

# SUMMERHILL SCHOOL

## WESTWARD HO

## LEISTON

## SUFFOLK IP16 4HY

**Reporting inspector: Mr N Grenyer HMI**

**Dates of inspection: 1-5 March 1999**

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### **Information about the school**

Name of school:	Summerhill School
Type of school:	Boarding
Status:	Registered
Association membership:	None
Age range:	9-17
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	boys: 34 girls: 22 total: 56
Number of boarders:	boys: 30 girls: 19 total:49
Number of pupils with English as an additional language:	32
Termly fees (day pupils)	£2,046-£3,085
Termly fees (boarders)	£5,049-£6,897
School address:	Summerhill School, Westward Ho, Leiston, Suffolk IP16 4HY

Telephone/fax number:	01728 830540
Headteacher:	Mrs Zoe Readhead
Proprietor:	As above
Chair of Governing Body	N/A
DfEE number:	935/6016

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### PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE INSPECTION

1. This inspection was carried out in order to advise the Secretary of State for Education and Employment of Summerhill School's suitability for registration under the Education Act 1996. The report therefore concentrates on those aspects of the school relevant to that purpose. No subjects of the curriculum are reported on in detail, although there is a greater degree of reference to English, mathematics and science.
2. HMI has had significant concerns about the school for a number of years and it has been regularly inspected over the past decade. Full inspections of the school were carried out in May 1990 and June 1993. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) issued a Notice of Complaint after the first of these inspections, but this was lifted when it appeared the school intended to take action on each of the key weaknesses that had been identified. Subsequent monitoring visits by HMI indicated that planned actions were not generally being implemented, leading to the second full inspection.
3. Since then the pattern has been repeated of strongly critical inspection findings being followed by promising plans of action that were only very partially, if at all, implemented by the school. When HMI last visited the school in June 1998, they found evidence of significant planning to address the weakness identified by the previous inspections. This full inspection was carried out to establish the extent to which the necessary improvements had been made and whether the school remained suitable for registration.
4. The last report indicated that the school had changed little in character since 1990; that remains true. It still makes unique provision with unusual appeal, in many respects guarding closely the philosophy of its founder AS Neill, challenging many of the values inherent in conventional education. Some pupils have learning difficulties and a large proportion of pupils are from overseas: many having experienced little success in conventional education.
5. This report cannot and does not pass judgement on the unique philosophy on which Summerhill is founded. It focuses upon the issue of whether the quality of the education provided is effective in practice.

## MAIN FINDINGS

6. Summerhill is not providing an adequate education for its pupils. Whether the pupils make sufficient progress and achieve the standards of which they are capable is left to each child's inclination. As a result, those willing to work achieve satisfactory or even good standards, while the rest are allowed to drift and fall behind.

7. There are some strengths. Standards of speaking and listening are good, as are standards of reading in Key Stage 4. Those pupils who are inclined to learn often enjoy good, well-differentiated teaching and achieve satisfactory or good standards, especially in mathematics. Similarly, the provision of English as an additional language (EAL) is effective for those who choose to attend lessons.

8. In general, pupils are well-behaved and courteous, if often foul-mouthed. They relate well to the staff and to each other. Because of their democratic participation in most aspects of decision-making in the school, pupils have a practical understanding of citizenship.

9. Sadly, these comparative strengths cannot compensate for the many and serious weaknesses. In Key Stage 2, pupils make insufficient progress throughout the curriculum because of erratic attendance of lessons. The many pupils who do not regularly attend classes in Key Stages 3 and 4 achieve poor standards of numeracy, reading and writing, and underachieve across the subjects of the curriculum as a whole. Some pupils with special educational needs make insufficient progress for the same reason. Similarly a significant number of overseas students do not benefit from the EAL teaching and so do not acquire sufficient command of English to take full part in the democratic system which the school claims as its distinctive strength.

10. A root cause of these defects is non-attendance at lessons: for example, some pupils abandon mathematics for up to two years on end. That is compounded by the fact that neither the short-term nor the long-term planning by the teaching staff take account of this erratic pattern of attendance, least of all in Key Stage 2. Consequently, for the great majority of the pupils, their curriculum is fragmented, disjointed, narrow and likely adversely to affect their future options.

11. This amounts to an abrogation of educational responsibility and a failure of management and leadership. The school has drifted into confusing educational freedom with the negative right not to be taught. As a result, many pupils have been allowed to mistake the pursuit of idleness for the exercise of personal liberty.

12. In relation to the arrangements for boarding, the school has suitable procedures for child protection in place. Beyond this, there is a catalogue of shortcomings. Pupils who do not attend lessons are unsupervised. There is no resident adult to supervise senior boarders. The security of the site is inadequate. One member of staff has not been checked against List 99, so the school cannot guarantee that all are fit persons to teach children. Boys and girls share common toilets contrary to the Children Act 1989 guidance and despite the recommendation of the Suffolk social service department that this practice should cease. In addition to this, many problems of cleanliness and health and safety were identified and are set out in paragraphs 71-73.

13. Few real improvements have been made since the last HMI inspection report. The local social services' recommendations have been rejected by the school as against the school's ethos.

14. Actions to address the key issues from the 1993 inspection report remain either ineffective or unimplemented. Standards of achievement still need to be raised, especially at Key Stage 2. The rate of attendance at lessons remains low in line with the school's philosophy of voluntary attendance. The range of curricular provision remains narrow in terms of what is actually delivered to pupils. Accommodation, including toilet and dormitory arrangements, fail to meet minimum standards.

15. The school fails to meet the requirements for registration under the Education Act 1996 in the following respects: the instruction is not efficient or suitable; the welfare of boarders is not adequately safeguarded and promoted; the school does not provide suitable accommodation.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

16. In order to improve the quality of education the school must:

¥ raise standards, especially in relation to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science;

¥ ensure that all pupils are fully engaged in study across a broad and balanced curriculum throughout their time in school;

¥ improve the quality of planning and teaching at Key Stage 2;

¥ make the standard welfare provision required by the Children Act 1989, as recommended in the Suffolk social services report of 1997;

¥ improve the accommodation, including toilet facilities and boarding arrangements;

¥ deal with the matters of health and safety raised in paragraphs 71-73.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

17. Summerhill is a privately owned, independent school for pupils aged 5- 17, located in a small town in rural Suffolk. It claims to be a democratic, self-governing school, where every person, whether pupil or adult, has an equal vote on how the community is to be run. The weekly meetings allow children to learn and to vote on the rules of the community. In so doing it is hoped that they will learn and appreciate its values so that they can, as individuals, effect change. Summerhill's expressed

primary aim is to allow pupils to develop at their own pace and to discover their own interests. Lessons are not compulsory, children are free to attend if they wish. The school places great importance on children being able to spend time at play, which is held to be as important as intellectual learning, the motivation for which comes from the child when the child is ready for it. A further principle is that assessment should not be imposed on children.

## Key indicators

### Attainment

18. The school makes no use of National Curriculum assessments.

19. GCSE examinations are taken. In the last two years, some pupils have sat these examinations aged 13, 14, 15, and 16; however, many of the entries have been from those in Year 12 (that is one year after the national norm). Over half of the pupils are from overseas and have to learn English as an additional language.

20. The school was unable to provide the required information of the number of pupils in each previous examination cohort on the pre-inspection form. It was not possible, therefore, to make comparisons with national figures. In 1998, 20 pupils in Years 10-12 made a total of 69 GCSE entries and 52 of these (75.3 per cent) gained A\*-C grades. In 1997, 25 pupils in Years 9-12 made a total of 97 entries and of these 62 (63.9 per cent) achieved grades A\*-C.

### Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:

		%
Authorised	School	0
	National comparative data	7/9
Unauthorised	School	0
	National comparative data	1.0

### Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils of statutory school age during the previous year:

	Girls	Boys	Total

Fixed Period	4	5	9
Permanent	0	0	0
Total	4	5	9

### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	16
Satisfactory or better	75
Less than satisfactory	25

## EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

### Attainment and progress

21. In speaking and listening in English, the standards of pupils whose first language is English are generally good. Such pupils discuss issues confidently, and can explain a point of view and justify it. The school's meetings and tribunal provide a splendid opportunity for pupils to develop such skills. However, the spoken English of those for whom it is not the first language is very variable, depending both on the length of time they have studied it and the extent to which they have attended lessons. Reading standards are good at Key Stage 4: older pupils read fluently and with understanding. Pupils are less successful at lower key stages and achievement is far too variable at Key Stage 2; overall, pupils do not read enough. Reading in English by pupils for whom English is an additional language is limited to their course books, though some enjoy reading books in their own languages.

22. Standards of writing are generally well below national expectations at all ages and are unacceptably low at Key Stage 2, where the work seen in lessons resembled that of much younger children. Pupils do not structure their work well, nor do they develop written fluency. Spelling and handwriting are often poor. There is little completed written work in evidence and extended writing is rare. Presentation of work is poor. Judged by evidence of pupils' written work, when compared with standards of speaking and listening and reading, many pupils are capable of attaining much higher written standards than they do, and while progress in speaking and listening is good, progress in reading below Key Stage 4 and in writing throughout the school are poor.

23. Attainment and progress in mathematics are at the mercy of the erratic patterns of attendance. Those pupils who regularly come to classes achieve high and often very high standards for their age. These pupils engage in dialogue with their teacher so that they have considerable opportunity to control the pace of the lesson. Their understanding of processes is good, and they ask many pertinent questions. Some work in algebra is very good. Pupils taking an AS-level course were able to select and manipulate a variety of equations to solve problems associated with projectiles. Pupils in Key Stage 3 were able to find the roots of an equation by trial and improvement methods, and made rapid progress once they were shown how the use of a computer spreadsheet could assist their thinking. Some slower, but conscientious pupils were able to solve simple linear equations and inequalities, and older pupils could apply the principles of trigonometry to finding angles and lengths in plane figures.

24. However, many pupils attend lessons irregularly and are held back by serious gaps in their background knowledge and understanding. Basic numeracy is often weak: many do not know their number bonds and consequently do not recognise patterns. Some rely far too heavily on calculators for basic computation. Several have not learned the technical vocabulary associated, for example, with circles, and their progress with work on surface areas and volumes is slow.

25. In the youngest class there is no planned weekly programme of work and several pupils have poor levels of mathematical understanding. Pupils attend classes on a 'drop-in' basis and their progress is spasmodic and random. The majority do not make the progress expected for pupils of similar age nationally.

26. In Key Stage 3 and beyond pupils 'sign up' for the classes they wish to attend. Some do not sign up for a year or two and even where pupils do sign-up there is no guarantee that they will attend. For the great majority, attendance is poor, mathematical education is fragmented and piecemeal, and they do not make the progress of which they are capable.

27. Attainment in science in Key Stage 2 is well below national expectations, experience is fragmented to the detriment of steady progress; the scant amount of work in the subject at this key stage is an indication of wholly inadequate coverage. At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils attending classes often display sound levels of scientific knowledge and understanding while a few show high levels of scientific understanding in the topics studied. However, sporadic attendance leaves many with significant weaknesses in their subject knowledge. There is insufficient opportunity for the systematic development of pupils' practical and investigative skills, so that most pupils make unsatisfactory progress in these respects. Attainment in history and geography was satisfactory within the lessons, but pupils made little progress except for those who attended GCSE classes regularly. Progress in art is patchy and matches attainment.

28. Pupils with learning difficulties make unsatisfactory progress and their achievement is low. No clear individual programmes are provided to support the pupils and targets are not set. Monitoring of progress is inhibited by the school's philosophical attitude to assessment, and continuity is difficult to provide because attendance at lessons is unpredictable. Progress is also affected by the adults' lack of understanding of some pupils' specific learning difficulties.

29. Overall, instruction is not suitable or efficient as required by the Education Act 1996.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

30. Pupils of different ages and nationalities generally get on well together. There is, however, occasional friction and hostility and reports of harassment, bullying and petty theft from some pupils. The meetings and tribunal provide valuable opportunities for problems of this kind to be brought out into the open and resolved. At the same time staff are duly alert to the danger in these forums of public humiliation and the potential for collective bullying of particular individuals. The Japanese pupils in the school are, as a group, less well integrated than others though steps have recently been taken to enable their concerns to be addressed properly in the public meetings.

31. Relationships between pupils and adults in the school are good. There is a relaxed atmosphere, staff are very approachable and pupils feel well supported. Staff are generous with their time and at a personal level know the pupils well. However, some of the physical contact between staff and pupils could be misconstrued and as such is ill-advised.

32. Pupils behave well both within classes and about the school. They respond positively to the school's ethos of self-regulation and self-control and generally respect the privacy of others in the boarding accommodation. There is, however, evidence of mistreatment of the fabric of the buildings in some areas. Pupil exclusions are reported to be rare but they have been high this year: recent incidents were related to consumption of alcoholic drinks.

33. The school accepts the widespread use by both staff and pupils of crude language that many people would find offensive, though it is a school rule that adults or children should not swear in front of visitors. There is at times gratuitous use of such language which goes completely unchecked by staff.

34. While a small minority of pupils have a positive commitment to academic learning and take their studies very seriously, the majority are more ambivalent in their attitudes. They fail to sustain regular attendance at classes and their efforts are at best, sporadic. Staff do not generally regard it as part of their role to encourage positive attitudes to learning, fearing that this would be perceived by pupils as interfering with their freedom not to attend lessons. Several pupils fail to develop positive attitudes towards study.

35. Where the teaching is particularly stimulating and demanding of pupils, as in some German and English as an additional language lessons, good attitudes to learning are promoted. Similarly high expectations should be adopted by all staff.

36. In spite of the school's ethos of self-regulated learning, sustained individual study is neither well developed nor well supported and pupils' study skills are generally poor. Pupils are therefore doubly disadvantaged in relation to their academic study.

37. The pupils with learning difficulties are independent and able to make choices within the confines of the curriculum. The climate does not encourage regular attendance in lessons and leads to pupils with learning difficulties missing regular teaching in basic skills. This results in a low level of interest, especially among the younger children at Key Stages 2 and 3. The majority of pupils with SEN are articulate and confident when speaking with adults. The poor attitudes to learning and failure to address or even recognise the issue is a major cause of the school's failure to provide efficient and suitable instruction.

### **Attendance**

38. The "day kids' register" only records attendance for the morning session and does not match the requirements of the regulations. While attendance at school is satisfactory, attendance in lessons varied during the inspection from 0-125 per cent (ie more pupils than on the class list), with a mean of just less than a third of pupils present. This level is very similar to that recorded by teachers for mathematics lessons during the autumn 1998 term. Attendance improves close to the GCSE examination, but even in these classes it is poor. There is also evidence that some pupils visit lessons, but do not stay and settle to work.

39. Attendance in lessons by pupils with learning difficulties is poor. Where teachers have recorded attendance in lessons it shows figures such as seven lessons out of 17, four lessons out of 24. The pupils are able to sign up for those subjects they feel will interest them. Without adult guidance about the appropriateness of their choice, it can result in no work in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The number of exclusions (nine) is high for a school of this size.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

40. The quality of teaching is extremely uneven. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 75 per cent of lessons, but was good or very good in only in 16 per cent; in a quarter of lessons, teaching was poor. Unsatisfactory lessons were more common at Key Stages 2 and 3.

41. Some of the teaching of English and English as an additional language has good qualities. The best work is carefully planned with a range of strategies, including discussion, appropriate for the needs of individual pupils. In such lessons, pupils are challenged, and extended to use English with accuracy and clear pronunciation. Pupils listened carefully and enlarged their vocabulary. The teacher kept records of pupils progress and the language points they had mastered. Most teaching was weaker than this, being poorly planned, containing insufficiently precise and accurate use of language and with the teacher keeping no effective record of pupils' progress. There is little sign of coherence either in the documentation or, more importantly, in the work seen in pupils' folders which are disorganised and contain unfinished, superficial fragments. In most of the English teaching, the quality of marking is poor. There is no formal assessment of pupils' attainment and progress.

42. In mathematics, the majority of the teaching is good or very good. For classes from Year 9 upwards, the planning of work is very good. Every course has a structured outline, which is normally communicated to pupils at the beginning of each term. Pupils know in advance what mathematics they are expected to cover (or are likely to miss by absence). However, the teaching of mathematics to younger pupils is unsatisfactory. It is insufficiently planned, unsystematic and operates only when a pupil 'drops-in' and shows an interest.

43. Few teachers have a strategy to cope with pupils' varying levels of attendance, but in history and geography there has been an attempt to construct a system of modules of supported self study, giving pupils a third option between attending lessons and not studying. There is little marking or assessment and therefore little planning or help, teachers negotiate individual learning plans with their pupils.

44. The school does not identify any child as having special educational needs. The lack of any formal assessment is a disadvantage, as many pupils have specific learning difficulties which are neither identified nor addressed. The pupils listed on the "special attention" list are reviewed on a termly basis, but their learning difficulties are not the main priority.

45. There is no named teacher with responsibility for pupils with learning difficulties since all claim a responsibility. No teacher has a qualification in special educational needs. Expectations of pupils with learning difficulties are generally low and the range of teaching strategies is very limited. Consequently the pupils with learning difficulties have unmet needs.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

46. The curricular provision for pupils at all key stages is neither broad nor balanced. There is no planned continuity. At Key Stage 2 pupils visit the classroom but do not attend for sustained teaching in the core or other foundation subjects. At Key Stages 3 and 4, there is more emphasis on the core subjects and other subjects which will be entered for GCSE, but erratic attendance affects curriculum coverage.

47. There are few schemes of work or guidelines to make clear how the subject might be taught or how progression might be planned. The school has policy documents or schemes of work for some subjects but not others. Given that staff turnover is high and some teachers are inexperienced, newly qualified, or have trained in other countries, there is a pressing need to ensure much greater continuity and progression for the curriculum and pupils' learning.

48. There is no systematic plan for curriculum review over time. The pursuit of high academic achievement and improved rates of pupils' progress are not regarded as priorities by the principal and staff. They believe that individual pupils should be free to decide their own goals or aims, which may not include high standards of achievement or good progress. If they do, teachers will respond and support them; if not, the school believes that other personal goals are equally valid.

49. Teachers do not have an accurate picture of reading or of mathematical attainment. For mathematics, a record of pupil progress is maintained and this is used

well to write end of term summaries for each pupil. The records provide summative assessments, and are used for curricular planning of future work. However, although pupils present in classes receive instant feedback on the quality or accuracy of the work they have produced, they have little knowledge of its standard against national norms. Pupils are not prepared for the pressure of formal external examinations, nor yet for non-calculator papers. National Curriculum tests are not used formally but some questions are used as part of everyday teaching and learning. Across the curriculum, the lack of assessment makes planning to meet individual special needs difficult.

50. The school does not monitor academic progress or assess or record their personal and social development. Attendance at lessons is generally recorded and behaviour is monitored by the school community including the staff.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

51. The participation by all pupils in the democratic running of the school has a strong impact on moral and social education. Pupils' confidence is improved. The tribunal in particular contributes strongly to pupils' moral education. The opportunity to run shops and cafes contributes equally strongly to their social education, as well as offering some limited vocational and business experience.

52. Pupils with learning difficulties play a full part in the community. They meet on equal terms with their peers at the school meetings which determine the rules which all are expected to respect. There is little evidence to suggest that cultural diversity is seen as a strength of the school, or that cultural diversity is celebrated except in some humanities lessons where Japanese history and culture are studied and discussed. Trips to the British Museum have been of great benefit to some work in humanities lessons. Private instrumental music lessons taken by many pupils make a strong impact on the cultural life of the school.

53. All school staff have attended the training provided by Suffolk social services on child protection. The proprietor is the nominated person for child protection. Clear guidelines for staff are available in the staff handbook. Nevertheless supervision is inadequate in two important respects. First the pupils who do not attend lessons, and secondly the senior pupils in their night time accommodation, are unsupervised. The security of the site and particularly of pupils' residential accommodation does not match modern requirements or expectations.

### **Partnerships with parents and the community**

54. Given the unique nature of the school it is not surprising that parents who choose to place their children in its care are strongly supportive of its values and philosophy. A number of parents travelled many miles, some even flying from Germany, to attend the meeting with HMI. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire are strongly assertive of the beneficial effects of the school on their childrens' character and confidence.

55. How well parents are informed about pupils' progress and attainment, however, is uncertain because the reporting system is geared to pupils passing on the variable content of school reports.

56. Parents do not therefore receive regular information about pupils' progress and are unlikely to be aware of the true standards of attainment, levels of special educational need, or the lack of skilled intervention.

### **Leadership and management**

57. The unusual nature of the school, as a self-governing democratic school, precludes the usual hierarchial structures of devolved responsibility. In consequence, the school has evolved systems for organising and maintaining day-to-day matters.

58. The principal gives strong leadership with regard to the philosophy, ethos and value system of the school. Her role is best described as the guardian of the founding principles and the primary means of the transmission of the school's culture. All authority resides with the principal: decisions concerning finance, staffing, admission, and exclusion of pupils are taken directly by her. In addition, she retains the right of veto on all curriculum matters. The community, which comprises staff and pupils, has a clear and continuing role in decision-making regarding the routine organisation and administration of the school.

59. The principal takes no lead in curriculum management and does not perceive this to be part of her function. This presents a major difficulty because no authority or responsibility for leading this work is clearly devolved to anyone else. In consequence, curriculum development is haphazard and disjointed, dependent on the initiative of teachers individually or collectively, or on the expressed wish of students for some change to meet their needs or preferences. However, when changes are proposed, they are seriously considered and widely consulted on before a decision is taken.

60. The requirement from the DfEE following the previous inspection for the school to produce an action plan has led to some constructive discussion. When HMI visited the school in 1998, they noted some promising early developments in relation to assessment, record keeping and peer support. However, there has been only very limited implementation of these plans and the constant revision, for example in the draft assessment policy, is likely to undermine further progress. More seriously, despite the Action Plan, it remains clear that there are major areas of unresolved difficulty where the school's philosophy is in conflict with wider external expectations of pupils' levels of achievement and progress. The most serious difficulty for the school is that it does not agree that identified weaknesses in its provision are weaknesses: such judgements are seen as external impositions at odds with the school's beliefs and values. The principal and staff do not acknowledge the need to monitor or to evaluate teaching or the curriculum because they do not see it as their responsibility to improve pupils' attainment. The result is that only a small minority of pupils receive education that is good or satisfactory. For the great majority, their education is fragmented, disjointed and likely to adversely affect their future options. Quite how the school reconciles such high levels of under-achievement, together with a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, with the democratic principles it purports

to promote is very difficult to understand. In other words, the approach seems to entrench weaknesses in teaching and learning which sell pupils short rather than prepare them fully for living in a democratic society.

61. The aims of Summerhill are constantly made explicit and clarified by and for pupils and staff. Structures for information and decision making such as the weekly meeting and tribunal provide effective forums for safeguarding the rights of most members of the community to express an opinion, listen to other views and to vote for their preferences. For some EAL students, though, non-attendance at lessons disenfranchises them, because they do not have the language skills to participate effectively in the meetings.

62. The democratic ethos of the school, its philosophy and values, put it in a very strong position to claim to meet many of the aims of education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools. But the academic aspects of the curriculum do not in any way reach the same standard. Crucially, its aims do not include commitment to ensuring that pupils achieve appropriately high standards or make good progress: these issues at the heart of education, are left to the individual pupils, who by non-attendance at lessons, are able to disadvantage themselves. This places an unacceptable burden of responsibility on these pupils, who are faced with making choices based on incomplete and inadequate information rather than being the professional responsibility of the school.

### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

63. The overall numbers of teaching and non-teaching staff are satisfactory. The necessary checks have been made on all staff except for one part time peripatetic music teacher. These checks must be made urgently. Turnover of staff is high and has consequences for continuity in planning and developments. Of the ten teachers, none has been in the school for more than four years, three teachers joined approximately six months ago and the current average length of service is about two years. Seven out of ten teachers have a teaching qualification and the match with initial qualifications and subject taught in the majority of cases is good. No member of the staff has any qualification in special educational needs, which is a disadvantage. Currently only those staff employed as house parents have a job description. This outlines responsibilities, which include "...the physical and social well being of the children... to maintain an awareness of the emotional problems... particularly for new pupils". However, the whole school community share in these responsibilities.

64. Helpful induction is provided for staff new to the school. As well as oversight by the principal, other persons are identified to provide a supportive link. No monitoring of the quality of teaching is undertaken by the principal, who does not see this as part of her role. Peer review began recently, whereby teachers pair with a colleague and visit each others' lessons. Subsequent discussion provides mutual support rather than rigorous critical analysis of teaching methodology.

65. The staff handbook states in-service training is encouraged and most staff have undertaken courses relevant either to the subjects they teach, or on more general matters, such as child protection. Sensibly there is a requirement to write an evaluation report after each course. A member of staff acts as a 'teachers' support' to

help facilitate discussion about the curriculum and action plan within the parameters of the philosophy of the school. This has potential for coordinating development and related further training.

66. The accommodation generally supports education effectively; it comprises a main school building supplemented by a variety of other nearby buildings located in the grounds of the house, some of a demountable type, a few of which are currently not in use. Site security is at a minimum level and lighting at night is poor on the main drive, a worrying feature in view of the freedom allowed to pupils to move about on and off the site. There is some uncertainty relating to the route traffic should take on entering and leaving the grounds.

67. Health and safety in teaching areas are in most respects properly safeguarded. However, fire extinguishers in the science area need to be secured and once the school begins to use its pottery kiln, it will be important to ensure that no pupils go near it while it is hot. Art accommodation is adequate in size, but many of the work surfaces are uneven and are not clean and, there is not enough variety of lighting conditions. The woodwork room should have its dust efficiently removed each day. Both the art room and woodwork areas are suitable and accessible to pupils.

68. Although classroom sizes are generally adequate for the numbers of pupils present in lessons, and rooms are warm and adequately lit, the space for pupils in Class 2 is very cramped and could become overcrowded were all the pupils to turn up for a lesson. There is limited clean working space in the art room, and the dark room is not well organised. The school library is inconveniently located at one end of a classroom; it is poorly resourced and pupils rarely use it especially as library books have been dispersed to the appropriate specialist teaching areas. The pupil workroom is an important facility with four computers that are heavily used; during the inspection the room was however seen to be not respected by some pupils as a place for quieter study. Furniture in the school is generally adequate and serviceable.

69. Much remains to be done if the boarding accommodation is to be brought up to an acceptable standard. The school has made very slow progress, if any, on recommendations from previous inspections both by HMI and Suffolk social services.

70. In contrast to that of the girls, the boys' accommodation is very basic. Beds and bunks are generally of a sturdy wooden construction with ample space for storage and always a lockable cupboard. Rooms are improved by the use of furniture often made by pupils past and present. Most pupils have personalised their accommodation to some degree, sometimes attractively. Although linen is washed regularly, some of the blankets and duvet covers were very grubby. A number of spotlights were without bulbs.

71. There have been some improvements in the provision of toilets, baths and showers in the main building but other sanitary facilities are often shabby and in need of repair or replacement. The fact that some repairs have not been done indicates that regular monitoring is not carried out or acted upon. Defects such as crumbling plasterwork around doorframes and washbasins, a lack of towel rails in bedrooms, the absence of hand drying facilities near to washbasins, several broken toilet seats, two broken toilet cisterns with no chain pulls, a toilet door which cannot be locked from

the inside, linoleum and other floor covering which is badly cracked and holed, defective tiling and a shower that does not work, are all cases in point.

72. Some practices, such as hanging a metal coat-hanger from a live cable attached to the ceiling, and an electric kettle lead trailed across a doorway are clearly unsafe and should be stopped immediately; both are symptomatic of the lack of adequate supervision in the senior boys' accommodation.

73. The school's philosophy, which allows the shared use of toilets by boys, girls and staff, contravenes Children Act 1989 guidance and the recommendations of the last social services report in 1997. The security of the site, however, and health and safety monitoring are issues of the most serious immediate concern. Levels of supervision and the absence of any residential adult in senior pupils' accommodation areas are also worrying features. This is exacerbated since site security is weak and some ground floor bedroom windows have only broken or missing window catches and no security locks; there are serious concerns about boarders' safety.

74. There are sufficient basic resources, textbooks, consumable materials and practical equipment, to support learning in the subjects offered. However, in some subjects, for example history and geography, if all pupils who could attend did so at any one time, resources would be stretched. No system of capitation operates but resources are allocated to staff to purchase items, as and when required; this appears to work satisfactorily. The four computers in the computer room, are well used by pupils for educational simulations, e-mail and internet access during afternoons and evenings. A booking system operates for part of the time but difficulties have been experienced with computers being misused by some pupils. Resolution of this problem is being sought by the community through the school meeting. A reasonable range of software including CD-ROM is available. Although well used in some lessons, for example in mathematics and information technology, wider use could be made to support pupils' work in other areas. Some teachers make much use of photocopied worksheets either produced by themselves or from commercial sources. Video is used appropriately in history, geography and science lessons.

75. The library, which is situated at the rear of the English room, is inadequate either to support pupils work or for their leisure time reading. There is no issuing system. Pupils do have the opportunity to use the local public library. Increasing the book stock and encouraging more pupils to use the school library could provide opportunities for improving literacy.

## **INSPECTION DATA**

### **Summary of inspection evidence**

76. The reporting inspection took place between 1-5 March 1999 and was carried out by eight of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools (HMI). Although all aspects of the school were inspected, there was specialist inspection for pupils in Key Stage 2, for pupils with Special Educational Needs and for mathematics, English, science, information technology, geography, art and woodwork. Fifty-five lessons were

observed, either wholly or in part amounting to a total of 36 hours 40 minutes. HMI held discussions with the principal and other members of staff and all were seen teaching. HMI also saw the work available in English, mathematics and science and a range of other subjects and talked with many of the children.

### Data and indicators

#### Pupil data

Year Group	Girls	Boys	Total
5	3	1	4
6	0	3	3
7	1	7	8
8	4	4	8
9	6	8	14
10	4	5	9
11	2	3	5
12	2	3	5
13	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>56</b>

#### Teachers and classes

Number of teachers	Full-time		Part-time	
Total: 10	Female: 3	Male:5	Female: 1	Male:1
FTE teachers	FTE pupils		Pupil : teacher ratio	
8.5	55		6.47 : 1	

#### Average teaching group size

KS2: 13
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KS3: 10
KS4: 10
Sixth form: 3

**Public funding**

None of the pupils are supported by public funding.

**PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent:	55
Number of questionnaires returned:	39
Percentage return rate:	70.9

**Responses (percentage of answers in each category):**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	13.3	20.0	53.3	13.3	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my children)	86.7	6.7	0	0	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	40.0	20.0	33.3	0	0
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	50	13.3	33.3	0	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	30.7	23.1	46.2	0	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	57.1	21.4	21.4	0	0

The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	100	0	0	0	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	43.0	7.1	49.9	0	0
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	100	0	0	0	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	77.0	15.4	7.6	0	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	92.3	7.7	0	0	0

*It should be recorded that a high percentage of parents considered that the questionnaire asked questions which they felt did not relate to Summerhill; for example, some parents recorded that they were happy that the school did not expect them to play an active life in the school.*