

INSPECTION REPORT

Appleford School

Shrewton, Nr. Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP3 4HL

LEA area: Wiltshire

School Register Number: 126535

Headteacher: Mr P Stanley

Reporting inspector: Tina Clark
T12561

Dates of inspection: 15/06/98 to 18/06/98

Under OFSTED contract number: 695641

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the Education (Schools) Act 1996

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Information about the school

Type of school:	Special
Type of control:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	7 to 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Shrewton Nr. Salisbury Wiltshire SP3 4HL
Telephone number:	01980 621020
Appropriate authority:	Wiltshire
Name of chair of governors:	Dr P Gardner/Mr G Trump

Information about the inspection team

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Main Findings of the Inspection

1. The school intake covers the whole range of abilities, but all pupils have specific learning difficulties which inhibit the development of literacy and numeracy skills to a significant degree. Some pupils have additional special educational needs, such as language problems or associated emotional and behavioural problems. Pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8. Judgements on pupils' attainments across the school are based on lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, examination of pupils' statements of special educational needs and annual reviews and of their individual education plans. The results of reading, spelling and numeracy tests have been examined and the results of a recent pilot of the end of Key Stage 2 assessments have also been scrutinised.

2. Assessment on entry indicates the severity of the difficulties which pupils have, particularly in literacy and numeracy and often with associated emotional and behavioural difficulties which affect their learning. On entry to the school, pupils' levels of attainment are significantly below national expectations in English and mathematics. Those pupils who have statements of special educational needs have attainments in literacy and numeracy which are very significantly below national expectations.

3. In English the attainment of pupils is below national expectations. However, at both key stages the progress of pupils in reading, writing and speaking and listening is good. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have good word attack skills, spell simple words accurately and can talk about subjects of personal interest. Key Stage 3 pupils read fluently with expression, with carefully structured support they write vivid and emotive poems and they can begin to discuss issues arising in literature thoughtfully and logically.

4. In mathematics across the school pupils make satisfactory, sometimes good progress. Progress in number is good and in other aspects of mathematics it is satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 2 the higher-attaining pupils attain standards in line with national expectations and in Year 8, pupils' attainment suggests that the more able are likely to achieve the national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3.

5. In science at Key Stage 2 attainment is in line with national expectations and pupils make satisfactory progress with regards to developing their knowledge and understanding. However, their progress in other aspects of science ranges from satisfactory to unsatisfactory and overall at Key Stage 2, their attainment is lower than national expectations. At Key Stage 3 pupils' progress in science is unsatisfactory and they are behind schedule in reaching national expectations by the end of the key stage.

6. In design and technology, pupils' attainment is below national expectations at Key Stage 2 and behind the schedule necessary to meet national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Progress at both key stages is unsatisfactory.

7. In information technology attainment is in line with national expectations at Key Stage 2 and pupils are on schedule to meet national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Progress in most aspects is satisfactory at both key stages

8. In history and geography many pupils attain national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2. Many of the pupils in Key Stage 3 are likely to reach the national expectations. Overall attainment is better in pupils' oral rather than written work. Pupils make good progress in their knowledge of an increasing variety of topics and satisfactory progress in the key skills associated with these subjects.

9. In their modern foreign language, although attainment is below the national expectation, pupils make satisfactory progress.

10. In religious education, particularly in their oral contributions, pupils demonstrate attainment in line with the expectations of the school's "agreed" syllabus, but their written work is more often below. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress.

11. In art and music attainment is in line with national expectations. Pupils make satisfactory progress.

12. In physical education, because of their weaknesses in planning and evaluating, attainment is below national expectations although the performance of some pupils is in line with national expectations. Progress is satisfactory and sometimes good.

13. Overall pupils with statements of special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set in their annual reviews.

Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development

14. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. Their behaviour is very good around the school and mostly good in lessons. Occasionally it is unsatisfactory because of the inconsistencies in the way some teachers manage pupil behaviour. Concentration ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Often pupils remain on task for long periods although there are occasions while a minority need prompting to complete their work. There are very good relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils work together very well and often volunteer to help one another. Pupils are keen to fulfil the targets in their individual care plans and to meet the responsibilities they are given, such as dormitory captain or prefect. Pupils do not have the skills to plan and manage extended tasks such as investigations in mathematics and science.

Attendance

15. Attendance at school is good. Pupils arrive at school on time and, with a few exceptions, lessons start promptly.

Teaching

16. Teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to excellent but it is satisfactory in the vast majority of lessons. Teaching is satisfactory or better in just over 9 out of 10 lessons. It is good or better in almost 4 out of 10 lessons. There is little difference between the key stages. There is a wide variety in the quality of teaching. The greatest proportion is satisfactory but a small proportion is excellent and a small proportion unsatisfactory or poor.

Curriculum and Assessment

17. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum. In most subjects, curriculum planning is good, although in science, teachers' knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum is weak. The twenty-four hour curriculum provision is a strength of the school. Extra-curricular provision, including sport, is very good. The quality of formative assessment ranges from good to unsatisfactory. Although the school assesses the pupils against National Curriculum levels, the teachers' knowledge of the assessment criteria is variable. The use of assessment information to inform planning also ranges from good to unsatisfactory. It is particularly good in English where well focused targets are used to guide pupil's learning.

Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

18. Overall, pupils' spiritual and moral development is good. The provision for social and cultural development is very good. Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to take responsibility and participate fully in the community. Through the study of literature, theatre visits, musical and dramatic productions as well as through design and technology, personal and social education and religious education, they develop their understanding of their own and other cultures. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the relationships between pupils and all adults are good.

Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

19. The school's provision for pupils' support, guidance and welfare is good. The procedures to monitor pupils' progress are sound but as yet are not used sufficiently to help teachers plan for the pupils' future learning. Monitoring of personal development both inside and outside the classroom is good. The monitoring of attendance is excellent. Expectations of pupils' behaviour are generally high and are supported by a well understood and consistently applied system of "pluses and minuses". Incidents of misbehaviour and the actions taken are carefully recorded and monitored. The school has good child protection procedures which are well known and understood by all adults within the school. The health,

safety and well-being of its pupils are priorities for the school and all these areas are well promoted by effective policies implemented consistently across the twenty four hour curriculum.

Partnership with Parents and the Community

20. The school's partnerships with parents and the community are good. Information provided for parents is good and includes regular newsletters. Subject reports are sent to parents at the end of the autumn and summer terms. These are very detailed and include references to pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding as well as their attitudes to learning and life outside the classroom. Parents appreciate the high quality of reports and annual reviews. The involvement of parents in their child's learning is limited by the wide geographical area from which the pupils are drawn. Opportunities for parents to discuss pupils' work and progress are available at a mutually convenient time. Good communications exist with those living abroad either by telephone or facsimile. The school makes very good use of both the local and wider community.

Leadership and Management

21. The leadership and management of the school by the headteacher are very good. The headteacher provides very clear educational direction for the school and the school is largely successful in meeting its stated aims. However development planning, monitoring of standards and evaluation of teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.

Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

22. The school has sufficient qualified teachers, classroom assistants and care staff to meet the demands of the curriculum and the residential aspects of school life. Staff are deployed well in most cases to meet the curriculum and residential aims of the school. Staff development is a priority for the school and a process of appraisal to support professional development is well established. Whilst the level of staff skills relating to special needs is good insufficient emphasis has been given to developing teachers' subject knowledge in

relation to the National Curriculum and their ability to make accurate National Curriculum assessments in mathematics, science, design and technology and information technology. The school site is very attractive and contributes positively to the general life and ethos of the school. The accommodation of the school is satisfactory and meets the demands of both the curriculum and the residential provision. The school has satisfactory resources for the subjects of the curriculum, including the library.

The Efficiency of the School

23. The school development plan does not provide a clear basis for improvement and is not linked to financial planning. The process of planning for long term improvement is unclear. The process of planning, evaluation and review, together with the financial implications does not yet form an effective strategy for improvement. The financial control of the funds available directly to the school for curriculum development is very well managed and used effectively. The routine administration of the school is very effective and the school runs smoothly from day to day. The school makes satisfactory use of the staff, accommodation and resources available. However, staff with managerial responsibilities are not always effectively deployed to meet the managerial objectives of the school particularly in respect of the evaluation of teaching and learning and the monitoring of standards. Taking into account the satisfactory standard of teaching, the quality of education provided and the progress made by the pupils the school gives satisfactory value for money.

24. Key Issues for Action after the Inspection

1. To improve the planning for the development of the school by:

creating a manageable set of priorities that focus more precisely on pupils' attainment and progress;
and linking developments more closely with the total budget for the school.

2. To improve the accuracy and consistency of teacher assessment by:

improving the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum assessment criteria particularly in mathematics, science, design and technology and information technology;

- establishing a system to standardise the quality of assessment judgements; and using assessment information more accurately to promote the progress of pupils.

3. To implement a system that facilitates the monitoring and evaluation of teaching to ensure that:

the school can identify the factors which promote good and very good teaching and improve the overall quality of teaching.

4. To raise standards in science by:

improving teachers' knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum for science;

- planning a scheme of work that guides the teaching of scientific knowledge and understanding and science investigation skills;
- planning lessons that have challenging learning objectives and effective strategies for achieving them.

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

25. Appleford is a independent day and boarding school for boys and girls of 7 - 13 years of age who have specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). Currently, there are 88 pupils on roll, of whom 30 are day pupils. There are 14 girls and 74 boys on roll. Twenty-two pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Pupils come from a wide geographical area, including abroad. Twelve pupils have been placed at the school by their Local Education Authorities.

The school aims:-

to provide a stimulating, structured and varied curriculum for the dyslexic child, with the main emphasis placed upon English skills of spelling, reading and handwriting.

- . to restore self-confidence so that the pupils believe in themselves and become more aware of what they can achieve.
- . to develop self-respect and self-reliance by fostering self-organisation and independence skills.
- . to cultivate courtesy and consideration for others by developing an understanding of an individual within a community.

26. KEY INDICATORS

Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	3.0
	National comparative data	10.0
Unauthorised Absence	School	0.0
	National comparative data	1.0

Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	2
Permanent	0

Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is :

	%
Very good or better	19
Satisfactory or better	93
Less than satisfactory	7

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Attainment and Progress

27. In English, pupils make good progress in reading, spelling, speaking and listening. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have good word attack strategies and can spell simple words correctly. They are able to express themselves orally and listen to others' contributions. Key Stage 3 pupils read fluently with expression and with help they are able to write moving poems. They enjoy discussion about different kinds of literature. Pupils' attainments in reading and spelling at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 are below national expectations, as would be expected as a result of their specific learning difficulties. Pupils' progress with handwriting is very good and by the end of Key Stage 2, the majority of pupils have developed an efficient and neat cursive style, which they develop further in Key Stage 3. Their attainments in handwriting skills are in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 2 and in Key Stage 3. Progress in writing is good at both key stages and with carefully structured support, pupils develop a range of writing styles, appropriate to different audiences. Their attainments in writing are below national expectations at both key stages as a result of their specific learning difficulties.

28. In mathematics, pupils are taught in ability groups throughout the school. By the end of Key Stage 2, higher ability pupils achieve standards in line with national expectations, while the attainment of the remainder of pupils is slightly lower. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 8, higher ability pupils are demonstrating standards in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. Other pupils' attainments are approaching national expectations by the end of Year 8.

29. The youngest higher-attaining pupils in Key Stage 2 understand the properties of simple two-dimensional shapes and are able to compile and use bar charts to interpret data. The lower attaining pupils use addition and subtraction efficiently. By the end of Key Stage

2, the most able pupils can add and subtract decimals and present data accurately in a variety of forms. In Key Stage 3, the higher attaining pupils understand decimal rotation to three places and can convert decimals into fractions. The lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 understand reflective symmetry and simple fractions. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress in mathematics. In number, across the school, progress is good. Attainment in investigative mathematics is restricted by a lack of opportunities within lessons.

30. In science, pupils' attainments at Key Stage 2 are lower than national expectations. In Key Stage 3, they are behind the schedule necessary to meet national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of science, but in other aspects of science, their progress is unsatisfactory. In all aspects of science, pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory.

31. In design and technology, pupils' attainment is below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and behind the schedule required to meet national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils' progress is unsatisfactory at both key stages. In information technology, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations at Key Stage 2 and pupils are on schedule to meet national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. Progress in information technology is satisfactory at both key stages

32. In history and geography, many pupils reach national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and given their satisfactory to good progress at both key stages, are on target to meet national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3. In French, although attainment is below the national expectation, pupils make satisfactory progress. Attainment in religious education is in line with the expectations of the school's 'agreed' syllabus. All pupils make at least satisfactory progress. In art and music, attainments are satisfactory and are in line with national expectations. Pupils' attainments and progress in relation to musical performance are good. Pupils make satisfactory progress. In physical education, attainment is below national expectations because of pupils' weaknesses in planning and analysing, but individual performances are in line with national expectations. Progress is satisfactory and sometimes good.

33. Across the curriculum, progress is sound or better in almost nine out of ten lessons. It is good in almost one in three lessons and unsatisfactory or poor in a small number of lessons. Despite the small proportion of girls in school, no differences in either attainment or progress were noted as a result of gender, nor were any differences highlighted as a result of either race or social background. No significant trends were noted over time. There are no significant differences between the key stages.

34. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to the targets set at their annual reviews.

Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development

35. Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They are interested in their work and are motivated to learn, especially when they are set stimulating and challenging tasks. Pupils' concentration is often very good and they normally work hard for extended periods particularly where activities are properly structured by teachers. In a few lessons pupils are captivated by the activities in which they are engaged. A minority of pupils lack concentration and need prompting, sometimes strong prompting, to focus on or complete their work. Pupils most easily lose concentration in the last two lessons of a long afternoon session without a break. Some pupils persevere when facing problems in their learning while others too quickly look for help. Pupils make good progress towards the social and behavioural targets set at their reviews.

36. Pupils are courteous and trustworthy. Generally their behaviour is very good about the school, such as in the playground and common rooms. Behaviour is mostly good in lessons. On the few occasions when behaviour is unsatisfactory there are inconsistencies in the way some teachers manage pupils' behaviour. Pupils respect each others' property and they make responsible and safe use of materials and equipment, such as when playing games or working with computers. The school's records show few instances of bullying and those that occur are minor and well managed and this is much appreciated by parents. There have been two temporary exclusions during the school year.

37. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are very good. Pupils co-operate and collaborate well during lessons and other activities. They often help each other, for example, when exploring new computer software or answering challenging questions from the teacher. Pupils usually listen carefully to each other and show respect for what is said. On a few occasions pupils add constructively to each others' comments.

38. Pupils value the responsibilities they are given during lessons and leisure time, such as dormitory captain or looking after books and equipment. They strive to meet the targets they are set, for example, those listed in their individual care plans and are largely successful in this. Pupils effectively fulfil responsibilities such as being a school prefect or serving on the school council.

39. In some lessons pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own work. However, most pupils do not have the skills necessary to solve problems for themselves or to take charge of extended projects that have clear objectives but are loosely structured by teachers. They do not plan their own investigations in science and mathematics, or independently evaluate their own and each others' work, such as in physical education and design and technology.

Attendance

40. Attendance at school is good. Day pupils arrive at school on time and lessons, with a few exceptions, start promptly. Day pupils are registered at the start of each school session and the whereabouts of all pupils are checked informally at other times during the day.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

41. Teaching is satisfactory or better in just over 9 out of 10 lessons. It is good or better in almost 4 out of 10 lessons. There is little difference between the key stages. There is a wide variation in quality across the school; teaching ranges from excellent to poor. Teachers

have good knowledge and understanding of the methods used to teach pupils with specific learning difficulties. They plan and prepare lessons effectively and use carefully structured approaches that help pupils overcome their difficulties with sequencing, organisation and literacy.

42. Teaching is always good or better in physical education; it is at least satisfactory and often very good in geography, history and art. Teaching is satisfactory or better in all English lessons. In modern foreign language and religious education, teaching is always satisfactory and in mathematics, music and science it is satisfactory or better in the majority of lessons. The quality of teaching in information technology is lower, being satisfactory in only three-fifths of lessons. Too few lessons of design and technology were seen to make a secure judgement on the quality of teaching.

43. At Key Stage 2 teaching is satisfactory or better in 9 out of 10 lessons and is good or very good in 4 out of 10 lessons. In the best lessons teachers have good understanding of the subjects they teach and they use time and resources well so that lessons proceed at an appropriately brisk pace. In an English lesson, for example, pupils' ability to spell words improved because the teacher's knowledge of the subject was very good, the work was matched well to pupils' abilities and activities were very well organised. In a geography lesson, the teacher made very good use of questions to review pupils knowledge of river formation, gained from the previous lesson and then to introduce the next topic; in this lesson the teacher used a range of effective methods, incorporating both geography and science, to promote pupils' understanding of compass directions. In the small number of lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, teachers use resources ineffectively, there are low expectations of what pupils have to achieve and work is not matched to pupils' abilities.

44. At Key Stage 3, teaching is satisfactory or better in over 9 out of 10 lessons and is good or better in almost 4 out of 10. A small percentage of teaching of the highest quality was seen at Key Stage 3. In a physical education lesson for example, the assessment of pupils' high-jump skills was used to help them improve their technique and make considerable gains on their previous best performance. In the small number of lessons where

teaching is unsatisfactory, teacher's knowledge and understanding of the subject and how it should be taught is weak and work is not matched to pupils' abilities.

45. Across the school, teachers almost always manage pupils' behaviour well. On the rare occasions when discipline is fragile, it is because the work set for pupils does not challenge them sufficiently. In the great majority of lessons teachers use questioning and tasks well to assess what pupils know and to help them make at least satisfactory progress. Homework is set regularly; it is an important feature of the life of the school and makes a very significant contribution to pupils' progress in all subjects. A daily "prep" period, after school, is shared effectively by both day and boarding pupils.

Curriculum and Assessment

46. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant. Almost half of the total teaching time is dedicated to the teaching of English and mathematics. Given the specific learning difficulties of the pupils, such organisation is appropriate. All subjects of the National Curriculum are provided and religious education is timetabled. Sex education and drugs education are taught through science and the personal and social education programme and parents acknowledge the quality of this provision as a strength of the school. In subjects other than design and technology, the planning pays sufficient regard to the National Curriculum orders.

47. Opportunities for pupils to access the curriculum are variable. In some subjects the teaching methods and materials are good but in others they are unsatisfactory. The arrangement of the teaching groups is satisfactory. Curriculum planning for special educational needs and provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs is good. Individual multi-sensory teaching programmes are provided and, where required, pupils have access to the speech and language therapist and the occupational therapist. Provision for the arts is very good with a very broad range of extra-curricular activities of a high standard supporting work done in lessons.

48. In most subjects curriculum planning is good. Both long and short term planning provide clear continuity and progression. However, those elements are not secured in science or design and technology

49. The extra-curricular provision, including sport and competitive team games, is very good. There is an extensive programme of after school and weekend activities and a comprehensive sporting fixture list. However, opportunities for girls to represent the school at sport are limited. The wider curriculum provision, including the twenty-four hour curriculum, is a particular strength of the school, which is greatly appreciated by parents. Both day and boarding pupils are able to take advantage of extra-curricular activities.

50. On-going assessment, including the quality of targets in individual education plans and the frequency and effectiveness of teachers' own records, ranges from good to unsatisfactory. These aspects are good when teachers' subject knowledge is secure. In such cases they have a direct impact upon the quality of the pupils' performance. The quality of care plans for all, including day pupils, is good. Pupils' are formally assessed twice a year in reading and spelling, and the results of these tests are used to set future targets.

51. The school has, informally and unofficially used the end of key stage tests to assess the pupils. It is currently considering officially assessing pupils using the end of Key Stage 2 tests. Teacher assessment using National Curriculum levels is also undertaken and reported to parents. However, the limited knowledge and understanding of the National Curriculum by some teachers mean that the reliability of such assessments cannot be guaranteed. Internal moderation is not routinely undertaken by all, especially in the core subjects and the school has not sought external validation of its assessment judgements. It is considering forming links with the local primary school in order to standardise teachers' assessments.

52. The use of assessment information to influence planning also ranges from good to unsatisfactory. It is particularly good in English where targets are specific and measurable and have an almost immediate influence upon the pupils' next stage of learning. In other subjects, records are less precise, referring to coverage or attitude rather than actual

attainment. Annual reviews conform to statutory requirements and result in very detailed and effective documents, which are appreciated by parents.

Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

53. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual and moral development is good, and for social and cultural development it is very good.

54. Religious education lessons make a good contribution to spiritual development. Pupils are encouraged to explore fundamental questions about God. Boarders attend the Sunday service at the local church, confirmation classes are offered in school and pupils have written their own prayer books. Brief prayers are said at the conclusion of weekly house assemblies and at the start of some morning lessons but provide little opportunity for spiritual reflection.

55. The school places a strong emphasis upon good behaviour. It has a clear policy, and has successfully targeted behaviour at mealtimes to improve it. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and their relationship with all adults, teachers, support assistants and care and ancillary staff, is very good. The study of the poetry of The Great War has provided pupils with opportunities to explore a number of moral issues.

56. Through the house system, the school council and their duties as prefects, pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the life of the school. An impressive range of over thirty after school activities, involvement in village activities and special events such as the annual musical production and a talent contest enable pupils to participate fully in the community. In house assemblies, pupils are provided with opportunities to discuss freely issues that are important to them and to celebrate their own and other pupils' successes. The residential and care arrangements make a very good contribution to the development of positive relationships and social behaviour. All staff set very good examples for pupils.

57. Opportunities for pupils to explore their own and other cultures are very good. Pupils are given access to authors and works from the English literary heritage and visits to the theatre. They participate in musical and dramatic productions. In personal and social education their programme of visits include a mosque and a synagogue. Very good use is made of field trips to the local community and heritage sites including Stonehenge, in history and geography. In design and technology pupils enjoy a range of local crafts as well as Indian cooking and the making of Indonesian puppets.

Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare

58. The school's provision for the support, guidance and welfare of its pupils is good. The school creates a warm, open atmosphere where pupils feel secure and valued. Pupils are confident in their dealings with adults and willingly approach them with any concerns they may have secure in the knowledge that they will be listened to and their problems and worries will be taken seriously. Relationships throughout the school community are supportive and friendly, and this has a positive effect on standards of both attainment and behaviour.

59. The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress are sound but, as yet, they are insufficiently focused or used to inform teachers' planning in order to promote pupils' future learning. The practice of marking work alongside individual pupils is very good. It promotes understanding and enables pupils to improve and make progress. The report for the annual review of those pupils with statements of special educational need is excellent. It includes, besides details of attainment and progress in the core subjects, the results of any diagnostic or other tests undertaken. Targets are set for improvement during the review process. Monitoring of pupils' personal development within school, during after school activities and in the residential setting is good and consistent. Any problems with attendance are quickly resolved by direct approaches to parents and monitoring of attendance is excellent. Generally, expectations of pupils' behaviour are high and most pupils strive to meet them. The school has a rewards and sanctions system which is well understood by pupils and usually applied consistently by the staff. The care staff endeavour to ensure that any problems during the school day are not carried over into the residential setting and that the pupils feel that they have a fresh start when school is over. The incident book is kept in the staff room and is accessible to all adults; it includes details of problems, including

misbehaviour, and successes of pupils' and is an effective way of keeping staff informed of any difficulties the pupils may be experiencing. Incidents of misbehaviour and the action taken are carefully recorded and monitored by staff. The school follows appropriate procedures for child protection and staff are vigilant. They are aware of the sensitivities attached to this area and familiar with the actions which they may need to take.

60. Appropriate procedures and policies are in place to promote the health, safety and well being of the pupils. They are applied consistently across the twenty four hour curriculum and include fire drills conducted during the night.

61. The care provided within the residential setting is very good and this care is also extended to day pupils. The houseparents create a family atmosphere where pupils feel safe. They are ready and willing to give pupils support in any area of their life which is causing them a concern. In this they receive weekly support from a psychotherapist who will discuss individual or more general problems as they arise. Her sessions with individual pupils are confidential. Attention is given to the provision of healthy, varied and carefully monitored menus, which are appreciated by pupils whose comments are taken into account.

Partnership with Parents and the Community

62. Despite the very wide geographical area from which the pupils are drawn, the school keeps in good contact with parents. Information provided for parents is generally good and includes regular newsletters which keep parents informed of both past and future events. Subject reports of high quality are sent to parents twice a year. These include information about pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding as well as details of their attitudes both within and outside the classroom. Sections are devoted to useful summaries by the group tutor, headteacher and houseparents. Pupils and parents are also asked to comment upon their report and identify for themselves their strengths and areas for improvement. Opportunities for parents to discuss their child's progress are available at any convenient time and there is a formal parents' day in the Spring term.

63. The school has regular contact with those parents who bring their child to school each day. Parents of weekly boarders have the opportunity to talk to staff either on Friday evening or Sunday evening; at other times contact is maintained by letter or telephone. The school is flexible in arranging times to see parents who are in this country for only a short time. At other times the staff keep in touch by telephone or facsimile. All parents are kept informed of the good things which happen as well as with any problems or concerns. The school holds an annual ball which is well supported by parents and the Friends of Appleford raise considerable sums of money which enable the school to further enhance its work. The school makes good use of parents' expertise, where appropriate. For example one parent was able to come and cook some Indian food with the pupils and demonstrate how to wear a sari.

64. The school is very successfully involved with the local community. Confirmation classes for children in the school and from the village are held at Appleford and the celebration after Confirmation on the Sunday after the inspection is being hosted by the school. The school uses the local community for its village study and pupils attend local functions such as bonfire night and fetes. Local artists and craftspeople visit the school and there are links with the local primary school. The school makes good use of the wider community including visits to Stonehenge as part of a history topic. The effect of all these links on the pupils learning and personal development is good.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

Leadership and Management

65. The headteacher provides very good leadership and gives a very clear direction for the life of the school. The aims of the school are clearly stated and understood and provide a framework which is reflected through the life of the school. The school's Directors provide support, expertise and advice to the headteacher, the staff, pupils and parents. The school development plan has no formal links with the school's financial planning, which is the sole responsibility of the school's Directors. The development plan is based on issues which are

raised and discussed first by staff and then by the headteacher with the Directors. The school bursar provides monthly financial statements for the Directors, who decide on spending priorities within the school. The headteacher manages the curriculum budget efficiently. The school development plan is drawn up by the headteacher and staff and presented to and discussed with the Directors in order to set their spending priorities. The school development plan is not prioritised or fully costed and this limits its effectiveness as a tool for the planning and monitoring of teaching and learning. Although there are regular links between the Directors and senior management team their meetings are not normally minuted and there are no formal agendas for these meetings. There is insufficient documentation on school development planning and its evaluation. There are no subject or care development plans. The headteacher is responsible through his job descriptions for the monitoring of educational targets. He provides strong guidance and leadership and his support is greatly valued by staff, parents and pupils alike. However, the opportunities for him to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning are severely restricted by his own teaching commitment which limits the time available to him to monitor teaching and learning particularly in relation to the school's stated aim of focusing on English and mathematics. While support for teaching and learning is good, the support for the curriculum is not sufficiently focused on bringing about improvement through the systematic analysis of strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainments. The school has a very positive ethos and is largely successful in meeting its stated aims.

Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources

66. There are sufficient well qualified and experienced teaching staff to teach the planned curriculum to all pupils and to meet their special needs. The subject expertise of staff is well matched to their teaching responsibilities. A significant number of staff have specialist qualifications in the teaching of pupils with specific learning difficulties. This, together with a favourable pupil teacher ratio helps to ensure the individual needs of pupils are met. Staff are deployed well in most cases but staff with management responsibilities do not always have sufficient time to meet their responsibilities for evaluating the teaching and learning and monitoring standards. Professional development of staff is a high priority for the school and an effective system for appraisal to supports teachers. Staff have used the availability of

courses to improve their expertise with pupils with specific learning difficulties but insufficient emphasis has been given to developing subject knowledge in mathematics, science, design and technology and information technology. This has limited the ability of some staff in these subjects to plan and assess the National Curriculum.

67. The educational support assistants are sufficient and well deployed to support pupils' work in English. They make a good contribution to pupils' progress. There are sufficient care staff to meet the demands of the school, and they make a good contribution to the life of the school. Staff report they are well supported by a mentoring system and new staff are carefully inducted into the school. These procedures contribute positively to their effectiveness.

68. The school occupies a very attractive site which is very well maintained and well used by the school to provide a good range of activities for pupils. The accommodation is sufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum and residential needs of pupils. Teaching accommodation is satisfactory and includes specialist science and art and design accommodation. The science laboratory is small as are some classrooms and although adequate for the size of groups being taught, they do occasionally limit the range of investigative and practical work which can be covered in science, music and mathematics. The facilities for physical education are very good and the sports hall provides a good large space for assemblies, drama activities and concerts. The teaching areas are enhanced by good displays of pupils' work.

69. There are sufficient learning resources in all subjects except design and technology and resources in English, information technology art are good. Resources in physical education are very good. The library stock is satisfactory. Pupils use the library for their personal reading but were not observed during the inspection using it often for research or independent study. The school makes good use of local museums and loan collections and visits to places of interest are well used to enrich the curriculum.

The Efficiency of the School

70. The school has 88 pupils on roll, 58 of these are boarders. The current annual fee for full boarding is £11,985 which is broadly in line with similar schools. In recent years there have been improvements in the teaching and residential accommodation, the provision of a sports hall and equipment for information technology.

71. The school has a development plan which outlines plans for minor improvements to buildings, professional development of staff and improving aspects of monitoring pupils' progress and care. These are discussed within the school and finally agreed with the directors. The headteacher manages the budget for resources for subjects well and funds for this purpose are satisfactory. There are no detailed subject or care development plans to guide improvements. The school development plan is not clearly linked to financial planning and available resources. Overall the planning for long term improvement and the use of the development plan in this process is unsatisfactory.

72. Financial control of the funds managed by the headteacher is very good. The school ensures that spending on major items represents value for money. The day to day administration of the school is very effective. Staff are well supported, by the headteacher and Directors, records are well maintained and communication throughout the school is good. The vast majority of lessons start on time and activities for pupils after school and at week ends are very well organised.

73. The school makes satisfactory use of staff, accommodation and resources. Teaching, educational support staff and care staff are carefully deployed during the day and after school. Although information technology is used well to support humanities, its use elsewhere in the curriculum is under developed. The use made of the grounds and the local community is good.

74. Taking into account the attainment of the pupils on entry, the quality of teaching and education provided and the progress made by pupils, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

75. The attainment of pupils at both key stages is below national expectations. However, in speaking and listening and in reading, the attainment of the older, more able pupils is close to national expectations at both key stages.

76. In relation to their prior attainment pupils' progress over time is good. In reading, by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils develop their knowledge of phonics and their understanding of terms such as vowel, consonant, syllable, prefix and suffix. Their knowledge of blends and digraphs is good. Although their reading lacks fluency, their word attack skills are good when tackling unfamiliar words including "acquired, tragically, buttered". They begin to develop the ability to use dictionaries effectively. At Key Stage 3 pupils' reading is generally very accurate and they identify and correct their own mistakes. Many read fluently and use intonation and expression well. Comprehension skills also improve. Recall is very good and many pupils can respond to more complex questions concerning characterisation and motivation. For example, they can explain how evacuee children in 'Carrie's War' felt about being removed from their families. They can describe literary techniques used in poems including identifying "lost the light" as a metaphor. The pupils read novels by well known children's authors, study twentieth century poetry, Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' and Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'.

77. Progress in writing is good. Attainments in writing are below national expectations as a result of pupils' specific learning difficulties. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils generate short accounts of weekend activities and descriptions of friends. Although many understand the principles of simple punctuation they do not use punctuation consistently. They spell simple words accurately but they have difficulties with many constructions. At Key Stage 3, despite continued difficulties with spelling, pupils' vocabulary increases. They develop the

ability to plan their writing. With carefully structured support, they generate vivid and emotive poems about 'War', produce informative brochures about the school and Salisbury and create acrostics, haikus, lanterns, onomatopoeic and shape poems. Handwriting is good. Most pupils produce accurate joined-up writing. Their punctuation improves and they develop the ability to use question marks, exclamation marks and, in some cases, speech punctuation and the apostrophe. At both key stages pupils understand and effectively employ the spelling strategies that they have been taught and make good use of the "Complete Speller" computer program.

78. In speaking and listening, progress is good although the structured opportunities for pupils to engage in this aspect are limited. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils can begin to talk about weekend activities and topics of personal interest. At Key Stage 3 pupils take part in group discussions about story planning and brainstorming vocabulary lists. They can provide clear, thoughtful, logical explanations of issues in the 'Lament of the Banana Man'. In history, geography and religious education they develop their abilities to talk about a variety of topics.

79. Attitudes to learning are at least satisfactory and often good. The pupils' behaviour is good and most remain on task most of the time. They are keen to contribute answers and ideas to class discussions. They pay attention when the teacher is talking and relationships with teacher and other pupils are good. Some Key Stage 3 pupils are developing the capacity to work and use resources independently.

80. At both Key Stages 2 and 3 the quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and in 4 out of 10 lessons it is good or very good. Overall, teaching is good.

81. In the best lessons, teachers have very good subject knowledge, particularly in relation to the diagnosis of reading errors, strategies to improve spelling and literary appreciation. Subject specific terminology is well used. Lessons are well planned and have good pace. Good use is made of praise and encouragement and day-to-day assessment is effective.

Activities and resources are well matched to the requirements of individual pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Tasks are clearly explained and good support is given to individual pupils as they work. Teachers maintain a high standard of discipline and incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. Support assistants are very effectively deployed to help pupils to improve their reading standards. Homework that builds upon classwork is set regularly.

82. However, there are a few lessons which start slowly, proceed without any real pace or urgency and end without any formal review of learning. On these occasions some pupils do not remain on task. In lessons where pupils are working on a series of individual tasks, the degree of teacher support provided is inconsistent. In some classes, unless they specifically request it, pupils receive no direct support from their teacher.

83. Curriculum planning is good and the scheme of work pays due regard to the requirements of the National Curriculum. The school provides a structured curriculum with the emphasis upon reading, phonetics, spelling and handwriting and the balance between this and the National Curriculum is good. Multi-sensory programmes provide each pupil with equality of access and opportunity which effectively address their specific learning difficulties. Planning by individual teachers is good. Targets are set for pupils within both their individual education plans and lesson plans. The assessment of pupils' attainment in relation to those targets is good. Teachers keep detailed records of pupils' progress in reading and spelling. The assessment of pupils within lessons is also good. The teachers are skilled in diagnosing difficulties and providing the pupils with strategies to enable them to improve. Assessment of pupils' attainment in relation to National Curriculum levels is not always accurate. Staff within the English Department have agreed how to assess National Curriculum levels but they have not compared their understanding of National Curriculum levels with that of teachers from other schools, which would improve their confidence in the accuracy and validity of their judgements.

84. The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' cultural development. Pupils have taken the opportunity to study works by Chaucer and Shakespeare, The Great War and Liverpool poets. Visits to the theatre, including The Globe, have been organised.

The department is well lead by a qualified and experienced teacher with a thorough understanding of teaching English to pupils with specific learning difficulties. All the teachers of English have qualifications relevant to the special needs of the pupils. Effective training has been provided for support assistants in the assessment of reading. The high profile given to English reflects the school's aims well and there is a strong commitment to high achievement by all pupils. Speech and language therapy of high quality is provided through small group and in-class sessions. Learning resources, including a wide range of reading books applicable to the age and ability range of the pupils, are good.

Mathematics

85. Pupils are taught mathematics in ability groups throughout the school. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils in the higher ability classes achieve standards in line with the national expectation while the attainment of other pupils is slightly lower than this. In Year 8, pupils in the high ability classes are on line to reach the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 3.

86. Across the school, pupils make at least satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. In Key Stage 2 younger, more able pupils understand the properties of simple two-dimensional shapes. They understand and compile simple bar charts, which they use accurately to interpret data. Less able pupils are beginning to use addition and subtraction to solve simple problems. By the end of Key Stage 2, the most able pupils add and subtract decimal numbers correctly and they present data accurately in tabular and graphic forms. In Key Stage 3 the most able pupils use graphs to plot and interpret data, they understand decimal notation to three places and can convert decimals into fractions. Less able pupils at Key Stage 3 understand simple fractions, plot co-ordinates and understand reflective symmetry. Across the school pupils make good progress in number and satisfactory progress in all other aspects of the subject. Their ability to use number to investigate and solve problems is limited by insufficient opportunities to do this.

87. In almost all lessons pupils show that they are interested in mathematics. They work hard and persevere, despite their learning difficulties. Many have been taught good strategies

to overcome these difficulties. Pupils' behaviour is almost always good. They are courteous and respectful in lessons and their relationships with adults and with each other are very good. In a very few lessons, pupils' interest was not stimulated by the work they were asked to do and consequently they did not concentrate sufficiently and their behaviour was unsatisfactory.

88. Teaching is satisfactory or better in almost all lessons. In a fifth of lessons teaching is very good and in a small proportion it is excellent. In a small proportion of lessons teaching is unsatisfactory and occasionally poor. The best teaching is well planned to provide highly challenging activities, which captivate pupils' interest and stimulate their enthusiasm for the subject. In a lesson at Key Stage 3, for example, the carefully structured introduction of increasingly difficult and challenging tasks enabled pupils to make very good progress in the use of data and its interpretation through the construction of scatter diagrams. Most teachers have a good understanding of the methods needed to teach mathematics to pupils with specific learning difficulties. Their knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum is not always satisfactory. The majority of lessons are well organised, teachers use appropriate resources well and they set high expectations for their pupils. In lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory or poor, however, the activities are not matched to pupils' abilities and there are low expectations in what pupils' are asked to do.

89. The school provides a broad and balanced mathematics curriculum that is well matched to pupils' learning difficulties and which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The scheme of work provides guidance for teaching mathematics to pupils with specific learning needs but does not set in sufficient detail the expected learning outcomes from the topics covered. Consequently the school cannot be sure that teaching builds progressively on what has gone before. The assessment of pupils' attainment is carried out regularly but the results of this are not used sufficiently to set targets for the development of the subject or for pupils' individual improvement. Mathematics makes a good contribution to pupils' moral development. Its contribution to their social development is satisfactory but the highly structured approach limits the development of pupils' initiative and independence.

90. Although the school has set itself very ambitious targets for the improvement of pupils' attainments in the subject there is no clear plan for how these will be achieved. The monitoring of teaching and the curriculum is insufficiently rigorous and therefore the school is not in a position to identify the characteristics of the best teaching or use these to improve the quality of teaching. There are sufficient teachers for mathematics, all of whom have undertaken training in the teaching of the subject to pupils with specific learning difficulties. There has been very little training related to the requirements of the National Curriculum or its assessment procedures. Classrooms are generally adequate but their size sometimes inhibits the development of investigations and practical work. There are sufficient books and equipment for the teaching of mathematics. There is no evidence of significant differences in attainment or progress related to race, gender or social background.

Science

91. At Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of science and their attainment is in line with national expectations. These pupils know a range of sources of light and that we see things because light reflects off them. They are aware that forces can make things change, such as the shape or speed of objects, but their understanding of friction is less secure. Younger pupils have a good understanding of sound, they know it is caused by vibrations, and that the pitch of a guitar string can be changed by altering its length, thickness or tension. Some older pupils know about the function of body parts and that branching keys can be used to identify living things.

92. At Key Stage 3 pupils make unsatisfactory progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of science. Their attainment is behind schedule to meet national expectations by the end of the key stage. These pupils have a satisfactory understanding of some aspects of science, for example, they know sound cannot travel through a vacuum, and how to calculate the time it takes to travel a given distance. However, their understanding of many aspects of science is shallow, for example, in materials and their properties, electricity, forces and light.

93. Pupils' progress ranges from satisfactory to unsatisfactory between different aspects of science investigation at Key Stage 2. Overall, progress is unsatisfactory at both Key Stage 2 and 3. Pupils' attainment is below national expectations at Key Stage 2 and behind schedule to meet national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. As they move through the school pupils learn how to follow instructions, write up experiments, record measurements, plot graphs and use equipment. They are able to make reasonable observations, such as recording how a seedling grows. However, while they are familiar with the term 'fair test' and carry out experiments planned by teachers, they do not plan investigations for themselves. Pupils do not identify what to change and what to measure in investigations or consider in sufficient detail the accuracy of their measurements. These pupils do not make sufficient use of their knowledge and understanding of science to help make predictions or interpret their results.

94. Pupils enjoy science lessons. Their behaviour is mostly good and they usually concentrate well. They make sensible and safe use of equipment and collaborate well with each other and with teachers. Some pupils ask their own questions about science topics to help them check and extend their own understanding. Most seek teacher guidance when experiencing difficulty and make effective use of the advice they are offered. Sometimes pupils need prompting to remain on task and on rare occasions, to behave properly.

95. The quality of science teaching ranges from good to unsatisfactory. About two thirds of the teaching observed was satisfactory and one fifth unsatisfactory. In many lessons, while the overall quality was satisfactory, there were unsatisfactory aspects. In effective lessons, teachers listen well to pupils' comments, provide activities which pupils find interesting and give appropriate emphasis to practical work. They usually organise pupils well and provide appropriate resources and effective support for individuals. The overall structure of lessons is usually satisfactory but in many, there are periods during which the expected work rate is too slow. This is usually caused by ineffective approaches to behaviour management or inappropriate teaching strategies. Teachers do not always identify learning objectives for lessons or plan sufficiently demanding tasks to meet the different needs of pupils. In some lessons teachers demonstrate insufficient knowledge and understanding of science, especially physics, and the National Curriculum programmes of study.

96. The head of department has been effective in providing resources for other teachers and has identified the necessary priorities to improve the facilities for science teaching. The scheme of work for science provides an appropriate schedule for covering the National Curriculum programmes of study. The use of information technology within science is in its very early stages of development. Some pupils use drawing software to illustrate their ideas about the solar system and CD ROMS to research sound and light. The curriculum gives inadequate emphasis to science investigation and some aspects of knowledge and understanding, especially at Key Stage 3. There is no guidance on the step by step development of knowledge, understanding and skills as pupils move through the school, nor is there a plan which identifies actions to raise standards of attainment. Systems for assessment are in place and implemented, including the trial use of national test papers for science. However, this data is not yet used to identify the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding or in the teaching of science. Little professional development in science has taken place. Teachers have insufficient knowledge and understanding of the expectations of the National Curriculum programmes of study for science, and of effective methods for their assessment. These shortfalls are having a significant and negative impact on pupils' standard of attainment.

97. The science rooms provide insufficient space for pupils to plan and manage their own science investigations as required by the National Curriculum. Science resources are satisfactory in quantity and quality although there are shortages, such as in the number of ammeters for measuring current. There are inadequate facilities for storing materials and equipment. The storage of chemicals is unsatisfactory and fails to meet recommendations published by the national School Science Service. No risk assessments have been recorded for the use and storage of individual chemicals. There is no technician support for science teaching. There are insufficient reference materials, such as published science teaching schemes and guidance on health and safety in science.

OTHER SUBJECTS

Art

98. Pupils' attainments in art in both key stages are in line with national expectations. Progress is satisfactory and occasionally good. Pupils enjoy a spacious and well-equipped art room with a kiln and both wet and dry areas. A wide range of art activities is undertaken and pupils are encouraged to explore themes in a variety of media. Technical vocabulary is introduced when appropriate and pupils are confident in its use. Artists and crafts people visit the school and provide additional opportunities and experiences for pupils. A particularly pleasing feature of art is the provision of pupils' individual sketchbooks, which are highly valued by pupils. Pupils' response in lessons is satisfactory and sometimes good. Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good at both key stages. Opportunities in art contribute very positively to the cultural development of all pupils. Art is well led by a teacher whose subject knowledge is very good.

Design and Technology

99. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress in design and technology at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. Their attainment is below national expectations at Key Stage 2 and is unlikely to reach national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3.

100. At Key Stage 2 pupils make satisfactory progress in some aspects of designing, for example, a few drawings and plans make clear what pupils intend to make, and pupils consider different ways of using materials such as textiles. In contrast there is little evidence of pupils stating the key design features of what they intend to make, evaluating how well their product meets these intentions or suggesting improvements. Pupils use of a range of materials, for example, card and textiles, to make products such as model fairground rides and puppets. However, the overall quality of making is unsatisfactory. Pupils use only a narrow range of joining and finishing techniques, such as masking tape to join wood or fitting wings onto card birds with paper fasteners. Pupils make limited use of components such as lamps, batteries and air filled syringes and learn little about making products from food.

101. Pupils at Key Stage 3 demonstrate reasonable progress in some aspects of designing, such as planning the main steps of making in advance and modelling products from card, such as mugs for younger children. They have an awareness of the design process and consider existing products and alternative designs, for example when making body decorations. However, these pupils do not carry out sufficient research, develop design criteria and specifications, use different drawing techniques, or evaluate the products they make. These pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good quality products from a narrow range of materials, such as hats and masks from card. They also successfully make battery powered vehicles from wood and plastic sheet, and simple clothing items from textiles which they decorate. However, pupils have a very limited range of making skills. Pupils do not use a wide enough range of tools and do not have access to powered machinery in lessons, such as jig saws. Their range of marking, cutting, joining and finishing techniques is very limited. They learn little about the properties and application of resistant materials and food, or how to control things using electrical, mechanical or other devices.

102. One design and technology lesson was observed during the inspection. In this lesson pupils demonstrated pride and enjoyment in designing and making, although a minority lost concentration and needed strong prompting to remain on task. Pupils books', a design and technology scheme of work, teachers plans and a large collection of photographs show that the curriculum provides appropriate opportunities for design and technology. Opportunities are provided for pupils to learn new making skills, explore the design characteristics of existing products, and design and make products for themselves. However insufficient attention is given to developing pupils designing skills, a sufficiently wide range of making skills or their knowledge and understanding of, for example, control and product research and evaluation. Extra-curricular activity effectively complements lessons and those pupils who take part extend their range of making skills through, for example, making boats and planes from wood or building a large buggy for them to drive.

103. Teachers lack sufficient understanding of the expectations of the National Curriculum programmes of study and the range of skills pupils need to meet national expectations at both Key Stages 2 and 3. Procedures for assessment and recording need to be securely based on

national expectations and assessment data acquired used to identify the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment.

104. The accommodation and resources for design and technology at Key Stage 2 are adequate, but fail to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study at Key Stage 3. The school knows that there is inadequate accommodation for food technology and that there is only a narrow range of equipment used within lessons. The installation of the powered equipment already available within the school, for example a pillar drill, fails to meet the nationally accepted recommendations of British Standard 4163.

French

105. Although pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject, their attainment in Years 7 and 8 is below that of pupils of a similar age and most are unlikely to attain standards in line with the national expectation by the end of Key Stage 3.

106. Pupils make better progress in their ability to listen to the spoken language and respond appropriately than they do in their abilities to speak it for themselves. Most pupils understand simple classroom commands, short statements and questions; they show an understanding of clear speech either from the teacher or from a high quality recording. Too often however, they demonstrate this understanding by responding in English rather than French and this limits their progress in speaking the language. Most pupils can read and understand clearly presented single words and higher-attaining pupils understand short phrases when they are set in a familiar context.

107. Pupils respond well to their lessons; they show interest, enthusiasm and they concentrate well. They are willing to ask and answer questions, although they usually use English rather than French. Pupils' behaviour is always at least satisfactory.

108. Teaching is always satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and contain a good range of activities to promote pupils' progress in the subject. The teacher has a very good

command of French. Resources are used well and lessons proceed at a brisk pace. In the lessons seen there was good coverage of listening and writing activities but insufficient attention was paid to developing pupils' speaking skills. There is an appropriate policy for the subject which places its teaching within the context of a school for pupils' with specific learning difficulties. The knowledge and skills which pupils are expected to acquire in each of Years 7 and 8 are not set out in a detailed scheme of work, consequently the assessment procedures are not sufficiently rigorous in measuring pupils' progress against expected standards. The study of a foreign language contributes well to pupils' cultural development.

109. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Pupils are expected to achieve high standards, relationships are very good and statutory requirements are met. Staffing arrangements are good. Teaching takes place in two classrooms in different parts of the school and therefore storage and accessibility of resources is a problem. There are sufficient books and equipment for teaching the subject.

Geography

110. At the end of Key Stage 2 the attainment of pupils is broadly in line with national expectations. This is demonstrated particularly through their discussions and responses to questions, but is less evident in their written work. Pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. The youngest pupils in the key stage are developing a sound understanding of places and knowledge about the effect of rivers on the landscape. They are beginning to use technical terms such as tributary and meander with accuracy. The oldest pupils in the key stage use the findings of a local village survey to extend their skills of making maps using first hand observations, photographs and aerial photographs. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are making good progress and their attainment, particularly oral work, is satisfactory, at this point in the key stage. Year 8 pupils have a good understanding of the classification of economic activity and of farming as an example of a primary activity. Pupils use atlases and maps to identify the conditions for various types of farming and present this information clearly to others in the class.

111. Pupils behave well in lessons, they generally listen carefully to the teacher and to each other. They work well in pairs and small groups and are eager to join in class discussions. Pupils' skills of independent research are not as well developed.

112. Most geography teaching is good. Teaching of geography is always satisfactory and more often very good. Teachers plan carefully using a good range of activities and resources which interests the pupils and arouses their curiosity. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to good effect when asking questions and explaining tasks. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will respond in lessons and concentrate well. They give clear indications to pupils on their performance. Work is marked carefully but does not always give sufficient advice to pupils on how to improve and extend their work.

113. The scheme of work meets the National Curriculum requirements but does not always give sufficient detail on how to promote the systematic development of geographical skills between the key stages. There is no overall plan for the development of the subject through the school. Assessment is satisfactory but is not always used to plan for pupils' different needs. A very good feature of the curriculum is the use of fieldwork as a basis for developing knowledge and geographical understanding. The curriculum is further enhanced by good use of information technology, for example, pupils showed the results of a traffic survey in their village study using a range of formats including various types of graphs. Resources for geography are sufficient, accommodation is good and enhanced by good displays of pupils' work.

History

114. No teaching of history at Key Stage 3 or with the youngest pupils in Key Stage 2 was observed during the inspection. Examination of folders and displays of work shows appropriate coverage of the curriculum. By the end of Key stage 2 most pupils are attaining standards which are in line with national expectations. They show through their answers to questions and in discussions a sound knowledge of a range of historical topics. They demonstrate an understanding of the value and the limitation of the use of secondary evidence when looking at prehistoric sites and use photographs taken during a visit to Stonehenge to

describe its key features. Pupils make good progress in building up knowledge and in their understanding of the key elements of chronology and enquiry.

115. Pupils generally behave well. They were enthused by the visit to Stonehenge and eager to show their good observational skills through their answers to the teachers questions. They respond with creative ideas for moving the largest stones from Wales to the present site in Wiltshire. These good attitudes to learning were less good when lessons were at the end of the day.

116. The teaching of history is mostly good or very good. Lessons are planned using a wide range of interesting resources and methods to interest and captivate pupils' attention. These include photographs, models and audio tapes. The teacher uses good subject knowledge to ask questions which encourage the pupils to extend their understanding of historical events. Helpful feedback is given to pupils during the lesson about the progress they are making.

117. The scheme of work meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and assessment is linked to level descriptors. The curriculum is enhanced by visits to museums and places of historical interest and by use of local loan collections of models and artefacts. Resources are satisfactory and sensibly being built up to support planned units of work.

Information Technology

118. Pupils at Key Stages 2 and 3 make satisfactory and occasionally good progress in most aspects of information technology. Their attainment at Key Stage 2 is in line with national expectations for these aspects of information technology. At Key Stage 3 pupils are on schedule to meet national expectations by the end of the key stage in these same aspects of information technology. Progress is best in word processing, including the insertion of pictures into text, drawing and the use of spreadsheets. Pupils are able to prepare text for a range of audiences and add pictures using clip art, for example when preparing cartoons and the school's Big Apple newsletter. They are able to follow instructions to enter data into spreadsheets and then produce and print out pie and bar charts. This was evident when pupils

successfully presented their results of a road survey. However, there is little evidence of pupils checking the accuracy of the data they use. Pupils make effective use of software to create imaginative drawings that clearly represent their intentions, for example, drawings of stars and planets, and to prepare patterns. Pupils are beginning to use computers to create more formal drawings, such as line drawings of products. They make good use of software to produce maps of the United Kingdom which show geographical features such as land use, or to record their recent visit to Shrewton by preparing a map which includes key features such as roads and rivers. Some pupils make use of CD ROMs to research information, for example, about light and sound in science. Pupils prepare instructions to control computer controlled devices. However, they do not use computers to sense changes in their environment, such as temperature and light levels, or to control events, such as making a light flash or a motor to change direction. Pupils know how information technology influences their daily lives. A few receive communications from parents by fax but at present pupils do not use e-mail or have access to the internet, which would further enhance their learning. There is little evidence of pupils deciding for themselves which software will to meet their need or of them preparing extended reports, for example, of their science investigations.

119. Pupils generally concentrate and behave very well when working with computers. They willingly try out new software when guided by the teacher and adapt ways of controlling what happens in one programme and apply it to another. The more confident pupils explore for themselves the use of unfamiliar icons and offer help to those experiencing difficulty. On occasions, and especially near the end of the long afternoon session, a minority of pupils lose concentration and need prompting to remain on task. Pupils make good use of the help they receive from teachers.

120. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to unsatisfactory, most being satisfactory. Teachers generally provide strong encouragement to pupils and are effective in helping them overcome difficulty. In most, but not all lessons, questions are used effectively to involve pupils and to explore what they have remembered from previous lessons. Lessons, are usually well structured but plans identify activities rather than learning objectives. In some instances, extension activities are not planned for pupils who complete the set tasks quickly. Explanations are usually clear, although in some, the lesson objectives are not made

sufficiently clear at the start and explanations are too long. Sometimes very effective approaches are used to help pupils learn how to use new software, for example, how to create an accurate village map.

121. Future developments in information technology have been appropriately identified although they are not yet presented in the form of a subject development plan. The scheme of work covers most parts of the National Curriculum programmes of study and the head of department is aware of those aspects of the curriculum that need improvement. Information technology is very well used in geography, it is used effectively in English to support spelling and word recognition. Information technology is also used in art and mathematics and is beginning to be used in science. It should be further developed in subjects such as design and technology, music and religious education. Pupils who have a particular need to use information technology have access to appropriate equipment such as listening centres and computers, which support their learning well. Appropriate assessment procedures are in place but they are not yet securely based on national expectations and the information gained is not used to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment. The head of department has provided effective professional support for colleagues. However, he has had few opportunities to learn about developments in hardware and the information technology curriculum, such as how to gain controlled access to the internet. Resources for information technology have benefited from recent and significant improvements. While this resource is well used during the school day, too little access is provided to support "prep" or for pupils who are boarders. There is a lack of hardware for sensing and control, and equipment that will further develop pupils' communication skills such as e-mail, a digital camera and a flat bed scanner for the integration of photographs into texts. The information technology room is small and restricts teachers from moving from one pupils to another in lessons.

Music

122. Music plays a very important part in the life of the school and performances are well supported by friends and parents. Some original material has been performed with great success. A wide range of instrumental provision is available to all pupils and an increasing number are taking up this option with great enthusiasm. Attainment and progress in music

are satisfactory at both key stages. At Key Stage 2, pupils have a good knowledge of the range of musical instruments and can name them correctly. At Key Stage 3, pupils have a basic grasp of music notation and can identify where the music stops on a musical score. The teaching of music is satisfactory at both key stages. The teacher has a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and resources are well managed and well organised. Expectations of pupil performances are high. The teaching of specific skills is good.

123. Pupils' attitudes vary from unsatisfactory, where the poor behaviour of a small number of pupils disturbs the learning of others, to good. Where pupils' response is good, pupils practice their instruments independently and concentrate well. They answer the teachers' questions keenly and they treat their instruments with respect.

124. Resources for music are adequate but storage of instruments is an increasing problem and the size of the music room inhibits pupils' opportunities to take full advantage of the musical opportunities on offer to them in lessons. The range of instruments chosen by pupils makes it difficult to accommodate them successfully in the room available.

125. The music curriculum is greatly enhanced by the concerts and productions which are a regular feature of school life. Photographs, scrapbooks, videos and audiotapes confirm the high quality of these productions. Pupils recall with pride and great pleasure the parts they have played. The music department is led by a very able musician who is raising still further the status of music in the school curriculum. The music teacher is currently looking into the possibility of introducing information technology into the department.

Physical Education

126. The attainment of pupils is below national expectations at both key stages. Whilst the performance of some pupils is in line with national expectations, their ability to plan and evaluate is below national expectations.

127. In relation to their prior attainment pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress at both key stages. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have successfully developed their relay baton changeover skills; they understand the basic techniques involved in discus throwing and a few begin to analyse their performance using that knowledge. In swimming, some improve their backstroke, leg kick and front crawl breathing techniques.

128. In Key Stage 3 pupils combine scissors jump and back flip to produce some reasonable attempts at the Fosbury Flop. They follow teachers' instructions and advice to improve their attainment in the high jump. In cricket, they learn how to run onto a ball, pick up one handed and throw over the stumps; they adopt the correct batting stance and a few can produce good quality cover drives and pull shots. In rounders, some pupils, particularly the girls, bat competently.

129. The attitudes of the pupils are at least good and often very good. They follow instructions and strive to replicate the techniques demonstrated by the teacher. They are enthusiastic participants and are keen to perform well. Behaviour is good and they persevere very well even in the difficult and highly technical field events in athletics. They are confident in the water and enjoy swimming. They are very supportive of other pupils, cheering them on and spontaneously applauding good individual performances. Their planning and evaluation skills are less well developed. Most pupils are reliant upon the criteria provided by the teacher. The school is aware of this and, has targeted the development of such skills.

130. The quality of teaching ranges from good to excellent. Knowledge of a wide range of physical education skills is good and expectations of pupils are high. The quality of instructions, explanations and demonstrations and the management of pupils are very good. Lessons have good pace and time and resources are used well. Feedback to pupils about their performance is very good and makes a significant contribution to the progress they make. The teaching of and adherence to health and safety issues are always good.

131. There is a detailed scheme of work that incorporates a variety of games, athletics, swimming and gymnastics. Inter-house competitions involve many sports. Judo is provided

as an after-school club and archery is also offered. The provision of outdoor and adventurous activities is currently limited to the senior pupils but is a priority area for development. Assessment in lessons is very good and enables pupils to improve their performance. Detailed records of performances are kept which inform curriculum planning and lead to in-house awards in a variety of activities including swimming, athletics and gymnastics. Regular fixtures are held with mainstream and other independent schools.

132. The subject is well led and managed. There is a clear commitment to high achievement and the provision of a stimulating learning environment. Equality of opportunity is good. Specialists are deployed effectively to enhance the curriculum. The facilities and accommodation including the sports hall, grounds and the use of the nearby leisure centre, are very good.

Religious Education

133. In their contributions to discussions many pupils at Key Stage 2, show attainment in line with the expectations of the “agreed” syllabus. This attainment is also evident in some examples of extended writing at Key Stage 3. At both key stages, pupils make satisfactory progress. Their writing shows that they have studied, and are familiar with, Bible stories and with some aspects of the major world religions. Their progress is more evident during discussions where they ask pertinent questions about the difficult concepts involved in the study of religion. In a lesson about the creation, for example, a pupil asked, “If God lives in heaven, but He also created heaven – where did He live before that?”

134. Pupils’ attitudes to religious education are good. They are interested in the subject and participate in discussions with enthusiasm. They ask questions of the teacher and of each other and concentrate well on topics that are conceptually challenging. Relationships in lessons are good and pupils behave well.

135. Teaching is satisfactory. It is well planned and organised. The teacher’s knowledge and understanding of the subject is good. Lessons are carefully structured; introductions are clear and oral work is managed well to ensure that the challenge presented to pupils is at an

appropriately high level. Although pupils are provided with a range of appropriate strategies to overcome their difficulties with writing the challenge set by writing activities is sometimes low. Good use is made of praise to promote pupils' progress.

136. The school has written an appropriate syllabus by combining several of the agreed syllabi of several local authorities. This has resulted in a well-structured scheme of work appropriate to the needs of pupils with specific learning difficulties. The scheme does not set out in sufficient detail the knowledge, skills and understanding which pupils are expected to acquire as they move through the school. The emphasis on oral work in the subject contributes well to the school's policy on the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. Insufficient use is made of alternative strategies of assessment such as tape-recording, to ensure accurate records which can be used in planning what pupils need to do next.

137. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development because they are frequently required to think and talk about major issues of concern to humankind. The teaching of the subject contributes well to pupils' moral and social development. The subject is well led. Although there is no formal plan for the development of the subject, the co-ordinator has a very good understanding of how provision for religious education can be improved and there are plans to revise the scheme of work to ensure more effective assessment of pupils' progress. Accommodation is good. The school has an adequate supply of books which is effectively supplemented by the use of artefacts from the local authority loan scheme.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

138. Summary of Inspection Evidence

A team of six inspectors including a key inspector completed a total of 22 inspection days over a four-day period. During the inspection.

A total of 69 hours and 10 minutes was spent in lesson observation. Inspectors also observed extra curricular activities, registration periods and assemblies and time spent in the residential setting.

The written work of a sample of pupils from each key stage was examined and evaluated, in addition to work seen in pupils' books during lesson observations.

A sample from each year group and across the ability range were heard reading.

Formal and informal discussions were held with pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff, visiting staff, parents and governors.

School policies, teachers' plans and records, registers, reports, letters to parents and other school documentation were examined

Pupils were observed at lunchtimes, breaktimes, coming to and leaving school, and in the residential setting.

A questionnaire was circulated to parents; 88 were sent out and 57 responses received and analysed; thirty-nine parents attended a meeting prior to the inspection and gave their views.

139. DATA AND INDICATORS

PUPIL DATA

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on schools' register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y3 - Y9	88	22	88	0

TEACHERS AND CLASSES

Qualified teachers (Y3- Y9)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	10.10
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.71:1

Education support staff (Y3 - Y9)

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked each week	51.0

Average class size:

9

FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:

1997-98

	£
Total Income	1024344
Total Expenditure	1041108
Expenditure per pupil	11567.87
Balance brought forward from previous year	535575
Balance carried forward to next year	518811

PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	88
Number of questionnaires returned:	50
Percentage return rate:	57

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	34.0	48.0	14.0	4.0	
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	72.0	28.0			
The school handles complaints from parents well	37.8	53.3	4.4	4.4	
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	40.0	48.0	8.0	4.0	
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	48.0	46.0	6.0		
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	52.0	46.0	2.0		
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	75.5	22.4	2.0		
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	38.8	49.0	6.1	6.1	
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	62.0	38.0			
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	44.0	54.0	2.0		
My child(ren) like(s) school	56.0	38.0	6.0		

Other issues raised by parents

[If included]

