved greatly, although pupils are not well enough involved in assessing their learning in lessons.

Commentary

77. Since the last inspection, the school has appointed a science specialist. The subject has made great strides and improvement is very good. Throughout the school, standards of work seen are considerably below the national average. However, pupils of all ages achieve well in science and progress is good.

78. In Year 6, pupils are given the opportunity to make particularly good progress. As well as a science lesson twice every week, much of their topic work contains scientific components. They are learning a range of scientific words and phrases, and increasingly carry out practical investigations. Their workbooks show pupils' knowledge of a range of materials with different properties. There is a growing understanding of electrical circuits as pupils use simple components, such as switches and bulbs. By experimenting with pushing and pulling, pupils develop a simple concept of forces. By studying a range of plants and fruits, they learn about the seasons. The topic of 'Water', involving a number of curriculum subjects, contains many science elements, including condensation and evaporation, the weather, and water and the human body. In one lesson, pupils used an interactive whiteboard most effectively to develop their work on this topic. Since the previous inspection, there has been significant improvement in the provision for this age group.

79. By the end of Year 9, pupils' knowledge, understanding and scientific skills have developed well. Discussions are very good and illustrate pupils' ability to grasp scientific concepts and their growing confidence in making predictions. Pupils work well, and there is a substantial amount of evidence in their files to illustrate this. Investigative work forms the basis of most of what they learn, and there is a marked improvement in practical skills and the ability to record their findings. The use of literacy and numeracy increases, with the use of simple prose in recording and the development of the use of graphs. In lessons observed, work on the refraction of light illustrated the growing ability of pupils to discover scientific facts and record findings in a clear manner. Pupils discovered that white light can be split into its coloured constituents by passing it through a glass prism. In another lesson, pupils investigated the states of matter by transforming ice to water and then to steam. Most pupils were able to discuss changes of state. Pupils' progress over time is good.

80. In Years 10 and 11, pupils work towards external accreditation. They further develop their scientific skills, and there is evidence in lessons that they have developed a good grasp of scientific concepts and methodology. These pupils work towards their targets with considerable enthusiasm. Recent school results in GCSE are creditable. Lower attaining pupils work with equal enthusiasm even if their prospects in examinations are not as great. All pupils in this age group are working to their full potential and achieve very well. The broad and balanced curriculum which they enjoyed in

earlier years makes a solid foundation on which to build. A discussion on the human nervous system and how the body reacts to stimuli was very interesting and displayed well the growth in pupils' understanding. In another lesson, pupils studied waves outside the visible spectrum and their contributions on infrared and ultra violet light were impressive.

81. Teaching and learning are good overall. This is evident from an analysis of pupils' work. In the five lessons observed, the teaching and learning were very good in two, and only less than good in one lesson. The success of lessons is underpinned by the good relationships between staff and pupils and the skilled management of some quite difficult behaviour. Lessons are well planned and allowance is made in the planning for a range of ability. Very good use is made of classroom support staff. In the science room, the teacher, together with the LSAs, has drawn up a set of guidelines for her work with specific classes. This is most successful. The use of listening and speaking skills has been well developed by teachers, and good quality discussion opens every lesson. During this it is easy to evaluate the degree of success of earlier lessons. The positive ingredients of lessons commonly seen across the school are dynamic delivery, good pace, very good subject knowledge, effective use of praise, which inspires confidence in pupils, and carefully selected resources.

82. Useful evaluation takes place during most lessons. It would benefit pupils if they were more aware of their individual targets and how much progress they make towards meeting them. Lack of effective assessment was a real weakness at the previous inspection. Now there is an efficient system of assessing and recording pupils' progress. In science, the whole-school system is used. The science co-ordinator has devised additional ways of identifying progress. If pupils were more closely involved, the overall system would be very good.

83. Leadership and management in science are good. Since the previous inspection, thorough schemes of work have been written, and long-term, medium-term and short-term plans are very good. The curriculum has breadth and is planned in a way that ensures that pupils continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understating. Most of these areas were unsatisfactory previously. An excellent and comprehensive co-ordinator's handbook has been produced, and any new staff member could use it. All the shortcomings noted at the time of the previous inspection have been dealt with. The accommodation and resources are good, but there would be a need for some upgrading if pupils aspired to higher external accreditation, which is beyond the current group. Health and safety procedures are rigorously enforced. The co-ordinator has been on science courses and hopes to develop more on-site training for colleagues. She gets very little non-contact time, Together with the learning support assistant and all monitoring takes place during her own time. The local environment is used well, but there is a need to get out to museums and other places of scientific interest. There are plans to have a science element in the school's activity week later in the year.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not achieve well enough in ICT.
- The appointment of a suitably qualified ICT co-ordinator has begun to improve provision.
- Planning does not account for the range of abilities in class groups.
- The quality and quantity of hardware and software do not support the curriculum sufficiently.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is underdeveloped.

Commentary

84. Development of the subject, until very recently, has been affected by the lack of a co-ordinator. Provision for the subject has improved very little since the last inspection. As a consequence, pupils' achievement overall is unsatisfactory. Despite this, however, four pupils in Years 10 and 11 gained GCSE accreditation in the short course exam in 2004. The recently appointed co-ordinator has made a good start to leading and managing the subject. Work has begun on evaluating both the ICT curriculum and the use made of ICT equipment and resources. There is a good action plan for further development of the subject.

85. The co-ordinator is aware that elements such as control and monitoring are not established; this is in part due to the lack of software to support learning, as well as the lack of staff expertise. Although the level of staff skills has improved as a result of training, not all staff are confident in their use of ICT, and this affects the progress that pupils make. A recent worthwhile development has been the adoption of an electronic assessment system that enables the co-ordinator to see where individuals and groups need reinforcement in different areas of the subject. Further development of this system will enable pupils to be given clearer targets; currently, pupils receive variable feedback on their learning.

86. Although teaching and learning in lessons are generally satisfactory overall, lesson planning in the secondary department is not always sufficiently detailed in identifying what individual pupils, and groups of pupils, will learn in each session. Lesson plans are similar for different year groups, and this does not provide the greater challenge and extension activities needed. For instance, pupils in Years 8, 10 and 11 worked through similar database exercises. Understandably, this is a practical response to the difficulty of bringing in new courses for all pupils, and addressing gaps in skills and understanding, but it should be used only as a very short term measure. Within class groups, insufficient use is made of grouping pupils according to their competence and skills, with specially designed tasks for each group. The link between assessment and planning is still not secure, particularly for those with additional special educational needs and for higher attaining pupils. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson, one pupil with reading difficulties found the web text difficult to access without adult help. Factors that currently limit achievement include the amount of time the co-ordinator has had to spend supporting the network. A technician has recently been appointed (but is not yet in post), which should go some way to improving the situation.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

87. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory; the school needs to extend ICT into all subject areas to provide opportunities for students to practise their skills and use the internet to research and gather information. It also needs more subject-specific software and guidance on how to include ICT in subject work. This is formally recognised in the school's improvement plan.

HUMANITIES

GEOGRAPHY

It is not possible to make an overall judgement about geography since only two geography lessons were observed; the subject was not a focus for this inspection.

88. A very good Year 6 topic lesson which was observed included science and geography components. The theme was the environment and pollution. In a pleasant and relaxed lesson, which featured very good teaching and learning, pupils successfully marked rainforests on the interactive whiteboard. They also discussed the melting of polar ice caps. A discussion at the close of the lesson illustrated that these pupils' geographical knowledge is developing well.

89. A good Year 7 lesson sought to explain geographical patterns through the theme of sport. Good resources had been selected, and pupils enhanced their learning by effectively using the

interactive whiteboard. The work was challenging and pupils tackled it with enthusiasm. Pupils knew that steel is now imported from Japan and that the hub of the steel industry at home is Sheffield. They then related this knowledge to the manufacture of sporting equipment, such as bicycles.

History

It is not possible to make an overall judgement about history since only one lesson was observed; the subject was not a particular focus for this inspection.

90. The subject of a Year 9 lesson was 'Why did the Germans vote for Hitler?' This followed from a previous lesson on the Treaty of Versailles. The lesson was satisfactory overall. Most of the class was interested, but the lesson was spoilt by some poor behaviour from a minority. Pupils used a newspaper photograph of the footballer David Beckham to help find words which described Hitler. They were successful in this exercise and some good discussion took place. The closing discussion at the end of the lesson indicated that the pupils understood clearly the role that propaganda had played in Hitler's rise to power.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not achieve as well as those in other year groups, because of past weaknesses in provision.
- Good leadership and management have secured good improvement in the provision, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

91. Pupils in the junior classes and those in Years 10 and 11 achieve well; the achievements of pupils in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. Until September 2004, pupils in Years 7 to 9 were taught by an unqualified teacher; weaknesses in teaching and learning were identified, as part of the school's monitoring practice. Since September, these pupils have been taught by the subject leader, and they are now making good progress.

92. The good teaching in religious education is characterised by strong relationships that help staff to manage pupils' behaviour well. Teachers now draw on suitable schemes of work, developed since the previous inspection. Lessons are planned and prepared well, and teachers have access to a wider range of resources, including artefacts. In a good Year 5 and 6 lesson, pupils learned about the life of Prince Siddhartha, as an example of a religious figure who helps those less fortunate than himself. Pupils read the story aloud, taking turns, and then had a choice of writing about the key points or making a storyboard showing these. They tackled the task enthusiastically, and made good progress in the time available. Good recall demonstrated their learning. A very successful session in Year 7 saw pupils finding out about mosques as places of worship, prior to a planned visit to one. Good use of a PowerPoint presentation captured pupils' interest, and key words written on the board helped pupils to become familiar with these. Pupils were set different tasks according to their abilities and so were all fully challenged. The teacher's expert management of the pupils was the most telling feature of this lesson. In a good Year 10 lesson, the good planning, varied tasks and appealing resources helped pupils to extend their understanding of absolute and relative morality. Pupils were thoughtful, mature and sensible in their responses.

93. In Years 10 and 11, pupils either follow the entry level course or their work is acknowledged through the 'Beliefs and values' section of the Youth Award Scheme. The school has not yet explored the use of recently published levels for religious education, and this is an area for further

development where there is no external accreditation. Work is generally marked in a helpful way, and in Years 5 and 6 marking supports pupils' developing literacy skills by drawing attention to spelling and punctuation errors. In Years 7 to 9, the teacher emphasises discussion and completes an evaluation of each lesson, indicating whether pupils have achieved objectives, such as showing that they can empathise. However, pupils could be better involved in assessing their learning if teachers identified different objectives for pupils of different abilities, and then engaged pupils in evaluating their performance at the end of each lesson.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

It is not possible to make an overall judgement about provision in design and technology, as only two lessons were observed.

94. However, it was possible to note that suitable improvements have been made to the workshop for resistant materials and that all pupils have been made aware of health and safety issues when using the machines. In food technology, a very successful partnership with the Academy of Culinary Arts has led to pupils cooking and serving high quality meals to school guests at various times of the year.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning, and a rich curriculum, result in very good achievement.
- Opportunities for external accreditation are good.
- Art promotes spiritual, social and cultural development very well.

Commentary

95. Since the previous inspection, there has been very good improvement in the provision for art and design. Planning is now good; standards have risen, and resources are also good. There is an emphasis on experimental work, and pupils are encouraged to try out their ideas. The ethos for learning is very good. From a low starting point, most pupils gain a pass at GCSE by the end of Year 11. Pupils produce work of high quality, showing good creativity, good skills and highly individual ideas in the development of their work. In lessons observed, attitudes were never less than very good and pupils worked with great concentration and care. Inspired by the work of different artists, they grow in confidence and self-esteem as their projects evolve and come to completion.

96. In Years 5 and 6, pupils learn basic skills and techniques such as colour mixing, drawing and printing. By Year 11, pupils select methods of printing such as silk screen and block and use their knowledge of the work of William Morris and Matisse, and of decorative patterns from the Hindu religion, to create cushion covers and wall hangings. All year groups use sketchbooks effectively to show how designs have developed. Inspired by a local artist, Year 9 pupils work with clay to create a totem pole, using terms and techniques such as 'maquettes', 'incising' and 'low relief' to create their designs. The class teacher ensures that pupils not only increase their knowledge of art history, but also explore the techniques used by different artists. Displays in and around the school are of a very good quality, and they include an unusual display of moulded body parts, a mural entitled 'Through the wall' and many interesting individual pieces in two and three dimensions. One striking

piece is a pair of shoes in air-dried clay inspired by a painting by Van Gogh. The work displayed from craft, design and technology reflects well on pupils' artistic efforts.

97. The co-ordinator for art and design leads the subject very well. Assessment is good and samples of work are regularly archived as evidence of pupils' achievements. 'Levelled' work clearly shows pupils' rapid progress. The co-ordinator has identified areas for development of the subject accurately, and she monitors the work of Years 5 and 6 as part of her role. Within lessons, a dedicated learning support assistant gives very good, sensitive support both to pupils and to teachers. Relationships with pupils are exceptional and support pupils' personal development very well, particularly by nurturing their self-confidence. The pupils appreciate the work of artists, but also the work of others in the class. Staff use praise effectively, and pupils join in that praise. Pupils' use of ICT is as an area for further development of the subject.

Music

This subject was not a particular focus for the inspection, and too little evidence was gathered to make secure judgements on provision.

98. Two lessons were seen, both on Monday afternoon, when some pupils had only just returned to school from their half-term break. In one, teaching and learning were satisfactory, but in another, pupils did not make enough progress because a small number disrupted what was a well-planned and prepared lesson.

99. Since the previous inspection, suitable schemes of work have been developed for music, although these could be further improved by simply adding references to the National Curriculum.

Physical education

It is not possible to make an overall judgement about physical education because only two lessons were observed.

100. However, both the lessons were of high quality and both showed the wide range of activities that pupils follow. For example, Year 5 and 6 pupils successfully learn team-building skills, balance, and co-ordination at a nearby outdoor pursuits centre; Year 9 pupils learn about the effect of exercise on the circulatory system after vigorous exercise in the school grounds and fitness room. However, the lack of a suitable gym or hall limits the progress of pupils and the balance of the curriculum offer. It also wastes valuable curriculum time in travelling to other venues in the community. This same observation about the unsatisfactory accommodation was made at the previous inspection and has not been addressed; the school cannot solve the problem without support from Barnardo's. Year 11 pupils are appropriately accredited through entry level to GCSE in physical education.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Vocational courses were not a particular focus for this inspection, and too little evidence was gathered to allow secure judgements on the overall quality of provision.

101. Inspectors saw two lessons. In an introductory **childcare** session at the local college, Year 11 pupils made satisfactory gains in their knowledge and understanding, by watching a video and taking part in a discussion. In a Year 11 **travel and tourism** lesson, a single pupil made good progress in understanding how skiing has both positive and negative effects on the local area. The

pupil started the session by dressing up in skiing gear, and this successfully generated interest in the topic. Discussion was encouraged well by the strong rapport between the teacher and the pupil. As the session progressed, the pupil was able to see that there are adverse effects as well as benefits.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in PSHE and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils in Years 5 and 6, and in Years 10 and 11, achieve well.
- Personal, social and health education (PSHE) makes a good contribution to pupils' overall personal development.
- The school uses a good mix of specific PSHE and citizenship lessons and day-to-day activities to foster pupils' personal development.
- There is less written work done than in other subjects, but oral work is effective.
- The subject is well led and managed, and this has secured good improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

102. Improvement since the previous inspection has been considerable. The scheme of work was largely informal, with aspects of life and social skills taught in the residence. Since then, it has developed together with national initiatives, such as citizenship, and is seen as having high priority in the school. It has an emphasis on building self-esteem and confidence, and developing relationships, as well as preparing pupils for living independently in an adult community. The school uses a mix of specific PSHE and citizenship lessons and day-to-day activities to foster pupils' personal development. A very relevant curriculum for both PSHE and citizenship has been developed by the co-ordinator and it meets all the statutory requirements. Careers education has its own scheme of work and is taught as a discrete element.

103. A very enthusiastic and well-organised co-ordinator has produced a subject syllabus that addresses topics such as physical activity, safety, healthy eating, emotional health and well-being, and sex and relationships in a structured and progressive way. Consequently, pupils in all years develop knowledge and understanding of these aspects through activities that are appropriate to their age and interests. In addition, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are introduced to topics such as aspects of the law, the concept of rights and responsibilities, and understanding the media. This equips them very well with the skills required to become full members of society.

104. Teaching and learning are good overall, and satisfactory in Year 7 to 9. However PSHE sessions are timetabled at the end of the day. Inevitably, pupils are tired and sometimes reluctant to participate; this is a particular problem in Years 7 to 9, where learning and achievement are satisfactory. Additionally, if pupils are off site for visits in the early afternoon, these sessions are either missed or not viable. In order to ensure that these periods are used productively, there is a need to monitor them and evaluate their success.

105. Most teachers use sessions well to teach aspects of personal and social education. Pupils usually listen carefully to the views of others, even when they may be different from their own. Teachers use a good range of open questioning to stimulate response and ensure that all pupils contribute in lessons. This helps pupils' speaking and listening skills, and they also start to understand that they should value the views and beliefs of others, which promotes their moral development. Although discussion work is an important element of PSHE and citizenship, there is also the need for pupils to record and write about what they have learned. The analysis of pupils' work in this area showed that there is less written work completed than in most other subjects, and this is an area for development.

106. Leadership and management of all subject strands are good, although there is a need to monitor teaching and learning. The co-ordinator has established good subject plans which ensure that pupils have opportunities to build on previous learning and which include appropriate opportunities for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to gain accreditation through the Youth Award Scheme. The topics covered within each subject area contribute well to pupils' personal and social development, to their growing awareness of their place in the local and wider community, and to preparing them for the next stage of education or for entering the world of work.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
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	4
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	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
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	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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).

*In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not national standards.*