

INSPECTION REPORT

MARKET FIELD SPECIAL SCHOOL

Elmstead Market, Colchester

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 115473

Headteacher: Gary Smith

Reporting inspector: Mary Last
17171

Dates of inspection: 27th – 30th May 2002

Inspection number: 192127

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Mike Andrews
Date of previous inspection:	17 th February 1997

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13101	Mike Kell	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology	The school's results and pupils' achievements
21527	Hilary Gannaway	Team inspector	Religious education; Design & Technology	English as an Additional Language
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Market Field School is designated for up to 110 pupils with moderate learning difficulties from four to sixteen years of age. There are currently a total of 123 pupils on roll, 89 of whom are boys. Eight children are under five and forty-three pupils are diagnosed as having autism. Twenty-four of these pupils are catered for in three class bases with increasing opportunities to learn alongside other pupils for a range of activities as they move through the school. All pupils have statements of special educational needs and attain at levels lower than that expected for their age group. 121 pupils are of white United Kingdom heritage and there are two pupils with English as an additional language. In Years 10 and 11 some higher attaining pupils gain grades C and D in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in art and design and drama, whilst all pupils have good opportunities to gain entry level qualifications in English, science, literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology (ICT) and geography. Almost all pupils travel to school by local authority minibus or taxi necessitating long journeys as many come from a wide catchment area including Colchester and Harwich.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Market Field School is an effective school where the quality of teaching is high and pupils' achieve very well by the end of Year 11. The school holds the Investors in People Award and the Schools Curriculum and Achievement Awards. Pupils are confident and happy at school and make very good gains in maturity and personal development. The headteacher leads with enthusiasm and inspires the staff through his very good role model and his overall understanding of the pupils' and parents' needs. The school has secure financial procedures and spends its money wisely for the benefit of the pupils and children. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The quality of teaching is high and through well-planned lessons, all pupils and children, including those with autism, undertake tasks which motivate them and enable them to make good progress
- Teaching is particularly good for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, in physical education, art and design and in Years 7 to 11 for science and drama
- The pupils and staff enjoy very good relationships which help all the pupils and children improve their behaviour and develop positive attitudes to learning
- The school provides a very good programme of extra-curricular activities including a monthly Saturday Club which enables pupils' families to join in with their activities
- The parents hold the school in very high regard and the headteacher and staff are sensitive to the needs of pupils and parents
- The headteacher and senior staff lead the school well: they provide very good role models as highly effective teachers and are fully committed to raising standards

What could be improved

- The school does not have consistent procedures for identifying pupils' progress and recording it in common format
- The targets in pupils' individual education plans vary in usefulness and value because they do not always identify measurable outcomes
- There are not enough opportunities for subject co-ordinators, classroom teachers and deputy headteachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of teaching, learning and the curriculum

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress in addressing most of the weaknesses found in the last inspection in February 1997. The curriculum now meets statutory requirements with all subjects of the National Curriculum offered to all pupils. However, some subjects, such as history and design technology remain unsupported by comprehensive schemes of work to

guide pupils' learning as they move through the school. For pupils in Year 11 the school has now introduced a good level of national accredited qualifications, such as GCSE and entry level certification. The staff have improved their specialist knowledge of techniques to meet the needs of all the pupils including those with autistic spectrum disorders. The school has made significant improvement in the promotion of pupils' and children's communication. The use of signing is now well targeted to those pupils who need it as is the use of a picture exchange system. The school's strategies for assessing and recording pupils' progress over time remains inconsistent with too little written evidence on progress from one year to the next. A major reason for this weakness is the lack of comprehensive monitoring by the senior management group and the subject co-ordinators who have insufficient time to undertake these responsibilities. The governors are highly supportive, but have not yet fully implemented their role in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses. Despite significant improvements in the teaching of information and communications technology staff do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to reinforce and extend their skills by using computers in other subjects.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils and children achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year R	By Year 6	by Year 9	by Year 11	Key
speaking and listening	A	A	A	A	very good A
Reading	B	B	B	B	Good B
Writing	B	B	B	B	Satisfactory C
Mathematics	B	B	B	B	Unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	A	Poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

All pupils achieve particularly well in speaking and listening and in their personal development because there is a consistent focus on communications and promoting pupils' confidence and maturity. In the Foundation Stage children under 5 make good progress in the early stages of reading and understanding numbers. In their social skills and personal development they make very good gains in learning as they grow to understand that they have to wait their turn and to listen to other people speaking. In English pupils develop their reading and writing skills well and are able to express their thoughts in writing as they get older. Pupils achieve well in mathematics and learn to use calculation skills in real life situations such as shopping. In science pupils achieve well through practical work and experiments. They make good progress in relation to the targets set for them in their individual education plans where these targets are specific to the task and skills which should be achieved. Nevertheless, the quality of such targets is inconsistent across the school. Over time a lack of consistent recording makes pupils' progress difficult to identify. However, by the age of sixteen, many are successful in GCSE and other accredited qualifications. All pupils make very good gains in maturity as they move through the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. All pupils and children show great enthusiasm for the school. They are very interested and involved in their work. They come happily to school, eager and ready to learn and keen to do well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall. In lessons, in assemblies and when moving about the school, pupils are self-disciplined and behave well. They are courteous and well mannered.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils co-operate, together and with adults. They demonstrate patience, tolerance and understanding of others. Older pupils frequently show initiative and take responsibility.
Attendance	Attendance is good. Levels of attendance improved considerably last year. Pupils are punctual when they arrive enabling the school to make a prompt and efficient start to the school day.

Absences are generally only due to legitimate reasons, most often medical appointments. However, those pupils who attend the breakfast club are sometimes significantly late for the first lesson of the day.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 9	Years 9 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good	Good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Good quality teaching is a consistent feature of the school across all ages and ability groups although the majority of outstanding lessons were observed with pupils in Years 10 and 11. Teaching in English is good because it takes account of the National Literacy Strategy and helps pupils to develop an interest in reading and, as they get older, to record their thoughts in writing. In mathematics, good teaching enables pupils to use number skills and simple data handling in their everyday lives, for example for shopping. Science teaching is very good, particularly in Years 7 to 11, and pupils deepen their understanding of materials and the world around them through very good, motivating practical work. In ICT, teaching is satisfactory and pupils quickly learn how to control the computer and tools such as the mouse. However, there are too few opportunities for them to reinforce their skills on a regular basis. Teachers know their pupils well and respond to their needs and abilities by providing tasks which suit individuals. Inconsistencies in target setting limit the teachers' abilities to track pupils' detailed progress over time. Teaching is at least good and it is very good in art and design, drama and physical education for pupils aged eleven to sixteen. There is frequently very good teaching for children with autistic spectrum disorders and those in the Foundation Stage.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum provides pupils with full coverage of the National Curriculum and religious education. Pupils receive a good balance of subjects during the week but there are too few opportunities for them to use their computer skills in other subjects.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. The few pupils with English as an additional language are well supported in lessons, and their progress monitored so that their needs are effectively met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils are provided with good opportunities to reflect on their lives, their actions and their achievements. The school ensures that pupils understand right from wrong and that they are aware that people vary in their lifestyles and preferences.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Pupils work in a secure and positive environment where they feel happy and well supported. They are very well supervised at all times of the day and their progress and achievements are celebrated.

The school looks after its pupils and children well, and has high expectations that they will work hard by providing a curriculum which is challenging and interesting. There are some minor omissions of coverage in several National Curriculum subjects and pupils' progress is not consistently assessed and recorded. Parents are consulted widely about their own children and about broader school decisions. Arrangements for annual reviews are good; the majority of parents attend and are consulted about their children's education and the way the school works.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and senior staff provide very good role models for teaching and work effectively as a team to ensure the school runs efficiently. They have created a positive environment for learning where staff and pupils are valued but have not yet fully implemented successful monitoring procedures.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good. The governors are fully involved in the life of the school and provide good levels of support through their expertise. However, they are not yet fully involved in monitoring the work of the school
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school continues to investigate the best methods of identifying its strengths and weaknesses and has many good procedures in place. However, there are still inconsistencies in some of its procedures mainly because senior staff have too little opportunity to fulfil their monitoring responsibilities.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school's management of its finances is good and it uses its money wisely to promote the education and welfare of the pupils.

There are sufficient teachers and support assistants to ensure that pupils make good gains in learning and receive help when they need it. The accommodation is satisfactory overall but some areas are shared and there is no room for further expansion. The school ensures that all its pupils and children, regardless of their abilities, background or previous experiences, succeed well. The school provides a good range of resources to support teaching and learning. These are used effectively in lessons to stimulate pupils' thinking.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children like school • children make good progress • behaviour is good • teaching is good • they are kept well informed about their children's progress • they are comfortable when approaching the school • children are expected to work hard • school works closely with parents • school is well led and managed • school helps children to become more mature and responsible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the amount of work to be done at home • the range of activities outside lessons

Parents have the highest perceptions of the school and believe that 'every child has the chance to shine'. Inspection findings support the positive views of parents. A very few parents feel that the range of activities outside lessons could be improved. Inspection evidence does not support this view. With the Saturday Club and the range of trips and residential visits inspectors judge that the school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities for pupils. Inspectors do, however, agree with the parents' views that homework is not set consistently.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment but high quality teaching and good attention to pupils' individual learning needs mean that they make good progress in lessons. The oldest pupils, in Years 10 and 11, make very good progress in lessons. Therefore they are able to take a number of GCSE and Entry level examinations at the age of sixteen because teachers plan relevant and motivating tasks. It is difficult for the school to know over time precisely how much progress pupils have made because assessment and recording procedures are unsatisfactory in some subjects. Despite these weaknesses the indications from pupils themselves, staff and parents are that pupils achieve very well and by Year 11 they have made very good gains in English, mathematics, science and in their personal and social skills. When they leave the school they present as confident young people.

2. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, additional special educational needs, such as sensory impairments, and the very few pupils with English as an additional language all, achieve well. The knowledge that teachers have and use concerning the pupils' backgrounds, helps them to respond to the pupils' needs and to ensure that their lives are reflected in the materials and methods used in lessons. These strategies make learning meaningful to the pupils with additional needs, and their progress is in line with all other pupils.

3. The school has a good strategy for teaching literacy skills, which extends pupils' interest in books and their good progress in lessons. In the light of their learning difficulties and their prior experience, the pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and by Year 11 it is good. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening develop well throughout their time at the school and there are good examples of pupils being enabled to develop these skills in different subjects. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders enter the school with limited communication and their skills in communicating, speaking and listening are developing well. They are provided with a range of ways of supporting their communication, where this is appropriate, and some use for example, signs and symbols. The school now uses a good a range of texts to broaden pupils' horizons in literature and they provide a good challenge to developing reading skills. Pupils' achievements in writing are satisfactory. By the age of 14, some pupils write about books they have studied, showing understanding of the characters and developing use of vocabulary such as adjectives. The older pupils develop a range of writing styles, showing some understanding of writing for different purposes, such as letters, a diary and newspaper articles.

4. Pupils' achievements in Years 7 to 11 in drama are very good as a result of very good teaching which consistently builds their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils build up a variety of skills. By Year 9 they improvise a scene, using speech, mime, props and sound effects and by the end of Year 11 they develop and extend their ideas. For example, when studying Macbeth, they consider the characters in the play and improvise using modern speech as they think it would have been spoken by different characters.

5. An effective strategy for teaching numeracy skills means that pupils make good progress in lessons and use their skills in everyday tasks such as shopping. In science the pupils enjoy their practical work and deepen their understanding of basic

scientific principles, such as electricity or plant growth, through practical work. The pupils' achievements in personal social and health education are consistently very good, particularly in respect of their relationships with each other and their levels of maturity. The opportunities provided by the school in lessons and in other social times of the day are a major factor in the development of their self confidence.

6. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in ICT during lessons and their achievements over time are also satisfactory as they follow a broad and balanced subject curriculum. Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 when they follow an externally accredited course and their achievements are reflected in their success in Entry level examinations. However, the school does not exploit the use of new technology in a satisfactory way across the curriculum. Although pupils use ICT to search for information, for example on castles in history, there are many examples when such opportunities are missed. In mathematics, little use is made of computers for pupils to manipulate data or to format their work into charts and tables. The school does not provide pupils with enough planned access to ICT, through the Internet and CD ROMs, to reinforce and extend their learning in most subjects of the curriculum.

7. In physical education pupils of all abilities make good gains in learning throughout the school. They make good progress in their physical development and learn an increasing range of games skills and gymnastic abilities because of the opportunities teachers plan for pupils of differing abilities. Pupils show considerable determination in rising to the associated physical challenge, and have an extremely sensible, attitude to health and safety issues.

8. Overall, pupils' achievements in design and technology are at least satisfactory with the exception that pupils achieve well in Year 11 where their work reflects the whole disassembling, designing, making and evaluation process. Pupils consolidate and complete tasks independently, finding resources and discussing ideas with staff. They accurately paint and measure, follow instructions and use a narrow but suitable range of tools such as a jigsaw, file and lathe.

9. In religious education pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory. The youngest pupils listen attentively to stories, including many with a moral message from the Bible so that by the end of Year 6, they recall many of the Ten Commandments and are aware of what constitutes good and bad behaviour through this work. Secondary age pupils consolidate work on Christianity and the five other main religions.

10. In the humanities, primary aged pupils' achievements are good in both geography and history. In geography, pupils continue to make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of concepts as they move through the secondary department. A variety of resources, such as brochures, books, photographs, videos, and off-site visits are effectively used to enhance teaching and learning. Well-planned visits, reinforced through video clips and reference books, also support pupils' learning in history but secondary aged pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory in this regard.

11. Since the last inspection the school has successfully set and met targets for raising the level of pupils' achievements through the use of information derived from the 'P' scales. There are still areas where better assessment and planning would assist pupils to achieve more.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good throughout the school and their relationships and personal development are very good. They have been maintained well since the last inspection. The pupils' positive attitudes to learning continue to ensure that lessons are successful and, in over three-quarters of observations, the pupils' response was good or better.

13. Pupils show great enthusiasm for what they are asked to do and their attention to activities is a frequent feature of lessons, assemblies and break times. Pupils are greatly interested because teachers plan tasks that challenge and motivate them. They take great pride and enjoyment in producing good work and are keen to share their results with others as they demonstrated frequently during very high quality drama lessons by discussing and evaluating their work.

14. Behaviour is good and improves as pupils grow older, a view that is confirmed by parents. At all times of the day, pupils show that they can achieve very good levels of behaviour. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. In lessons, behaviour is consistently good and almost all pupils conform to high expectations even when not closely supervised. However, in two lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, a small number of pupils display challenging and disruptive behaviour.

15. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its policy of keeping the number of pupils excluded as low as possible. The very small numbers of pupils who are required to stay away from school reflect the insistence that incidence of continuously unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. During the inspection there was no evidence of bullying or lack of respect for school property.

16. Pupils form very good, constructive relationships with each other and with adults. They work co-operatively together, demonstrating that they will listen with interest to each other and try to understand the other person's point of view. For example, during a religious education lesson pupils were keen to say positive and kind things about each other. Pupils show genuine pleasure in the achievements of others as shown by the spontaneous applause for the dancing of a Year 10 girl during the upper school assembly. Virtually all pupils act in a mature and responsible way. They consistently demonstrate patience, tolerance and understanding for others.

17. Pupils' personal development is also very good. The school continues to provide a good range of opportunities for the pupils to show initiative and take responsibility and they demonstrate that the trust is well placed. From the earliest stages of their time in school, pupils make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development as they perform jobs within the classroom. As they progress through the school greater degrees of independence are encouraged. Older pupils act as monitors in an extensive number of activities around the school. The school council is an effective mechanism to enable pupils to have their voice heard.

18. Attendance has been improved and is now consistently good. Although the absence figures are accurate in total, a small amount of unjustified absence is wrongly classified as authorised. Punctuality has improved and now virtually all pupils are punctual and many arrive early. They come happily to school, eager and ready to learn, enabling the school to make a prompt and efficient start to the school day.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. The school has made significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection when one in seven lessons were unsatisfactory and only one in five lessons were very good or better. Teaching is now good overall, with considerable strengths in the specialist subject teaching for pupils in Years 10 and 11 especially in English, science, art, drama and physical education. This results in pupils gaining appropriate accreditation before they leave school. At the last inspection, the variability of teaching for different age groups and in certain subjects was noted. This is now less marked, although there remain a number of activities within lessons for pupils in Years 2 to 9 where teachers still have insufficiently demanding expectations of what pupils can achieve. In these, the pace and challenge of activities can be slow and as a result pupils' productivity and engagement reduces. The overall picture for the secondary age pupils is now greatly improved and teachers' management of pupils of all ages is consistently very good and, at times, excellent.

20. In the best lessons teachers have very good subject knowledge, are confident and enthusiastic in presenting information and show that they know and understand the abilities and needs of all the pupils very well. They plan and organise activities that match pupils' differing abilities and use questioning and discussion well to ensure that all the pupils are included and can contribute. Some teachers make very good use of computers to produce their own very well designed materials to support their teaching, but in the lessons which are less successful, worksheets provided for the whole class lack interest and cannot engage either the most or least able pupils. Overall, teachers are not making sufficient use of ICT in their teaching in a planned and consistent way across the school. Pupils do not have enough consistent opportunities to transfer and practise the skills they learn in their ICT lessons in other contexts, for example to improve the presentation of their work.

21. The school has worked hard to implement the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy and the impact of these in terms of improving lesson structure and pace and the pupils' positive responses to reading and mathematics, are now becoming clear. A recent training day for all staff was effective in sharing the best practice and extending it into the secondary classes.

22. English teaching is good overall and very good for Years 10 and 11. The best lessons are well planned, clearly linking the curriculum to the individual needs of children, who can then make progress against their individual targets. Pupils are told clearly what they are expected to do in the lessons.

23. A variety of strategies are used to meet the pupils' needs and interests. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders benefit from specialist teaching techniques, which help them to concentrate and improve their communication. Teachers set very small but incremental steps of learning for lower attaining pupils so that their achievements and effort are maximised. For higher attaining pupils these steps are increased so that the level of challenge is great and pupils have to work hard to succeed. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching for boys or girls or for any different groups of pupils. Teachers ensure that all are included in activities within lesson and that their attention is maximised. as well as the Lower attaining pupils gain pupils' attention and to help them to respond. For example, in a Year 3 class, pupils' attention and understanding of the story of the *Billy Goats Gruff* was enhanced by the use of puppets and of sound effects. Well-paced lessons, with a number of different activities, help to maintain pupils' attention.

24. In mathematics, the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is now good. In one very good primary lesson, the concept of fractions was described very well. Pupils then experienced real examples, by cutting food into halves and then quarters which reinforced their understanding. This was further extended by work in groups, which matched pupils' individual learning abilities very well.

25. For pupils aged 11-16 teaching is good, particularly for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. The staffs' knowledge of pupils' abilities and needs helps them set challenging targets for individuals. In all other classes teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour. Pupils listen to each other carefully during class discussions.

26. Teaching in science is strongest for the pupils and students in Years 7 to 11. Very clear learning objectives are shared with pupils and time is carefully planned to recap and check pupils' understanding at the end of each lesson and explain the next steps needed. Improved planning with the learning support assistants has increased the amount of practical activities and raised pupil' interest and their progress.

27. In Years 1 to 6, the teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. In the most effective lesson, the teacher's subject knowledge is good and explanations and answers to questions are very clear. Well-chosen resources illuminate the key activities and information about food chains. A good range of activities is provided to meet the wide range of ability the class. The teacher emphasises the importance of using the correct terminology and reinforce pupils' learning of new words and phrases, linking some of their literacy work to their activities in science. Where the same activity is planned for all the pupils the work is either too hard or too easy for some and their motivation and concentration is affected.

28. Teaching is also very good across the school in physical education and in art for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In the very best lessons, teaching inspires and motivates pupils and students. In a Year 11 drama lesson, pupils are challenged to develop and extend their ideas, for example, when studying Macbeth, they consider the characters in the play and improvise, using speech as they think it would have been spoken by different characters. The teacher carefully builds on ideas of using voice, movement and information about a character to improvise a scene. Very good understanding of the play is shown when pupils are able to transfer scenes from the play into a modern environment, considering ideas such as Lady Macbeth at the supermarket or hairdresser's. Because of the enthusiasm of the teachers and the ways in which pupils are helped to build on previous work, pupils are positive and enthusiastic, try very hard with all aspects of their work and achieve well.

29. A notable strength of the specialist teaching of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is the development of their skills in formulating and communicating ideas, taking part in sustained and thoughtful discussion and evaluating their own work and that of others.

30. In art lessons for pupils in Years 10 and 11 the evaluation of their own work and that of each other is a pronounced, effective feature of good teaching. Teaching across the school in PE is very good overall. In an excellent lesson for Year 7 - 9 pupils specialist teaching identified and used relevant techniques for javelin, shot putt, sprint and relay. The demonstration of techniques and the very effective learning support helped pupils do their very best and measure their achievements against their own personal best performances.

31. Many of the satisfactory lessons represent a balance of strengths – in the knowledge and management of pupils, for example, and weaknesses such as lack of pace, challenge and match between planned activities and the full range of ability in a class. More effective strategies are needed to monitor and improve subject teaching, and a key weakness in many subjects is the use of assessment of pupils' progress to plan lessons that will improve their learning and progress.

32. The limited records that many teachers keep of previous work means that although they make judgements about progress there is little convincing evidence to support them. Good practice exists in the school but has not yet been extended into an approach that is used consistently throughout the school. Where specialist teaching markedly raises standards for older pupils such as in art and science, the school should consider how best to extend this to ensure that pupils of primary age receive a strong and consistent foundation in the subjects by the time they finish their primary schooling.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

33. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. The school provides pupils with a good range of learning opportunities, which gives them a broad experience of all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. At present, there are some gaps in the curriculum for design and technology, and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their ICT skills in different subjects. At Key Stage 4, there are now good opportunities to follow accredited courses, which is a good improvement from the time of the last inspection, when few such courses were available. These now include GCSE art and design and drama, together with entry level Certificate of Achievement examinations in English, mathematics, ICT, and design and technology, science and geography.

34. Since the last inspection, progress has also been made in the planning of schemes of work, which set out what pupils will learn over the course of several years. These have now been developed in most subjects, although there are some gaps as in history in Years 7 to 9 and ICT. The planning is based on the programmes of study in the National Curriculum and, in Years 9 to 11, on the outlines for the accredited courses. These schemes of work now provide teachers with a useful structure on which to base their termly planning, ensuring that pupils have a good balance in their opportunities for learning.

35. The provision for pupils' special educational needs is also good. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 follow a curriculum based on that for pupils at the Foundation Stage which gives good opportunities for them to develop their early learning skills. The curriculum in the classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder is appropriately organised both to give access to the National Curriculum and to developing pupils' communication and social skills. Since the last inspection, there has been good development of the ways in which pupils are helped to communicate with access to

signing and symbols. A recent and useful addition is the use of a picture exchange system to help pupils express their wishes.

36. The school has made good progress with the implementation of the National Literacy and National Numeracy strategies for pupils from Years 1 to 6. The National Literacy strategy has also been introduced into Years 7 to 9. These strategies are being well adapted to meet the needs of pupils. Staff are encouraged to promote the development of communication, language and literacy across the curriculum but, at present, this practice is inconsistent. While there are good examples, such as the display of key words in science and the introduction of new words supported by flash cards in geography, opportunities are sometimes missed because not all teachers plan to develop these aspects.

37. The school provides very good opportunities to enrich the curriculum. A range of visits gives support to pupils' learning. For example, recent visits have included Colchester Castle as part of the history curriculum, and Highwoods Country Park and a nature reserve for science and environmental activities. Opportunities for extra curricular activities are very good within the limitations imposed by travelling difficulties. There is a very good choice of lunchtime clubs, for example computers, and for organised games such as football and cricket. A monthly 'Saturday club' gives pupils and their brothers and sisters opportunities to meet one another. From the age of eight, pupils are able to take part in residential experiences to places such as Eton Dorney, Scarborough and the Lake District. Within this wide variety of activities and visits, the pupils' experiences in learning and social development are broadened.

38. The school does all that it can to ensure that pupils are included in all of its activities based on a sound equal opportunities policy which is implemented by all staff. Pupils with additional special needs, such as sensory impairments or physical difficulties, are well supported by school staff or by visiting therapists. The team of staff who give support to the school include physiotherapists, occupational therapists, visiting specialist teachers and medical personnel. Annual reviews are well organised and meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. Parents are fully consulted and involved in all decisions concerning their children. As they get older and more responsible, the pupils too are involved in assessing their own progress and making their views known about future provision.

39. Provision for personal, social and health education is good for primary age pupils, and satisfactory with some good features for pupils in Years 7-11. The programme meets the statutory requirements and includes sex education, drugs awareness and citizenship. The programme for younger pupils is well planned, but for pupils in Years 7 to 11 it is variable. This is developed around a carousel of activities which includes citizenship, careers, health education and self-esteem. The health education modules are particularly strong, and the school has recently extended this to include parenting skills.

40. Provision for careers and work related education is very good and gives pupils many opportunities to plan for the future. Pupils from Year 9 have a programme of careers education which focuses pupils' attention effectively on their life ahead. There are close links with the local careers adviser who visits the school on a regular basis to interview pupils, to attend transition reviews and to participate in some lessons. Pupils build up a good record of achievement including personal statements and a variety of certificates. In both Years 10 and 11, pupils undertake work experience for two weeks which provides very effective opportunities to learn more about the world of work and what might be expected of them in the workplace.

Pupils are well prepared for this experience, and their work is carefully monitored, and information about this is added to their records of achievement. Older pupils also attend local colleges on a part time basis and take part in taster courses which are very effective in helping them to decide what courses they might like to follow when they leave school.

41. The school has very good links with the community, which make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Many of the curriculum related visits which pupils undertake are within the local area, and local businesses are used to provide pupils with work experience, for example, supermarkets, a hairdresser, old people's homes and the nature reserve. A local business provided support for the development of the school's sensory garden which is regularly used to extend pupils' learning experiences. A strong and effective link has been formed with Colchester football club which allows pupils to receive regular training. These sessions help pupils mix with a wide range of adults and have a positive impact on their social skills and confidence. Visitors from the community are involved in talking to pupils, and helping them understand how other people live. For example, the local vicar is a regular visitor and takes some assemblies. The school has recently obtained the Schools' Curriculum Award for the links which it has built up with the community in support of pupils' learning.

42. The school's links with mainstream and other special schools are particularly good and enable staff to share ideas and give and receive advice and training. Teachers from Market Field are increasingly involved in helping mainstream schools to meet the special educational needs of their pupils. The school has also taken part in joint training with a local secondary school, and the headteacher and deputy headteacher maintain close connections with all the authority's schools and are active members of the inclusion steering committee. Several pupils from Market Field undertake work experience at a local primary school by working alongside younger children and pupils from local secondary schools carry out similar tasks during their work experience at Market Field. Pupils from a nearby secondary school are spending some time at Market Field as part of their A-level psychology course. There are links with other special schools, for a wide range of sports including football, cricket, hockey and netball. The school has also developed links with schools in Germany, France and Switzerland and e-mail links with schools in Australia and a partnership with a school in the Gambia. However, opportunities for pupils to study part time within local schools are, at present, limited. One pupil attends a secondary school for GCSE science and another attends the same school, mainly for social benefits, but apart from these examples there are no opportunities for social inclusion, even at primary level. This situation has already been recognised by the school for further development in its strategic planning. Links have also been formed with local further education colleges. In addition to the taster courses, pupils in Year 11 spend one morning a week undertaking a variety of vocational and creative courses, again providing useful experiences which pupils can consider when choosing post school courses.

43. The school makes good provision for pupils to develop their understanding of others and to deepen their experience and understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural matters. There are good arrangements for pupils' spiritual development. School assemblies afford good opportunities for pupils to sing and reflect. In religious education lessons teachers use artefacts very effectively to reinforce the pupils' experience and understanding of many faiths. Pupils also have opportunities to visit the local church. They take an active part in assemblies and show a real respect and admiration for pupils who are involved in role-play or receiving praise for achievements in work or behaviour. During the inspection two senior pupils

presented as part of their assembly an energetic dance routine developed through their own initiative. Other pupils showed their appreciation with spontaneous applause.

44. The very good relationships that exist in the school and the work in personal, social and health education and in religious education lessons successfully promote very good moral development. Pupils are encouraged to be sensitive to the needs of other people, honest with themselves and to distinguish right from wrong. The praise and support given by staff raise pupils' self-esteem and pride in their learning. This encourages honesty, appropriate behaviour and moral development. Pupils are also encouraged to show initiative and accept some responsibilities. Pupils are given the opportunity to discuss the meaning of right and wrong in lessons. They know that fighting and damaging other peoples' property is wrong. Older, higher attaining pupils are able to make decisions about themselves in terms of responsibilities and independent living skills.

45. Pupils' social development is very good. Staff provide a very good range of activities to support them. For example, pupils make many visits outside school to shops, local churches and sports facilities. Pupils from mainstream schools mix well with the pupils during placements at the school and pupils make good friends and enjoy the good range of lunchtime activities, Saturday morning and breakfast clubs. Pupils elect members of the school council who meet each month with members of staff to discuss improvements to school routines.

46. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils cultural development with good opportunities to recognise and understand their own cultural values. They visit Colchester, the local community and contrasting areas further afield such as the activity centres in Windsor and North Wales, which provide pupils with new ideas and experiences. Activities to aid pupils' ability to appreciate cultural diversity and an understanding of other peoples' values and beliefs are satisfactory but not routinely planned as part of the whole curriculum. However, wider cultural experiences are made available to pupils with reference to religious festivals of Ramadan and Divali in religious education. Geography and history lessons also provide pupils with a range of information about life and customs in other countries, with a perception of previous times and the effects of world events such as war on people around the world. Festivals and celebrations, music from other cultures, theme days and visits to France and other parts of the UK also contribute well to the cultural development of pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

47. The school promotes the welfare, health and safety of the pupils very effectively in a warm and secure environment. This atmosphere encourages pupils to learn and develop as individuals and promotes their awareness of citizenship issues. Staff continue to know their pupils well and have a very clear idea of their personal strengths and weaknesses; they use this knowledge well to offer pupils effective counselling and support.

48. Pupils benefit from the high quality support offered by the wide range of specialist external agencies such as therapists or specialist visiting teachers. Good levels of co-operation and consultation ensure that the most effective use is made of their time to support the pupils' needs. Teachers continue to be sensitive to the needs of the pupils and consistently monitor their personal development and their ability to cope on a day-to-day basis.

49. The school's procedures for recording pupils' academic progress in the short and long-term are inconsistent. The quality of assessment ranges from very good to unsatisfactory. Procedures for formally recording pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory. Insufficient information is recorded for teachers to plan future tasks and targets for learning. Where assessment and recording are good, specific details of what the pupils know, understand and can do, provide a systematic and accurate record. The link between consecutive records and new targets for pupils' learning are then clear and the targets themselves are expressed as specific achievable tasks.

50. In the best practice, teachers incorporate well-established procedures for identifying new learning into their lesson plans and pupils' achievements before they are forgotten. The pupils' targets are generally well addressed in lessons but vary in value because many lack sufficient focus on achievable, measurable outcomes. Because assessment procedures and the recording of pupils' achievements have not been fully monitored by senior staff, omissions and unsatisfactory recording are a feature of a significant number of pupils' files. For example, some teachers have confused the 'criteria for success' with what the pupils have already done rather than what they should achieve, so that the opportunity to identify how the pupils will achieve a task and achieve a skill is not identified. The targets set for pupils are often too vague so that the precise amount of quality of work expected from them and the way in which they will progress is not specified. Examples include 'hopefully to progress to Stage 6 continuing to work through Stage 5', 'working things out for himself', 'weighing and measuring will be included', 'develop knowledge of links believes multiplication and division'. Where targets are more specific, pupils' achievements are easier to quantify, for example, 'use return and space bar when setting out a poem or a list'. The link between the targets and pupils' individual education plans is not consistently secure over time, in some records there is a gap between individual education plans so they jump from one task to another without a clear judgement on whether, or how well, the earlier work has been achieved.

51. Many pupils' reading records simply record the pages read and include such comments as 'good' or 'showed interest'. Very few reading records include detail of what the pupils was actually able to understand or predict about the narrative or give specific difficulties to be addressed such as breathing sounds. There are no consistent guidelines for this area of recording and because several people may contribute to each pupils' record, an overall judgement on progress is unclear and frequently based on the number of books read rather than the pupil's achievement in understanding, decoding and using text to further their studies.

52. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, assessment and recording have improved over time and, despite some of the weaknesses outlined above, are satisfactory overall. In a significant number of other subjects such as religious education, design and technology, geography, history and music, procedures are unsatisfactory. However, there are some areas of very good practice in assessment and recording, mainly in classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and in the majority of Foundation Stage documentation for children under five. Where assessment is particularly good, the smallest steps of achievement are clearly identified, as are spontaneous, and sometimes unexpected, examples of progress or personal development – such as in the Foundation Stage where a child handled an insect for the very first time.

53. Older pupils are increasingly involved in assessing their own progress and in the best lessons the use of the final few minutes to review the work covered helps pupils identify exactly what they have learnt and how well they have achieved. Higher attaining pupils, particularly benefit from reflecting on their activities although few can

yet make an objective judgement on their level of achievement and whether they could have done better.

54. The statutory procedures for assessment are good and provision is good for the use of standardised tests, SATs and the recording of achievements towards accredited courses such as GCSE at Year 11. The school has also used various newly published schemes for identifying with more precision its pupils' achievements on a whole school or individual basis. It has not yet settled on a cohesive, straightforward and consistent format to be used by all staff.

55. Annual reports to parents are frequently very detailed but there is not always sufficient recorded evidence to support what is written. For example, the reading records mostly lack sufficient detail to inform pupils and staff on actual skills learnt or to identify a focus for future work.

56. The school's arrangements for the annual review of pupils' statements and meeting the requirements of the Code of Practice are good. Parents are fully consulted in the targets set for their children and are encouraged to voice their views fully during reviews.

57. The school has identified the improvement of assessment and recording procedures as a focus in its strategic planning but, nevertheless, has not fully addressed the main weaknesses identified in its previous inspection report. Pupils' experiences and progress are built into a record of achievement over time which is valued by pupils and parents as a reminder of the pupils' time at school.

58. Child protection issues continue to be handled effectively. Most staff understand their roles and responsibilities and are aware of the need for vigilance and the steps to take if suspicions are aroused although there is no formal training programme for the benefit of newly appointed learning support assistants.

59. The school continues to have effective systems to monitor and promote attendance. Registers are marked speedily, correctly and efficiently at the start of the school day and after lunch. All absences are properly noted and contact made with parents to explain the absence. Attendance figures are correctly aggregated in total although a small amount of unjustified absence is wrongly classified as authorised. The school has introduced effective strategies to improve attendance which has resulted in attendance rising by 2% last year to nearly 94%. Aggregated figures are properly reported to parents in the governors' annual report to parents and in the prospectus. Behaviour policy is consistently applied by all members of staff who were seen to pre-empt incidents of possible misbehaviour with firm, calm intervention maintaining good control.

60. Management of pupils with behavioural problems continues to be very good building positively on the very good relationships in the school. Staff provide very good role models in promoting high standards of good behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are in place. The consequences of unacceptable behaviour have been made clear and are understood by all pupils.

61. Health and safety is promoted effectively in the school. Potential hazards are identified and remedial action taken as necessary. All staff members are safety conscious and watch for the health and safety of the pupils as demonstrated in the Year 10 science lesson in which pupils were given clear guidance on the safe use of

scalpels for dissection purposes. Staff work hard to create a safe and secure environment in which the wellbeing of pupils is promoted effectively.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

62. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. They believe that it has many strong features and that staff expect their children to work hard. Parents value the way they are informed about their children's progress.

63. Parents at the meeting were glowing in their praise of the headteacher. They feel that he makes sure that 'every child is allowed to shine'. Inspection evidence confirms these positive views of parents.

64. Parents and other adults are encouraged to involve themselves in the life of the school and they continue to respond positively. They help around the school as well as on the school trips. There is an extremely active Friends of the School association whose members raises substantial amounts of finance in support of the school. They also help out in practical ways by accompanying pupils on school trips and at school functions. The school values highly the contributions made by parents which enhance their children's learning and personal development.

65. Information to parents is good overall. The school prospectus is clear and comprehensive. It gives parents a proper overview of the school's values and its curriculum. The governors' annual report to parents is very friendly and encourages parents to read it. Reports to parents are of good quality and give much good information about what the children know and can do. They also contain information about general areas for improvement. Specific targets are included in the individual education plans and annual reviews. Parents are fully informed about meetings to review these areas. Parents consulted during the inspection are strongly supportive of the school and its beneficial effect on their children's work and behaviour.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66. Since the last inspection the senior leadership group has built on the foundations of the work it had just begun at that time. The roles and responsibilities within this management team are clearly established and the headteacher and his two deputy headteachers run the school effectively and provide very good role models as practising teachers. The school runs very effectively on a day-to-day basis. The commitment to meeting the needs of all its pupils is at the heart of the school's work and is very well promoted by the senior leadership group and the governors. There is a very good atmosphere for learning and all staff share a sense of purpose and commitment. Teachers and support assistants work well together to promote pupils' learning and benefit from specific training, for example, working with pupils with autistic spectrum disorders or in dealing with challenging behaviour.

67. The school has identified relevant priorities for raising standards particularly in regard to strategies for identifying its strengths and weaknesses. For example, senior staff have implemented a programme of classroom observation in order to open up a dialogue with teachers about the effectiveness of teaching and learning. However, this work is not yet fully effective because insufficient time has been allocated to enable the full programme to take place. Subject co-ordinators teach almost all lessons leaving less than one hour a week for subject management tasks. In the past subject co-ordinators have been allocated sufficient time to monitor new initiatives such as the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Currently, however, the subject co-ordinators are unable to provide the senior management

group with unequivocal evidence about the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and recording. One result of the limited opportunity for monitoring teaching is the number and quality of the lesson observations recorded. At the outset those teachers who do observe, took a suitably supportive and encouraging approach to lesson observation in order to gain recognition of the value of shared perceptions and debate. However, the school has scarcely moved past this point so that the majority of lesson observations, whilst supportive to the teaching do not provide clear statements on weaknesses or clear judgement overall about the quality of teaching and learning. Both deputy headteachers carry a heavy teaching commitment of over 20 weekly lessons. Whilst the very good teaching models provided by these senior staff are beneficial to the pupils, the time pressure to complete the other important facets of their role is inadequate and unsatisfactory. The senior leadership group is consequently unaware of some weaknesses in the school's recording, for example, the recording of pupils' progress over time. In some cases the information provided in pupils' reports is not based on firm and concrete evidence, but rather on the teachers' own recall or reference to informal notes.

68. The governing body is effective in supporting the school. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are using their own particular skills and strengths to work in partnership with staff to raise standards. Although governors are frequent visitors to school and have very effective systems for gathering information, they are not yet fully involved in monitoring classroom practice. However, they are fully supportive of the pupils and their parents and together with the headteacher and staff there is a determination to meet the increasing needs of pupils and parents to build upon the school's high standards.

69. The school's procedures for performance management are good and have helped all staff reflect on their own work. The school sets high standards and is currently investigating a wide range of strategies in order to identify the best method of setting targets for whole school improvement. The school makes every effort to secure the best prices for services and equipment. The governing body and chair of finance fulfil their statutory duties well and have a good and clear understanding of the school's finances.

70. The school has sufficient teachers to meet the needs of the students and most of the demands of the curriculum. However, there is a reliance on part-time and supply teachers to ensure that the school is up to strength. Although few staff have expertise in specific subjects, this does not impact on the quality of teaching and learning because of the school's commitment to ongoing training for teachers and classroom assistants. However, there is no design and technology teacher and no subject leader for history at secondary level, and this does affect the quality of the curriculum in these subjects. All staff have participated in the government-funded computer skills courses, although a number of staff still lack confidence in using computers. Literacy and numeracy training is up to date and satisfactory, which is reflected in the development of these subjects throughout the school. Induction procedures for new or temporary staff are satisfactory so that they are immediately able to fulfil their roles effectively.

71. Within the space restrictions of the school, the accommodation has improved since the previous report and is now satisfactory. There is a newly constructed unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders in Years 7 – 9 with further plans in place to build a similar provision for sixteen-year-olds. The designated science and technology rooms, which are combined, are inadequate for the teaching of either subject to pupils in Years 7 to 11. There is insufficient classroom space for the youngest pupils, and the hall, which is used as a dining area and a gymnasium, is

also used as a thoroughfare to other parts of the school, which frequently interrupts lessons. The new food technology room is well equipped and the small but pleasant library is well stocked with a good range of quality books and study areas. It is used effectively for individual work with the pupils such as for reading tuition.

72. Overall, there is a bright and pleasant atmosphere, with attractive posters, information, photographs and displays of pupils' work which boosts their self esteem and confidence. The standards of cleanliness and maintenance are very good and provide visitors with a positive view of a happy school which is well cared for by the premises manager and his staff. Externally, the play areas provide a good range of play structures, and a delightful sensory garden which provides a useful environment for scientific investigation of plants and insects as well as a quiet corner for reflection. The school has the use of an adjacent recreation field, and makes good use of this for football and athletics so that pupils enjoy the full entitlement to the physical education curriculum.

73. Financial procedures are well managed by the school's bursar, who ensures that all ordering, administration and stock control procedures are carefully followed. The level of resources to support the pupils' learning is good. The school makes every effort to secure the best prices for services and equipment so that pupils are able to benefit from the best techniques and the most suitable equipment to meet their needs. The governing body and chair of finance fulfil their statutory duties well and have a good and clear understanding of the school's finances. Although the budget carry over is higher than average, this is part of the school improvement plan, with monies allocated towards further developing the provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum. The school provides good value for money.

74. The headteacher, senior staff and governors share a firm belief in the value of special education and the future of the school. Many of their ideas have been encapsulated in a 'vision' document, which has been shared, with several local schools. The governors have taken a genuine interest in the life of the school and know the pupils and staff well. The school's omissions in identifying its current strengths and weaknesses, will need to be addressed as a priority. However, the current plans proposed for the future of the school are ambitious but well focussed upon the needs of pupils with autism.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

75. The headteacher and governors should ensure all pupils' progress is fully and consistently recorded
(Paragraphs: 1, 32, 49, 50, 51, 117, 139, 148)
76. Improve the targets for pupils' learning by:
- setting individual targets, which identify precisely what each pupil should learn and by when
 - including details of how the pupil will be helped and by whom
 - keeping regular and consistent records which clearly identify the pupils' steps of learning
 - assess pupils' progress at regular intervals and set new challenges whenever appropriate
 - monitor the effectiveness of all target setting and pupil progress in order to seek further improvement
- (Paragraphs: 11, 31, 49, 50 – 54, 69, 113, 149, 165, 171, 175, 176)
77. The headteacher and governors should:
- Review the roles and responsibilities of senior staff and subject co-ordinators so that they have sufficient time to implement agreed procedures for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- (Paragraphs: 67 –69, 100, 129)
78. The school should also address the following, less important issue:
- Increase opportunities for pupils to reinforce and develop their skill in ICT by regularly identifying opportunities for them to use computers and other technical resources in all lessons where appropriate.
(Paragraphs: 20, 159, 165)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	114
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	132

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	10	26	35	38	2	0	0
Percentage	9	23	32	34	2	0	0

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	123
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	31

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.3

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	3
White	119
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.6
Average class size	8

Education support staff: YR – Y11

Total number of education support staff	32
Total aggregate hours worked per week	763

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	1043470
Total expenditure	1040033
Expenditure per pupil	9124
Balance brought forward from previous year	119330
Balance carried forward to next year	122767

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	123
Number of questionnaires returned	40

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	29	0	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	68	27	5	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	46	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	36	8	6	17
The teaching is good.	73	27	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	68	30	2	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	90	10	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	27	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	88	12	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	88	12	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	71	27	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	32	8	2	7

Inspectors agree with the parents' views about the strengths of the school and that there are inconsistent arrangements for homework. However, because of the difficulties over transport and the long distances some pupils travel, inspectors believe that the school provides a very good range of activities out side of lessons. These include a monthly Saturday club in which members of the pupils' families can participate.

There were too few pupils on roll for their results to be reported formally. However, the following results illustrate the pupils' success at the end of Year 11.

GCSE drama: 1 pupil gained grade B, 2 pupil gained grade C and 2 grade D.

GCSE art 1 pupil gained grade C and 1 grade D

From Years 9 – 11 pupils have achieved success in entry level examinations in ICT, literacy, numeracy, science, technology and geography. 3 pupils gained level 3 certification in English, and 4 in mathematics with up to twelve gaining level 2 awards in a variety of subjects.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

79. During the inspection there were eight children under five attending Foundation Stage classes. The school has built upon the high standards found at the last inspection with good teaching in half of lessons, outstanding teaching in one with three satisfactory lessons. In the very best teaching children show curiosity and are able to work independently, behave very well and enjoy taking part in a wide variety of activities all of which are well matched to their needs and interests. As a result the children quickly gain in confidence and ability and by the age of five are ready to enter the first year of formal education. Their communication skills are then sufficiently well developed to support their learning in all the subjects of the National Curriculum. The high quality teaching and the good gains children make in their learning are consistent in all subject areas with no significant differences between the achievements of boys or girls or for those from different backgrounds. The school has successfully put into place the latest curriculum requirements for the Foundation Stage and has introduced assessment strategies that identify clear pathways for learning. The co-ordinator is currently seeking ways to identify more clearly the progress made by the children in order to gather data on the children's overall success and achievements. Staff are continually seeking to improve the ways in which they identify the strengths and weaknesses of their work.

COMMUNICATION LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

80. Promoting high standards of communication is a fundamental tool in developing the children's personal skills. Teaching and support are very good and help children to understand the need to listen and to interact with adults. The youngest children confidently express their preferred activities and very soon learn to add the 'please' and 'thank you'. Staff provide excellent role models. Teachers and support assistants encourage the children to communicate by asking questions with confidence and competence. They use their skills very well to challenge and extend the children's responses by asking them 'how' they did things or 'why' they like something. All staff are conscious of the language difficulties experienced by many of the children and they try hard to compensate for this by flooding them with language and opportunities whenever they can. For example, the staff join in sharing their ideas in circle time and expect children to do the same. This simple strategy helps children to define their ideas and begin to justify the underlying reasons for their choices.

81. Foundation Stage classrooms provide a language-rich source for the children's development of communication, English and literacy. All displays included basic, but relevant, text as labelling or explanation. There are many opportunities for children to learn from displays by searching for a word, character or their own name. The staff have many examples of printed materials near to hand which the children can pick up and examine. A recent introduction has been the use of a picture exchange system whereby each pupil uses a picture to help him or her select a preferred toy or activity such as a slinky spring or a bubble toy. Literacy sessions are well planned and provide all children with opportunities to improve their listening skills and understand how books work and how illustrations support narrative. For example, children follow the text as the adult reads, and they enjoy watching as puppets act out the story of the 'The Enormous Turnip'. Few are yet able to read the actual words from the text such as 'pull' or 'turnip' but they listen to the teacher

carefully and then increase their English vocabulary. These opportunities for working with words provide children with good opportunities for developing the very earliest stages of reading. Children respond very well to these opportunities and can sometimes be seen rehearsing quietly the events of a story they have been told, particularly when they are drawing their own illustrations.

Personal, social and emotional development

82. In personal, social and educational development many children are developing well in their acquisition of socialisation skills and are successfully making the transition from home to school. Teaching is very good and helps children to relate to adults and each other and, as a result, they are learning to take turns, which sometimes involves waiting. They show increasing patience at taking turns and can be seen watching and listening to others as they anticipate their own turn. Staff are very vigilant and observe the children carefully so that they can comment on their activities and relationships and provide parents and carers with detailed examples of their activities.

83. A major strength in personal and social education is the independence that staff encourage many children to show. When they need help with a task they are quick to ask but all are able to do some tasks unaided. For example, they pick up items from the floor without being asked or choose a book they would like to look at.

Mathematical development

84. Teaching is good in mathematics and adults prepare many activities which promote the children's understanding of the use of number. Higher attaining children can count to over nine and often practise use of numbers when counting the characters in a book or singing number songs. All staff are rigorous in ensuring that children understand the relationship between the sign for '2' (the numeric symbol) and '2' objects and they reinforce these concepts at every opportunity using dice, cards and pictures. Higher attaining children are developing their understanding of numbers sequences, turning number cards to illustrate that nine comes after eight.

85. All children enjoy an activity to differentiate between 'the same' and 'different'. Most have carefully looked at the butterflies attached to the white board before deciding which one is the same as the one they are holding.

86. All children quickly develop a good sense of shape and many can recognise common shapes such as circle and triangle because teachers use every opportunity to reinforce their understanding. For example, one pupil, at the earliest stages of recording, immediately tried to change the pattern of his 'scribbling' when the teacher asked him to try some 'round shapes'. Most children know the colours and are therefore able to use this knowledge when colouring and painting on pages on the computer.

87. By the time they reach the last term of reception, children explain their work through sign, increasingly show they can make comparisons between other children's work and their own pointing out the similarities and differences, for example in colour or shape. This helps the children to share their ideas with others and to express their ideas with confidence.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

88. Teachers plan good opportunities to promote children's knowledge of the world around them and they experience a wide range of opportunities and make good progress overall. The children's abilities in ICT are not so well advanced as few opportunities were seen during the inspection. However, staff make very good use of the school's sensory garden and as they tell stories they 'discover' carefully placed insects, such as a spider or a centipede. Back in the classroom the children take a lively interest in watching the insects settle around a glass-topped box. Several are sufficiently brave to let a spider or centipede walk across their hands and are praised by the staff. Most children are beginning to trace or copy over the letters of their names and some higher attaining children can identify letters which are the same. Children enjoy using a range of materials.

Physical development

89. Children develop their physical skills very well in formal lessons and during opportunities for play within their own play area. Within the outside area they benefit both from formal teaching in lessons and less formal, unstructured activities. Children also enjoy moving around play equipment and investigating how to use a range of apparatus. During trips out of school their physical endurance is appropriately challenged when, for example, they visit the local village.

90. The curriculum also provides good opportunities for children to gain confidence in the water and begin to swim but it was not possible to see this during the inspection. Within the classroom, teachers plan other effective activities to challenge children's thinking and physical effort. Overall children's progress is good; they respond well because they enjoy the activities, as they are well planned and motivating.

Creative development

91. Staff plan many good opportunities for children to develop their creativity through many practical activities. They also enjoy using a range of materials such as glue sticks, scissors and paper which they stick on a relevant model. At various points of the day the children sing action songs to mark significant activities such as the beginning and end of the day.

92. The environment in all the areas of the department promotes interest and learning. There are many pictures and illustrations which link with work the children are currently studying and many opportunities for them to increase their sense of identity by seeing their names on rotas and timetables. Teachers use these well to help children understand the passage of time during the day so that they know when to expect playtime, lunch or home time. Overall teaching is good with particular strengths in the staff's understanding of how to develop the children's communication and early listening skills. Their management of the children is very good so that their behaviour is good and they understand what is expected of them.

ENGLISH

93. The provision for English, and the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in Years 10 and 11 have all improved since the last inspection. Pupils' achievements in English, in relation to their prior attainment and to their targets, are satisfactory by Years 4, 7 and 9. By Year 11, it is good. Progress in lessons is often good. Pupils

take GCSE Drama and last year seven pupils entered of whom two gained a grade C and five gained grades E and F. In the last two years, of the 17 pupils who took the certificate of achievement in English, 3 gained a Level 1 pass grade, 12 a Level 2 merit and two pupils gained a Level 3 distinction.

94. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening develop well throughout their time at the school. Younger pupils are encouraged to listen carefully and most are able to listen attentively to adults reading to them. By the end of Year 2, many answer questions about what has been read to them, some using single words or phrases, while others speak more fluently using simple sentences, their responses showing that they have understood what has been read to them. Lower attaining pupils name objects around them. They carry out simple instructions. By Year 6, pupils continue to develop these skills, and many are able to hold conversations about the books which they read, explaining why they do or do not enjoy them. By Year 9, pupils are able to make use of these skills in a variety of contexts, for example, in discussions in a personal, social and health education lesson about what makes people good to know. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils take part in discussions and conversations, showing good understanding of language and an interesting vocabulary, although some lower attaining pupils have limited understanding of vocabulary. Pupils make progress with developing specific aspects of language such as opposites and comparisons. They are able to use their skills in a variety of situations, for example in discussing their preparations for college.

95. Many pupils with autistic spectrum disorders enter the school with limited communication and their skills in speaking (communicating) and listening are developing well. They are provided with a range of ways of supporting their communication, where this is appropriate. For example, some use signs, symbols and a picture exchange system to communicate their thoughts and wishes. Pupils gradually learn to recognise symbols for the different activities during the day, and some use symbol exchange to remind them of tasks to be completed. The development of communication skills is very well supported by the school's speech and language therapists who work both in classes and with groups of pupils developing their understanding of language and of alternative forms of communication. The school benefits from the advice of a speech and language therapist who is a specialist in working with pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.

96. Younger pupils begin to develop pre-reading skills, looking at picture books, listening to, and enjoying stories. By the end of Year 2, many pupils know where to start reading a book, and that print has a meaning. Most begin to recognise initial letter sounds, and the names of the characters in their reading scheme books, while the higher attaining are building up knowledge of the most commonly used words. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils can read simple texts such as those in the reading scheme, and follow the text of 'big books' being read in class, such as 'Rome and the Romans'. Higher attaining pupils join in with reading the text, and with taking turns to read aloud a class reading book or from a play. They further develop their knowledge of common words and of the use of phonic skills to break down words they do not know. By Year 9, pupils talk about the plots of the books which they have chosen to read and say whether they have enjoyed the book, whether it is funny or sad. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils read with some understanding. For example, they are able to read newspaper articles and answer questions about them. They show understanding of the texts which they are reading as a class, such as 'Buddy' and are able to demonstrate this by writing letters and newspaper articles linked to the text.

97. Younger pupils develop pre-writing skills, such as mark making. By Year 2, many pupils copy their names, either over or under an adult's writing, while the lower attaining pupils trace over words with their hands held by an adult. Some dictate sentences to adults, for example, describing a picture they have drawn, then copy under the sentence. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils form letters correctly and evenly and some develop cursive writing. They write for a variety of reasons such as describing visits and writing their autobiographies. They begin to record their work in other subjects, for example, in writing briefly about scientific experiments. Other pupils progress from copying to writing their own sentences, developing even letter formation and increasing the amount that they record. Higher attaining pupils progress from writing over to copying under words. Pupils make use of opportunities to present their work using word processing. By Year 9, some pupils have developed good fine motor skills, and are able to write independently, while other pupils are still at a stage of copying over or under words. They develop sentence structure when writing about books they have read, and show some understanding of writing for different purposes, for example, letters, a diary and newspaper articles. Higher attaining pupils write about books such as "Danny the Champion of the World" showing understanding of the characters and developing use of vocabulary such as adjectives. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 write about books they are reading and develop a range of writing styles for such items as letters and newspapers. For lower attaining pupils, writing is limited and sentence structure is weak, though pupils use some basic punctuation.

98. The teaching of English is good overall throughout the school but ranges from satisfactory to very good. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good. The best lessons are well planned, clearly linking the curriculum to the individual needs of children, who then make good progress against their individual targets. Pupils are told clearly what they are expected to do in the lessons. A variety of strategies are used to gain pupils' attention and to help them to respond. For example, in a Year 3 class, pupils' attention and understanding of the story of the Billy Goats Gruff was enhanced by the use of puppets and sound effects. Well-paced lessons, with a number of different activities, help to maintain pupils' attention. For example, in a Year 7 class, a lively session on letter sounds led on to the pupils analysing how the text was constructed. Pupils were challenged and responded well, developing their reading skills at appropriate levels. The very good relationships which exist between pupils and adults give pupils the confidence to attempt work which they find difficult. Pupils are encouraged to work together in pairs and groups, and they respond positively to these opportunities. In some classes, good use is also made of display to support pupils' learning, as well as to celebrate achievements. There are displays related to the books which classes are reading which help to remind pupils of characters and stories. Lessons are well rounded off by discussion of what has been covered in the lesson, providing a good way of consolidating pupils' knowledge. Less progress is made when teachers do not plan in detail and do not provide work which is appropriate to the individual needs of the pupils. There is a great deal of reliance on the published worksheets which accompany the reading scheme, and these are not always suitable for all the pupils in a class. When tasks are not appropriate, pupils lose interest, and some teachers have limited strategies for gaining and maintaining their attention.

99. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 participate in drama lessons, and the provision for these, including the quality of teaching, is a strength of the school. Teaching of drama is excellent overall and never less than very good. In Year 9 pupils build up a variety of skills over several weeks, and then improvise a scene, using speech, mime, props and sound effects. In Year 11, pupils are challenged to develop and extend their ideas, for example, when studying Macbeth, they consider the

characters in the play and improvised, using speech as they think it would have been spoken by different characters. The teacher carefully builds on ideas of using voice, movement and information about a character to improvise a scene. Very good understanding of the play was shown when pupils were able to transfer scenes from the play into a modern environment, considering ideas such as Lady Macbeth at the supermarket or hairdressers. Because of the enthusiasm of the teachers and the ways in which pupils are helped to build on previous work, pupils are positive and enthusiastic, try very hard with all aspects of their work and achieve well.

100. There are three subject co-ordinators, including the deputy headteacher who oversees the subject across all key stages, with a particular focus on Years 10 and 11. The other co-ordinators are for the primary age group and for Years 7 to 9. They work well together, and much good progress has been made with introducing the National Literacy strategy at Years 1 to 6. The co-ordinators have developed planning based on the National Literacy strategy and have provided good support to colleagues by assisting with planning and monitoring lessons. In addition they have provided demonstration lessons for colleagues, and put together a very useful literacy training day for all staff and governors. Monitoring is developing satisfactorily with the observation of lessons, but further tracking of the curriculum and of pupils' work would enhance the co-ordinator's role and enable better identification of the pupils' progress.

101. A positive development since the last inspection has been the incorporation of a wider range of literature into the schemes of work, so that much of the work in Years 7 to 11 is based around the book or play being read. Carefully chosen texts include classic and contemporary novels and a Shakespeare play. These opportunities have broadened pupils' horizons in literature and provide a good challenge to develop reading skills further.

102. There are good examples of pupils being enabled to develop their speaking and listening and literacy skills in different subjects. For example in history pupils in Year 9 were able to write the kind of questions they might ask an evacuee. They then enjoyed using this work in a role playing exercise. In geography, new vocabulary was introduced and supported by the use of flash cards. In science, key words for a topic are put up on the wall as a point of reference to pupils.

103. Assessment in English is being developed and is satisfactory. Pupils undertake reading tests annually, so that progress can be identified. Pupils' progress is tracked against the National Curriculum levels and, for younger pupils and those with more significant learning difficulties, good use is made of the P levels. However, there is no consistent system for recording on-going progress, so that teachers have to track through their own notes and pupils' books when they need to reach a judgement about pupils' levels of attainment. While pupils' work is generally marked regularly there is not always sufficient information about the level of independent working to allow for a judgement to be made about pupils' progress. While it is useful to have pupils' reading ages, there is no follow up to these by means of diagnostic assessments to enable more specific planning of reading programmes for those pupils who are making limited progress in reading.

104. Resources for English are good, having been well developed since the last inspection. In addition to building up big books and reading books, a lot of thought has been put into re-ordering the library and into acquiring a range of interesting and age appropriate books for pupils.

MATHEMATICS

105. Throughout the school the pupils achieve good standards and make good progress in mathematics. This has been an improvement since the last inspection when the overall progress was satisfactory. In most lessons learning objectives are now clearer and more precise which is a good development. Previously at Years 7 to 11 they had lacked definition and challenge. The good progress can be linked to the successful introduction of the National Numeracy strategy across all key stages.

106. By the end of Year 2 pupils are able to count together to 10 as a group and recognise and select number cards on request. Higher attaining pupils colour the correct number of circles on a worksheet. They join in singing rhymes to reinforce their numeracy skills such as *One potato, two potatoes, three potatoes four*.

107. In Years 3 to 6 younger pupils are able to match basic shapes and can play a lotto game, which requires them to describe shapes and colours. They identify shapes such as a square and a triangle and some pupils know that a square has four straight sides of the same length. By Years 5 and 6 pupils skills have developed further and they are now beginning to understand simple fractions such as halves and quarters. They have consolidated knowledge of numbers up to 100 and fill in the missing numbers on a number square. Pupils understand that there is a need for a standard unit of measurement such as centimetres because that is accurate whereas a hand span is not due to the varying size of a person's hand.

108. Younger pupils in Years 7 and 8 recognise number bonds and they use these to complete three digit sums. They are able to complete a three-digit addition in a variety of ways and can describe the strategy they have used. By Year 9 pupils are beginning to understand the concept of drawing to scale and know that one-centimetre represents one metre on a plan of rooms in a house. Some pupils understand the decimal notation for metres and centimetres and are able to distinguish between shapes, which do and do not have right angles. Pupils with more complex needs were able to count to 20 and back and one pupil did so in French.

109. At Years 10 and 11 pupils are mentally calculating differences between numbers and are using *Venn Diagrams* to separate even numbers and multiples of five. At the time of the inspection they had recently completed their examination for the Certificate of Achievement and therefore coursework was focussed on preparation for a residential trip to the Lake District. Pupils understood the relevance of the compass and were able to identify the four main points. They were able to identify symbols on a map and give grid references to travel to specific places.

110. Overall the quality of teaching and learning across the school is good, this is an improvement from the previous inspection when expectations of what pupils could achieve at Years 10 and 11 were too low. At Years 1 and 2, where teaching is satisfactory, staff work well to support the pupils. However, due to the inadequate accommodation and the short session time and it is difficult to deliver all parts of the Numeracy strategy appropriately.

111. Teaching for Years 2 to 6 is good. In one very good lesson the concept of fractions was described very well and pupils experienced real examples of cutting food in half and quarters which reinforced the concepts. This work was then very appropriately extended in group work in relation to the pupils' individual needs. The staff team understands and recognises the pupils' needs well and they encourage them to take risks so they recognise and understand that making a mistake is a form of learning.

112. At Years 7 to 11 teaching is good particularly for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. They are set challenging targets and because the staff have a good understanding of their needs the individual targets are appropriate. In other classes pupils are managed well and the staff have good expectations and encourage pupils to listen to each other during group discussions

113. The overall assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory although short-term assessment is poor and relies mainly on annotated notes and information retained mentally by the class teacher. This is unsatisfactory because it cannot inform future planning.

114. The subject is co-ordinated by two teachers, each taking responsibility for the primary and secondary level. They have worked hard to introduce the Numeracy Strategy in Years 3 to 9. There is a good mathematics policy document in place but this does not reflect current practice. There are no whole school schemes of work in place because planning is derived from the National Numeracy strategy. Medium term planning tends to take place in isolation, by the class teachers, and this therefore restricts progression and an overview of current provision. There is a need for a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of the mathematics curriculum which will reduce the unnecessary repetition of key tasks, particularly in Years 7 to 11.

115. The curriculum co-ordinators have adequate time to monitor and evaluate lessons and provide targets for development. There was no evidence of pupils using their ICT skills to support their learning because teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities for them to present information such charts and graphs in other than written forms. There was only limited evidence of pupils using their numeracy skills in other lessons. Good examples were seen in music, for example, where the pupils frequently counted forwards or backwards in songs specifically designed to practice such skills. Displays of numeracy work or information were also limited. There are a satisfactory range of resources to support classroom teaching and these are generally used effectively to aid pupils' understanding. The subject co-ordinators are planning to improve the storage of the resources within the school so that all teachers have easier access to them during the school day.

SCIENCE

116. At the last inspection, younger pupils responded well to the opportunities for practical activities and some of the very youngest pupils made good progress. However, the majority, especially those of secondary age, were not being challenged to build on the knowledge they had gained during their primary years. The school has made such good progress since then that science is now one of the strongest subjects in the curriculum for secondary age pupils. Since 1998, all the pupils have followed the Certificate of Achievement. In each of the past four years, every pupil in Year 11 has passed with a merit, and many achieve distinctions. Pupils of all abilities achieve very well and make very good progress throughout their five years. This is the result of the appointment of a subject leader who is a specialist science teacher to teach all but one group of pupils in Years 7-11. The other group, which caters for pupils who have autism, receives an equally rigorous programme adapted to meet their learning needs, which is jointly planned with the specialist teacher.

117. The improvement in standards is not yet as marked for the primary pupils. The youngest pupils and those at the end of their primary schooling are not being sufficiently extended by the activities offered, and as a result of the school's limited recording of their work it is difficult to make a judgement about the amount of

progress they make over time in science. In the middle years, some very good work ensures that these pupils develop their knowledge and understanding, as well as investigative skills and their ability to present and analyse evidence gathered from their experiments. The variation in standards achieved between different classes is accounted for by two factors. The first is the range of teachers' subject knowledge and confidence and the second is the very limited opportunity, at present, for the subject leader to work with primary phase colleagues.

118. The youngest pupils learn about growth in animals, plants and in the human body, and study living things in their environments. During the inspection, they were following the progress of their planting of garlic bulbs, cress and grass seeds, and the effects of heat, light, water and compost on the developing plants. Higher attaining pupils recall how to plant and care for growing seeds and bulbs. They also correctly label key parts of the bodies of a bird, rabbit and fish. Pupils in Years 3-5 engage in a wide range of investigative and scientific work and their books provide a lively record of their work in the subject. They are developing good enquiry and investigative skills and pupils of all abilities have taken part in activities to devise and explain fair tests, to predict results, present their evidence clearly and draw conclusions. In one class, all pupils are able to correctly assemble an electrical circuit, with lower attaining pupils receiving support for some aspects of the task.

119. Pupils in Year 6, several of whom have significant learning difficulties, show considerable interest in a film showing the life cycle of a butterfly and all cut and paste a jigsaw showing the five key stages of development, the higher attaining pupils successfully and quickly ordering them correctly.

120. Pupils in Year 7 embark on their secondary science course with enthusiasm and interest. Their study of how microbes are spread is brought to life by a film about the Black Death and the highest attaining pupils show a good understanding of the importance of a range of methods to prevent disease spread, and can contrast modern day approaches such as immunisation with those used in the 17th century. Lower attaining pupils are able to list the ways in which infections such as the common cold can be spread, and the part played by mosquitoes in the spread of diseases such as malaria.

121. By the end of Year 9, pupils have encountered a wide range of topics and undertake experimental and investigative work. The foundations of an understanding of chemistry, physics, biology, geology and environmental science are extremely well laid and as a result, the written work of the highest attaining pupils shows rapid development of their knowledge and understanding.

122. By the time they take their final examinations, pupils in Year 11 have demonstrated in their coursework that they have consolidated and extended their understanding. As well as an extensive portfolio of assignments, tests, homework and classwork covering the programme of study, pupils increasingly come to understand the relationship between science and their everyday lives. They develop their understanding of ways to protect the environment, the importance of sustainable development and the impact of burning fossil fuels. Pupils of all abilities are then supported to make connections between their knowledge, for example of life processes such as breathing and the oxygenation of blood, and the effect of decisions they may make, such as smoking, on their health.

123. During the inspection, the pupils in Year 11 had completed their examination course and finished all their coursework. The school then offers these pupils an extended six-week course preparing them for their next steps, college courses and life beyond school.

124. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good for pupils in Years 7 to 11 due to the high level of specialist teaching. In Years 1 to 6 the teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good. In the most effective lessons, teachers' subject knowledge is good and their explanations and answers to questions are very clear. Well-chosen resources illuminate the key activities and information. A good range of activities is provided to meet the wide range of ability evident in all the classes. Teachers emphasise correct terminology and reinforce pupils' learning of new words and phrases, linking some of their literacy work to their activities in science. Their management of pupils' behaviour is very good and pupils therefore work without undue interruptions. .

125. In less successful lessons, the same activity for pupils of all abilities mean that opportunities to extend and challenge higher attaining pupils is lost, the pace is often too slow and pupils' behaviour in some cases deteriorates visibly as a result. For all the classes in Years R to 6, there is an urgent need to develop an effective system of recording pupils' achievement, gaps in understanding and use this to plan subsequent lessons effectively. Present practice makes it difficult to form a secure judgement about these pupils' progress over time.

126. In Years 7 to 11 the specialist teaching is very good overall, with curriculum planning being outstanding. Very clear learning objectives are shared and explained at the start of each lesson and time is used well at the end to recap, check pupils' understanding and explain the next steps needed. The teacher shows very good understanding of pupils' learning needs, and supports each lesson with carefully prepared, and well organised, resources. The team work of teachers and learning support assistants is very effective and has recently debated ways of increasing the pupils' access to more practical activities in order to maintain their motivation and raise standards of work in science.

127. Assessment is good in secondary science and used rigorously to track pupils' progress, identify gaps in learning and plan subsequent lessons accordingly. Meticulous records are kept of test results and other assignments and pupils' and pupils' work is regularly marked both for the science content and for accuracy and presentation. The quantity, range and quality of the written work from every pupil provide convincing evidence of their individual progress over time.

128. The leadership of the subject is very good indeed in terms of raising both its profile in the school and providing a secure framework for learning in Years 7 to 11. Resources are very well deployed and priorities for development have been funded based on an annual review and development plan.

129. The school has yet to identify ways of enabling the subject leader to visit lessons to evaluate and support the practice of teachers who are less confident in the subject. This is a key issue that affects all subjects in the school. The school has not recently reviewed its approach to assessment and reporting so that it cannot specifically identify what each pupil knows, understands and can do in the key aspects of the science curriculum.

130. The accommodation for science is shared with technology, lacks adequate facilities and its layout makes supervision of practical work difficult. Although these limitations are not reflected in poor examination results, it is having an adverse impact on the range of practical work that can be undertaken. For the pupils and students with more severe learning difficulties, they are able to understand best through first hand experience, and the current arrangements constrain these opportunities.

ART AND DESIGN

131. At the last inspection, for pupils up to Year 6, both progress and the quality of teaching was sound, but with some poor features. In Years 7 to 11 both progress and teaching were very good with excellent features. From the evidence available, there has been some improvement in the standards achieved by primary pupils, and the evidence of work planned for the pupils linked to their topic work shows activities that are often imaginative, providing the chance to work with a wide range of techniques and materials.

132. The very good standards achieved by pupils of secondary age have been maintained, with all pupils in Year 11 achieving a graded pass in GCSE in the past three Years. The subject is taught by specialist teachers, but the school is currently without a specialist teacher for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and the subject was taught by a range of supply teachers during the inspection. This is showing some impact on pupils' work in terms of the depth of analysis, evaluation and development of individual projects.

133. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' work in art arises from their topic work at the time of the inspection, they had completed work on the Vikings, and Greeks and were working on the Romans using a wide range of craft skills and painting techniques including the use of papier mache, metallic paint and digital photography. The pupils in Years 7 to 9 develop their own ideas very rapidly using sketchbooks to experiment with ideas and materials. The influence of other artists is demonstrated and several pupils explain what they like about the work of an individual artist. They begin to evaluate each others work, focusing on the positive aspects of the projects in hand, speaking knowledgeably about work on symmetry, pattern or random effects.

134. The pupils in Years 10 and 11 build on this good foundation to produce a wide range of very good work for their GCSE portfolios. The results are recognised by the examination board through regular commendations of the school's work. Year 11 pupils discuss with confidence the impact of their interests and studies on the examination work they have displayed. For example one pupil's work on pub signs started with well-composed and executed digital photographs. Another pupil who is a talented dancer, explained what she liked about Degas, and her pub sign – 'The dancing shoes' – captured the movement and positioning of the dancer's feet.

135. The contribution art and design is making to pupils' spiritual and cultural understanding is clear from their 3D work on mask making drawn from the traditions of Aboriginal, Maori and Aztec Art. Pupils' perseverance in long lessons and their effort and concentration is outstanding.

136. The limited opportunity to observe art lessons in the primary classes means that no judgements on the quality of classroom teaching are possible. Planning is thorough, but the limitations of linking art exclusively to project work are apparent. Pupils learn skills and techniques in order to complete set projects, but there appear

to be few opportunities for them to undertake more open ended, expressive and personal pieces of work.

137. Teaching by the specialist teacher in Years 10 and 11 is consistently very good, with good assessment of pupils' work. The management of pupils' behaviour is particularly effective and pupils who have difficulty concentrating in some subjects work with great purpose, energy and attention to detail. The leadership and management of the subject in Years 7 to 11 are excellent, but lack of time and opportunity prevents the subject leader from having an impact on the effectiveness of teaching in Years 1 to 6.

138. The accommodation, in a mobile classroom, has limitations and there is no facility for 3 dimensional work, especially ceramics. Display space for larger pieces of work is very limited in the school.

139. Although assessment and reporting for older pupils is very good the strategies are not used consistently throughout the school because recording and reporting documents do not provide sufficient information for teachers or parents on what the pupils know, understand and can do. The absence of portfolios of work built up to show the pupils' best and developing work means that judgements about their progress over time are not securely rooted in evidence. Art and design makes a major contribution to the achievements and progress of pupils by the time they leave school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

140. It is difficult to make an accurate judgement on pupils' achievement over time in design and technology. This is because there is very little assessment and record keeping with the exception of pupils in Year 11. As a result, it is not possible to gauge pupils' rates of progress apart from that seen in individual lessons. This is similar to the situation at the last inspection. However, evidence taken from the scrutiny of a range of work, planning and lesson observations does show that pupils' achievements overall are at least satisfactory. This is comparable to that at the last inspection with the exception that pupils now achieve well in Year 11 where they gain a good level of accreditation in the Certificate of Achievement.

141. During Year 1 and 2, all pupils complete puzzles and develop the skills of cutting and pasting to support their work in design and technology. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils use a range of materials such as salt dough, which they have made in the food technology room, plasticine and papier mache to construct models, while lower attaining pupils use wooden bricks to build simple structures. In the recently organised carousel for pupils from Year 3 to Year, 6, pupils begin to experience a range of design and technology skills. For example, they plan and make moving toys such as a centipede using cord, split pins and straws. They evaluate toy cars to see how they work using terms such as axle and base and design and make their own, completing a simple evaluation. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders concentrate well when manipulating a range of materials such as plastic bags, string and wire. They check which materials are stronger or weaker before planning and listing materials needed to make a kite. By the end of Year 9, most pupils consolidate their knowledge of designing and making with higher attaining pupils able to evaluate and modify work such as puppets made to entertain younger pupils.

142. Pupils in Year 10 and 11 working towards accreditation consolidate and complete tasks independently, finding resources and discussing ideas with staff. They accurately paint and measure, follow instructions and use a narrow but suitable range of tools such as a jigsaw, file and lathe. Progress is occasionally slower in Year 10 because pupils have too little opportunities to solve problems before an adult intervenes. By the end of Year 11, pupils study a range of merchandise to see how they work and design and make their own products such as a bird feeder, a clock and games for younger pupils. They use a range of materials such as wood, card, perspex and occasionally plastic. They evaluate the games with younger pupils in the school.

143. The standards of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although staff shortages have led to most pupils being taught by supply teachers. This is due to suitable structured planning and the good levels of interest and involvement shown by pupils. They enjoy practical work often supporting and encouraging each other to complete activities. Teaching is good for the pupils in the primary and secondary autistic classes because the teachers have a good understanding of the pupils' individual needs and have very good relationships with them. They plan work accordingly ensuring pupils remain motivated and on task. Teaching is also good for Year 11 pupils where the teacher has a good level of subject knowledge and high expectations. This gives pupils the confidence to practice and extend their skills successfully, knowing that if they need subject specific support it is available. In the better lessons, good use is made of demonstration so that pupils know what to do and work independently to complete tasks. In a good Year 7 lesson there was a skilful demonstration by the teacher of how to decorate a puppet head. This was followed up with a good range of easily accessible resources. As a result pupils thought about, and chose, resources for themselves often working co-operatively.

144. Good use of praise keeps pupils on task and they are motivated to do well. What weakens some otherwise satisfactory lessons is that not all opportunities are taken to stimulate the imagination. For example, in one Year 8, lesson the lack of a good range of resources meant pupils were not challenged to think creatively while making packaging and learning was not extended. However, in one good lesson with pupils with autistic spectrum disorders the teacher used very good tactile resources to encourage ideas and pupils delighted in touching these. As a result, pupils remained involved. They enjoyed the work and all completed a design. In all lessons, very little use is made of ICT and pupils miss out on experiences such as computer aided design which would further support learning.

145. There is presently no co-ordinator for design and technology and consequently the subject is not monitored or evaluated to ensure improvements. Apart from Year 11, there is little evidence of formal assessment. There is no record keeping to inform future planning and ensure that skills gained can be developed progressively and reflect pupils' individual needs. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory for food technology and pupils gain substantially from using this provision. They are unsatisfactory in all other aspects of design and technology for pupils in the secondary phase. This is because there are no facilities to allow pupils access to a wide range of resistant materials. As a consequence, pupils have no experience of metals and little of plastics and this limits the breadth and balance of the curriculum. Teachers of design and technology share a room with science teachers. This results in almost continuous use of the joint facility which is therefore unavailable for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The reliance upon supply teachers has caused difficulties in building upon previous work or extending pupils' learning. Nevertheless, there has been some improvement since the last inspection. This is because pupils now complete accreditation. There is also evidence of schemes of work and pupils'

experiences reflect the whole disassembling, designing, making and evaluation process.

GEOGRAPHY

146. Pupils in all years make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of geographical concepts. Older pupils achieve well in the Certificate of Achievement examinations where they make good progress and achieved a 100% pass rate in 2001.

147. By Year 4, the pupils achieve an understanding of how food crops are grown and harvested. Their work is linked to other subject areas, which reinforces their overall understanding, and they participate with enthusiasm and interest. By Year 6, they make good progress to extend their learning of the wider world, learning, for example, how volcanoes erupt. They use their literacy skills to annotate their written work and models using geographical vocabulary such as 'magma' and 'lava'. Older pupils in Year 9, make good gains in their knowledge of their environment. For example, they visit and photograph local villages, and make comparisons between the respective geographical layouts and facilities. In Year 11, the pupils make very good progress. They have a good knowledge of global warming and its effects, and they understand and use a wide range of vocabulary in discussing international environmental issues. Pupils on the autistic spectrum make good gains in their mapping skills. The youngest pupils in Year 2, trace words matched to photographs of local buildings. By Year 9, they have learnt basic mapping skills and draw streets and landmarks with clarity and precision.

148. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Classroom assistants provide valuable support during lessons, particularly in grouped sessions. Well-structured and balanced lessons are lively and imaginatively presented. For example, because of the teacher's excellent preparation of a lesson on the destruction of the rain forests, Year 10 pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of the Kapok tree to animals and natives alike. In all years, there is a high degree of challenge, appropriately pitched to cater for the pupils' individual needs. Lessons are planned for continuity and progression. Literacy and numeracy are well promoted through speaking and listening, attention to handwriting, opportunities for reading aloud or by estimating areas and measuring room sizes. A variety of resources, such as brochures, books, photographs videos, and off-site visits are effectively used to enhance teaching and learning, but there is insufficient use of computers to encourage the pupils' independent research. Although there are no formal records of the pupils' progress, there is evidence in the teachers' planning that they have a very good knowledge of the pupils' abilities and their needs are well met. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good, and lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

149. Geography is jointly managed at primary level and led by a non-specialist teacher at secondary level. This is successful in securing continuity between key stages because of good liaison between staff. Departmental documentation is limited to short term schemes of work, although there is a four-year overview linking geography to other curriculum areas for Years 2 to 6. There is no recent whole school policy for the teaching of geography and the school has not yet introduced formal procedures for monitoring, recording and assessing the pupils' progress. This is a significant omission as it results in pupils' progress over time not being identified. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, although space is severely restricted in the infant classroom and in the youngest class base for pupils with autistic spectrum

disorders . Resources are good and often supplemented by those made specifically by staff. Good use is made of the local environment for field trips and follow up activities. Lovely wall displays celebrate the pupils' achievements and give value to their work.

150. There are still areas for further development such as in formal assessment procedures, but the level of improvement since the last inspection, is satisfactory overall. The introduction of national accreditation at Year 11 is good. The pace of pupil progress has significantly improved because of the improved quality of teaching.

HISTORY

151. The school's provision for history is satisfactory and taught to all pupils from Years 2 to 9. Pupils' achievements in Years 2 to 6 are good. Whilst the achievements made in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory within lessons, their progress over time is not sufficiently well assessed and recorded to enable their specific needs to be identified.

152. By the end of Year 2, the pupils develop an awareness of the changes that time brings through looking at their local environment, which is reinforced by trips to Colchester or Harwich. They investigate forms of transport, and their written work and drawings indicate that they make good gains in their historical knowledge.

153. By Year 6, their understanding of historical events is good, and they appreciate aspects of the Vikings, Roman and Greek life. For example, they compose Roman menus, look at fashions or make shields, with good examples of follow-up written work neatly presented in attractive booklets. Local historical landmarks, such as Flatford Mill, contribute to their knowledge of how people used to live.

154. In Year 7 pupils investigate Mediaeval England, and write short accounts of how they imagine the life of a mediaeval child. They know the advantages and disadvantages of motte and bailey castles and why they were built. Whilst they make good progress at this stage, by Year 9, their achievement is unsatisfactory. An analysis of their work indicates little cohesion to the sequence of historical events studied, so pupils cannot make chronological links. For example, their books contain coloured sheets on the Norman Conquest and voyages of discovery, interspersed with work on World War II posters and evacuation. There is no reference to the Industrial Revolution or World War 1. There is little evidence that computers are used to enhance their learning. However, in the unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, teachers' records and an analysis of these pupils' work in Year 9, show they make satisfactory progress. For example, they worked together to design and create a tabletop Saxon village, which represents good progress.

155. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The pupils in Years 2 to 4 are taught on a thematic basis, which provides good links with other subject areas. For example the growing of seeds reinforces changes over time and is linked to the harvesting of crops in geography, and living things in science. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good overall. Well-planned lessons are structured, balanced and well resourced, and teachers make good use of reproduction artefacts borrowed from local museums, which gives pupils the opportunity for hands-on experience of historical items. There is a good balance of oral, reading and written work, which promotes their basic literacy skills. Well-planned visits reinforce learning.

156. The quality of teaching for pupils aged between Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. In the best lessons, there is a high level of challenge and a lively pace, with all pupils fully involved and enthusiastic. Very good question and answer sessions encourage pupils to analyse their views, such as when they explore the mediaeval class system by comparing the lives of Lords and Peasants. Learning is reinforced through video clips and reference books, and attractive wall displays gives value to the pupils' work. However, where aspects of teaching is unsatisfactory, the expectations are unrealistic. For example, although some pupils show real interest in World War II they have difficulty with more detailed concepts such as funding the war effort. Consequently, they become restless and disinterested. Although teachers have a very good knowledge of their pupils, the monitoring and recording of their progress is too informal. Classwork is often unmarked and homework is rarely set.

157. Although the curriculum is planned in Years 2 to 6, there is no subject leader for history for older pupils, which results in their failure to make satisfactory progress. Schemes of work are in place for primary age pupils only. Although part-time and supply teachers have developed personal schemes of work, these lack continuity and are hindered by the absence of recorded pupil progress.

158. In the classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, history is overseen on a job-share basis by a qualified historian, and assessment procedures are satisfactory. Resources are good overall and very good use is made of local history through of-site visits and museum links.

159. Although aspects of the subject have improved since the last inspection, there is still much to be done. The curriculum for secondary age pupils needs to be formalised, as do procedures for monitoring and assessing the pupils' progress. The use of computers to support learning is an area for development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

160. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress during lessons and their achievements over time are also satisfactory as they follow a broad and balanced subject curriculum. Pupils achieve well in Years 10 and 11 when they follow an externally accredited course and their achievements are reflected in their success in entry level examinations.

161. The youngest pupils are provided with an appropriate range of activities that develops in them an interest in ICT and a knowledge of how ICT can be used to make things happen. Therefore, by the end of Year 2 pupils get great pleasure from using switches and buttons to produce change using resources such as tape recorders and small electronic keyboards. They also use simple paint programs that result in changes on computer screens as they move large rollerballs. The highest attaining pupils have developed finer motor skills and have increased their understanding of programs. They use a mouse to point, click, drag and drop objects on the screen as they build towers of blocks and compose pictures using different shapes. Pupils' understanding of the use of different programs and the key skills required to operate new technology are further developed as they move through the primary department. Therefore, in Year 6 they open and close programs and save and print their work independently. They use a word processing program to produce a variety of documents and improve presentation by changing the font size, style and colour. They also add variety to their work by opening picture galleries, instructing the computer to search for pictures associated with a particular key word, and importing the picture in to their document.

162. Older pupils extend their knowledge of computer hardware and their understanding of different applications. By Year 6, the highest attaining pupils handle and manipulate data by using a basic database, and communicate using the Internet. They use a search engine to identify appropriate web sites and use address books to access names in order to write and send e-mails. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop their understanding of how information can be classified, organised and accessed. By the end of Year 11, the highest attaining pupils produce spreadsheets of information such as the weekly record sales of different pop groups, use databases to record information like characteristics of the planets, and word process articles for a newspaper. They also use control programs so that they write simple procedures, such as the set of instructions to draw a square, and input more detailed pre-written instructions to draw more complex shapes.

163. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are taught well and some very good lessons have a range of activities that build systematically on pupils' prior learning. Teachers have satisfactory knowledge of the subject and the ICT technician is particularly effective in providing very good support to both teachers and pupils. Particularly good teaching is characterised by planning that identifies tasks that are appropriately challenging to meet the needs of all pupils. Therefore pupils have a good understanding of what they are required to do and the necessary skills to carry it out. As a result, they work with interest and perseverance and many are able to work independently but when they do experience difficulties help is at hand. This may come from their classmates because the high quality of collaborative and co-operative work is a feature of many lessons. Alternatively, adults provide good levels of guidance whilst still requiring pupils to think for themselves rather than being provided with answers. Such carefully considered support ensured that a class of fifteen year olds working on a control program solved their own problems. The teacher and ICT technician used questions very well to challenge pupils to analyse the difficulty and come up with a solution. Pupils are well managed in lessons with very good relationships. Pupils respond to challenges very well as they feel confident to try to solve problems themselves even if their attempts are unsuccessful.

164. Whilst no teaching is unsatisfactory, some lessons have features that limit pupils' progress. Time and staff are not used efficiently on these occasions. Consequently the timing of different activities is not sufficiently well planned and this means that the higher attaining pupils have finished work quickly and there is no extension work available for them. At times this goes unnoticed because staff are not deployed effectively and they devote a disproportionate amount of their time helping lower attaining pupils without monitoring the work of the higher attaining pupils.

165. There has been satisfactory improvement in the school's provision for ICT since the previous inspection. There is good purpose-built accommodation, although it is rather cramped and tends to get very warm, and a good range of resources. However, the school is aware that it does lack a variety of new access technology, such as modern switches, that will promote even further the ability of all pupils to benefit from all subjects of the curriculum. The subject is well led and managed and the co-ordinator has a good understanding of the areas that require further development. In particular, current procedures for assessing and recording pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory. They are not sufficiently well planned to enable teachers to accurately evaluate pupils' progress over time and the new commercial record system that has been implemented is not yet being used consistently or effectively. In addition, there is not yet in place a scheme of work that is specific to the school. As a result, there is no guarantee that teachers' medium term planning is

based on a progressive and continuous subject curriculum that provides pupils with a comprehensive range of relevant experiences as they move through the school. The school does not exploit the use of new technology in a satisfactory way across the curriculum. Although pupils were seen using ICT during the inspection, such as exploring the Internet to research information on castles, there were many examples when such opportunities were missed. The school does not provide pupils with enough planned access to ICT, through the Internet and CD ROMs, to reinforce and extend their learning in different subjects of the curriculum

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

166. It was only possible to see two lessons of French during the inspection. Pupils study French at Years 7 to 11 and they make very good progress in speaking and listening in the target language. By the end of Year 9, they know a range of basic greetings and can introduce themselves in French. They can answer simple requests, remembering to add 's'il vous plait' or 'merci' appropriately. Many can count in sequence well into double figures. They are also able to say their age and choose items from a display and identify the colour.

167. Teaching is very good and concentrates on basic, but useful, vocabulary. The staff are supportive and encouraging, for example, if pupils are hesitating over an answer, staff will model the correct response for them. This ensures that lower attaining pupils or those who are nervous of speaking in a foreign language are given the confidence to join in the lesson successfully. Plenty of repetition is built in to lessons and this has the effect of allowing pupils to practise their pronunciation and reinforces their learning vocabulary.

168. Since the last inspection the school has built on the good work seen then. Pupils enjoy their lessons and respond consistently well and with confidence. The subject is well led by a specialist teacher who provides an excellent model of spoken French.

MUSIC

169. Eight music lessons were observed in Years 9 to 11 and teaching and learning were good in half and very good or outstanding in the remainder. The progress that pupils make is in direct relation to the quality of the teaching. Where teaching is outstanding pupils make excellent gains in participating, leading others and working as part of a group. For example, in a practical mixed aged group of primary pupils, the needs of pupils' abilities were very well met. Through the skilled teamwork of two teachers a subtle mixture of listening, singing and playing was organised which provided each pupils with an individual opportunity to participate at an appropriate level. Standards of behaviour were outstanding as pupils anticipated the beginning of each activity. The combined skills of teachers resulted in a lesson that moved at a very good pace, kept pupils motivated and consolidated their skills in counting forwards and backwards when singing well-known songs. The high quality guidance and physical help provided by teachers and support assistants was well matched to the pupils' individual needs and goals and resulted in them all making very good identifiable gains in learning. All pupils, regardless of ability or confidence, were able to undertake their role with eagerness and contribute to the overall performance, enjoyment and learning in the lesson.

170. Where teachers are less confident and rely upon pre-recorded music to steer learning, pupils learn to respond satisfactorily to changes in tempo and mood. They demonstrate their understanding by adjusting the pace and volume of their playing, but they are less motivated and less enthusiastic because the music is not live. However, all teachers make effective connections between the music pupils hear and the composers. Pupils react best to music that they know, such as popular songs or well established school favourites. Where teaching is no more than satisfactory, teachers do not maximise opportunities for pupils to develop their musical skills and knowledge by setting high standards regarding playing and singing and listening. For example, they give praise to pupils when they play a percussion instrument in time to a recording, but do not then set more challenging tasks such as maintaining a steady beat for an identified number of bars or without the help of a recording.

171. The school has made satisfactory progress in developing the subject since the last inspection in that it now has schemes of work. However, their content is currently more of a menu rather than a route of learning to steer pupils' achievements over time. As with some other subjects, the arrangements for assessment are unsatisfactory to match the planning and to develop an effective method of identifying each pupil's steps of learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

172. The school has responded well to the findings of the last inspection and provision in physical education is now very good. This is as a result of good teaching including a very good contribution from specialist teachers. A good range of relevant learning opportunities is reinforced by extracurricular activities and sporting links

173. Pupils of all abilities make good gains in learning throughout the school. They show considerable determination in rising to the associated physical challenge, and have an extremely sensible, attitude to health and safety issues. In swimming, they become confident in their visits to a local pool, and gain a basic level of competence in the water. Younger pupils and those with autistic spectrum disorders gain confidence during the horse riding sessions. Older pupils develop their skills well, applying them to good effect. They practise them further using all parts of the swimming pool including the deep-water. During a recent sponsored swim many of the older pupils achieved distances in excess of 500 metres. Pupils learn the basic skills of games such as football, passing and receiving the ball with some accuracy and enthusiasm, learning to make good use of space and treating equipment with the respect it deserves. Older pupils then apply this learning particularly well when working together as a team, thereby reinforcing their understanding of key vocational core skills. They practise dance routines and gymnastic exercises, and apply their physical skills well in the context of outdoor activities during their residential visits to North Wales or the Lake District. Pupils respond very positively to all these various activities and acquit themselves well when competing in a wide range of sporting fixtures against other Essex special and mainstream schools.

174. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and shows a consistency that marks a good improvement when compared with the last inspection. The school makes very good use of a member of the support staff who is an experienced, qualified swimming teacher, and she, together with other external professionals, makes a valuable contribution. Lessons are well planned and organised and founded upon the very good relationships between all staff and pupils. Teachers and instructors employ a good range of strategies including clear demonstrations, with the result that all pupils understand and can apply the points under consideration. Pupils make good progress in their physical development and learn an increasing

range of games skills and gymnastic abilities because of the opportunities teachers plan for pupils of differing abilities. Where some aspects of teaching are less successful strategies for pupils to evaluate their own performances, and those of others, are under explored. As a result opportunities for identifying individual personal goals are sometimes lost.

175. The headteacher, who is a physical education specialist, coordinates the subject, contributes to the teaching of physical education and is therefore well placed to monitor the school's provision. The school is well resourced for physical education but lacks a dedicated gymnasium or sports hall necessary for older pupils to extend their skills, although pupils from an early age have access to a soft play area and a variety of outdoor equipment including the adventure playground and a large trampoline. Very good opportunities for the pupils' personal and social development are created and exploited through the routines associated with changing and personal hygiene. There is, however, a need to develop an effective approach to assessing pupils' levels of achievement, supported by a range of in-house certificates and external accreditation.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

176. A lack of assessment and record keeping in religious education means that it is difficult to judge pupils' achievement over time. However, evidence from the narrow range of work seen, planning and lesson observations indicate that pupils' achievement overall is satisfactory and recent progress for pupils in Years 3 to Year 6 towards their learning targets is good.

177. By Year 2 pupils listen attentively to stories with a moral message, including many from the Bible. They act out Hindu stories about Holi and most take part in assemblies where they share special times such as birthdays and religious festivals. From Years 3 to Year 6 pupils join in stories from all the major religions seeing and touching appropriate artefacts to assist them when recalling facts. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 experience Christian traditions. They show good recall of previous work remembering aspects of Judaism such as having separate kitchens for dairy and meat products. By the end of Year 6, they recall many of the ten commandments and are aware of what constitutes good and bad behaviour through this work. Higher attaining pupils provide instances of what could happen if you break commandments as a prelude to work on the commandments of Jesus. They all use work on *Love thy neighbour* to recognise, reflect on and praise the quality of others in their class.

178. Secondary age pupils consolidate learning on the six main religions and complete work on for example, the five pillars of Islam. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders listen and join in stories from the Bible. They enjoy acting out the parable of the houses built on sand and on rock and state where they would prefer to live. By the end of Year 9 most pupils have studied rites of passage while Year 10 and 11 pupils reflect thoughtfully on those who help and care for them.

179. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is often good for pupils in Years 3 to 6 and pupils in the secondary class for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders because they are taught by teachers who manage and know them well. Strengths in teaching include the ability of teachers to take every opportunity to relate elements of a story to pupils' own life by involving them in role-play. This practical approach keeps pupils interested and keen to participate. Very good relationships and praise ensure pupils are confident to express views even where the issues are sensitive. However, in otherwise satisfactory lessons, there is sometimes a lack of challenge. For example, questioning is not always targeted at individual pupils to

check that they understand the activity or used to encourage pupils to answer at length. This means that teachers cannot accurately assess their progress or whether activities are appropriate. For some pupils who could cope with more complex activities, there is little matching of work to need and they rush the task. Despite this pupils remain motivated and keen to learn.

180. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The secondary and primary co-ordinators have a policy and schemes of work which following the locally agreed syllabus but are suitably adapted to meet the needs of pupils. The subject plays a good role in the social and moral development of pupils through reflective discussion on issues such as caring, self esteem and valuing others. Pupils in Year 10 and 11 now have discrete lessons, unlike at the last inspection. The subject has a suitable range of artefacts videos and resources although there is very limited evidence of the use of information and communication technology to aid learning. The role of the co-ordinators is limited, because they do not receive time to develop the subject or plan improvements. Assessment and record keeping are unsatisfactory and do not provide evidence of pupil progress through the school.