

INSPECTION REPORT

ROMANS FIELD SCHOOL

Bletchley

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 110580

Headteacher: Wayne Marshall

Lead inspector: Dr D Alan Dobbins

Dates of inspection: 10th - 12th January 2005

Inspection number: 268620

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special
School category: Community special
Age range of pupils: 5 - 12
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 43
School address: Shenley Road
Bletchley
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
Postcode: MK3 7AW
Telephone number: (01908) 376 011
Fax number: (01908) 645 320
Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mrs Susan Bennett
governors:
Date of previous May 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Romans Field School is part of the provision of the Milton Keynes Local Education Authority for pupils from five to 12 years with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The agreed number of places is fifty. Forty-three pupils currently attend, 42 are boys and one is a girl. The youngest pupil is aged seven years and the oldest is aged 12 and is in Year 7. Most pupils are white-British; only two are not. No-one is learning English as an additional language and there are no traveller children. Nineteen pupils are residents for some part of the week. Because of their learning difficulties and, for some, their irregular attendance at their previous schools, the attainment of many pupils on entry is below that expected for their age. All pupils have statements of special educational need. The school has no awards and is not involved in any local or national initiatives. The last inspection was in February 1999. The headteacher at that time has retired and the new headteacher has been in place since September 2003. The LEA is conducting a review of the provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|---|
| 27424 | Dr D Alan Dobbins | Lead inspector | Mathematics Information and communication technology Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) |
| 9710 | Rosemary Burgess | Lay inspector | |
| 21899 | Gillian Lawson | Team inspector | English Geography History French Religious education |
| 20444 | David Hughes | Team inspector | Science Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Romans Field is a very good school. Pupils make very good progress in dealing with their difficulties and in their learning over a wide-ranging and very relevant curriculum. The excellent leadership of the headteacher, who is supported very well by a committed and able senior management team, creates conditions in which pupils and staff strive to do their best. The relationships between pupils and staff are excellent and provide a very solid platform that supports all the work of the school. Very good teaching and advice help prepare pupils very well for the next stage of their education. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good way in which pupils learn to cope with their difficulties and become increasingly mature and responsible.
- The very good standards pupils achieve in most of the subjects.
- The very good attitude pupils have to their learning and their commitment to doing their best.
- The excellent leadership and management.
- The very good curriculum, which promotes learning over all the subjects of the National Curriculum while focusing on pupils' primary need.
- The very good way in which the activities of the residential setting complement the work of the day setting.

Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection. All the key issues identified then have been addressed, although the development of a long-term plan is being delayed because the local education authority's review of provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties has not yet been completed. The role of subject co-ordinators is clearer and they are beginning to lead and manage the subjects well. The highest-attaining pupils are now being equally challenged as learners. Governors are meeting all their statutory duties. There have been other improvements. Overall, leadership and management are better and the standards pupils achieve in most of the subjects have improved because teaching and learning are better. The new information and communication technology (ICT) suite is a very good specialist teaching room.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Pupils' achievement at the end of: | In relation to individual targets in: | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Subjects of the curriculum | Personal and social education |
| Year 2 | Very good | Very good |
| Year 6 | Very good | Very good |
| Year 7 | Very good | Very good |

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

Overall, pupils' achievement is very good. This applies to all pupils over all years, irrespective of the cause or level of their special educational needs, and to the only girl on roll. Pupils make very good progress in developing their personal and social skills, including their self-confidence and in the way they see themselves. This allows them to deal with others and the staff with greater assurance because they have better control over their emotions and behaviour. They achieve very well in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design and physical education. They achieve satisfactorily in design and technology, music and religious education. It was not possible to judge achievement in French, geography or history. The standards achieved in their personal and social development and in English, mathematics, science, ICT and art and design are better than at the

last inspection. The very good standards achieved last time in physical education have been sustained.

Overall, pupils make very good progress in their spiritual, social and cultural development, and excellent progress in their moral development. They quickly learn that they are respected as young people. They develop excellent relationships with staff and because of their very good attitudes to learning and their very good behaviour, routinely try to do their best at all times. The expectation for appropriate behaviour is very clear to pupils and the procedures for rewarding appropriate behaviour are very good. In only a few lessons is there a need to remind pupils of their responsibilities as learners. The activities of the residential setting are making a significant contribution to the personal and social development of those pupils who take part.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The very high expectations teachers have for learning and behaviour result in lessons that are planned very well to challenge all pupils as learners. They give excellent help and encouragement in assisting pupils in completing their tasks. As a result, all pupils, irrespective of their capabilities, gender or the level or cause of their difficulties, make very good progress. In English and mathematics, the recommendations of the national strategies are implemented very well and in these subjects, especially, very good support for teaching and learning is being provided by new technologies. Support assistants are skilled and have been very well trained. In most lessons they are deployed very well and make a very good contribution to learning. This is also the case for the childcare staff, who continue the work of the day staff very well after school. They oversee homework, know the children's targets for learning and provide very good additional tutoring. **The curriculum is very good.** It focuses on the primary need of the pupils, which is to help them in their personal and social development. It is planned and organised very well and regularly checked. It contains all the subjects of the National Curriculum, although the resistant materials and textiles elements of design and technology are not taught in full. It is supported very well by the planned activities at break and lunch times that help develop pupils' personal and social skills.

The partnership with parents and carers is very good. Many support their children very well by attending annual and termly reviews. Most contribute to the establishment of new targets for learning and some help their children achieve these by following the school's procedures at home. Most attend school functions regularly. **The links with the community are good. The links with the school that most pupils move to are good and improving.**

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher gains very good support from the senior management team and all staff, including the care staff. He is an excellent role model and sets the highest of standards. By empowering staff with authority, clearly linked to responsibilities, he is helping them achieve the same high standards. **The procedures for checking all the work of the school are good** and are used well continuing its development, although not in judging the standards pupils attain against those of pupils in other schools. Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and support the headteacher very well. They, and the headteacher, have a clear and appropriate vision for the future of the school. This includes using the skills and experience of staff in helping those in mainstream schools deal better with pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and becoming part of an extended school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The views of parents are very positive. Parents are very pleased that their children like school and attend regularly. They are especially pleased that their children do not experience the difficulties and anxieties they did at their previous schools. Many are very appreciative of the work of the residential setting in helping their children become more mature and responsible and in providing a safe place for them to be when there are difficulties at home.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important thing to do to continue to improve is to keep checking the work of the school and carry on using this information to identify priorities for the improvement plan. In line with national expectations, governors should ensure that they are able to take a full role in this process and in judging the effectiveness of the school against other schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in the subjects

The attainment of most pupils is lower than is expected for those of equivalent age in mainstream schools. However, when their social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and for many their irregular attendance at their previous schools, are taken into account, they achieve very well and are making very good progress in many of the subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good way in which pupils learn to deal with their difficulties and become increasingly mature and responsible.
- The progress pupils make in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT is much better than at the last inspection.
- All pupils achieve very well and make equivalent progress, irrespective of the cause or level of their special educational needs or their gender.
- The school makes no comparisons of the standards pupils achieve with those of pupils in other schools.

Commentary

1. Pupils join the school after having had problems in meeting the routines and expectations of their mainstream schools because they have difficulties in dealing with their behaviour and their emotions. For many, this resulted in them disliking school and attending irregularly. Most pupils enter Romans Field lacking in confidence and with a poor image of themselves. A small number are angry. They soon realise that staff are there to help them manage their difficulties. They quickly learn to trust and respect staff. This is the first step to developing the excellent relationships they have with them. These form a very strong base from which pupils develop their personal and social skills and make very good progress in becoming mature and responsible. Learning in the dedicated lessons on personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is supported very well throughout the school day. Assemblies and break and lunch times help establish and maintain the excellent relationships between staff and pupils. But for about half of the pupils, being included in the residential programme makes an especially important contribution to helping them become more self-assured, self-confident and generally happier with their roles in life. The very good levels pupils achieve in their personal and social development are better than at the last inspection. By the end of Year 7, they are prepared very well for the demands of the next stage of their education. Over their time at Romans Field, they gain a much better understanding of their emotions, learn to cope very well with many different social situations and achieve much greater control of their behaviour. As a result, they improve their attitudes to school and to their learning and this helps them to achieve more and make better progress than they did in their other schools. A small number of pupils make such good progress in all aspects of their development that they return to mainstream schools.
2. At the last inspection, pupils achieved very well in physical education, well in about half of the subjects and satisfactorily in the others. Now they achieve at better levels in the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT and also in art and design. The very good levels achieved in physical education have been sustained. In design and technology, music and religious education they achieve satisfactorily. Overall, the subjects, this represents very good improvement. The very good standards pupils achieve are a testament to the ability of the staff to change the attitudes of pupils to their learning through gaining their respect and trust

and through creating learning opportunities for each pupil that match very well with their needs and capabilities.

3. The results of the very good use of formal and informal tests demonstrate to pupils that they are improving. For many pupils this is a new experience. They like it and are motivated to try harder at their learning. As a consequence, many, over their time at school, make impressive gains, especially in literacy and numeracy. Most gain more than 14 reading months in a school year and the equivalent in mathematics. Those who make the most progress gain more than two reading years in a school year. Pupils who join the school in Year 2 are most often more than two years behind in their reading at age seven years. It is not uncommon for these pupils to make such good progress that when they leave school at the end of Year 7 they read at age expectancy. It is the same with mathematics. The standardised test scores for pupils in Year 6 show that, in the three subjects tested, the best pupils are at age-equivalent levels in English, mathematics and science. The results of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) tests, which are given at the end of each year, chart the impressive gains pupils make from Year 2 to Year 7 in English and mathematics. This applies to all pupils, irrespective of the cause or level of their learning difficulties. The only girl at the school is fully included in all aspects of the curriculum and, overall, makes the same very good progress as the boys.
4. No comparison is made of the standards pupils achieve with those in other schools, for example, with the standards pupils achieve in the local education authority's primary schools or with those achieved by pupils in comparable special schools. This is disappointing because benchmarking against the results of pupils in these schools would provide a relevant context for judging the impressive progress that Romans Field pupils are making.

| Subject | Standards achieved | Subject | Standards achieved |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| English | Very good | French | ** |
| Mathematics | Very good | Geography | ** |
| Science | Very good | History | ** |
| ICT | Very good | Music | Satisfactory |
| PSHE | Very good | Physical education | Very good |
| Art and design | Very good | Religious education | Satisfactory |
| Design and technology | Satisfactory | | |

* - For each subject the standards achieved are the same over all the years.

** - It was not possible to make a judgement on the standards pupils achieve in these subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school, their behaviour and their personal development are very good. Attendance is good and pupils arrive punctually to school and to lessons.

MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The excellent relationships pupils develop with staff.
- The very good way in which pupils learn to control their behaviour and their emotions.
- The considerable contribution the activities of the residential setting make to the development of pupils' personal and social development.
- The very good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The good attendance and punctuality.

COMMENTARY

5. Pupils very quickly develop very good attitudes both to the school and to their work. They like their teachers and support assistants, develop excellent relationships with them and, as a result, generally co-operate very well with them. They work hard to do

their best. They enjoy school and most want to attend. For many pupils this comes as a surprise and is a delight to their parents and carers who, because of their experience in their other schools, never felt that their children would gain from education, let alone work hard at their learning. Each morning they arrive full of enthusiasm and take a full part in all activities.

6. Behaviour is very good. There are times when pupils are troubled and bothered, but the very good procedures for improving behaviour and the excellent relationships they have with staff mean that the longer they are at school the fewer difficulties they have in managing their behaviour. Bullying or harassment is not tolerated and all possible steps are taken to ensure that pupils understand that unpleasant behaviour towards other people is not acceptable within the school or in the wider community. Reprimands are accepted without fuss and pupils are sincere in their apologies when they step outside the accepted boundaries. Pupils agree the targets for behaviour in their personal support plans. Day and care staff know these and both work well in encouraging pupils to meet their targets and in celebrating their achievement. Pupils see the rewards for good behaviour as meaningful, such as the award of the golden dragon scales, and this helps motivate them to behave well. A good number of staff are trained in crisis intervention, including restraint. They have few opportunities to practise their skills because most of the time the school is a calm and organised learning environment with a friendly, family atmosphere in which pupils are happy to engage in conversation with visitors, are polite to staff and considerate towards each other.

7. Pupils who take part in the activities of the residential setting benefit substantially from the continuity between the day school and care settings. Some staff work both in the day and the evening and they form a common element between the two. In the residential setting, care staff have the same excellent relationships with pupils that day staff do and provide a wide range of social and learning activities that interest pupils and in which they take a full part.

8. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed better than was the case at the last inspection. Lessons in religious education help and the regular assemblies always have a spiritual theme. Through the procedures for improving behaviour and the lessons in PSHCE, pupils develop a very clear understanding of what is right and wrong. They are helped in this by the excellent role models offered to them by all staff. Social skills are developed very well throughout all the day, but especially at break and lunch times and when pupils take part in the residential activities, for example, when they visit the local shops and cafeterias. Displays throughout the school emphasise cultural differences very well, as do the regular visits by senior figures from many religions who talk about different faiths and different cultural traditions. The visit to France by pupils in Year 7 is an excellent opportunity for them to speak French and to gain first-hand experience of French culture and traditions. Visits to places of interest to support classroom learning help develop a good knowledge of local heritage and history. Lessons in art and design and music also extend pupils' knowledge of different cultures.

Attendance

9. Attendance, at about 90 per cent, is good in that it compares very favourably with that of pupils in other equivalent schools. Punctuality is not a problem.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 9.4 | School data | 0.2 |

| | |
|---------------|---|
| National data | * |
|---------------|---|

| | |
|---------------|---|
| National data | * |
|---------------|---|

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

Exclusions

10. Last year, there were two fixed-term exclusions, which is low for schools for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Ethnic background of pupils

| |
|---|
| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
| White – British |

Exclusions in the last school year

| Number of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 | 2 | 0 |

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The curriculum, which for about half of the pupils is supported very well by the activities of the residential setting, meets pupils' learning and additional needs very well. They gain very good advice and the procedures for ensuring their safety and security are very good. The links with parents are very good and those with the local community and other schools are good. Teaching and learning both improved since the last inspection.

Teaching and learning

The excellent assessment procedures in English, mathematics, science, ICT and for personal and social development help in making lessons meet the learning needs of all pupils very effectively.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good way in which lessons are planned to meet the learning and additional needs of all pupils.
- The excellent relationships staff have with pupils, which makes pupils want to work hard to do their best.
- The very good behaviour and the very good attitude pupils have to their learning.
- The effective way in which computers are being used to support teaching and learning.
- Homework helps in learning, but only for some of the pupils.

Commentary

11. The learning and additional needs of all pupils are met very well in lessons. There are a number of good reasons for this. Teachers have very high expectations for learning.

Class sizes are around eight pupils; consequently, teachers and their support assistants know the pupils very well both as individuals who are dealing with their difficulties and as learners. They make very good use of this information in planning lessons that consistently challenge all pupils because they include tasks that are relevant to each pupil and sometimes excite them. The availability of a good range of resources helps in this, but the greatest contribution is made by the support assistants. They are very talented and highly trained. They are deployed very effectively and make an excellent contribution to pupils' learning, when helping individual pupils or leading small groups of pupils. Very good planning ensures learning continues over the full duration of lessons.

12. Pupils know that lessons will result in new learning. For many this is a new experience, as records in their previous schools suggest that they did not achieve great success as learners. Now, they behave very well and enjoy working very hard to do their best. They treat their books and other resources with care and abide very well by the rules of the specialist rooms, such as the computer suite and food studies room. The excellent relationships staff have with pupils contribute to the very good attitudes pupils have to their learning. They want to do well for their teachers and support assistants and routinely work hard. Occasionally, pupils have difficulties in controlling their behaviour, but in most lessons there is no need to remind pupils of their responsibilities as learners.
13. Teachers use ICT increasingly well in supporting teaching and learning. They see computers, especially, as an important resource. All have completed the national training programme. The ICT suite is very good, with ready access to many specialist programs and to the Internet. Especially in English and mathematics, commercial packages are used very well in promoting learning. For example, in English, pupils regularly use word-processing and publishing programs to present their completed work. In mathematics, they practise the skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. In many of the other subjects, computers are also used very well. For example, in art and design, pupils use paint programs such as Dazzle to create pictures of faces and symmetric designs.
14. Homework provides good support for learning for some pupils. It is set mostly to improve literacy and numeracy. Reading is practised through the home-school reading programme and pupils take word lists home to increase vocabulary and to improve spelling. In mathematics, parents and carers are encouraged to help their children with their tables to 10. Many actively support and encourage their children in completing their homework. Some do not. Pupils who spend time in the residential setting benefit considerably from the very close links between the day and residential staff. On a routine basis, care staff ensure that pupils are able to continue their learning after the day school has finished, either by supporting them in completing work not finished in lessons, on designated homework or by helping them learn about a topic that interests them.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 28 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 1 | 14 | 11 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

The curriculum

The curriculum provides very many high quality learning experiences that include many interesting extra-curricular activities provided by care staff. The range and quality of resources to support teaching and learning are good. The addition of specialist rooms for ICT and food studies has

made the accommodation a better base from which to present the curriculum than was the case at the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good curriculum meets pupils' learning and additional needs very well.
- The very good procedures for continually developing the curriculum.
- The very good way in which the recommendations of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy are embedded in lesson planning.
- The generous staffing ratio and very strong relationships between staff and pupils provide very good support for learning.
- The very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The very good ICT suite and the good food studies room make the accommodation a better base from which to teach the curriculum than was the case at the last inspection.
- The very good contribution that the activities of the residential setting make to the personal and social development and to the learning of some of the pupils.
- The full programme of study for design and technology cannot be presented.

Commentary

15. The curriculum is very good and provides a broad range of worthwhile and relevant opportunities that match very well with pupils' interests and their learning and additional needs. It is better than at the time of the last inspection. Promoting pupils' personal and social development is the primary focus of the school's work and is done very well. Learning in the planned programme of discrete lessons in PSHCE is supported very well throughout all the activities of the school day and by those in the residential setting. Success in improving pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem and in the way in which they control their behaviour and emotions makes a major contribution to making them more independent and mature and to changing their attitudes to school and to learning. The content of the relevant programmes of study of the National Curriculum is reflected in full for almost all the subjects and for religious education. Pupils gain additional benefit from the programmes for sex education, drugs awareness and citizenship. They are able to take part in a good range of sporting activities against other schools and visits to places of interest in the locality and further afield, including visiting France to practise speaking French and to learn about French culture and customs.
16. The procedures for checking the curriculum operate very well in ensuring that it is continually developing to meet the changing needs of pupils. Subject co-ordinators manage their responsibilities well and work well with senior managers to improve provision in their subjects. For example, they monitor teachers' plans against the content of the programmes of study for the subjects and the learning needs of pupils and good systems operate for assessing the quality of completed work against the planning documents. In this way, very good planning and checking mean that most of the time learning is organised and sequenced, with new learning being firmly based on prior learning.
17. The curriculum is designed to promote literacy as an important step in giving pupils easier access to learning across the subjects. The recommendations of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy are implemented very well into lesson planning and help ensure that tasks are relevant to each pupil. The small size of the classes

means that pupils have many opportunities to discuss and debate in lessons and this helps promote their speaking and listening skills. Targets for literacy in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) are known to all staff and they successfully use opportunities in lessons to help pupils achieve them.

18. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Most lessons are taught by teachers with specialist training or initial qualifications in the subject. The number of support assistants and care assistants is very good. They are well trained and provide skilled and effective support in all the subjects and over the 24-hour curriculum. Resources to support teaching and learning are, generally, very good, especially for English, mathematics, science, ICT, physical education and art and design. The generous staffing ratio and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils ensure flexibility in presenting the curriculum so that pupils' social, emotional and behavioural needs are met in full. Provision for pupils with additional special needs is very good and the very good management of behaviour by teachers and their support assistants and the care staff ensures that all pupils, including the only girl, have full access to their learning.
19. Extra-curricular provision is very good. Pupils enjoy and regularly attend a wide range of activities out of school hours. They compete against other schools in the major winter and summer sports. They take part in football, rugby, hockey, cricket and badminton sessions with visiting specialist coaches. They go on sailing and canoeing courses, attend local sports clubs and participate in sports days and dance activities. These all provide very good opportunities for the development of social skills, for example, through learning to get on with others and to compete with and against others as a member of a team. Visits outside school, and visitors to the school, to support learning in the subjects are regular events. For example, recent visits to support learning in history have included Warwick Castle and Coventry Museum. Visits to Ely Cathedral and a Buddhist temple have helped make lessons in religious education more relevant. Whole-school events include trips to Drayton Manor and, during the week of the inspection, to Milton Keynes Theatre to see 'Peter Pan'.
20. The accommodation is a satisfactory base for presenting the curriculum. Because of the addition of the very good ICT suite and the good room for food studies, it is better than at the time of the last inspection. The building is well cared for, respected by pupils and is spotlessly clean. The very good standard of displays contributes to making it a very good place for learning. There is no specialist area in which pupils are able to work with resistant materials in design and technology and this limits what can be taught in the subject. The lack of an appropriate library base inhibits the development of the skills of investigative learning, although the library corners in the classrooms and the regular use of the local library compensate for this, in part. Some classrooms are small and access to them is through other rooms, which can interrupt teaching and learning. The difficulties with the accommodation are well known to staff and there is a continuing programme of development to reduce the difficulties. The grounds are well laid out and very spacious. The science area, including a pond, a wild garden and sensory garden, is used well to support classroom-based learning in science, especially, but also in other subjects. The range and quality of playground equipment are good.

The residential setting

21. At the time of the inspection about half of the pupils had some link with the residential setting. A small number stayed at school until 8:00 p.m. before going home; some

stayed for one night a week, but most stayed for up to four nights each week. Inspectors agree with the findings of the Commission for Social Care Inspections (March 2004) who judged the provision to be ‘...expertly undertaken by qualified, competent and committed staff.’ The relationships between pupils and care staff continue to be excellent. The close links that care staff have with day staff mean that learning and personal and social development for those who take part in the residential activities are precisely targeted over the full range of the 24-hour curriculum.

22. Time spent in the residential setting considerably benefits the personal and social development and the learning of pupils. Their needs and those of their families are met very well through the flexible use of the residential setting. The very wide range of activities considerably extends curriculum opportunities available during the day. The very good overall quality of work in the residential setting adds an important dimension to the range of provision available to staff in dealing with the complex and long-standing difficulties of some pupils.

Care, guidance and support

The quality of care, welfare, health and safety is very good. The provision for support, advice and guidance is very good. Pupils have good opportunities to present their views and opinions.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good way in which all the school’s activities and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils contribute to pupils’ personal and social development.
- The very good way in which policy documents outline a wide range of important procedures.
- The very good level of staff training in child protection.
- The excellent way in which the regulations for pupils with statements of special education need are met.

Commentary

23. The very good way in which pupils are cared for and nurtured is central to all the work of the school and is a major strength. Teachers, support assistants and care staff, and other staff such as the administrative staff, kitchen staff and the site manager, are united in their approach to the pupils. They are friendly, respectful and understanding, yet make it clear to pupils that they expect to be dealt with in the same way by them. For some pupils this is a new experience, and they take a little time to be comfortable around staff. But they become comfortable and ultimately the excellent relationships they establish with staff form a very strong basis for accepting advice and taking guidance on all aspects of their development and learning. As a consequence, pupils who entered the school as vulnerable children make great progress in the way they see themselves and in their ability to make relationships.
24. The many policies that cover health and safety, relationships, care and guidance and joint planning with staff in the residential setting outline procedures that are consistently followed by all staff. This helps create a safe and caring ethos in which the needs of pupils are met very well. For example, the induction arrangements are very good and include a “buddy” system where those who have been at the school for some time introduce new pupils to the routines and expectations. As a consequence of this, new pupils quickly feel at home and keen to take a full part in all the activities.

25. The procedures for safeguarding the health and welfare of pupils are very effective. Many staff have been trained in child protection and the procedures and systems for maintaining pupils' health, including the administration of prescription medicines, are very good and are known to and followed by staff and pupils. The procedures for assessing risk work very well and appropriate risk assessments are carried out when required. Records of pupils' social development are detailed and link targets in IEPs with those in pupils' care plans. Because some day staff work in the residential setting and some care staff work in the school, the transfer of information on the pupils who take part in the residential activities is excellent. For those pupils, continuity between the two settings means they gain additional benefit in developing their personal and social skills and their learning over a 24-hour curriculum.
26. All pupils have statements of special educational need and the administrative procedures relating to the requirements for statemented pupils are excellent and fully meet statutory requirements. Pupils take a full part in their annual reviews, at which most are supported by their parents or carers. The annual review targets link closely with those in pupils' IEPs, to which pupils also contribute. Individual education plans and the care plans are reviewed termly and operate very effectively in guiding teaching and learning.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The links with parents are very effective. The links with the community and with other schools are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good procedures for involving parents and carers as partners in the education of their children.
- The good use that is made of local facilities to extend the curriculum, especially for pupils who take part in the residential activities.
- The good links with local special schools that provide opportunities for pupils to compete against each other.

Commentary

27. A very effective partnership has been established with parents and carers. Any problems or concerns staff have about pupils are discussed with them and dealt with immediately. They are encouraged to keep in touch with the school by telephone and to visit at any time. Staff contact parents and carers regularly and they respond very well by taking a close interest in the progress their children are making. Attendance at formal reviews, parents' and carers' consultation evenings and school performances is good. The information provided in the prospectus and annual reports is good. Generally, parents and carers are very supportive of the work of the school and realise that it is helping them because it is helping their children to become more mature and responsible and gain better control of their behaviour and emotions. There is no special provision for them, such as a parent room, parenting classes or a nurture group. Nevertheless, staff share their expectations for behaviour and learning with parents and carers as well as the procedures and strategies they follow with their children. Many follow these strategies at home to their children's benefit.
28. Good relationships have been established with the local community. Many local recreational facilities and shopping centres are used well in making classroom learning relevant and in supporting personal and social development, especially in the evening under the guidance of care staff.

29. The local special schools have a very good history of competition against each other in a wide range of sports. Pupils benefit from being in competition with each other, especially as Romans Field traditionally gains good success in the major games and in athletics competitions. Links with the special secondary school to which most pupils transfer have improved significantly, with the introduction last year of a transfer week for pupils in Year 7. Continued improvement will help ensure that the benefits pupils derive from spending time at Romans Field will continue into their secondary education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management are excellent. The newly appointed headteacher has made an excellent start. He receives very good support from the deputy headteacher and the head of care and all staff, including those who work in the residential setting. Governance is good. There are no serious barriers to achievement in most of the subjects or in promoting gains in pupils' personal and social development. The on-going review of provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties by the local education authority is imposing difficulties on planning for the long-term future.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent way in which the headteacher and the senior management team inspire staff to do their best and operate procedures that allow them to routinely achieve this.
- At this time the headteacher's clear vision for the future of the school cannot be translated into reality.
- The very good day-to-day management realises optimum opportunities for pupils' personal and social development.
- The very good assessment procedures inform lesson planning very well, but are not being used to compare the standards pupils achieve with those of pupils in other schools.
- The new and refurbished accommodation means that nearly all aspects of the school's curriculum can be taught without limitations.
- The good support that governors provide to the headteacher and senior managers.
- The good improvements that have been made to strengthen the procedures for financial planning.

Commentary

30. The headteacher is an excellent role model for staff and pupils alike. He has considerable experience of leadership in schools for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Since his appointment, he has made excellent use of his skills and wisdom to improve a school that was seen as effective at the last inspection. He leads a very strong team of senior managers, who are equally committed to achieving very high standards in their work to ensure the school can meet all the needs of pupils. The deputy headteacher complements the strengths of the headteacher very well, and the head of care manages a seamless link between the day and residential settings and has a very valued role in the day-to-day management of the school. They are united as a team and inspire, motivate and maintain conditions so that staff and pupils regularly achieve their best.
31. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the future of the school. This includes: through the development of outreach provision, making the skills and competencies of staff available to those in mainstream primary schools; the establishment of nurture

groups for younger children; classes and courses on parenting; and the continuing development of therapeutic provision for Romans Field pupils. He is having difficulty in translating his vision into reality. The local education authority's on-going review of provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is creating uncertainty as to the future of the school and this militates against the sense of creating a precise long-term plan for development. The leadership and management skills of the headteacher and senior managers, the very good quality of teachers and teaching assistants and the very good range of specialist facilities all contribute to making Romans Fields an ideal contender for extended school status; either on its own in providing specialist provision for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties or as part of a larger extended school.

32. Very good management ensures that all the work of the school is very well organised and effective in meeting its purpose. This is especially so for the primary aim of the school, which is to help pupils grow as individuals so that they can take a fuller and more complete role as learners in the next stage of their education. Day to day the school is calm and ordered, with a very positive ethos that is built on the celebration of success. Pupils work hard to do their best, in dealing with their difficulties and in their learning, because they enjoy being successful. They feel safe and valued, are often happy at school, and this is a strength. Many pupils enter after experiencing difficulties in dealing with the demands and expectations of their previous schools and, for many, in making friends. They quickly learn to respect and trust staff and establish excellent relationships with them and, increasingly, with other pupils. Their self-esteem improves and they learn to see the good things about themselves, including the better way in which they are able to control their behaviour and their emotions. Because they are successful, they enjoy their learning and this motivates them to work harder in an effort to do even better.
33. Very good performance management procedures have contributed to the improved quality of teaching and to making the co-ordination of subjects more effective. Termly lesson observations and the clearer identification of the expectations for co-ordinators have resulted in the provision for almost every subject being better than at the last inspection, including the standards achieved by pupils. The very good assessment procedures for the core subjects have also improved and include recognising the gains pupils make against National Curriculum levels and against other criteria, such as reading and spelling ages. At this time, this information is not being used to judge pupils' progress against that of pupils in other schools. When this is accomplished, it will provide an important yardstick with which to judge the effectiveness of this aspect of the school's work.
34. The accommodation has been improved since the last inspection. The school's curriculum, including the National Curriculum, can be presented in full without serious limitations, except for the resistant materials and textiles aspects of design and technology. The new ICT suite is very good and the food studies room is good. In general, classrooms are spacious and attractively presented and the building is very clean. For most subjects, resources to support teaching and learning are good. The commitment to using computers to provide greater support for teaching and learning is made very clear to co-ordinators and increasing use is being made of new technologies in supporting teaching and learning in almost all the subjects.
35. Governance is good. A committed and knowledgeable chairperson leads the governing body very well. Governors offer a wide range of experience and wisdom to the headteacher and fully embrace their role as 'critical friend' to the school. Statutory

requirements are met. They gain a good knowledge of the effectiveness of the school from the presentations and reports of the headteacher and other staff. They gain no information on how effective the school is in comparison with other schools. Their next challenge is to have the headteacher establish and operate procedures that help them make such a judgement.

36. Financial controls and administration are very good. The school finances are well managed by the governing body, headteacher, senior management team and administrative officers. Expenditure is carefully monitored and spending is closely linked to educational objectives identified in the improvement plan. Staff follows a policy and guidelines handbook to initiate any expenditure and the school's office follow this up very efficiently. Governors are clear about the principles of best value and ensure the school gets best value for money in its purchases. The high carried-forward figure of £82,501.00 is earmarked for expenditure agreed in the improvement plan.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | |
|----------------------------|---------|
| Total income | 839,438 |
| Total expenditure | 909,059 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 18,181 |

| Balances (£) | |
|--|---------|
| Balance from previous year | 82,501* |
| Balance carried forward to the next year | 31,105 |

* - A planned carry-over to support refurbishment of the new food studies and ICT rooms, a meeting room for parents and repairs to the heating system, as identified in the 2004/5 improvement plan.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN YEARS 2 TO 7

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very well-organised curriculum, with an appropriate focus on speaking and listening.
- The excellent relationships between staff and pupils, which help pupils make the most of the very good teaching.
- The very good leadership and management that have helped improve the quality of the provision.
- The lack of a library area limits the opportunity for pupils to develop their skills of investigative learning.

Commentary

37. Over all the years, pupils achieve very well. Evidence from tests of reading and spelling, regular testing and pupils' completed work shows that from a low baseline pupils make very good progress in reading and in speaking and listening, and good progress in writing. All pupils make equivalent progress irrespective of their capabilities, their experience of learning English in their previous schools, the cause and level of their additional difficulties or their gender. The highest-attaining pupils in Year 7 are at Level 4 of the National Curriculum.
38. The curriculum is very well organised. It appropriately focuses on promoting speaking and listening skills because most pupils enter the school speaking hesitantly and with little confidence. They quickly learn to speak confidently and clearly in many different situations. For example, in one excellent assembly, several pupils in Years 5, 6 and 7 improvised a scene showing skill and perception, and very good speech patterns, from a story read to them by the teacher. Many procedures are used to improve reading, including the very good use of assessment information and of specialist teaching approaches, advice from visiting consultants and the use of a very good range of good quality resources and reading schemes. The results are impressive. Pupils in their first year at the school regularly improve their reading ages by more than two reading years. Over all the years, they make very good progress so that by the time they are in Year 7, they read confidently and fluently, although their understanding of the written text sometimes lags behind. The youngest pupils follow a phonics programme that incorporates handwriting exercises and they learn to write their news, poems and stories neatly and in complete sentences. The best writers in Year 7 are able to write about characters from Shakespeare with perception and enthusiasm. They write successfully in different styles for a range of audiences and develop good skills in note taking, editing and in redrafting longer pieces, most often using word processing. They write in cursive, well-formed script and spell simple vocabulary accurately. By the time they transfer to their secondary school, many pupils are as good in English as most pupils of their age.

39. The quality of teaching is very good. The recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy are incorporated well into lesson planning and provide a worthwhile framework for most lessons. Pupils have a clear focus for learning because lessons start with teachers outlining the aims of the lesson. The excellent relationships between pupils and staff help pupils be confident learners who are willing to speak with staff when they are unclear about their learning. They take a full part in discussions and debates and, generally, work hard at making the most of the very good teaching. In the best lessons, a good balance of praise and challenge routinely motivates and encourages pupils. Questions are used very well in extending learning and for providing informal information on how well pupils are doing against the lesson objectives. They move forward at a fast pace and for many pupils, learning is fun. As a consequence, they work very hard and behave very well. Teachers are beginning to use new technologies very effectively, especially in helping pupils learn the skills of drafting and re-drafting work. Sentence starters, prompts and staff acting as scribes all help in modelling good writing. Clear, well-illustrated worksheets and carefully chosen books are used well in increasing pupils' understanding of many different purposes of written text.
40. Leadership and management are very good and the quality of the provision is better than at the last inspection. The co-ordinator has a very clear and appropriate action plan and a pertinent view for future development, which includes benchmarking the progress pupils make against that of pupils in other schools. Planning for teaching has improved in part because of the close links with the local education authority's advisor for literacy and the regular way in which staff are informed of new approaches and resources. She monitors teachers' planning and pupils' work thoroughly and this has also helped improve the quality of teaching from the time of the last inspection. At present, each classroom has a small library and frequent use is made of the local library. However, the lack of a satisfactory library limits the ways in which teachers can promote investigative learning.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

41. Language and literacy are promoted well within the other subjects. The strong emphasis on speaking and listening in all lessons and the small number of pupils in each class mean that pupils have more opportunity to speak with teachers and support assistants about their learning and other matters than is the case for pupils in lessons in mainstream schools. Similarly, those who take part in the residential activities gain excellent opportunities to speak with care staff about their work, topics that interest them and how they are dealing with their difficulties.

Modern foreign languages (French)

French is taught to pupils in Year 7 in the summer term. Therefore, it was not possible to observe any lessons or judge the quality of the provision.

42. Pupils in Year 7 complete a module on France and the French language. They are enthusiastic and motivated to learn French. The course focuses on speaking and listening skills and usually culminates with a day visit to France, so pupils hear and use the language in context. On last year's visit to Paris, pupils visited the Eiffel Tower and took a trip on the Seine on a 'bateau-mouche'. The specialist teacher uses many teaching approaches including active approaches that result, for example, in pupils seeing, smelling and tasting French food. Staff and pupils in Year 7 annually raise

money for the trip to France when they dress as Parisians and, through the medium of the French language, sell 'crêpes', in school. Lessons, and the visit to France, make a significant contribution to extending pupils' cultural awareness.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good knowledge that teachers have of their pupils, which helps them meet their learning needs very well.
- The positive attitude that pupils have to their learning, which makes them want to work hard to do their best.
- The very good procedures for assessing pupils' progress.
- The very good improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

43. The standards pupils achieve are very good. Most enter the school with very little knowledge of mathematics. The results of standardised tests for pupils in Year 6 show that the best at mathematics attain Level 4 of the National Curriculum and most pupils attain Level 3. In Year 7, the best pupils are at Level 5. These gains represent very good progress over all the years.
44. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers and their support assistants know their pupils very well and plan lessons that are made up of tasks that match with their learning needs and capabilities. In this, they are helped by the very good range of resources available to support learning, including a good number of different commercial schemes. The recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy are routinely incorporated into lessons. For example, at the start of one lesson, pupils worked quickly and accurately on ten addition sums in order to beat their previous best time. Support assistants are used very well and make a considerable contribution to pupils' very good progress. They are very good at helping individual pupils, but are equally comfortable dealing with small groups of pupils. Plenary sessions are used well in checking how pupils are doing against the objectives for lessons and in celebrating achievement. Teachers use commercial packages presented through the Internet well in giving pupils interesting opportunities for practising skills initially taught by other methods.
45. Pupils enjoy lessons in mathematics. Their very positive attitudes to learning make an important contribution to their very good progress. They behave very well, take great care and pride in presenting their work neatly and are pleased when they do well. They take special pride in learning their tables, for which they gain the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards, and in demonstrating their knowledge to visitors. Regular testing and accurate record keeping show that, at the time of the inspection, the hardest table for pupils was the 8 times table, which 62 per cent of pupils knew, and the easiest was the 10 times table, which 96 per cent of pupils knew. By the end of the year, almost all of the pupils will know each of the tables to 10. By the end of Year 7, they have sufficient skills and knowledge in mathematics to be able to discuss their methods and solutions, as well as other possible ways for solving problems.
46. The procedures for assessing work provide very good information on progress. The small size of classes means that teachers have a very good knowledge of what pupils can do, what they understand and what mathematics they have missed at their previous schools. They also gain more formal information. For example, each of the schemes that is used is supported by assessment sheets that provide very good

information on how pupils are doing. Results from the QCA tests are used regularly throughout the year and always at the end of the year. Standardised Assessment Tests (SATs) are taken at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Collectively, these procedures provide very good information for judging the progress pupils make. This information is used very well in lesson planning, but not at all in judging the effectiveness of the overall provision in mathematics, for example, by benchmarking the gains made against those of pupils in other schools.

47. The subject is very well led and managed by an enthusiastic co-ordinator. Her leadership has helped improve the quality of teaching and learning. In part, this is because teachers have an increased range of good quality resources and they make better use of computers in supporting learning. The quality of the provision is much better than at the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

48. Numeracy skills are consolidated well in other areas of the curriculum. For example, pupils weigh and measure in lessons in food studies. However, planning to reinforce numeracy skills does not feature in subject policies. This provides scope for increasing the progress pupils are making in mathematics through making use of deliberately planned opportunities in the lessons in other subjects to apply, and reinforce, learning in mathematics.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good quality of teaching that makes learning relevant to pupils by linking it with everyday issues.
- The very good curriculum that enables pupils to build new learning on what they know and understand.
- The very good way lessons contribute to pupils' social development and their awareness of the need to be healthy and fit.
- The very good leadership and management that have contributed to the very good improvement in the provision since the last inspection.

Commentary

49. Pupils in all years achieve very well and make very good progress. Scores for pupils on last year's SATs show that they are achieving better than was the case at the last inspection. The highest-attaining pupils in Year 7 are at Level 5 of the National Curriculum.
50. The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are prepared very well and are made up of topics that interest and motivate pupils. Lessons begin with a clear statement of what pupils are expected to learn. This provides a very good framework that helps pupils organise their learning. Teachers make a very good effort to ensure that pupils have many opportunities to take part in practical work. Pupils enjoy being active in their learning and carry out practical activities enthusiastically and diligently record their results. Most of the time, they clearly understand what they have to do and the results they gain help them recognise relationships as a first step to finding out for themselves. In a small number of lessons this is not so. In these lessons, the experiments are not sufficiently well thought through to enable pupils to recognise the relevant relationships. In some areas of the programmes of study, teachers cannot arrange for pupils to take charge of their own learning. For example, the absence of a

specialist room means that pupils do not carry out experiments on topics that require the use of a fume chamber or gas taps. Support assistants make a significant contribution to learning. They are deployed very well and are equally at ease working with individual pupils or small groups of pupils. They are very good at helping pupils maintain a focus on their work and in dealing with inappropriate behaviour so that learning is rarely interrupted. Attention to health and safety is very good. Pupils are required to wear appropriate clothing and protective wear when required and they take care to abide by the rules of safety.

51. The curriculum is based on the QCA recommendations and reflects the relevant programmes of study of the National Curriculum very well. It is planned and monitored very well to ensure that learning is sequenced and organised, and that new learning is based on prior learning wherever possible. Every attempt is taken to make science a subject that is relevant to pupils and many opportunities are provided for pupils to learn about the application of science in everyday life.
52. Lessons in science help promote pupils' social skills because they are expected to work together as members of a team, for example, on joint experiments. The excellent relationships they have with staff, and their developing relationships with other pupils, help them work co-operatively and harmoniously with each other. They also gain from making visits to places such as Cadbury World and organisations such as Parks Trusts to support classroom learning. Lessons in science also link well with learning in lessons in PSHCE through, for example, learning about food types and how sensible eating and exercise contribute to a healthy lifestyle.
53. Leadership and management are very good. The progress pupils make against their annual learning target is recorded very well and this information is used well in planning lessons. The range and quality of resources are better than at the time of the last inspection. The co-ordinator, who keeps up to date with science initiatives in mainstream schools through regular training, has identified areas for development that include making more use of new technologies to support teaching and learning. The outside area, especially the environmental area made up of sensory and wild gardens, is used very well in supporting learning over many topics. The gardens are good enough to be seen as useful enough by teachers in other schools who visit to give their pupils a first-hand experience over a wide range of environmental matters. Science has made very good improvement since the last inspection, when pupils achieved satisfactorily and made satisfactory progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good new ICT suite includes sufficient very good quality equipment to allow each pupil to work at their own workstation.
- The very good experience pupils have over a wide range of computer applications.
- The very good match of tasks with pupils' needs, which contributes to all pupils making very good progress.
- The very good way in which ICT is led and managed.
- The confident way in which teachers and pupils use computers to help learning in the other subjects.

Commentary

54. Over all the years, the standards pupils achieve and the progress they make are very good and are better than at the time of the last inspection. Since that time, the building of a small, well-equipped computer suite that provides a very good base for teaching and learning has helped improve the quality of the provision. Each of the ten new computers has Internet access that benefits teaching and learning because they can be controlled from the teacher's workstation.
55. Pupils in all years have discrete lessons in ICT. They use computers confidently. As early as Year 2, they have complete control of the screen through the mouse and keyboard and have learned to use word-processing packages very well in presenting their work. They use specific programs, such as Dazzle, to find out about other uses of computers so that, by the time they get to Year 7, they have gained experience of a wide range of applications. As a consequence, the highest-attaining pupils confidently create and use spreadsheets, and gain information from the Internet which they transfer in word and picture form to their own documents. They use programs, such as PowerPoint, to prepare presentations that are supported by animation and sound. They leave at the end of Year 7 with skills and an understanding of the new technologies that are equally as good as those of the best pupils in mainstream schools.
56. The quality of teaching is very good. All teachers have taken the national training, as have some support assistants. When they teach in the computer suite they are often supported by the subject co-ordinator and the specialist support assistant. This means that there are many adults to help pupils who, because of their different experience with computers and their different capabilities, work at different levels. For example, in one lesson on gaining information on Milton Keynes from the Internet, worksheets requiring searches of different complexity meant that all pupils were equally challenged and motivated by their tasks, irrespective of their capability. Pupils are excited about their lessons in the computer suite and work very hard at their learning. They take pride in doing their best and respect the equipment very well. Teachers' very good planning results in pupils working on tasks that are relevant to them and means that all pupils make equivalent progress. The introductions to the lessons are short and clear and benefit from the very good use made of the digital overhead projector, which projects the teacher's computer screen onto a wall. The objectives for the lesson are presented quickly and clearly so that pupils spend most of the lesson being active in their learning because they are working at their computers. The assessment procedures work very well and provide teachers with a detailed knowledge of what pupils know and can do. This information is used very effectively to set relevant tasks for each pupil, but less well in judging how pupils are doing against those in other schools.
57. The expectations of the co-ordinator are very high. He sets very high standards for his own work and for learning and behaviour. He leads and manages the subject very well and provides very good support for teachers when they use computers to help promote learning in the other subjects. The curriculum is very well organised. It takes very good regard of QCA recommendations and is supported very well by good assessment procedures. His leadership and management have made a significant contribution to the improvement in pupils' progress since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

58. Planning to use computers to support teaching and learning in the subjects is good. Teachers and pupils are practised and confident at using the Internet to gain information and to reinforce their learning, especially in English and mathematics, through the very good use of

commercial learning packages. Pupils present their work using word processing that is often supported by pictures and graphs. Teachers and support assistants are better trained at using new technologies than was the case last time and use them more frequently and with greater confidence. Consequently, computers and other devices, such as digital cameras, are making a bigger impact on learning than was the case then.

HUMANITIES

Too few lessons were seen to judge the quality of the provision in geography and history.

Geography

59. From the planning documents and completed work it can be seen that pupils learn about different places and locations through a good range of practical activities that help them understand the key elements of the subject.
60. Pupils in Year 2 take part in fieldwork to help them draw simple maps of the school and the immediate locality. They learn about different means of transport, how places differ and how physical features influence the climate by following the route taken by Barnaby Bear as he travels around. In conversation, they demonstrate an awareness of different places beyond their own and are able to compare and contrast life on an island with that on the mainland. Good use is made of the locality to develop their interest in and increase their awareness of environmental issues. For example, they study the roles of different people and consider ways in which their local area can be made safer by looking at traffic flows and other potential dangers. Pupils in Year 7 study mountain ranges and rivers and are able to describe and contrast the physical and human features of different places, including identifying why towns and cities grow.
61. Geography is led and managed well. The policy describes current practice and provides a good framework for teaching and learning. The scheme of work, which is based on QCA recommendations, reflects the programmes of study of the National Curriculum well and identifies ways in which lessons in geography can link with other subjects in contributing to pupils' cultural awareness. The range of resources is good. Information and communication technologies, especially computers and digital cameras, are being increasingly used in supporting teaching and learning. The lack of a good working library limits opportunities for pupils to discover for themselves facts about topics in geography.

History

62. The policy and scheme of work reflect the content of the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. The scheme of work gives good guidance on topics and the order in which they should be taught, so that pupils gain a sequenced and progressive understanding of chronology and of important people and events in the past. Resources to support teaching and learning are good. Regular visits to museums and houses of historic interest in the locality also provide good help to teaching and learning.
63. Pupils in Years 2 learn about the Great Fire of London. They know of the conditions in which the fire started and why it spread so quickly. They know that original documents, drawings and photographs, such as the diary of Samuel Pepys, are from long ago. They place historical events correctly in a time sequence. As they move

through the years, they learn about other events, as well as how people such as the Victorians lived, so they can contrast these with their own lives. From discussions with pupils, it is clear that they like learning about the past. They are interested in finding out why events occurred and not just the facts of the events themselves. The absence of a good library area means that pupils have few opportunities to find out for themselves about life, and the events, of the past.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good way in which teachers make difficult religious concepts relevant to pupils.
- The good support assemblies give to learning in lessons.
- The good way in which the curriculum of the locally agreed syllabus is being implemented.
- The locally agreed syllabus is beginning to be incorporated into the scheme of work.

Commentary

64. Pupils achieve satisfactorily and make satisfactory progress.
65. Teaching and learning are good because teachers deal well in ways that are relevant to pupils with the facts associated with the major religions and abstract issues, such as belief and respect. For example, in one lesson the story of Jesus feeding the hungry crowd with five loaves and two fish was translated into a modern context that was easily understood by pupils. The importance of the messages became very clear to them during a short period of meditation that enabled them to see themselves as part of the hungry crowd surrounding Jesus. Planning is good and support assistants are deployed well in helping pupils who have difficulties, especially with some of the abstract issues that are often the focus of lessons. The clear expectations of the teacher and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils make pupils confident enough to ask questions about all aspects of religion, including on difficult issues to do with the ways in which different religions interpret major world events.
66. Assemblies play an important role in supporting learning in the lessons and in extending spiritual awareness. The planned programme gives pupils opportunities to listen to, for example, the beliefs and traditions of other religions, as well as the Christian religion. They learn about important festivals and join in prayers and in the reflections about good and evil. Although the main emphasis comes from a Christian perspective, pupils learn about Judaism, Hinduism and Islam, often through role play and story telling. Local leaders of different faiths visit assemblies and speak of caring for one another and for the environment as a common feature of many faiths. Assemblies, the lessons in religious education and visits to churches and other religious buildings make a good contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness and to their moral development.
67. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has worked hard with staff to implement the locally agreed syllabus. More work needs to be done here. He has a sound view for the future development of the subject and ensures by careful monitoring and evaluation that the school policy and the requirements and

expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus are being met. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very well-planned curriculum that provides a wide range of learning experiences.
- The very good way in which pupils' prior experiences form the basis for new learning.
- The displays of very good quality artwork throughout the school contribute to the ethos for learning and show the very high standards achieved by pupils using many different techniques and approaches.

Commentary

68. The standards pupils achieve and the progress they make are very good over a wide range of artwork. By the time they are in Year 7, the best achieve artwork at the same high level as those in mainstream schools.
69. Pupils have a full experience of art and design because the curriculum has been planned well to cover most of the elements of the relevant programmes of study. As a consequence, pupils over their years at school develop many artistic skills, including those to do with three-dimensional work. They paint and draw in a variety of styles using a wide range of materials. Drawings and paintings, especially, are of a very high standard, incorporating many different styles and techniques. The work is often delicate and detailed as is shown, for example, by the 'silk' paintings of seascapes on display in the dining area.
70. The quality of teaching is very good and this results in pupils developing a comprehensive range of skills and a very good knowledge of the work of a number of famous artists. Lessons are planned to ensure that all pupils have relevant support and guidance, without stifling their individual creativity. The scheme of work is devised to ensure the sequenced and progressive development of art skills and knowledge. This, and the very good range of learning opportunities provided in lessons and during visits to, for example art galleries, means that new learning is firmly based on prior learning. The progress pupils make over a wide range of the subject benefits from this. There is no specialist room for the subject, which means that work has to be packed away at the end of lessons and group work is difficult to manage. Also, the completion of three-dimensional art that needs firing is not possible because of the lack of a kiln.
71. The co-ordinator leads and manages the subject very well. The whole school is enlivened with displays of pupils' work that make a very good contribution to the very good ethos for learning. She has very good specialist knowledge, is an accomplished artist herself and has responsibility for teaching the subject throughout the school. Having all their lessons taught by a teacher with specialist knowledge is having a very positive effect on the standards pupils achieve and their enjoyment of lessons. A good range of resources supports teaching and learning. The school is justifiably proud of its work in art, which has improved since the last inspection and is a strong element in the curriculum.

Design and technology

The provision for design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have too few opportunities to learn about resistant materials and textiles.
- The good standards pupils achieve in food studies.

Commentary

72. The design and technology curriculum focuses primarily on food studies. As a consequence, pupils have too few opportunities to apply their emerging skills of designing and making to resistant materials or textiles. The standards pupils achieve and the progress they make in food studies are good, but the absence of regular opportunities to work with other materials means that, over the full range of the subject, the quality of the provision is only satisfactory.
73. In food studies, the quality of teaching is good. The new specialist room is an improvement and provides good opportunities for learning about food. However, its size and space limit what can be taught and how teaching can be organised. For example, there are too many pupils in a full class for them to be given major responsibility for their own learning. Lessons are planned well, with careful attention being paid to the design paradigm and the principles of plan, design, make, evaluate and modify. Pupils enjoy lessons in food studies because they are active in their work. They explain what they have learned accurately, evaluate their work well and are able to make suggestions for improvement.
74. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The curriculum time allocated to design and technology is reduced in comparison to that provided for pupils in mainstream schools and in many other equivalent schools. The co-ordinator plans the work in food studies well. The lack of a good range of hand tools and power tools limits what can be taught in the other aspects of the subject. The quality of the provision in the food studies aspect of the subject is better than last time because teaching and learning benefit from the specialist facilities in the new specialist room.

Music

75. It was not possible to judge the quality of the provision because too few lessons were seen. However, discussions with teachers, records of work and looking at the range of activities experienced by pupils suggest that pupils gain a satisfactory overview of music in its many forms. The recent implementation of the local combined scheme of work has ensured a progressive curriculum. Pupils' experience of music is extended considerably by taking part in the school's musical productions. They also gain from joining in with visiting musicians in the workshops they run at school, in the joint productions with other schools and in the aerobic sessions in the hall where they exercise to the rhythm of many current popular songs.
76. The range of musical equipment to support teaching and learning is good, although the lack of a dedicated room, in which electronic and amplification equipment can be permanently laid out, acts to limit the standards pupils are able to achieve.

Physical education

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very wide range of physical activities that makes up the curriculum.
- Teachers or instructors with specialist knowledge or training teach most lessons.
- The very good leadership and management.

Commentary

77. Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress. The very high standards achieved at the last inspection have been maintained. The curriculum offers a wide variety of physical activities that cover the relevant programmes of study very well. These include swimming, aerobics, gymnastics, team and individual games and sailing and outdoor activities. The subject is well linked to other areas of the curriculum, especially PSHCE, because pupils have many opportunities for social development, for example, when they travel and change for swimming at the leisure centre and when they play on teams, with and against each other. They also gain from taking part in competitions against pupils in other schools and when they demonstrate their prowess in aerobics to those in mainstream primary schools. The pupils who spend time in the residential setting experience many other activities, including ten pin bowling and canoeing.
78. Teaching and learning are very good. The co-ordinator is well qualified and is supported very well by enthusiastic support assistants. Lessons are planned well, with a clear pattern of 'warm up', 'activity' and 'wind down'. In planning lessons, teachers pay particular attention to the social elements of working together to help pupils develop better relationships with each other while competing with and against each other. Pupils enjoy their lessons. They behave very well and try hard to do their best, even when it means they become very tired, as they did in a lesson in swimming when working on their strokes. Pupils have the advantage of mainly being taught by teachers or instructors with specialist knowledge in particular games and sports, such as football and rugby in the winter, cricket and in athletics in the summer and swimming throughout the year.
79. The co-ordinator leads the subject very well and the overall curriculum is planned well. Learning is assessed and monitored effectively and pupils' skills and achievements are recorded well. Success is regularly celebrated in lessons and sometimes in assemblies. Resources are good, in range and quantity, and are used well in supporting teaching and learning. The hall is small and there are no facilities for showering in the main part of the school. The outside grassed area is very good. Lessons in physical education make an important contribution to pupils' social and emotional development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL, HEALTH AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for personal and social development permeates all the work of the school and is supported very well in the lessons in the other subjects.
- The very careful planning of lessons that contributes to teaching being very good.
- The excellent relationships between pupils and staff that underpin all the work in PSHCE.

Commentary

80. Pupils make very good progress in their personal and social skills, in learning about the importance of a healthy life style and in the need to be good citizens. At the last inspection PSHCE was judged to be very good. It continues to be very good and is an area of considerable strength.

81. Promoting pupils' personal and social skills is the primary aim of the curriculum and permeates all the work of the school. Lesson time for the discrete lessons in PSHCE is less than is the case in many equivalent schools. This does not limit the quality of the provision or the progress pupils make, because in the lessons in the other subjects, teachers and support assistants make the most of every opportunity to help pupils become increasingly mature and responsible. The links made, especially in lessons in science, physical education and religious education, mean that pupils gain an awareness of sex, relationship and drugs education, as these apply to them. Circle time is used very effectively and provides an excellent opportunity for pupils to explore issues that are of direct importance, including to the only girl amongst them.
82. The quality of teaching in the discrete lessons is very good, as are the leadership and management. This shows in the detailed planning of the programme over all the years and the way in which all parts of the curriculum help focus on the personal and social development of pupils. Clear and precise targets in pupils' IEPs and in their pastoral support plans provide very good guidance for all staff in dealing with the specific behaviours. The procedures for helping pupils improve their behaviour also work very well because they are consistently implemented throughout the school and provide very clear guidelines on what is right and wrong and what is acceptable.
83. But the most important contributor to the very high quality of the provision for PSHCE is the excellent relationships that pupils develop with staff. For some of the pupils, this will be their first opportunity to establish respectful and trusting relationships with their teachers and, for a minority of pupils, with any adult. Staff are friendly and caring. They are excellent role models and routinely encourage pupils to do their best. They celebrate good achievement quickly and warmly. By recognising even their smallest successes, they take every opportunity to increase pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence. Lunchtimes, breaktimes and when pupils make visits off site, for example, to swim at the leisure centre, are all used excellently by staff to advise, guide and encourage pupils. For about half of the pupils, the activities of the residential setting provide specific, powerful and very beneficial opportunities for helping them develop their personal and social skills.
84. The school's continued success in dealing with pupils' primary difficulties, as a first step toward re-orientating them toward their learning, is the most important contributor to the very good overall quality of the provision.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

| | |
|--|----------|
| The overall effectiveness of the school | 2 |
| How inclusive the school is | 2 |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since the last inspection | 2 |
| Value for money provided by the school | 2 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Overall standards achieved | 2 |
| Pupils' achievement | 2 |

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|---|----------|
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | 2 |
| Attendance | 3 |
| Attitudes | 2 |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions | 2 |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development | 2 |

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

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|--|----------|
| The leadership and management of the school | 2 |
| The governance of the school | 3 |
| The leadership of the headteacher | 1 |
| The leadership of other key staff | 2 |
| The effectiveness of management | 2 |

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