

INSPECTION REPORT

COMBE PAFFORD SCHOOL

Torquay

LEA area: Torbay

Unique reference number: 113640

Headteacher: Mr M Lock

Reporting inspector: Mr Tom Smith
21044

Dates of inspection: 16th – 19th June 2003

Inspection number: 249356

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 – Moderate Learning Difficulty, Physical Difficulty, Autistic Spectrum Disorder, Visual Impairment, Emotional Behavioural Disturbance.
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	8 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Combe Pafford School Steps Lane Watcombe Torquay
Postcode:	TQ2 8NL
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M Griffiths
Date of previous inspection:	January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21044	Mr Tom Smith	Registered inspector	Geography, personal, social and health education	What sort of a school is it? The schools' results and achievements. The quality of teaching. How well is the school led and managed?
9770	Mr John Baker	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
17260	Mrs Jennifer Taylor	Team inspector	History, modern foreign language, English as an additional language	
15600	Mr Colin Richardson	Team inspector	Science, information and communication technology	
22058	Mrs Christine Richardson	Team inspector	Music, religious education Provision for autistic disorder pupils	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
1124	Mr Graham Todd	Team inspector	Mathematics, art and design	
23300	Mrs Lily Evans	Team inspector	English, educational inclusion	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development
16747	Mr Alan Jones	Team Inspector	Design and technology, physical education	How well does the school care for its pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed, local authority day school for pupils with special educational needs from eight to 16 years of age. There are 198 pupils on roll. Boys outnumber girls by about 2:1. The pupils come mainly from Torbay and are mostly of white European origin. A few pupils come from other ethnic groups and a minority of these have English as an additional language. A small and reducing number come from a neighbouring authority. Pupils mostly travel to the school on transport provided by their local education authority. Thirty-five per cent of pupils are entitled to free meals. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and have a wide range of needs and attainment. The majority of pupils have moderate learning difficulties, but a significant group have needs that relate to autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), physical disability, emotional and behavioural difficulty (EBD) and visual impairment. Primary age pupils are taught mostly by their class teacher. Secondary age pupils have a class tutor and move to other teachers for the majority of their lessons. ASD pupils are in separate classes grouped broadly according to age. There are no opportunities for pupils to attend local mainstream schools. Since the last inspection, and as a result of a local authority review, the school has very recently merged with another special school and now provides for a much wider range of special educational needs than before. There has also been a large building and refurbishment project. However, this has been suspended by the local education authority, and a substantial amount of work remains incomplete. This makes current provision for pupils more difficult than it should be. The school currently has difficulty in filling key teaching posts, as well as those of other staff who are absent because of long-term illness.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school and is well led. It provides a good all-round education for its pupils. Although teaching and learning are generally good there are weaknesses in aspects of English and mathematics for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Despite this, the school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The leadership of the headteacher, his ability to manage change and the support he receives from senior management and governors are instrumental in raising standards and his vision has ensured that the school continues to provide a good standard of education.
- Pupils in Years 3 to 6 and Years 10 and 11 achieve well because they are taught consistently well. The provision for pupils' work-related education is excellent and there are strengths in art and design, physical education, music and science.
- Enables pupils to mature into young adults in a way that they are well prepared for their next stage of learning. Throughout the school the majority of pupils bring positive attitudes to their learning.
- The provision for pupils' social development is very good. They have rich and varied experiences that prepare them most effectively for life after school.
- Makes very good provision for the teaching and learning of pupils with ASD. These pupils make very good progress.
- The school's financial planning is very good and its use of grants raises standards as well as providing a wide range of other opportunities for pupils' personal development.

What could be improved

- Whilst satisfactory, achievement is lower in Years 7 to 9 than in the rest of the school, particularly in literacy and numeracy, because of weaker and sometimes unsatisfactory teaching.
- ICT is not used well enough in all subjects to extend and enhance pupils' learning.
- The rigour with which pupils' academic progress is recorded. The use of this information to inform teaching and learning is inconsistent throughout the school.
- Not all staff as yet have a full understanding of how to provide for the growing range of pupils' needs, particularly those of the higher attaining pupils. As a result, some pupils are underachieving.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory because the plans for this are incomplete and it does not satisfy the needs of all pupils.

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 was last inspected in January 1997. Since then the school has done all it reasonably could in order to raise standards, good improvement has taken place and trends in pupils' performance are upward. However, the school's circumstances have changed significantly, and this makes direct comparison with the last inspection difficult. The school has given significant attention to the major building programme and incorporation of the pupils from a nearby special school. In addition to this, all the issues from the last inspection have been successfully addressed. The quality of teaching and of leadership has improved, and the new buildings have improved the provision for ICT, music and for pupils with ASD. There is also a wider and increasing range of opportunities for older pupils to gain national accreditation.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	By Year 6	By Year 9	By Year 11	Key	
Speaking and listening	B	C	B	very good	A
Reading	A	C	B	good	B
Writing	B	D	B	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	C	C	unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	A	A	A	poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	C	C	C		

Years 3 to 6: These pupils achieve very well because of consistently good teaching. They are set demanding targets that are well monitored and because of this their achievements in English, mathematics, and science are at least good. Their achievements in other subjects are good. Individual targets are used well to raise achievement.

Years 7 to 9: Achievement in English and mathematics is satisfactory for most pupils, but unsatisfactory for higher attaining pupils. This is because some teachers lack expertise and consistency in planning and teaching English and mathematics. Achievement in food technology is also unsatisfactory because of the lack of expertise among staff.

Years 10 and 11: Pupils achieve well in all areas of learning. By the end of Year 11 they are successful in a range of national accreditations. They benefit particularly from their work-related education and the results from this are of high quality.

The inspection team judge that secondary aged pupils achieve at least well in art and design, information and communication technology, music and science. Pupils also achieve well in religious education (RE) and physical education (PE). The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' social development and the promotion of racial equality. They are very successful in this because the standard of personal social and health education (PSHE) is high. When considered as a whole, the school is good in promoting pupils' achievement against their particular needs. Pupils with additional or specific needs, such as those with ASD, make very good progress. The use of targets to raise individual pupils' achievement is inconsistent, however, and this particularly holds back those pupils with the potential for higher attainment.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good; pupils enjoy their time at the school and in most lessons they concentrate well and learn more effectively because of this.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; the school is calm and orderly. The majority of pupils behave well and lessons proceed smoothly. A minority of pupils in Years 7 to 9 disrupt lessons and prevent other pupils from learning.
Personal development and relationships	The provision is very good because it encourages pupils to relate very well to each other. Teachers provide consistent and good role models.
Attendance	Good; pupils attend school happily and punctuality to lessons is also good.

Pupils have good attitudes to the school and because of this they achieve well. The majority know what they have to do in order to improve and as they become older they take individual responsibility for this improvement. Relationships are very good and by the time pupils leave they have become young adults who show considerable maturity and personal responsibility.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 3-6	Years 7-9	Years 10-11
Quality of teaching	Very good	Satisfactory	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.

There is good teaching and learning throughout the school, but the consistency of this was more evident for pupils in Years 3 to 6 and those in Years 10 and 11. Some of the unsatisfactory lessons were taught by temporary staff; common weaknesses related to a lack of expertise in the subject or inadequate behaviour management of pupils. There is a significant and beneficial impact on pupils' learning where they are taught by teachers with good expertise; for example, in ICT and PSHE. Good quality teaching is hallmarked by detailed planning, which clearly identifies what pupils will learn, and this is backed up by teachers with the expertise to stretch pupils' imagination. These teachers are skilled in motivating pupils to learn more. Good teamwork between teachers and LSAs is particularly effective in supporting individual needs. Literacy and numeracy strategies are in place and are satisfactory for most pupils – though in some cases teachers have not adapted these sufficiently well with regard to the need of individual pupils. Teaching of English and mathematics for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is not as effective as it

should be. English for these secondary pupils is not always taught by teachers with appropriate expertise and in mathematics discontinuity of planning means that similar skills are taught across a range of years. This has a negative impact on pupils' progress. Pupils achieve well in science because the quality of teaching is at least good throughout the school. Pupils' learning in PSHE is of a high standard, reflecting the quality of teaching and this has a good impact on pupils' behaviour and their maturity when they are ready to leave the school. Generally the school meets the needs of pupils well, but there were some instances where the needs of higher attaining pupils were not fully met.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good This fulfils statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. PSHE and excellent work-related education are particular strengths, but there are weaknesses in the planning of mathematics.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good; support provided by the LEA as well as school expertise has been used well to provide individual programmes that enable these few pupils to make very good social and academic progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall; spiritual, moral and cultural development are good. Social development is very good because of the many opportunities offered to pupils at appropriate stages in their development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good; pupils are well cared for and this is central to the ethos of the school. There are weaknesses in the monitoring and tracking of their academic achievement. The school successfully encourages its pupils to behave well.

The school works hard to engage parents in the education of their children. Parents are kept satisfactorily informed about the progress made by their children. Pupils receive a broad experience of education, which has significant strengths in their personal development. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities and visits, including residential experiences for every pupil. Systems for assessing and recording pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 are not as robust as they should be. Where assessment practice is very good, as in Years 3 to 6, the information is used effectively to plan the next stages of learning. Individual education plans (IEP) and short-term targets are satisfactory, but where they are an integral part of classroom practice their impact is better.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good; the headteacher leads the school with a clear vision of his ambition for the school. He is supported well by his senior management team who share this ambition for high standards. All staff have clearly defined responsibilities.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good; the governing body is fully involved in monitoring the standards in the school and ensures that it fulfils all statutory requirements.
The school's evaluation of its performance	There are good procedures by which the school collects data on its performance and it uses this information to set new objectives.
The strategic use of resources	Good. These fully support the aims of the school and are used

	efficiently to raise standards.
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The headteacher has led the school through a continuing period of uncertainty with great skill and vision. His managerial expertise has ensured the creation of an environment where all individuals are valued. Because of this, adults and children do their best for the school. Governors, staff and management are united in their wish to raise standards, but they have faced significant problems that have resulted in incomplete and generally unsatisfactory accommodation. They have done all they can to minimise the impact of this. Resources to support learning are generally satisfactory. There is efficient financial management linked to good systems of monitoring school performance. Management is responsive to any issues raised and consistently applies the principles of best value.

PARENTS’ AND CARERS’ VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel comfortable about approaching the school concerning issues about their children. • There is good teaching and the school expects their children to work hard. • Pupils are expected to work hard and do their best. • They have confidence in the management of the school. • They like the way in which their children are maturing – this is especially so of older pupils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities their children can do outside lesson times. • The quality of information given to them about the progress of their child. • One in three parents would like their child to have more homework. • Some parents think behaviour could be improved.

At the meeting held before the inspection, some parents stated that the school did not keep them fully informed about developments relating to their children. Inspection shows that, although the school tries hard in this respect it needs to do more in order to improve its communication with parents. Also, inspectors find that the school provides a wide range of activities outside lessons, but agree with parents that the quality of communication with them could improve. Inspectors agree that homework could be more readily expected of older pupils preparing for external accreditation. They also felt that behaviour in the school is good and in this respect would disagree with parents’ views.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The majority of pupils achieve well, but there is evidence to indicate that higher attaining pupils, both boys and girls, are not reaching the higher levels that could be expected. The main reason for this is that the school is in the process of changing its characteristic from one that was essentially for pupils with moderate learning difficulties to one that now caters for a much wider range of special educational needs, which also includes higher attaining pupils. Judgements are made in the context of the changing circumstances of the school as well as what pupils achieve.
2. Generally the standards achieved by pupils in Years 3 to 6 and Years 10 and 11 are above average if compared to their attainment. In Years 7 to 9, which has the greatest number of pupils, these standards are average when compared to their attainment. The achievement of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is very good and they also make very good progress over time. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is good and they make good and sometimes very good progress. Achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory, overall.
3. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make at least good progress in all aspects of English. By the end of Year 6 the achievement of these pupils is good in speaking and listening as well as writing. It is very good in reading. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is inconsistent and, consequently, the progress they make is variable. By the time pupils reach Year 9 the progress they have made has slowed down and they do not achieve as well as they previously did. Generally, however, their achievement is still satisfactory. In part, this is explained by inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, too frequent changes of staff in some classes and also that expectations are unacceptably low. This is not the case for all pupils. For example, in Year 8, pupils receive high quality teaching and, as a result, their achievement and progress are equal to or better than Years 3 to 6 and Years 10 and 11.
4. Entry level English accreditation results for Year 11 pupils show that, in 2002, 69 per cent of pupils gained a Grade E2 (formerly known as a Merit), while 22 per cent of pupils gained a Grade E3 (formerly known as a Distinction). Compared to results in Year 2000 there has been a 20 per cent improvement in pupils gaining the higher E2 and E3 grades. However, when taking into account the 'number' of pupils being accredited, those who achieved the higher E3 grade is broadly similar (six in Year 2000 and five in 2002). When considering the same accreditation opportunities in 2001 the results are identical to those of 2002. This progress over time reflects the evidence of the inspection and shows that the number of pupils achieving the higher grades has remained broadly static. In English generally, not all pupils are being challenged appropriately and, as a result, those of higher attainment do not achieve as well as they should. In 2002, 25 Year 11 pupils gained a bronze award accredited by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). They achieved this in a range of subjects that included communication, information and communication technology (ICT), numeracy and practical work skills.
5. Pupils' achievements in English are being affected by the lack of appropriately qualified staff who would be able to co-ordinate literacy development throughout the school. The school has been unable to appoint such a person despite repeated attempts. Without this quality of leadership, the school has had to call on teachers who lack expertise in the subject. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are most affected by this. Achievement and progress of pupils is further impeded by the need for some staff to teach a subject for which they do not have relevant expertise.
6. There is a satisfactory provision for teaching literacy. By the end of Years 6 and 11, pupils have made good progress in their skills of speaking and listening. This progress is satisfactory at the end of Year 9. A similar pattern emerges when considering pupils' achievement and progress in reading. These are good by the end of Years 6 and 11 and satisfactory by the end of Year 9. The difference is explained by the fact that some of the texts used by pupils in Years 7 to 9 are inappropriate to their age and interests. Exceptions to this would be in Year 8 where higher

attaining pupils read well and indicate good progress in this class. There are also variations in pupils' writing skills. While these are good by the end of Years 6 and 11 they are unsatisfactory by the end of Year 9. This is because some teachers accept a standard of presentation and content that is too low.

7. In mathematics, pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well and their progress over time is consistently good. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve satisfactorily and their progress over time is also satisfactory. The standards for these pupils are not as high as they could be, particularly for higher attaining pupils who do not make the progress that could be expected. Weaknesses in curriculum planning, and lessons that are based on this, show that in some Year 9 classes pupils are taught aspects of the subject that they have previously learned on earlier years. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make good progress because the planning is consistent and lessons are challenging, with new knowledge built on what pupils already know. This is further helped by very good assessment, which enables teachers to focus on what pupils still need to learn.
8. Those mathematics lessons taught according to the requirements of the National Numeracy Strategy are not always adapted well to enable pupils to make appropriate progress when considering their attainment. The progress they make is inhibited by the insecure knowledge that some teachers have of this approach and because their expectations are sometimes too low. This is especially the case for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
9. Pupils achieve well in science. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make very good progress and those in Years 7 to 11 make good progress. In 2002, Year 11 pupils were accredited through the Entry Level Certificate. Fifty-two per cent of these gained a merit in this while a further 36 per cent gained a distinction. This reflects the good achievement observed in lessons during the inspection. Since Year 2000 these results have shown an upward trend.
10. Achievement is high in art and design and this is reflected in the high quality work achieved by pupils throughout the school. The majority of pupils make at least good progress over time because of inspirational teaching and a consistently high level of challenge to their knowledge.
11. Similar standards to those in art and design also apply in information and communication technology (ICT) where this is taught as a separate subject. Pupils were first accredited at Entry Level in this subject in 2001 with 96 per cent of pupils passing this examination. Sixty per cent of pupils achieved the higher grades. Since that time their achievement has shown an upward trend.
12. The achievement of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is very good in geography and over time they make very good progress. This progress is not fully capitalised upon in Years 7 to 11, because some of their work is repeated. Generally, however, these pupils make satisfactory progress though standards are not yet high enough. Pupils demonstrate good achievement in music, history, physical education (PE) and religious education (RE). In subjects, such as French, personal, social and health education (PSHE) pupils' achievements are very good. While achievement is static in most subjects it is rising in PE, RE and PSHE. Achievement in music is above the level that might be expected in similar schools and also above this in history for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The provision and achievement for design and technology are unsatisfactory in food technology but satisfactory in craft and design. The variation is caused by the need for the school to use temporary staff caused by the long-term absence of the specialist staff.
13. In addition to the full range of National Curriculum subjects, the school also offers pupils a broad range of opportunities for personal development. It is in this area that many pupils achieve particularly well. Every pupil benefits from being able to spend time away from the school in residential situations. These are constructed carefully according to the age of the pupil and the challenges they face increase as they get older. Throughout the school year there is also a further range of opportunities, such as clubs and societies, which are appropriate for pupils of all ages and attainment. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 11 they have grown to be appropriately mature and are as well prepared as they can be for their next stage of learning. The philosophy and work of the school is fully reflected in the maturity of these young adults.

14. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make excellent progress in their work-related education. They achieve the highest standards in this. During the course of the inspection, Year 11 pupils were seen taking part in an annual event, described as 'Industry Week'. The purpose of this is to enable pupils to prepare presentations on behalf of local and nationally based businesses who lend their support to the initiative. The impact on pupils' learning and the outcomes of this experience are very high. Pupils bring all they have previously learned to bear in this single event. They use literacy and numeracy skills as well as artwork and computer skills to prepare their presentations. They work in groups and teams as well as use their own initiative to research information. The outcomes are of high quality when compared to the attainment of these pupils. In 2002, for example, 25 pupils left the school. Of these, seven went directly into employment or related training and with one exception the remainder attended colleges of further education.
15. Pupils with additional needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder or those who use English as a second language (EAL) make at least good progress and also achieve well. The provision the school makes for the few pupils with little English is particularly good and when compared to their starting point within the school they make very good progress. Autistic spectrum disordered (ASD) pupils also make very good progress over time, particularly in their social development. Despite the recent establishment of this provision some ASD pupils are already being introduced into the main body of the school where they continue their education.
16. The special educational needs of the pupils in their learning are generally well considered but, because of the change in school characteristics, not all staff are yet fully attuned to the differing needs of pupils in their learning. The achievement and progress of some pupils are compromised because some staff inadvertently overlook the requirements of these pupils. For example, pupils with visual impairment would have difficulty reading overhead transparencies used in some lessons, the print on these being too small. In other lessons where some pupils were in wheelchairs, they were sometimes excluded from group activities because of the need to move furniture in order to accommodate them. However, excellent practice was seen in Year 4 where the needs of such pupils were fully considered. These pupils make progress comparable to that of their able-bodied peers.
17. Direct comparison with the outcomes of the last inspection is difficult, because the nature of the school has substantially changed. However, when considered overall the school has made good improvement in raising standards and the achievement of pupils. The most notable strengths are now the increasing range of accreditation opportunities, better progress made by pupils in Years 3 to 6, higher standards in science, ICT, music, PSHE and art and design as well as excellent progress made by pupils in work-related education. With exceptions already noted the trend in pupils' progress and achievement is upward. Some improvement could be made in the use of individual education plans (IEPs). These are used well in Years 3 to 6 in order to direct teaching and learning, but in other Years their use is too dependent on individual teachers as well as their knowledge of its contents.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

18. There has been a satisfactory improvement made in pupils' attitudes and values since the last inspection. Personal development continues to be very good for all pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorder, behavioural difficulties and physical disability; a much wider range of pupils than before. Pupils' attitudes to school and their learning are good. They like coming to school, a fact confirmed and supported by 82 per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire. Pupils who have a physical disability are now happy and settled at the school and other pupils with moderate learning difficulties have made good efforts to be considerate and understand the needs of these pupils.
19. Pupils show keenness when they arrive at school and quickly settle down to registration and classroom routines. Pupils' enjoyment of school is increased because staff provide a good range of lunchtime clubs. These are open to all pupils and are very well attended. Younger pupils are friendly towards visitors and will greet them both cheerily and inquisitively. Those of secondary age are also friendly, but in an appropriately mature way. They are very willing to talk about their work

or offer help to each other and visitors. Especially noticeable is the willingness of able-bodied pupils to assist pupils in wheelchairs. For example, where these pupils need to reach the 'Nortel building' and they may not have a powered wheelchair, able-bodied pupils consistently offered help to negotiate the steep incline. This level of concern is just one of the positive characteristics in the attitudes of pupils because it causes them to think and respond to the needs of others.

20. Pupils generally are prompt to lessons and settle quickly. They actively engage in the range of activities they are offered with both confidence and enthusiasm. They show the ability to work well and focus their attention, and concentrate for lengthy periods. They take pride in their work when teachers' expectations of standards are clear and know that staff value their achievements. They are pleased to show their work to visitors and to discuss it with them. Pupils' attitudes in the provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are very good.
21. The positive attitude to school is further illustrated in pupils' good behaviour in and out of school. Pupils are polite and courteous when in public places. There is a small minority of pupils who have challenging behaviour. These pupils respond well and make good progress in learning to control their behaviour when they are managed appropriately by staff. Where this is not the case, pupils are given too many chances before sanctions are introduced. They respond well to personal and social skills targets when staff are consistent in their responses to poor behaviour, but where this consistency is lacking pupils seem not to understand the consequences of what they do.
22. Seven out of ten parents, who responded to the questionnaire, agree that behaviour in school is good, but it should be a matter of concern to the school that almost one in five of these parents do not have this view. There have been a small number of exclusions during the last two years. This trend is dropping because there have been none in the present academic year. Rare occurrences of bullying have been dealt with promptly and there is an absence of sexism or racism. In lessons, pupils respond well when staff have clear expectations of behaviour. When on school trips, pupils behave very well and are sensible and polite. Pupils in Year 11, for example, were a credit to the school when they attended their 'Industry Week' briefing in a local hotel.
23. On the occasions when pupils lose concentration in lessons, they generally respond well to prompts and encouragement from staff and return to their work. They respect their environment and handle books, equipment and resources with care. It says much for their respect for property that they use high value items, such as computers, which they care for and use appropriately. The good behaviour observed in most lessons matches that seen around the school. Lunch is a pleasant social occasion despite the overcrowding caused by the large number of pupils who need to use the hall at the same time. Behaviour during break times is also good and vigilance by staff enables an atmosphere in which pupils form positive relationships between themselves as well as with staff. Similarly the arrival and departure routines are characterised by tolerance and good humour on the part of pupils. Instances of bullying and name-calling appear rare and where they have occurred, staff have taken prompt action in support of the victims of this. When considering the accommodation, which does not yet provide the total planned space, the behaviour of pupils is good because they show respect for each other as well as high levels of tolerance as they move between lessons.
24. Since the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in attendance, which is now above the national average for similar schools. Unauthorised absence is below the national average for similar schools and pupils arrive punctually for lessons. Registration is carried out in accordance with statutory requirements. These factors have a positive effect on pupils' attainment and progress because they are ready to take advantage of the opportunities that the school offers them.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

25. In the lessons seen during the inspection, the quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent. It was good, very good or excellent in 74 per cent of lessons. Five per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory. Some of the unsatisfactory lessons were taught by temporary staff, although the overall proportion of this was small. When compared to the last inspection there has been a

good all-round improvement and it can now be said that generally, teaching is of a good standard. For example, at the last inspection, satisfactory or better teaching was reported as 86 per cent, while good and very good teaching was reported in 56 per cent of lessons. No excellent teaching was reported. The improvement has come about as a result of better monitoring of teaching as well as its impact on pupils' learning. Performance management measures put in place have also contributed to this rise.

26. An analysis of lesson observations shows that the best teaching occurs for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Seven in ten lessons for these pupils were either very good or excellent. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also benefit from a good standard of teaching because three in ten of their lessons were judged as very good or excellent. Observations in these latter groups were mostly of Year 10, but the inspection team formed a view on the quality of teaching experienced by Year 11 by looking at how these pupils used their learning in tackling their projects during the course of their 'Industry Week'. There is a mixed picture for pupils in Years 7 to 9, where the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with good teaching in Year 8. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching is lower, at one lesson in five. However, one lesson in five also provided good teaching. One in ten lessons for these pupils was unsatisfactory. There are eight classes in these years and reasons for this disparity could be that pupils in some of these classes rely on temporary staff for some of their lessons (parents mentioned that one Year 9 class has had three different teachers within the year). In some instances, teachers who teach these groups are not deployed according to the subjects for which they have the most expertise.
27. The weakest teaching was seen in English and mathematics, especially for pupils in Years 7 to 9. In part, this is accounted for by the lack of continuity that changes in temporary staff have brought about, and also a lack of subject knowledge by teachers who teach outside their expertise. In mathematics, some teachers do not show a secure awareness of the structure within the National Numeracy Strategy and standards in this subject are not as high as they could be. By contrast, the quality of teaching in art and design, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education (PE) and personal, social and health education (PSHE) is at least very good. Art and design in particular provides a very high standard of teaching, which impacts well on pupils' learning and inspires them to achieve good quality work. There is a good standard of teaching in science, religious education and music, which has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The remaining subjects, such as design and technology, history, geography and French have satisfactory teaching standards.
28. Where pupils are taught by teachers with very good subject knowledge the quality of their learning is commensurately higher. This is most noticeable in subjects such as art and design and ICT. For example, in an art and design lesson for Year 10 the teacher's knowledge and expertise enabled her to challenge the pupils' current knowledge in such a way that they achieved very well within the course of a single lesson. When given the task of producing a batik banner the pupils reached a high standard of creative design, but they were enabled to do this because of excellent management by the teacher of both pupils and resources, as well as the full involvement of the learning support assistant (LSA). The pupils were encouraged to go about their learning, by the very good level of challenge provided by the teacher and they responded well to this. The whole lesson was underpinned by a subtly understated demand for high quality outcomes. The expertise and knowledge of the ICT teacher is also responsible for high standards in this subject, where it is taught as a separate subject. For example, a lesson for Year 10 pupils showed that many of them could work very competently with split screens, interrogate databases effectively and complete basic computer tasks with ease. The teaching was so effective because the teacher had a very good knowledge of what the pupils had already learned and took them on from that point. The tasks she provided were both appropriate and challenging to this prior knowledge – added to this was very good pace, changes in learning styles and very good assessment of what pupils had learned within the lesson.
29. The partnership between teachers and learning support staff (LSA) is particularly beneficial to pupils' learning. Where a teacher is confident in his or her subject knowledge their ability to deploy support staff effectively is most noticeable. In those lessons for pupils in Years 3 to 6 this provision is almost seamless and a considerable benefit to the achievement of these pupils. For example, in

a geography lesson for these pupils the LSAs played a full part in challenging pupils' knowledge with very good questions. Because these questions were open-ended, the pupils were required to think carefully about their answers. A particular strength of this relationship is that no single adult appears to take the lead (although the planning by the teacher confirmed that she does) and pupils are bombarded with high expectations and challenges. Not a moment was wasted to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. For example, in a geography lesson the pupils were challenged to not only understand the concept of maps but also to explain this thinking in their own words. Speaking and listening skills are a high priority in such learning. In other lessons, for example, in Year 8 English, LSAs support individual pupils through assisting in the management of behaviour. They do this quietly and effectively, with the result that these individual pupils not only cause little disruption to others, but concentrate on their own learning and achieve more as a result.

30. Where lessons provided excellent teaching, common traits were noticeable within these. These included:
- management of pupils' behaviour, which was derived from high expectations of teachers (for example, in art lessons);
 - lesson planning was detailed and it clearly showed what pupils would be expected to learn (for example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson);
 - use of a variety of teaching methods, which supported the main theme of the lessons;
 - information and concepts explained, using terminology that pupils understood (for example, in a Year 8 English lesson);
 - good use of ICT software that supported pupils' learning (for example in a Year 3 science lesson);
 - very good assessment of pupils' learning, which provided a basis for the teaching of subsequent lessons (for example, assessment practice in Years 3 to 6);
 - involvement of pupils in their own learning – either through stimulating discussion or tasks, which extended the challenge in learning (for example, in science lessons);
 - lessons that were presented with enthusiasm and vitality on the part of teachers (most lessons for pupils in Years 3 to 6 reflected this).
31. In contrast, weaker lessons were characterised by unsatisfactory management of pupils' behaviour. This resulted in pupils shouting out answers without being asked, talking over the instructions given by teachers, wandering around classrooms without due reason and in some cases being offensive and insulting to other pupils. The impact of such behaviour is that pupils in these classes (mostly in Year 9) do not learn as effectively as they should. The level of distraction from a few pupils prevented concentration by the majority and in some instances these pupils took little part in discussions or activities. It was noticeable that some of these pupils 'switched off' from their learning because of these distractions.
32. The use by some teachers of a 'chalk and talk' style of teaching did not engage many pupils in their own learning. Such lessons were dominated by a presentation of information from the teacher, which the pupils then attempted to replicate on a worksheet. Pupils were not expected to consider what they had been told either through discussion or other means, such as group presentations. Some lessons used this sole method too often and pupils subsequently became bored. The unsatisfactory lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9 all contained elements of this approach.
33. The use of ICT to support and enhance pupils' learning is insufficient. Where it is taught as a specific subject the quality of pupils' learning is high and pupils show good competence in using the technology. For example, some pupils in Year 11 used ICT very well in preparing their presentations for the school 'Industry Challenge'. They showed good competence with multimedia presentations as well as use of spreadsheets for constructing graphs. Pupils' learning of and their use of ICT are secure because of this level of teaching, but in a significant number of other lessons they were denied the opportunity to extend and enhance their learning. Where ICT is used in teaching the impact on pupils' learning is noticeable. For example, in a mathematics lesson for younger pupils where the teacher used a multimedia presentation the pupils' understanding was better. This was because the presentation was able to build up a clear sequence of activities that

aided understanding – discussion with pupils showed that most had understood the principle involved in counting on in steps of two, five and ten.

34. Higher attaining pupils throughout the school are not always challenged well to extend their learning. The exception to this was in those lessons where the quality of teaching was high. In part, this can be explained by teachers still adjusting to the greater range of pupil attainment, for which the school now has to provide. Discussions showed that some of these high attaining pupils found the work to be too easy and, in some cases, they were bored by what they were expected to do.
35. Despite the weaknesses in some individual areas of teaching and learning the overall picture is one where teachers provide stimulating learning opportunities for pupils across a wide range. This range goes beyond the formal National Curriculum. There is enough good and very good practice within the school to provide points of development in order to further raise the overall standard.

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

36. The school's curriculum is of good quality, reflects the aims of the school very well, and fully meets statutory requirements. These are particularly reflected in the excellent provision for work-related education, the extensive links with the community and the very good provision for personal, social and health education including extra-curricular activities. These aspects make significant contributions to pupils' learning and provide a broad range of relevant and valuable opportunities. It is not yet, however, part of the school's routine provision to enable individual pupils to enhance their studies through attendance at local mainstream schools.
37. Pupils work towards appropriate accreditation in a wide range of subjects by the end of Year 11. Staff have worked effectively to ensure that pupils who came from Steps Cross School at the end of Year 10 are able to complete their GCSE (Foundation) courses. Work-related education is excellent because it is very effectively planned from Year 9. It is integrated into the citizenship, vocational education and personal, social and health education programmes for Years 10 and 11. These pupils have very well structured opportunities to explore the world of work. The quality of discussion about preparation for a 'business link' was of high quality and pupils' response to the 'Industry Challenge Week' was very positive. It would be difficult for any pupil, irrespective of their attainment, not to achieve significantly as a result of the high quality of this work-related education.
38. Statutory requirements, including the provision of religious education according to local guidelines, are met and the numeracy and literacy strategies have been introduced satisfactorily. There is some planned use of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum, especially in Years 3 to 6. The curriculum in these years is good because it is planned and taught in a way relevant to pupils' needs, which ensures that they build on their skills and knowledge as they progress through these years. Several staff with responsibility for these pupils already have experience and expertise in the teaching of pupils with additional and complex difficulties. This has made it possible for these staff to offer particularly effective education and social opportunities for these pupils. However, in Years 7, 8 and 9, there have been unavoidable changes of staff, as well as posts that remain unfilled by permanent staff. Some of these staff are inexperienced in working with pupils with wide-ranging and complex difficulties and find it difficult to adapt their teaching to enable all pupils to learn effectively. A weakness also exists in their provision for higher attaining pupils, which would encourage them to achieve at appropriate levels. The curriculum, therefore, is not wholly relevant for all pupils within Years 7 to 9. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is very good because of its strengths in developing skills for life after school and accreditation opportunities given to pupils before they leave.
39. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good. Some topics are introduced in science and others through discrete PSHE lessons. There is a cohesive programme for sex, health and relationships education, which is reviewed regularly by governors. The school is deeply involved in a healthy eating initiative. The school provides a high quality PSHE programme, which enables pupils to make informed choices about drugs and their abuse

and misuse. This programme also enables pupils to develop skills in decision making and problem solving. As part of the school's citizenship programme, pupils take harvest produce to local residents and each class takes part in a week-long fund-raising activity. The money raised in this is shared between charities with a focus on the needs of people, the environment and animals. Pupils vote in assembly for the three charities to which they wish to contribute.

40. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Pupils have access to a range of activities that account for all interests and aptitudes. These include singing in the school choir, art and computer clubs, the annual Ten Tors expedition as well as sailing. The skills of staff and people from the local community are used very well to ensure that activities can be pursued to a high level. Where possible these include opportunities for team building as well as personal and social development. For example, individual pupils have opportunities to take part in Tall Ships training. To do this they undertake overnight voyages as full members of the respective crews. Discussion with these pupils indicates responses that range from initial apprehension to total exhilaration.
41. Very good use is made of the local community in order to extend and enhance pupils' opportunities, which enrich their learning. Well-planned educational visits make learning relevant and interesting to pupils because they visit familiar places, such as Torre Abbey and the local museum. Visitors, such as members of different faith communities, also come to the school to contribute their specialist knowledge. The school works very hard to persuade pupils to take advantage of events run by the local authority, such as summer activity weeks for senior pupils. One of the most exciting opportunities that pupils have had is to crew on the 'Golden Vanity – a tall ship. The school is also able to offer pupils longer courses in sailing, with a chance to build leisure skills within their locality. All pupils have residential opportunities each year and the youngest stay in Torbay, getting to know more about the geography and geology of the seashore. Every pupil has the opportunity for a residential experience and these increase in complexity and demand the older they get. A link with the local Torquay Girls Grammar School has resulted in the use of accommodation for Year 8 pupils, on their annual educational visit to France
42. Very good contacts with a wide range of employers help to ensure that all pupils have a work experience placement matched to their needs, aptitudes and career aspirations. This range of placements is excellent, and includes hotels, the construction industry, the zoo, local shops, hairdressing and computing. This extends the work pupils achieve through attendance at the local college. Irrespective of gender, all pupils have full access to the range of opportunities. Evidence shows that boys have experienced working in hairdressing salons while girls have worked in motor vehicle maintenance. The school and the college liaise closely to plan a suitable programme of vocational options for Year 11 pupils. This gives these pupils valuable experience of developing vocational skills in three chosen fields.
43. There are sporting fixtures with, and occasionally resources are borrowed from, other establishments, but generally there is too little professional contact with other schools that result in additional opportunities for pupils. Currently, no pupils are spending regular time included in mainstream schools and there are too few opportunities taken to work with, or learn from, other schools to develop such a provision. Similarly, the school has few contacts with disability organisations that might provide expert information or positive role models for pupils.
44. The school uses both its own and local authority resources very effectively to make very good provision where pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). Integration into regular school activities for such pupils is handled sensitively with very good family involvement. The school uses appropriate national guidelines to develop programmes of work and monitor progress. External support is regular and helpful, and members of Combe Pafford staff attend local training events run by the EAL service. Other pupils are encouraged to find out about the culture of newly arrived pupils, and enjoy learning some words and songs. Consequently, any pupil with English as an additional language makes very good progress both socially and academically.
45. The provision for pupils' personal development is good because, by the end of Year 11, pupils leave the school as mature young adults. Provision for spiritual, moral and cultural development is good and for social development it is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection

and results from the philosophy of the school, which believes in extending challenges to pupils in all areas of their personal development.

46. In assemblies, pupils reflect upon stories with a moral and realise, from a dramatically told story, how things could go wrong if you do not think before taking action. They respect spoken prayers, listening carefully to the prayers written by other pupils. Pupils in Year 4 made a moving and thoughtful Easter garden as part of their celebrations for last Easter. Their understanding of events at such times is good. Pupils develop their thoughtful sides through consideration of the beauty of the world as expressed in art, music and religious education. Their curiosity and interest are also stimulated when they go on field or residential trips and, in contrast, their appreciation of calm and peace is developed if they take advantage of the 'quiet garden' of the school.
47. There is a clear code of behaviour in classes throughout the school, though the exception to this would be in some Year 9 classes because of weak skills in pupils' behaviour management. This code is used effectively to promote moral and social development. It provides a very good framework in which pupils develop their sense of personal responsibility. Pupils value the team points they earn and presentation of certificates in assembly. The belief that rewards are worth having is central to the good systems created to encourage good behaviour. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and cheerfully take on individual responsibilities. For example, Year 11 pupils took pride in teaching Year 4 pupils how to print patterns in art and design lessons. Relationships in the school are very good and provide pupils with good examples on which to model their own social and moral behaviour. A strength in this provision is the role models provided by staff.
48. Pupils work well with partners and groups in most lessons. For example, in music they discuss the arrangement of their work and listen well to others when they suggest improvements. They are proud that as a member of a house team, every team point they earn may help their team to have the highest score of the week. Visitors to the school and visits to places of interest provide positive links with the wider community. Years 10 and 11 pupils make a positive contribution to their own learning and development when they attend courses at college or go on work experience opportunities. The wide range of extra-curricular activities and residential visits are very good opportunities for social, emotional and physical development. Social development is also encouraged through many opportunities provided by staff. These include small-scale opportunities such as lunchtime clubs through to the grander scale of visits to France. Each of these contributes positively to pupils' personal development and fully supports the school's philosophy to develop the whole child.
49. There is good provision for pupils' cultural development. Stories, music and art from many countries and diverse cultures are used well to extend pupils' knowledge and use of cultural imagery and language. Pupils show a good level of interest in other faiths and cultures. They reflect upon the qualities shown by famous people such as Martin Luther King and Mother Teresa. Pupils are involved in celebration of their own cultural heritage through singing traditional songs, celebrating religious festivals and working for the Eden Project as part of the millennium celebration. Pupils have experienced French culture through their visits to France as an integral part of their study of French. Generally pupils are prepared well for their life in a multicultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50. The school makes good provision for the care of its pupils. There is a good range of policies that cover all aspects of the school's activities. These are reviewed regularly and provide clear guidance for staff. Pupils benefit from very good lessons in personal, health and social education; these deal very well with issues such as drugs misuse, smoking and sex education. Additionally, health and safety issues are appropriately emphasised in lessons such as physical education, craft and design and technology. In lessons where hazards could be present, staff and pupils show a keen awareness of safety. Child protection matters are fully secure because of the arrangements put in place by the senior management. These arrangements comply with procedures that are agreed locally and the school follows these guidelines.

51. Teachers know their pupils well, and they have good relationships with them. Discussion with pupils indicated that where they had a problem most felt very confident to approach teachers, who they thought could help them. This is further enhanced through a well-run tutorial system. Medical services, such as those supplied by the school nurse and physiotherapist provide well for the range of needs of the pupils. Parents, however, would like to see an increase in the frequency of these services; the inspection team agrees with this view.
52. The school is hampered in its diligent attempts to ensure that all pupils and staff work in a safe environment. Building work both carried out and yet to be completed has created a number of health and safety issues, which are mostly related to accessibility, especially for pupils in wheelchairs. An audit carried out on behalf of Torbay Council earlier this year identified concerns such as non-compliance with recognised access standards on several routes, hazardous steps, and potential evacuation difficulties. The school is frustrated by delays in resolving these shortcomings while at the same time taking every reasonable step to minimise the possibility of harm to pupils. The school cannot be held to account for any of the deficiencies with which it currently has to live.
53. Insufficient account has been taken of parking arrangements for the arrival and departure of the increased number of pupils, including those in wheelchairs. Space is very restricted and becomes congested at the end of the day. Good levels of supervision by staff minimise the risk to pupils, but persistent vigilance has to continue if accidents are to be avoided. A good proportion of staff is on duty to ensure the safety of pupils during breaks from lessons. An outcome of this is that few pupils report any bullying or harassment. The school has also constructed a 'quiet garden' area where any pupil can go who may feel threatened, or who just wishes to sit quietly; this also adds to the general quality of the environment and care for pupils.
54. The personal support and guidance of pupils in Years 10 and 11 continues to be a strength of the school and has further improved since the last inspection. Throughout the school, teachers provide tutorial support to each year group. These sessions provide good quality support for pupils at both an individual and group level. For example, pupils known to be reticent or shy when in a group are encouraged to make their thoughts known during these well-structured group sessions. These measures, which build confidence in pupils, are carried through to lessons where these pupils make more effective efforts in their own learning. The needs of such pupils can readily be identified because the teachers know these pupils so well. This support can be at emotional and practical levels. Outside experts are consulted to ensure that, where necessary, pupils have the appropriate equipment needed to support their learning and the school continues in its effort to ensure that there are staff suitably trained to deal with physically disabled pupils as well as those with sensory difficulties.
55. The procedures for assessing pupils' achievement and progress through subject-based assessment are satisfactory. In English and mathematics procedures based upon the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are good. Additionally baseline assessment procedures are in place. Assessment is undertaken in September in Year 4 in English and mathematics and the targets set are evaluated by a similar test in January to obtain an entry level for each pupil. In science, procedures are also good and are based upon assessment at the end of each module of work and external accreditation in Years 10 and 11.
56. However, although the school is encouraging assessment based upon modules of work the use of assessment procedures are still inconsistent and unsatisfactory. For example, in modern foreign languages, geography and history, there is no formative assessment in Years 7 to 9 and only recent improvements in practice in design and technology make it barely satisfactory. Teachers also make inconsistent use of the guidance given in the school's marking policy. In some subject areas there is little evidence in pupils' workbooks of positive remarks and constructive hints as to what the pupils ought to pay more attention to in future lessons. The school realises that with the fairly recent increase in pupil numbers there is a need to review its procedures.

57. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is unsatisfactory and there is a lack of effective target setting in some curricular areas, particularly English. The monitoring of teaching and assessment, particularly in foundation subjects is inconsistent. As a result, it can not be assured that assessment procedures are first of all being used and that the outcomes to any such assessment are embedded in the planning of subsequent lessons. It is only where the occasional good use is made of assessment that such information forms the basis of individual pupil target setting.
58. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory. Inconsistencies in procedures for the assessment of pupils' achievement and progress results in poor or little individual target setting in some curricular areas. Additionally there is, as yet, no system in place to co-ordinate the centralisation of all assessment information to build up academic profiles of individual pupils. This makes the tracking of pupils' academic progress very difficult.
59. There are good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour. These are closely allied to the school's aims and also promote well the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The behaviour policy gives clear information for parents, teachers and pupils and is specific to each. For pupils, a central rule is 'Be responsible for your own behaviour'. The simplicity of this is understood by all pupils but in a few cases, mostly in Year 9, it is misinterpreted. Sanctions escalate in seriousness and parents are kept well informed when things might be going wrong.
60. Good behaviour is promoted well through the house point system, the 'Three Star' badge award and a range of certificates and cups, which are regularly awarded at the 'achievement' assembly. Following a residential visit, the youngest pupils' achievements, such as washing up, van loading and vacuuming floors were rewarded at such an assembly. Over a whole term, pupils are judged in worthiness for 'Three Star' badges only if staff are in agreement. Such an award is also used to encourage maintenance of desirable behaviour. The outcome of this approach is that the school has a community ethos in which the effort of individuals is appreciated and in which care for each other is most noticeable. The impact is most conspicuous in the classes for older pupils – these are the pupils who have been in the school for the longest time and they have taken on board its values.
61. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good and have resulted in improved attendance overall. Parents are contacted by mid-morning if they have not notified the school of the reason for their child's absence. Attendance is monitored monthly by the education welfare officer (EWO) and school. Any concerns are followed up with a letter from the school or a home visit by the EWO. The police carry out random truancy sweeps and will follow up any unauthorised absence if they are able and requested to do so by the school. Parents are reminded about the importance of regular attendance through newsletters. The impact of this is that attendance rates are good and pupils take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.
62. The school has maintained its good level of support for its pupils since the last inspection and improvements have also been made in some areas. These include provision for work-related education. This was a strength at the last inspection, but the quality of what pupils now receive is excellent and this impacts very well on their future opportunities. Assessment procedures for pupils in Years 3 to 6 are very good and these are used well to influence what teachers will teach next. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is a mixed picture and the progress made by these pupils cannot be ensured through some of the current approaches. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 now benefit from an increased range of accreditation opportunities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. The partnership with parents is similar to that at the time of the last inspection and is satisfactory overall. Parents generally have positive views of the school and these too are satisfactory overall. Nine out of ten parents feel comfortable to approach the school about any school-related issues and a similar proportion also believes that teaching is good. The majority of parents are satisfied

with all other aspects of the school except homework provision and information about their child's progress. The inspection team support parents' positive views but considers the use of homework and information on children's progress to be satisfactory. A significant number of parents feel that the school does not offer enough activity opportunities for their children that occur outside formal lessons. Only 68 per cent of parents thought the school was doing all it could in this regard. The view of the inspection team and supported by the evidence is that the opposite is the case. Pupils have many opportunities to enrich their own development and when compared to similar schools Combe Pafford provides a rich and inclusive programme that can be accessed by all pupils.

64. Parents are satisfactorily informed about the activities of the school through the prospectus, governors' annual report, well-produced termly newsletters as well as other individual correspondence. Information to parents about the curriculum is satisfactory overall. This offers opportunities to parents to support their children in their studies. Parents of pupils in Years 3 to 6 receive a termly curriculum prediction of what their children will be learning. A similar approach is used for pupils in Years 7 to 11, except that the prediction is for a year and the breakdown is by term in some of the foundation subjects. Individual education plans provide targets in English, mathematics and personal development. In the classes for ASD pupils and in Years 3, 4 and 5 parents receive good information about day-to-day progress through the 'Message Book'.
65. Information to parents about their child's progress is satisfactory overall. Parents are involved in discussion about their child's individual education plan (IEP). This occurs early in the spring term and new targets are set for the subsequent six months. Consultations are held between school and parents at the end of the summer term. These take place after annual reports have been issued. In these meetings progress towards targets is reviewed and new ones set. Annual reports are satisfactory overall. They give satisfactory indication of pupils' progress and attainment level in each subject but do not always indicate what pupils can do. In this regard they are not parent-friendly because a parent would be unaware of what their child can do if they did not have an understanding of what 'levels' refer to. Despite this some parents praised the school for its effort to keep them informed. This was especially the case where parents are separated.
66. As transport is provided to bring pupils to school, the school reacts positively to the need to keep in regular contact with parents. It does this informally by telephone to let parents know about their child's successes or equally to raise concerns. Parents are welcomed to the school at any time and invited to attend specific events. These are generally well supported. In particular, the school has worked very hard to involve the parents of children who transferred from Steps Cross School at the start of this academic year. The school takes very seriously the issue of parent communication and contact. To assist this, governors have approved the appointment of a parent-liaison teacher. This teacher has worked very effectively with parents and has regularly sought their views and where necessary successfully resolved most of their concerns.
67. Parents' contribution to their children's learning at school and at home is satisfactory. About half of the parents have signed the home/school agreement. Information provided by the school suggests that the majority of parents of pupils in the lower school (Years 3 to 6) help their children with homework. The incidence of this drops as pupils become older. A significant majority of parents attend parents' consultations and many parents of pupils in Year 11 attend the conferences that take place just before their leaving. This indicates the importance they place on education and helps to instil in their children good attitudes to learning and to the school. Earlier in the year the Parents and Friends Association raised valuable funds for the school but has been inactive since Christmas.
68. Approximately one third of parents chose to respond to the questionnaire distributed to them prior to the inspection. While the views as expressed in this were generally positive, the outcomes show that the school fails to inform a significant number of parents about crucial areas of their child's development. The views regarding what children do outside lessons would be a good example. Mostly the issue seems to be a failure of communication because in fact the school provides a rich range of such activities. It should be recognised that when considered as a whole, the number of parents who chose to respond to both the questionnaire and/or attend the pre-inspection meeting, represented a minority. The school enjoys the confidence and support of its

stakeholders – as seen in the number of volunteers who help in its activities as well as the high quality links with the local business community.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

69. The headteacher provides good leadership for the school. Within the last 12 months he has led the school through a period of considerable upheaval as it has amalgamated with another local special school that was closing. His skill in managing change and enabling all staff to make their personal contribution and feel valued during this period has resulted in a school where the morale of staff remains high; and this has positive benefits for the pupils in their care. Much has happened within the last 12 months, which could have distracted the school management from their drive towards higher standards. For example, there has been a major building programme, which was suspended before completion and has not yet been resumed, but all pupils are now, as planned, integrated into the school. The school has done all it could in this regard as much of the control of the building work is not the school's responsibility.
70. In spite of these adversities the school management has raised the standard of teaching since the last inspection; the school now provides for a wider range of special education needs and continues to offer pupils opportunities for personal development, which go beyond those of the formal National Curriculum. The headteacher's leadership has ensured that the foundation for future development is secure, though the anticipated benefits have yet to be materialised.
71. The headteacher is supported in his ambition for the school by a good senior management team. They work effectively at each of their delegated responsibilities and the impact of their work fully supports the aims and values of the school. Regular meetings between members of this group ensure that the headteacher is quickly aware of any issues arising. This is evident from discussion with the headteacher and by following through the impact of decisions made previously.
72. Subject co-ordinators are active in the development of their subjects. There have been improvements in specific areas such as the provision for pupils in Years 3 to 6 and subjects such as science, ICT and art and design. These developments have been supported by funding identified in the school improvement plan. In some cases, however, the sums involved are too small to support developments that would lead to a rise in standards. For example, the annual sum given to the provision of resources equates to just over £1 per pupil per week – this is insufficient to ensure a good quality of provision. The need to upgrade security systems because of constant vandalism during out-of-school hours also causes a drain on financial resources, which might otherwise be used to raise standards.
73. The processes of performance management have contributed to the rise in standards. All teachers have appropriate targets that are closely aligned to the requirements of the school development plan. For example, the development plan identified the co-ordination of provision for ASD pupils as well as those in Years 3 to 6. The impact of this is that these departments now offer very good quality provision to their pupils.
74. The governing body is fully involved in monitoring the work of the school and carry out their responsibilities thoroughly. Collectively they provide good support to the work of the senior management team and staff. This governing body is led well by a very knowledgeable and active chairman. He makes frequent visits to the school to monitor its progress and deal with issues of policy. His skilled leadership has ensured that every governor is fully aware of the responsibilities they have and his attention to detail has ensured thorough monitoring and evaluation of what happens in the school. Staff are very aware of the support afforded to them by the governing body as they are also aware of its role as a 'critical friend'. Governors call the school to account through a series of purposeful and structured monitoring visits.
75. The headteacher and his senior staff monitor the quality of teaching appropriately and this has resulted in an overall rise in standards. Performance targets for staff are securely in place and these too account for a rise in standards of provision throughout the school. Despite the rise in the quality of teaching, and the procedures that support it, there is evidence to indicate that the

manner in which the monitoring is carried out is insufficiently rigorous to raise standards in all cases. In those instances where teaching was thought to be satisfactory the inspection team found consistent evidence to the contrary, and this suggests that the criteria used to judge its quality were not always consistently interpreted by the school management. This could also have been that some teachers were inappropriately deployed when considering their strongest subjects. Deployment of some staff remains an issue to be addressed.

76. There is a consistent and rigorous programme in which the work of the school is evaluated through reference to its policies and subject plans for pupils' work. For example, each subject of the National Curriculum becomes the focus of review according to a published timetable. These reviews are thorough and identify both strengths and development areas within subjects. The outcomes need more rigorous implementation because in individual examples recommendations that come from these reviews have not been carried out in practice. For example, a review of geography, begun in late 1999, indicated that there should be more opportunity for pupils to use ICT in support of learning, and also put in place an assessment package that would be used from September 2000. Neither of these recommendations have been implemented.
77. The commitment to improvement shown by all staff is encouraged by good communication throughout the school. Staff are informed of all major developments and are fully included in the planning of school development. There is a rigorous system of school development planning, which involves subject co-ordinators submitting plans for the development of their subject. This information is considered and prioritised by senior management. Proposals are then submitted to the governing body for debate and approval. The process ensures that staff feel part of the school development and also that the areas for development are the right ones. The processes of information exchange and debate also apply to governors who are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors have an effective committee structure, each of which prepares detailed reports to inform corporate decision making.
78. There are sufficient numbers of teachers and learning support assistants to broadly match the demands of the curriculum. However, recruitment difficulties and staffing changes due to the school's changing role have meant that precise deployment of staff according to their expertise, has not been possible. In key areas, such as English and mathematics this is detrimental to pupils' progress and to the drive by the school for higher standards. Currently a supply teacher is managing the co-ordination of English. This is also an unsatisfactory situation. In addition, the school has still to appoint another teacher for pupils with autism, despite repeated efforts to do this. Senior management is considering a form of sponsorship to enable a currently unqualified teacher to achieve qualified status.
79. The strong emphasis the school places on the continuing professional development of all staff is reflected in the appointment of a continuing professional development co-ordinator. The co-ordinator has produced an informative teacher induction file that provides clear guidance for new members of staff. The appointment of this co-ordinator shows awareness by the school of the need to develop staff expertise in providing for the growing, diverse social and academic needs of its pupils. For example, all staff have received training in the manual handling of non-ambulant pupils and a learning support assistant has qualified as an instructor for this aspect.
80. Performance management and staff appraisal is well established. Performance management for the learning support assistants commences at the start of the next academic year. The inclusion of all staff in the performance management programme is an indicator of the school's wish to raise standards for its pupils.
81. Despite a significant building programme the accommodation is presently unsatisfactory. It does not, in all cases, support the growing range of complex needs of the pupils. However, this lack of provision is not a failure of the school. The school was in the process of a major rebuilding programme but the local authority suspended the project because of quality issues. Currently the school has a major shortfall in the planned accommodation and has had to provide temporary facilities to accommodate the increase in pupils.

82. This shortfall has brought difficulties, many of which are experienced by pupils with physical difficulties or who use wheelchairs exclusively in order to get around. For example, access to the two storey, temporary accommodation for wheelchair users is via an overly steep ramp to the first floor and a 'zigzag' path to the ground floor. This ramp is too narrow for wheelchair users to comfortably negotiate. For example, one pupil in an electric wheelchair had to use the equivalent of a three-point turn in order to negotiate the turns in the 'zigzag'. A recent audit by the local council under the Disability Discrimination Act of 1995 has stated that the overall rises between mobiles and other main school buildings are outside advisable parameters for ramp access. Such poor access results in pupils in wheelchairs taking too long a time to move from the temporary accommodation to the main school for lesson changes and this reduces their taught time.
83. The classrooms in the temporary accommodation have poor ventilation and are too small both for the size of classes and for Years 10 and 11 pupils who are now as big as many fully grown adults. On warm days the rooms become oppressively hot, making pupils listless and uncomfortable during lessons. This unnecessarily impacts on their learning. This problem of space is further compounded where there are pupils in wheelchairs.
84. Other issues around the school are:
- paths for wheelchair users have adverse camber and are too steep. Handrail provision is inadequate. This impacts on pupils' personal development because they are unable to move wholly independently;
 - within the school, users of the lift to the upper ground floor cannot independently close the gate and the lift controls are poorly designed;
 - in the library, some books on higher shelves are out of reach of wheelchair users;
 - in the CDT room insufficient thought has been given to access for wheelchair users. Inappropriate heights of sinks, machinery and workbenches reduce the opportunities for independent learning;
 - the art and design room is too small;
 - the library area is too small and also used for the storage of learning resources;
 - the colour and tonal contrast of some surfaces makes independent movement difficult for pupils with visual difficulties;
 - a lift system that, although serving only three levels, has a choice of 15 buttons, and these are too small for the pupils.
- This list is not exhaustive but provided by way of example. The local authority audit report highlighted many other issues of difficulty, some of which do not comply with recognised standards. None of these were costed with a view to imminent improvement. This is because of the limbo in which the school finds itself in regard to its building programme.
85. Accommodation for geography is also unsatisfactory. With no specialist accommodation the teacher has to move between seven different classrooms carrying all of the subject resources in a box. Consequently, pupils in some lessons have to wait while the teacher locates and sets up the resources required for the lesson. This reduces learning time.
86. The building programme has, however, improved provision in other areas. These include two computer suites, a purpose built provision for pupils with autism, a music room, outside play areas both for junior aged pupils and for pupils with autism and a quiet area with a water feature where pupils are able to meet. There are several specialist toileting facilities for wheelchair users with hoists and beds. The school's physiotherapist has specialist accommodation and is able to undertake individual physiotherapy programmes.
87. The school provides a very welcoming atmosphere and ethos in keeping with its mission statement. The main school accommodation is light, airy and well maintained by the site manager and cleaning staff and is in very good condition. Most, though not all, corridors are sufficiently wide for wheelchair users, pleasantly decorated and contain very good displays of pupils' artwork. This makes a major contribution to a positive learning environment.
88. Resources used by pupils for their learning are generally satisfactory, despite the relatively small sums spent on these. They support learning effectively. These resources are good in art and

design, music and in the provision for pupils with additional educational needs. Resources are very good in information and communication technology (ICT) where the subject is taught discretely. They considerably enhance pupils' progress, learning and development of ICT skills.

89. The money received by the school per pupil is very low when compared with similar schools nationally. The sum does not take full and proper account of the changing nature of the school, the pupils with a physical disability and those with ASD. The amount currently received by the school is very low even if the particular need of pupils is considered as 'moderate learning difficulty'. There is now an increasing number of pupils with additional difficulty, because of the change in school designation, but the financial support has not reflected the demands of this change.
90. The school finances are very carefully managed. Financial procedures are very good and all items of major expenditure are closely aligned to the school development plan. The recent auditor's report has helped to improve financial security further and best practice recommendations have already been implemented.
91. The school considers best value very carefully in terms of comparing standards with similar schools. They take on aspects such as funding their own caretaker and cleaning staff and have renegotiated grounds maintenance costs, because they could do this more cost effectively than local authority provision. Grants are very carefully spent, the money being used for the sole benefit of pupils. For example, the development of specialist ICT facilities and the Years 10 and 11 work-related programme, which prepares pupils for leaving school. When purchasing goods the school seeks competitive tenders. Good examples of this are the perimeter fencing and the new minibus.
92. The day-to-day management of the school's finances is very good. There are secure systems in place for ordering, receiving goods and paying invoices. The finance officer ensures that the Chair of the finance sub-committee receives regular monthly budget tabulations prior to sub-committee or governor meetings. This year supply cover has been a major cost.
93. Since the last inspection, the management of the school has continued to improve. This is largely because of the energy and enthusiasm that the senior management group continues to bring to their responsibilities. They deservedly enjoy the confidence of staff and the impact of their work is that staff are empowered to carry out their roles to the benefit of pupils.
94. The school gives good value for money because it offers its pupils a good all-round education, but there remain significant areas for improvement, such as the continuity of learning in the core subjects of English and mathematics for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

95. In order to further improve the quality of education and pupils' progress the head teacher and governors should:
- i. improve achievement in literacy and numeracy – especially for those pupils in Years 7 to 9 by:
 - continuing efforts to appoint a co-ordinator who will develop a whole school provision;
 - raising levels of expectation of what pupils need to achieve;
 - better deployment of staff with the expertise to teach the subjects.(see paragraphs 3, 5, 8, 75, 101, 104, 111-112)
 - ii. ensure that information and communication technology is used more prominently to challenge and extend pupils' learning in other subjects by:
 - ensuring that all staff are competent users of the technology;
 - requiring its use in all subjects;
 - monitoring the learning achieved by pupils and evaluating these outcomes.(see paragraphs 33, 122, 145, 151, 159, 169, 174, 176, 182, 189, 196)
 - iii. ensure there are rigorous procedures, consistently used, that monitor and track the progress of pupils so that:
 - information is readily available to identify pupils' progress;
 - parents can be better informed about the achievement and progress of their children;
 - progress by groups of pupils and individuals is more readily identifiable.(see paragraphs 56-59, 68)
 - iv. develop staff expertise so they are fully aware of the growing range of pupils' learning styles and needs so that:
 - attention can be given to pupils of higher attainment;
 - the quality of teachers' expertise will enable them to provide challenging work for all pupils.(see paragraphs 1, 4-5, 7-8, 16, 26-27, 32, 34, 38, 104, 108, 111, 119, 131, 142)
 - v. the governors should continue to press the local authority so that all of the planned accommodation is provided in as short a time as possible.
(see paragraphs 52-53, 81-85, 87, 153, 191)

For additional consideration:

- develop links with other local schools so that pupils have opportunities for academic and social inclusion.
(see paragraphs 36, 43)

PROVISION FOR PUPILS WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER

96. The provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) is very good. Strengths lie in the very good understanding of the needs of ASD pupils and very good teaching. Many interesting and relevant opportunities for learning are provided and there is a strong commitment to developing other teachers' knowledge and understanding of working with pupils on the autistic spectrum. This ensures that, where appropriate, pupils are included in lessons elsewhere in the school. Pupils are involved in assemblies with the rest of the school and spend some time in the playground with other junior aged pupils each day. This is very well organised to maximise opportunities for social and physical development.
97. The provision was established almost two years ago and pupils have pleasant low-stimulus rooms decorated in subtle colours. There is an useful area with the computer, bubble tube and relaxing mats, which are used well as rewards for pupils when work is completed. In the corridors outside the classrooms the displays are colourful, interactive and informative. They are an accurate reflection of pupils' work. The co-ordinator is based with the younger group and two other part-time staff, who work together well, with the smaller group of older pupils. The two classes frequently work together. For example, in physical education, during a lesson provided by a teacher from the main school. This was a successful lesson because the teacher was supported well by staff from the ASD unit. With their advice and support she was acquiring an understanding of how to adapt her lessons so that pupils participated and learned skills more effectively. The outcomes to this quality of teamwork impact positively on pupils' learning.
98. Pupils make very good progress in their social development and towards their academic targets on their individual education plans because:
- precise targets have been agreed and are known to all staff who work with the pupils;
 - individual education plans for each pupil are working documents and their progress is checked very regularly against its contents;
 - parents and carers are encouraged to work on pupils' targets at home and discuss outcomes with staff of the unit;
 - assessment information is used well to set targets that are used effectively to plan what pupils need to learn next. These targets encompass all subjects of the curriculum;
 - staff have a very good expertise and understanding of the needs of autistic pupils and how the National Curriculum can be adapted to provide these. They know the level of 'prompts' needed by each pupil. For example, in a literacy lesson very clear communication and routines lead to all pupils applying spelling pattern rules correctly.
99. Communication between home and school is good. This exchange of information impacts well on the rate of pupils' achievement. Staff also provide a good range of additional experiences, which aim at developing the social competencies of pupils. These include an overnight, residential visit towards the end of this term as well as weekly educational visits to places of interest. These represent challenging opportunities for such pupils. The work of the unit is well integrated into the wider work of the school, for example, a small group of ASD pupils from the secondary department are given valuable opportunities in the unit to support and develop their social skills.
100. The provision of the unit is very good because it is managed in a way that fully meets the needs of its pupils. The expertise of the co-ordinator is considerable and this impacts well on the quality of provision. Additional funding is used very efficiently to provide high quality support for pupils. The school has received an award to develop the use of 'social stories', which are an important aspect of learning for pupils with ASD. The success of the venture is also seen through the training provided by the co-ordinator for staff in other schools.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	98
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	45

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	12	24	36	21	5	0	0
Percentage	12	25	36	20	5	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Percentage figures do not equal 100 because of rounding.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	198
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	70

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	11

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.7

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

**Attainment of Pupils
End of Year 6**

Outcomes of tests and teacher assessed (TA) attainment for pupils in Year 9.

2000

		% of pupils attaining level						
No. of pupils		W	N	1	2	3	4	5
English TA	28	3.6	0.0	32.1	42.9	17.9	3.6	0
Maths TA	28	3.6	0.0	17.9	35.7	32.1	10.7	0
Maths Test	29	0.0	48.3	0.0	6.9	31.0	6.9	0
Science TA	28	7.1	0.0	25.0	39.3	25.0	3.6	0
Science Test	29	0.0	37.9	0.0	13.8	31.0	10.3	3.4

2001

		% of pupils attaining level						
No. of pupils		W	N	1	2	3	4	5
English TA	28	0.0	0.0	17.9	46.4	35.7	0.0	0.0
Maths TA	28	7.1	0.0	7.1	46.4	32.1	7.1	0.0
Maths Test	28	0.0	17.9	0.0	7.1	42.9	10.7	0.0
Science TA	21	0.0	0.0	9.5	85.7	4.8	0.0	0.0
Science Test	28	0.0	35.7	0.0	25.0	32.1	7.1	0.0

2002

		% of pupils attaining level								
No. of pupils		A	B	W	N	1	2	3	4	5
English TA	26									
Maths TA	26	0.0	0.0	15.4	0.0	3.8	19.2	50.0	11.5	0.0
Maths Test	26	0.0	38.5	0.0	15.4	0.0	0.0	30.8	15.4	0.0
Science TA	26	0.0	0.0	3.8	0.0	3.8	30.8	26.9	34.6	0.0
Science Test	26	3.8	23.1	0.0	11.5	0.0	7.7	42.3	11.5	0.0

End of Year 9

Pupils in Year 9 undertook national tests and tasks (SATs) for the first time this year. At the time of reporting these figures were not available.

End of Year 11

WJEC Entry level – 2002 – 26 pupils in the year

Subject	Fail	Entry level 1	Entry level 2	Entry level 3	Total entry	% success rate from 26 pupil entry
English	0	2 (2)	16 (16)	5 (6)	23	88%
Maths	0 (2)	11 (4)	7 (12)	3 (7)	21	80%
Science	0 (1)	3 (6)	13 (11)	9 (8)	25	96%
ICT	0 (1)	7 (8)	12 (10)	5 (3)	24	92%
Art	0 (0)	0 (6)	1 (4)	6 (1)	7	27%

CDT	1 (1)	4 (5)	6 (7)	4 (0)	15	58%
Food Studies	0 (0)	6 (9)	10 (4)	0 (0)	16	62%
TOTALS	1	33	65	32	131	

Note; Figures in brackets refer to pupils in 2001 who entered the same examination.
In 2001 pupils also entered French. No pupils entered for this accreditation in 2002.

ASDAN (YAS) - 2002

Bronze award gained by 25 pupils.

OCR National Skills Profile

Core Areas	Pupil entry	Aggregate of successful passes
Communication	24	89
Numeracy	4	4
ICT	18	18
Practical work skills	25	82
Vocational Areas		
Media	15	15
Retail	20	20

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	183	6	1
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	11	0	0

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	23.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.3
Average class size	10.4

Education support staff: Y3 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	25
Total aggregate hours worked per week	679

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001 - 2
	£
Total income	942,053
Total expenditure	949,313
Expenditure per pupil	5,718
Balance brought forward from previous year	45,284
Balance carried forward to next year	38,024

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	11.7*

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2**
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

**The increase in teaching staff is because of the amalgamation of Combe Pafford School with a school that was closed. The increase in pupil numbers required a commensurate increase in staff.*

*** These posts have been vacant for some time because of recruitment difficulties.*

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	198
per cent returned	27

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	28	9	7	2
My child is making good progress in school.	41	39	7	6	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	26	44	7	11	11
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	33	22	15	7
The teaching is good.	46	44	0	4	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	46	24	19	7	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	63	30	2	6	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	28	4	4	6
The school works closely with parents.	37	44	6	7	6
The school is well led and managed.	63	26	2	4	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	26	6	6	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	31	9	7	15

Note; All parents were sent a questionnaire prior to the inspection. Less than one third of parents returned these. Care should be taken in interpreting the percentage figures as two percentage points equates to one response.

Nine pupils were represented by their parents or carers at the meeting held prior to the inspection.

Other issues raised by parents

At the meeting held prior to the inspection some parents of pupils in Year 9 expressed concern at the frequency with which temporary staff are used within the school. While this is unavoidable in many cases, the inspection team found substance to these concerns. There is an adverse impact on the continuity of learning as well as subject planning. However, the school is doing what it can to minimise the impact of this on pupils' learning.

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

The school has changed its nature and merged with another special school since the last inspection. Direct comparisons, therefore, about pupils' attainments cannot be made. Comparison to the last inspection is only made about those aspects of the subjects where there is sufficient and common evidence.

ENGLISH

101. The achievement of pupils, including those with physical disability, autistic spectrum disorder and behavioural difficulties is good overall in Years 4 to 6, and Years 10 and 11. Although achievement is satisfactory in most classes in Years 7 to 9, it is good only in classes where the teaching is better; for example, in Year 8. The school has no permanent literacy co-ordinator at present and this has affected the consistency of standards of teaching and learning as well as the continuity of planning.
102. Improvement since the last inspection is good with strengths in particular areas. Some pupils have, for the first time this year, entered the National Key Stage 3 English test. The target of 50 per cent of pupils to attain Level 4, however, is unlikely to be met. Pupils in Year 11 who have entered the Welsh Joint Examination Council Examinations (WJEC), and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in English, in contrast, are likely to attain their predicted grades.
103. Pupils' achievement in speaking and listening is good across the school except in Years 7 to 9, where it is satisfactory. Achievement in reading is now very good by the end of Year 6 and good by the end of Year 11. Teaching and learning observed during the inspection in Years 4 to 6 was very good and there is clear evidence, from the scrutiny of work and teachers' records, of good practice in these classes in planning and assessment over the past year. There have also been recent good improvements in assessment, monitoring and support for reading throughout the school. There is now a good emphasis on developing the skill of spelling across the school. This has been accomplished through regular spelling assessments and informal tests.
104. There are several areas of underdevelopment. One of these is that teachers are not planning sufficiently well to provide a clear framework of age-appropriate texts across the school. Another is that teachers are not yet planning lessons to make sure that pupils continue to build on their previous learning. The marking of work is inconsistent and where it is unsatisfactory it does not tell pupils how well they might be doing or even what they need to do in order to improve. The quality of handwriting and presentation of work also needs improvement. There is also some evidence of underachievement of higher attaining pupils. In Years 7 to 9, the planning and recording of progress against the targets set in individual education plan targets is less developed, when compared to the rest of the school.
105. Inspection evidence shows that by the end of Year 6, pupils have made good advances in extending their language and reading skills. This is in spite of the wide range of learning needs experienced by these pupils. Some of this progress is due to the language-rich and stimulating classroom displays. These are informative, interactive and used well by teachers to develop skills of speaking and listening, as are other methods. For example, in a Year 5 class, pupils were required to repeat what they had said if their voice was too quiet for others to hear. The teacher checked with others, "Did you hear that?". As a result, pupils became increasingly aware of their audience. Some confident readers in Year 6, in the class for ASD pupils, referred to text they had read and reread this to explain clearly why a creature was pleased or displeased to see another. They talked about the feelings of a fish in a story. They had to decide whether this fish was sad, scared or angry and in so doing brought a large measure of empathy to their answers.
106. By the end of Year 9, pupils respond to teachers' questions such as "How do we know?". They answered with clear explanations and gave good examples in full sentences, such as "He is a bully because he never feels guilty for his actions". In science lessons, pupils give reasoned responses to each other's suggestions; for example, "That can't be so because...". By the end of

Year 11, pupils have made good progress in their speaking and listening skills. They are confident to help visitors to the school, explain what they have been doing and how they have felt about their change of school. All Year 11 pupils take part in, and prepare, an illustrated talk at the end of 'Industry Week' in which they present the work they have been doing as well as the results of their research. When compared to similar pupils in other special schools these pupils show significant confidence across a range of communication skills.

107. By the end of Year 6, achievement in reading skills is very good. From baseline assessment on entry to the school, teachers analyse and assess pupils' reading readiness, set activities to develop their skills from where each pupil is functioning and record progress closely. They use this information to further develop reading skills. Those learning support assistants, who have additional expertise in literacy, manage reading recovery programmes efficiently and keep good reading records for all the readers in their charge. Higher attaining pupils, including those in the ASD class, read with some fluency, confidence and expression because teachers and learning support assistants give pupils very well directed support in this skill. At the end of lessons, pupils enjoy reading out their work and teachers give encouraging comments such as 'Xxx worked all by herself'.
108. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in reading by the end of Year 9 and a few make good progress. They continue to have good quality individual support in reading skills, although the story texts they use are often better suited to younger children and not well matched to their interests. In some lessons, in contrast, the text is too challenging. Pupils stumble over words as they read aloud and this makes others lose interest and concentration. Pupils have regular library skills lessons and enjoy selecting books from the school library where there is an appropriate range of fiction and non-fiction texts. Pupils know how to search for books and how to use reference texts. In Years 8 and 9, pupils become absorbed in group-readers (texts which are read by individuals and simultaneously followed by others) and enjoy talking about the characters. Pupils with visual impairment have coloured overlays to assist them. However, there are times when they forget to use them and teachers also forget to remind them. By the end of Year 11, fluent readers enjoy reading from a good range of texts and show good interest in interpreting them. Less confident readers continue to improve their skills, using context, background information from discussion and video clips to deepen their understanding, for example, in their study of 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'.
109. By the end of Years 6 and 11, achievement in writing skills is good, and by the end of Year 9 it is unsatisfactory. Higher and average attaining pupils by the age of 11, write neatly in sentences with good basic skills of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Lower attaining pupils have good support and are encouraged to develop their writing. Teachers foster good habits of using dictionaries or word banks and these enable higher and average attaining pupils to work with some independence. They have opportunities to write diaries, poetry and extended stories, sometimes using word-processing skills.
110. By the end of Year 9, pupils' writing shows that writing skills developed by the end of Year 6 are not sustained or reinforced, although if asked, pupils know, for example, where full stops and capital letters should be. In one Year 7 class observed, these skills were emphasised well and individuals, when challenged to tackle personal targets within lessons, successfully accomplished these. In Year 8, when writing letters, pupils do not set them out correctly. The quality of marking and presentation is often poor because teachers accept low standards. There is a lack of attention to the clear school policy for marking. In Years 7 to 9, pupils develop the content of their writing with the use of a wider vocabulary and writing longer pieces. By the end of Year 11, pupils make good progress again in developing their writing in a wide range of genres as they complete work for their final accreditation. They write assignments with care, although throughout the school many pupils are still writing in printed script. There is good use of word-processing in Year 10. Higher and average attaining pupils punctuate work correctly, write grammatically, use paragraphs appropriately and spell common multi-syllabic words. Higher attaining pupils especially select strong verbs and use a good range of appropriate vocabulary. For example, pupils in Year 10 wrote emotively about the setting for the story of 'The Hound of the Baskervilles'. They wrote with

considerable feeling the kind of letters that soldiers might send from the fighting front. They also wrote poetry that stemmed from their study of World War Two.

111. The quality of teaching is generally good. However, there are variations between classes and year groups so that the quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to very good across the school. It is very good in Years 4 to 6, good in Years 10 and 11 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. At the time of the last inspection, teaching ranged from unsatisfactory to good. Although the proportion of unsatisfactory lessons has remained similar, two-thirds of lessons are now good or better and one in three lessons very good. Where teaching is very good lessons are derived from thorough planning, use of assessment information and attention to pupils' individual targets. This very good teaching results in very good progress by pupils. Where teachers have good subject knowledge, teach basic skills and use questions well, pupils are enthusiastic learners who are inspired and encouraged, for example, in the use of emotive vocabulary. In successful lessons, teachers use the end of the lesson well to review what pupils have learned. Attitudes of pupils to their learning are good except where the teaching is less successful. Features of less successful lessons are the opposite; weak subject knowledge, unsatisfactory teaching of basic skills, insubstantial planning, unsatisfactory behaviour management and pace of lessons, are common. In those situations, pupils become bored, waste time and do not do their best work. Many do not achieve the outcomes of which they are capable.
112. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching literacy skills is sound overall. Since the last inspection, staff have had training in the National Literacy Strategy and it has been implemented and adopted. However, it has not been successfully adapted for use by the school as a framework for planning. The literacy texts used in Years 5 to 9 are generally more appropriate for Years 1 to 4. The texts are also inappropriate for older pupils. For example, in Year 7, pupils are using 'The Stone Mouse' and in Year 9 the 'Pied Piper of Hamelin' as texts. Where texts are age appropriate, pupils enjoy them. The characters in the book 'Dozer' fascinate pupils in Year 9 and older pupils enjoy the drama and intrigues in the story of 'Macbeth'. There is now good emphasis on spelling skills across the school, although spelling tests are not well matched in all cases to the modules of work or pupils' needs. Literacy skills are promoted satisfactorily across the curriculum especially in science, history and religious education. With the exception of Year 10, information and communication technology is an underused tool in encouraging pupils to develop their literacy skills.
113. Short-term planning for English is satisfactory. Teachers take this directly from the National Literacy Strategy 'Reception to Year 6' programmes. There is no school-wide long-term planning framework, overview of named texts or writing genres. Neither is new learning identified that will be tackled for each unit of work by each year group. Individual teachers draw up independent medium-term plans and this creates difficulties for temporary staff. Because of individual characteristics they are unsure at which point in this plan they should focus pupils' learning.
114. Procedures for assessment are good and the use of assessment in most lessons is satisfactory. There are good procedures for baseline assessment on pupils' entry to the school and recently introduced, twice-yearly reading assessments. These monitor progress of groups of pupils. Assessment information is used well in Years 10 and 11 and Years 4 to 6 in order to set targets for individual learning as well as to monitor progress. This good practice is beginning to spread to a few classes in Years 7 to 9 but it is not being implemented consistently. This is a consequence of the lack of a co-ordinator with the appropriate expertise who could manage and plan the strategic development of the subject.
115. The good practice of using assessment information for each individual in writing is used infrequently for planning lessons in Years 7 to 9. There is also a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils, especially those in the current Year 11 physically disabled group. Despite this, these pupils have had very good support to enable them to complete the syllabus for GCSE and enter the examination.
116. There is a suitable range of age-appropriate texts in the library and for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Most of the reading schemes used for pupils to develop their reading skills are not age appropriate

either in storyline or illustration. There is, however, a suitable range of multicultural texts and 'big books' for use by the youngest pupils. The use of ICT to support and enhance pupils' learning is underdeveloped. The library area is barely adequate. It is small and cramped and if used by whole groups conditions would be overcrowded. Access for wheelchair pupils is also difficult – comments about this are made elsewhere in this report (see paragraph 85). A positive feature of the subject is the way in which it contributes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It encourages them to reflect on issues as well as empathise with characters they might never have otherwise considered.

MATHEMATICS

117. In Years 3 to 6, pupils' achievement is good and they make consistently good progress with their learning. All pupils accurately count forwards up to 50, though some were less confident when asked to count backwards in fives. Higher attaining pupils successfully used number bonds involving five, ten and twenty. In all other year groups achievement is satisfactory, however, there are some pupils who are not achieving the standards they could. In Year 9, for example, while most pupils were secure using number bonds up to 20 some pupils of average attainment were insecure in their ordering of the months of the year and knowledge of the number of days in each month. In particular, some of the work given to higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 11 does not challenge them. The progress made by pupils in the ASD classes is good.
118. Teaching is very good in Years 3 to 6. The planning demonstrates how effectively teachers prepare the work for different attainment groups. Resources are used well to teach and reinforce new concepts. For example, pupils in Year 4 used plastic cubes to help them with addition sums. One pupil, with a physical disability, while in a standing frame worked very hard using a joystick and computer to solve the same problem. In another group, a support assistant used large flash cards to help a lower attaining pupil to recognise single-digit numbers. Teachers have high expectations and they are implementing the National Numeracy Strategy very effectively; this is helping to improve standards in mathematics.
119. In Years 7 to 9, teachers are not as confident in teaching mathematics. Staff changes have affected the quality and consistency of teaching, with a number of classes being taught by temporary staff. Too often, work is not adapted sufficiently to meet the range of pupils' needs or it is repeated. For example, number bonds up to 20 taught in Year 4 were also being taught in Years 8 and 9. Some teachers require further training in the National Numeracy Strategy to ensure that mental and plenary sessions are taught more effectively and there is more pace and rigour to their teaching. Although teaching is satisfactory overall, there is not enough good and very good teaching to improve pupils' learning and raise standards. Evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that whilst teaching over time is satisfactory, expectations are too low. For example, the marking of pupils' books is often cursory and rarely helps pupils to improve their learning. Work is often just ticked or has comments such as, 'excellent' or 'good work'. Sometimes these comments are not merited. Sometimes work is ticked right that is incorrect. Working-out in pupils' exercise books is not always shown, so it is not clear how some pupils have arrived at their answers. The contribution of teaching assistants is good; most have clearly identified roles and support pupils' learning effectively.
120. The work for pupils in Years 10 and 11 following accredited courses has been affected by long-term staff illness. However, the school was fortunate enough to secure a teacher with the appropriate expertise to give former Steps Cross pupils several weeks of intensive tuition in preparation for GCSE. The scrutiny of work for other pupils taking the Certificate of Educational Achievement shows some gaps in their knowledge, the main weaknesses being: interpreting data, negative numbers and measuring and properties of shape.
121. Throughout the school the majority of pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and their behaviour in mathematics lessons is good overall.

122. Subject management is satisfactory. Assessment is developing well and the baseline tests are extremely useful in identifying pupils' progress. However, insufficient use is being made of the data to inform teachers' planning and subsequent lessons. A few examples were seen where ICT was used to support pupils' learning, but overall, the use of ICT is too infrequent and, therefore, unsatisfactory. The scrutiny of work previously done by pupils showed few examples where ICT was used to support or challenge learning. The co-ordinator monitors teaching, but this needs to be sharper and more rigorous in Years 7 to 11 if standards are to be raised. Currently the school is not building adequately upon the standards that have been achieved in Years 3 to 6.
123. Examples of mathematics being used well in other subject areas were seen in physical education where pupils were keeping the score in a game of short tennis and in history where graphs had been used to show the extent of the smallpox outbreak. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

124. Pupils' achievement in science is good throughout the school except in Years 3 to 6 where it is very good. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' progress was judged to be unsatisfactory. The improvement is due mainly to better quality of teaching and subject planning. Pupils generally learn effectively in spite of their individual difficulty. This is because they are taught well and the levels of challenge they are given keep alive their interest in the subject.
125. By the end of Year 6, pupils in their study of life processes and living things recognise and name the parts of a plant and use correct vocabulary to describe these. They have an understanding of how plants produce food by photosynthesis and of creatures that are vertebrates and those that are invertebrate. They undertake experiments to discover why the moon appears to change shape and are learning the difference between natural and synthetic materials. In their work on forces and 'floating and sinking' most pupils reason correctly that the water pushes up and the object pushes down. This was very well explained by a teacher in a Year 4 lesson relating to 'objects that float'. To this group of lower attaining pupils she explained that, "The boat's having a little battle with the water and the boat's winning".
126. By the end of Year 9, pupils in their study of growing plants and plant products have carried out a scientific enquiry into different people's tastes. They used onions of differing strength and accurately recorded their findings. Good lesson planning and management of pupils resulted in an enjoyable lesson in which pupils were able to represent their findings in graphical form. In their study of ecology pupils categorised animals and insects by their characteristics, such as number of legs and body segments. As part of their learning about the hearing ranges of humans and animals, pupils took decibel readings in different areas of the school. Some pupils confused pitch with volume saying that loud means high pitched. It was, however, typical of the good levels of challenge generally presented to the pupils.
127. By the end of Year 11, pupils understand the difference between series and parallel electrical circuits and of the change in state between solids, liquids and gases. They explain the difference between a voltmeter and an ammeter and calculate resistance when they knew the voltage and current. In their study of materials they undertake experiments to investigate the causes of rusting.
128. The majority of pupils enjoy their learning. They generally work well independently or in groups, sharing knowledge and challenging others' predictions. On a very few occasions the distracting and challenging behaviour of a few pupils affected the learning of others. This was mainly the case with some Year 9 pupils.
129. Teachers of science throughout the school have a good knowledge of the subject and plan their lessons well, generally sharing the learning objectives with their pupils. A feature of all observed lessons was the teachers' knowledge of the attainment level of each pupil, which enabled them to pitch learning in a way that advantaged the pupil. This was evident in the way that teachers used targeted and appropriate questions to extend pupils' learning, particularly that of the lower attaining

pupils. For example, in one lesson the teacher started with a quiz based upon what they had previously learned and on several occasions the teacher changed the style of the question to make it more readily understood by each pupil.

130. The quality of teaching is generally good with examples of excellent teaching. Consequently, pupils are making good progress in their learning. Characteristics of lessons where teaching is good or better are:

- very good preparation, planning and pupil management;
- learning objectives and teachers' expectations, which clearly indicate to pupils what they need to learn;
- excellent use made of questioning to guide learning, which challenges pupils' ideas and thinking;
- very good rigour and pace, which maintain high levels of concentration;
- excellent use of different methods, which support the range of learning by pupils.

In lessons where these features were evident pupils achieved well.

131. Where teaching does not match this quality, teachers' expectations of their pupils are too low. There is no extension work provided to challenge higher attaining pupils and improve their understanding of new learning. Poor timing and pace of lessons also results in reviews at the end of lessons being shortened too much or, in some cases, not used at all.

132. The two subject leaders, one for Years 3 to 9 and the other for Years 10 and 11, provide good leadership and management of the subject and have a very clear view of its future development. The present Year 11 pupils follow the Welsh Joint Examination Board (WJEC) syllabus for entry level GCSE. Year 10 will be accredited through the OCR Science Plus syllabus. From the next academic year Years 10 and 11 as well as the two top sets in Year 9 will follow the OCR syllabus. The subject only has eight per cent of timetable allocation. This does not allow pupils to learn as effectively as they could, because the syllabus needs to be rushed in order to satisfy examination requirements. Because of this it is unlikely that standards in the subject will rise at the rate they might otherwise.

133. There are good assessment procedures based upon the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) scheme of work. These present assessment opportunities at the end of each module learned. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are also assessed at the end of each unit based upon their scientific enquiry skills. Assessment information is used well to ensure that pupils have appropriate learning targets. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress. There is little evidence of pupils' use of information and communication technology to support their learning (particularly for low attaining pupils), and for promoting their skills of scientific enquiry.

ART AND DESIGN

134. Throughout the school pupils' achievement is good. A few pupils attain very high standards, for instance, the work for the Certificate of Achievement examination in ceramics and letterforms. The displays of artwork around the school are outstanding and reflect the high quality of teaching within the department.

135. The co-ordinator teaches art and design throughout the school. She has high expectations and pupils coming to her lessons are highly motivated and are expected to learn. Overall, teaching is excellent and because of this pupils achieve well. Lessons are extremely well planned, and a wide range of media is used. Clear links are made with art from different cultures; for example, Egypt, Greece and Africa. Pupils' learning benefits from contributions of local artists. A printer, potter and the 'Willow Man' are the most recent ones to share their expertise with the pupils. Sketchbooks are very effectively used to develop the design aspect of the work. For example, the pupils in Year 6 were reminded that they needed to take careful account of their three-dimensional designs, when making newspaper models of a dragon. This helped them to focus more on the size and shape of their models and challenged them to think about the quality of their work.

136. In Year 9, pupils made a printing plate. An excellent introduction to the work, reinforced pupils' knowledge and understanding of the skills and techniques they had learned the previous week. Probing questions helped the pupils to think about the quality of their designs in terms of pattern and texture. A first-class demonstration of printing techniques, using a pupil to operate the new printing press, enabled them to work with minimum help. Independent working was encouraged and the pupils responded well. For example, a higher attaining pupil took great care with his design and thought very carefully about colour combinations before printing. As a result, the impression created was of a high quality.
137. Outstanding planning, teaching and the work in pupils' sketchbooks showed how pupils' batik work in Year 10 has been influenced by Celtic designs and artists' pattern work. Other work displayed around the school shows the influence of great artists such as Botticelli and more modern ones such as Claris Cliffe. Year 11, were working hard in the art room as part of Industry Challenge week - designing beachwear for Marks and Spencer. The pupils had thought extremely carefully about their designs and their sketches showed clearly how their ideas had developed. Excellent guidance helped them to think about different motifs and one pupil incorporated a shell design for the buttons. Using watercolour paints in their sketches gave the pupils a feeling for how the beachwear items might look and the different type of fabrics and accessories they might use.
138. The management of art and design is very good. Assessment is developing well and pupils are assessed at the end of each unit of work; this now needs extending to incorporate pupils' evaluation of their own work. The levelling of pupils' work according to agreed criteria is also another area for development. The use of ICT is good. The work displayed shows work on pattern and colour and recently work has started on animation. The school should consider extending accreditation by entering some of the higher attaining pupils for GCSE. The art and design room is too small for some of the larger classes and, therefore, affects what can be taught, as movement and space are restricted.
139. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Standards of teaching and pupils' learning have risen. The issue of cramped and unsuitable accommodation remains as it was at the last inspection.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

140. The limited opportunities to observe lessons in design and technology, and these only in Years 7 and 9, mean that judgements are largely based on other evidence, such as evaluation of work previously completed by pupils, as well as teachers' records. Additionally, the specialist teacher for food technology and textiles has been absent for two terms. The unavailability of a suitably experienced temporary teacher has had a detrimental impact on this aspect of the curriculum as well as standards overall.
141. Good progress in acquiring designing and making skills in CDT (craft, design and technology) is made by pupils by the time they leave the school. They use a range of hand tools successfully, for example, in making simple wooden games and small enamel pendants. Current staffing difficulties mean that progress in food technology is unsatisfactory, especially by the end of Year 9. In food technology and textiles across the school, there is limited opportunity for pupils to gain independence in their learning, to plan and develop ideas, in their working with tools and equipment and in their evaluation of processes and products. They do gain knowledge and understanding of hygiene, healthy food and differences between recipe items such as wholemeal, plain and self-raising flour. The school is aware of the shortcomings, including the reduced breadth and balance of the design and technology curriculum because little textile work is taking place. It has, however, been unable to employ a temporary teacher qualified in the relevant aspect of the curriculum.
142. The teaching observed in food technology was unsatisfactory, but that in CDT was good because the expertise of the teacher is better. The difficulty in managing pupils' behaviour means that in food technology some pupils were often inattentive and disruptive. This effected the learning of all pupils. Many applied themselves adequately to the practical elements of lessons, but responded

poorly to introductions, group discussion and filling in worksheets. These as well as recipe sheets were not well presented. Valuable support was provided by the LSA in managing pupils' behaviour and in particular instances this enabled lessons to proceed. The timing of lessons also means that opportunities for independent learning were lost. For example, in order to speed up things the LSA rolled pastry for pupils rather than getting them to do this for themselves. She later took these items out of the ovens on the pupils' behalf; an adjustable height table is available for a pupil in a wheelchair, but it is positioned away from other desks. This showed a lack of empathy with this pupil who largely worked on the fringes of the main group. In contrast the CDT lessons were better organised; pupils knew what they had to achieve and the ethos of the classroom was such that better behaviour was expected. Consequently, pupils learned more because they enjoyed the lessons.

143. In food technology pupils paid attention to hygiene and answered questions correctly about what they needed to do in order to produce healthy, uncontaminated items. They produced simple foods such as a quiche roll, which they took home to share with their family. However, planning is insufficiently thorough and pupil behaviour management is inadequate. Relationships are unsatisfactory and this situation is at odds with other classes in the school. This leads to a sense of frustration by pupils and the quality of their learning is adversely effected. Consequently, their levels of concentration, attitudes and responses vary considerably. It remains to the individual pupil to determine how much they will achieve.
144. In CDT by the end of Year 6, pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils have difficulty in producing ideas and completing planning sheets, but use tools and assemble materials and components in a range of ways with assistance from staff where needed. They progress from making simple wheeled vehicles using card and straws to producing wooden pencil boxes, model creatures and games. Half the pupils require help, but plans are put into practice, pupils make evaluations in simple terms, and they measure, mark, cut and assemble materials and employ simple finishing techniques to improve their products.
145. Provision in the subject is similar to that of the last inspection. Gaps remain in planning between the two areas of learning. Issues in the current inspection, such as staffing issues management of pupils' behaviour and the resulting unsatisfactory learning in food technology are temporary. Further work needs to be done in order to use ICT as a vehicle for pupils to extend their learning.

GEOGRAPHY

146. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in geography. Their progress over time is also satisfactory and by the time they complete their course in Year 11 they have gained an appreciation of the natural world as well as the activity of man in shaping his environment.
147. By the time pupils have reached the end of Year 6 they have a good understanding of environmental issues, such as the effect of traffic on communities that live near busy roads. They also understand the beneficial effects that planting trees might have on the environment and how necessary it is to conserve energy. Because the teaching of these pupils is excellent they also have a secure understanding of the purpose of maps and know that a map is a representation of what they see on the ground. For example, in a follow-up lesson to a field work visit to a local countryside museum, the pupils clearly pointed out on a plan the areas they had visited and spoke of what they had seen. In addition to developing their skills of speaking and listening they showed a very good understanding of direction – higher attaining pupils used terms such as 'north' or 'south'. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 make very good progress over time.
148. By the end of Year 9, pupils have developed their understanding of the hydrological cycle, and included studies of rivers, volcanoes and Japan. Most pupils understand what a volcano is and can identify its main features, such as the cone, secondary cone and ash. Higher attaining pupils understand terms, such as 'magma', and from where this comes. They also understand that this is melted rock. No pupils understood how the rock became molten, although most knew that it emanated from deep in the earth. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in lessons and a scrutiny of past work indicates that progress over time is also satisfactory. Evidence indicates that higher attaining

pupils are not always well challenged, because the consistent use of worksheets does not allow them to show the full range of what they might understand or how they might develop this.

149. Pupils continue their studies up to Year 11 and they too achieve satisfactorily. They have developed an understanding of human geography and interpret correctly statistical data, such as bar charts. They understand the difference between primary and secondary industrial activity and relate this knowledge to a study of Britain. This understanding is extended through a study of similar activities in Japan. Most pupils know the reasons why man has settled particular regions or areas of the earth and secure this understanding through comparison with regions of little or no population. Higher attaining pupils give clear explanations why, for example, river crossing points are favourite places for settlement. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also write many of their responses onto worksheets and this unnecessarily restricts the understanding and interpretation that higher attaining pupils might achieve. This keeps overall standards down.
150. The subject is taught to a high standard to pupils in Years 3 to 6 and satisfactorily to pupils in Years 7 to 11. The excellent quality teaching is characterised by simple and clear explanations that challenge pupils' thinking and engage their interest. Their responses to very good challenges are all used to further develop their understanding. For example, in the follow-up lesson to their fieldwork the teacher used a huge plan of the site to stimulate discussion of what they had seen. The level of detail remembered by the pupils was impressive – as was their understanding. The variety of teaching methods used for these pupils ensured a high level of interest and concentration. This variety included both group based and individual activities. Despite a wide range of attainment within this group the teacher and LSA showed a very good understanding of how the pupils would best learn, consequently, they got the best from their pupils because pupils felt their responses were valued.
151. In contrast, the teaching in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory because the methods used are similar throughout and heavily biased toward the completion of worksheets. For many pupils the completion of the worksheet becomes the priority of the lesson. Where pupils were expected to actively engage with the topic, discussing volcanoes, for example, their responses became animated and the impact was much more interest in what they were learning. There is limited use of ICT and this is insufficient to make substantial difference to pupils' understanding.
152. The subject is very well organised for younger pupils (in Years 3 to 6). The plan of work is drawn clearly from national requirements and the outcomes are assessed well. The planning for pupils in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory overall. The subject is currently being restructured for these pupils with a view to a wider range of external accreditation and, at this time, there are points of repetition in what pupils are expected to do. Assessment is achieved mainly through the completion of worksheets, and outcomes are recorded. The weakness in this approach is that these do not allow for an objective assessment of pupils' attainment or progress.
153. Since the last inspection, improvements have been made in the provision for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The provision for pupils in Years 7 to 11 remains broadly similar. However, there is good potential for improvement. The most significant factor that currently inhibits progress is that the teacher of Years 7 to 11 has to teach the subject in seven different classrooms. This makes the use of the very good resources very difficult because it is often physically impossible to carry them around the building. The opportunities for more stimulating lessons are, therefore, artificially restricted.

HISTORY

154. Pupils of all attainment show satisfactory achievement in history. In Years 3 to 9 they follow a broad, appropriate scheme of work that builds on what they have learned previously. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an interesting and motivating course that leads to the Certificate of Educational Achievement. The work done in developing their portfolios helps these pupils to make good progress and achieve well.

155. There were no history lessons seen for pupils in Years 3 to 6 during the inspection, so no overall judgements of teaching are made. However, pupils' work, displays, planning and assessment files were considered. Some of the Years 3 to 6 displays are excellent. These are interesting and interactive, encouraging pupils to think about historical questions such as the difference between Victorian and modern toys and to reinforce ideas such as sequencing things by age. The displays make good links to the pupils' own experience through photographs and artefacts they have examined. Good use is made of computers and pupils type their own sentences. The pupil who wrote 'I was surprised that the Vikings had jewellery all those years ago' shows that he has a concept of the past and how it is different from modern times. Teachers of pupils in Years 3 to 6 also have a good assessment system that matches elements of the topic they are teaching to national level descriptors. This system is new, but is likely to work well to track progress as pupils move up through the school.
156. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 learn reasons why towns have become established in particular places and link this to their good knowledge of Torbay. They have also considered what it was like to live in the Middle Ages. This knowledge is linked well with their studies in geography. In Year 8, pupils study Tudors and Stuarts, learning stories, names and dates. By Year 9, they show real interest in life in the trenches and know a good deal about the First World War. They have empathised clearly about why young boys would have joined up despite the horror and danger. This approach has a positive impact on their spiritual development. They understand the need for objective evidence and use simple sources appropriately. They also understand the difference between primary and secondary sources of evidence. However, there is no continuing assessment for these pupils, although an attainment grade is given on their annual report. The new co-ordinator knows this to be unsatisfactory and is looking at the good practice in Years 3 to 6 to determine how best to rectify this.
157. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. Pupils make satisfactory progress and many develop a real interest in some historical topics. One lesson during the inspection was unsatisfactory, and this was because poor behaviour was not well managed and the quality of learning deteriorated. However, behaviour is satisfactory overall, although this judgement is a balance of considerable off-task, disruptive activity and enthusiasm by some pupils for historical facts and events. The best features of lessons are the teachers' wide historical knowledge and interest. This encourages pupils to ask detailed questions around the topic. Even when some pupils appear to be off task they can still give, for example, well thought out reasons for why people go to war. When they settle to individual work, pupils have constructive and detailed conversations with the adults in the class about their work. This helps them to gain understanding and develop their historical skills, such as the use of different kinds of evidence.
158. In Years 10 and 11 it was not possible to see any Year 10 lessons and Year 11 had finished their course. However, the quality of well-presented work leading to the Certificate of Achievement indicates good teaching leading to good progress. Pupils studied the Plague and the Great Fire of London. Their portfolios show they have some insight into why things happened as they did and how events build and impact on each other. Through their study of Hitler's rise to power they identified the difference between fact and opinion. When they looked at medicine and health through time, they began to understand the influence of attitudes and religious beliefs. They also learned about the culture of Torquay in Edwardian times through the study of Agatha Christie.
159. Subject leadership in history is at an early stage of development, but an appropriate development plan is in place and the co-ordinator is aware of the need to liaise with colleagues both in this school and other similar schools. Lessons are generally adequately resourced through use of a very good local authority loan service, but there are too few books and very few ICT resources to develop independent research. There are also well-planned educational visits to local museums and sites of historical interest. These contribute to the quality of learning and also motivate pupils because they bring topics to life.
160. Improvements since the last inspection are satisfactory. Good assessment is starting to develop in Years 3 to 6 and an accredited course for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is now in place. History

makes a good contribution to pupils' knowledge of their national and regional culture, and helps to develop empathy and respect for the views of other people.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

161. Pupils are achieving very well and making very good progress in their information and communication technology (ICT) lessons throughout the school. This is a very good improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' progress was judged to be inconsistent and generally unsatisfactory. The improvement in pupils' achievements and progress is mainly due to the quality of teaching and leadership of the subject. In addition, this improvement can be attributed to very good planning of lessons, good quality pupil-teacher relationships, the support and expertise of the LSA, particularly for the lower attaining pupils, and subject resources.
162. By the end of Year 6, pupils insert clip art images of fruit into documents and drag and drop appropriate descriptive labels that describe the fruit's colour, size, taste, smell and feel. They use a drawing program to produce coloured pictures of fish and animals using the brush and fill tools. They are beginning to learn the advantages for computerised databases over similar paper versions and use text and images to describe insects and animals. They are beginning to use the Internet. In one observed lesson, on raising pupils' awareness of the wealth of information on the Internet, pupils located a local well-known tourist attraction and there were cries of "wow!" from some pupils as they were able to take a virtual walk around it.
163. Pupils by the end of Year 9 are confident users of the Internet and undertake searches to download required text and images. In one lesson, pupils accessed the BBC weather site to obtain the minimum and maximum temperatures for their area and inserted them into a prepared spreadsheet to obtain averages for the school's weather information service. Pupils used a screen logo to draw shapes and a control program to control external devices. They are confident users of word processors, making information leaflets containing different font size, colour and types, use Word Art for headings and insert clip art and images from the Internet. A feature of most lessons is the very good relationship between teacher and pupils. As a result of the very well supported, relaxed but industrious atmosphere, pupils' learning was extended and enhanced.
164. By the end of Year 11, most pupils apply their ICT skills in a practical and vocational way. In the 'Industry Week', being held during the inspection, different groups of pupils had to research marketing and packaging, tourism in Torquay and clothes design. For this they confidently used Word Art for posters, spreadsheets for questionnaires, a graphics program to design clothes and the Internet to research tourist information on Torquay. In most of these projects they also made very effective use of a digital camera to emphasise an idea, point or local feature. At the initial ICT lesson for these projects, the teacher used teasing questions that challenged pupils' knowledge and enabled them to generate their own ideas. She showed a good appreciation of what they already knew because she pitched questions differently according to the pupil she was addressing.
165. Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently very good and, at times, excellent. They listen well to their teacher, enjoy working at their set tasks and, although working individually, discuss their ideas and challenge the other ideas of friends who work on adjoining computers.
166. The quality of teaching is never less than very good and in some cases it was excellent. The great majority of teaching was provided by the subject expert. Lessons are always very well prepared and presented in such a manner as to motivate and encourage pupils' learning. For example, in one lesson, pupils were drawing an insect or animal of their choosing after the style of Matisse. Using a graphic program, pupils composed the main body from ellipses of varying sizes. Then the teacher, in a series of prepared examples, showed the pupils that using different colours in different parts gave clarity of form to the picture. Very good lesson planning and management enables the teacher to support lower attaining pupils whilst also challenging the work of the higher attaining pupils. In the former the teacher is very well supported by a competent and confident learning support assistant

167. The experienced and dedicated co-ordinator provides very good leadership of the subject. Resources for the subject are very good. The school has a number of Smartboards, two suites of computers and a range of peripheral resources such as scanners, camcorders, digital cameras and Alphasmart portable word processors, some of which are used by pupils with fine motor dysfunctions. All these initiatives are, to an extent, the outcome of the co-ordinator's efforts to ensure that teachers have access to high quality resources. Opportunities for external accreditation are good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) entry level for the GCSE. In the last two years successes in this have risen from 59 per cent to 71 per cent of pupils passing this examination at either Level E2 (merit) or E3 (distinction).
168. Management of the subject is good. The school is using an adapted scheme of work from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and pupils' attainments are assessed and recorded against each type of ICT application at the end of each module of work. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 also undertake self-assessment using 'I can' statements.
169. However, the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in other subjects is inconsistent and underdeveloped. Little such use of ICT was observed in lessons during the period of the inspection and an analysis of bookings for the ICT suites shows limited use by some teachers.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

170. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 attain in line with expectations for similar pupils. However, pupils in these years speak French with a very good accent and their achievement in this is significantly better than in many mainstream schools. Their limitation becomes apparent only in their knowledge and range of French vocabulary. The good accent is due to the very good subject knowledge of current and past teachers. The limited vocabulary may be due to the timing and frequency of lessons. Pupils have a one-hour lesson each week. Too much time is spent trying to remember the words learned in the previous lesson and pupils do not develop the vocabulary they might otherwise achieve. This could possibly be alleviated if teachers used French in other informal situations, such as greeting pupils to other lessons or even using French in social contexts. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work towards the Certificate of Achievement and make good progress following an appropriate syllabus in a systematic way. Pupils were not accredited in the subject in 2002. However, the growing popularity of the subject, as measured by the number of pupils now opting to study it, will ensure future accreditation opportunities.
171. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 develop a knowledge of simple conversational structures such as 'j'aime ...' and 'je m'appelle...'. They can answer "oui" and "non" appropriately to questions about topics such as school subjects, colours, parts of their body and the weather. Higher attaining pupils were interested in learning more words and listened carefully for familiar phrases when watching a video. They copy write French words, but have few opportunities for learning or experimenting with spelling French words independently. Pupils are encouraged to look for similarities between French and English words and by the time they are in Year 9, some are confident to tackle simple but unfamiliar French text and guess the meaning. They are keen to volunteer suggestions and one pupil translated 'ca m'enrage' correctly as 'it makes me really mad'. Pupils also develop an awareness of French culture because most have made a residential visit to France as well. They extend this awareness by watching videos of French children and French speakers from other parts of the world.
172. In Years 10 and 11, pupils write a few simple words independently and take initiative in finding spellings in the workbooks or around the class. They know a number of mnemonics for remembering words and their pronunciation. They learn about the different way that French people give phone numbers, but find this hard as it involves knowing numbers up to 99 rather than just digits. Lower attaining Year 10 pupils still need support and prompts with asking and answering simple questions, but they are all confident to pronounce phrases clearly and accurately. By the end of Year 11, pupils achieve levels of simple dialogue about time, routes, shopping and daily living.

173. Teaching is satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and good for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The progress and achievement made by pupils reflects this teaching. The progress made by all pupils is stimulated by the very good expertise of the teacher and they hear good French spoken well. This gives them a yardstick to copy. Work is well planned from appropriate schemes but is not always well matched to individual learning needs. Teachers support their communication with humour and mime, which motivates and engages pupils, but too little use is made of other resources such as pictures or objects that would connect and reinforce pupils' learning to other experiences. There are good planned opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and groups, but pupils do not always have the skills to use this time effectively.
174. Co-ordination is at an early stage of development, but appropriate plans are in place to broaden provision and make links with other schools. Although the curriculum is now good, assessment for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. Marking and recording of pupils' work is very limited. Assessment practice in Years 10 and 11 is driven by the accredited syllabus and this supports identification of good progress. Generally, resources are satisfactory, but little work is done using ICT and too little use is made of picture or symbol-based materials or real French items. There is also too little use of display to support learning.
175. Provision for French has undergone significant staffing changes recently and there is now a good capacity to maintain standards and continue to improve. The subject contributes well to developing pupils' social and cultural knowledge, and effectively promotes the aims of the school.
176. Since the last inspection, there has been at least satisfactory improvement in the subject. Pupils are better motivated to learn and there are now better links between the subject and use of the language in real situations, such as their visits to France. Further use of ICT could also be developed, in enabling pupils to extend their understanding of French culture.

MUSIC

177. All pupils achieve well in music throughout the school, especially in composing and performing, because of good teaching. Pupils with additional physical needs are sensitively supported by the teacher and LSA and, because of the availability of adapted instruments, these pupils join in all activities in lessons. The work done by the LSAs is particularly effective because they are well briefed before the start of each lesson and also provided with plans that identify what they are to achieve.
178. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 remember musical patterns well because they associate these with the good visual aids used by the teacher. For example, they were interested in the items in a picnic basket and wanted to sing about them. Shyness was overcome as they sang while collecting items from other pupils. Pupils clapped rhythm patterns accurately and worked out that the piece of music they were using was a Haydn lullaby. They managed this because they listened intently to its music and detected its soft quality. In Year 6, pupils put together a wealth of imaginative responses during the jungle song and confidently identified written rhythm patterns. They matched sounds to pictures very well and constructed a sequence of the patterns.
179. Three pupils in Year 7 worked on their composition before asking the rest of the group to perform it. They showed a clear understanding of how to improve the music by introducing variations of tone and length of notes. Pupils thought about the 'Moonlight Sonata' and the poster 'Dead Calm'. Most pupils could explain their reactions to both. They thoughtfully selected music of the correct pace, which might be used for walking around a museum in 'Pictures from an Exhibition'. They extended this by giving good alternative suggestions. Pupils in Year 8 developed an exciting musical 'World Tour' and played chords with hand chimes as backing to African chants and songs. They discussed their work very sensibly and produced high quality performance in their music and chanting; in this they synchronised chants and notes well.
180. Pupils are developing a very good understanding of notation. Pupils in Year 9 played hand chimes to a keyboard backing and had to concentrate hard as they successfully built up rhythms to match the backing. Some pupils also have additional tuition in keyboard, guitar and drums from visiting teachers. Although they were nervous about their first public performance in a school assembly the guitar group accompanied the singing in assembly very well.
181. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are very well planned, fast moving and enjoyable. There is a clear emphasis on developing skills as pupils move up through the school and a very good balance of activities within the lessons. The specialist teacher has high expectations of the quality of music that pupils produce. Pupils' listening skills also improve as they considered the different sounds made by each instrument. Every activity is planned with the objective of giving each pupil a successful experience of music, and this further motivates them in their learning. As a result, pupils enjoy their music and work hard at getting better.
182. The curriculum is very well planned. Progress is checked regularly and very attractive certificates are awarded when pupils achieve expected levels in each unit of work. The highest awards are given to pupils who work successfully together. The whole school benefits from visits by professional musicians and additional time given to music in the past year has been very well used in raising the standard and quality of learning. The co-ordinator is aware that more use could be made of ICT to extend musical composition. Music makes a strong contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.
183. Since the last inspection the quality and standard of provision has improved. This is because there is now a co-ordinator with appropriate expertise and the quality of teaching is better. Accommodation has improved, although the pressure on use of this room means considerable effort has to be made to lay out resources before lessons begin.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

184. Good achievement in acquiring and developing a wide range of skills and improving performance in physical education is made by pupils throughout the school. Taking account of the range of special educational needs, all pupils achieve well and do their best. This compares well with the generally satisfactory progress described in the previous inspection.
185. By the end of Year 6, pupils know how to exercise safely and can describe what they are doing as well as the effects of exercise on their bodies. They use appropriate skills and actions, including strokes in swimming, simple throwing and catching, and racquet grips and shots in short tennis. They do these with increasing control and co-ordination.
186. By the end of Year 9, pupils understand the role that physical activity plays in their fitness and health, and they understand rules. Their evaluation of each other's performance is developing and they try hard to improve; because of this they achieve well. Good progress is made lesson by lesson in gaining skills such as athletic activities. These include combinations of running, jumping or throwing. Improvements are made that lead to the understanding and implementation of skills such as the grip, arm action and body position when using a javelin. Pupils worked co-operatively and also employed a range of basic orienteering skills when in a familiar environment.
187. By the end of Year 11, a wide range of physical activities has been explored by pupils. They have participated in activities based in a variety of local leisure facilities. This develops their social awareness and prepares them well for life beyond school. This year, for the first time, 17 pupils were entered for WJEC accreditation in physical education. Initial results indicate that all pupils have been successful in this examination and this is an indicator of the rising standards in the subject.
188. The teaching of physical education is at least good and mainly very good across the whole school. It was described as satisfactory or better, with a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, in the previous inspection. Modules and individual lessons are thoroughly planned, informed by clear assessment and recording, and effectively create opportunities for all pupils to explore what they can achieve. The physically disabled pupils have gradually become more included in lessons and they too achieve to the best of their ability.
189. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy within the subject are planned and taught well, but although a start has been made in using ICT this is currently underdeveloped. Expert knowledge and understanding, demonstrations and instructions given with a sense of vitality provided good challenges to pupils who were inspired to work productively and make good progress. Pupils work very hard in lessons and put in much effort. This is increased further by very good motivational support given by teachers and LSAs. The latter are also well deployed to support individual pupils. Very positive relationships, high expectations of good behaviour and clear objectives for each lesson, which are readily understood by pupils, lead them to enjoying learning. They strive to improve their performance because of the teachers' consistent nurturing towards higher standards. Success at the end of modules is rewarded and recognised through certificates.
190. Leadership in physical education is very good with a clear vision of improving the range of opportunities that pupils have to develop their skills, teamwork and fitness. Generally, the planning, assessment and the support provided to non-specialist teachers are good. The appointment of an additional physical education teacher has had a positive impact on pupils' learning and the continuing development of outdoor and adventurous activities. The school provides the required two hours of physical education each week for its pupils, and enhances this with an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. These include inter-school competitive sports, table tennis, mountain biking, the Ten Tors challenge, sailing and an Outward Bound annual scholarship. Areas for further development include closer liaison with the physiotherapist to ensure that all physically disabled pupils are fully included, and links with the ICT co-ordinator in order to develop joint approaches in using technology. The increase in the number of pupils and the on/off nature of building work has diminished the availability of appropriate facilities and storage, although there are plans for a new activity hall. In spite of these difficulties, physical education contributes very well to the personal and social development of the pupils. Its status has been raised amongst pupils and it has the potential and drive to become very high profile both within and beyond the school.

191. The provision has improved since the last inspection because the quality of teaching is better. This has also been made more effective throughout the school because of the advice offered to colleagues by the co-ordinator. It is unfortunate that at this time the quality of provision is adversely effected by the suspended building programme. Without this standards would possibly have been higher.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

192. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in their understanding of world religions as they make progress through the school. This is because of good quality teaching, which has an impact on the quiet, respectful atmospheres created in lessons and assemblies. This year, 32 pupils in Year 11 have been entered for the WJEC Entry Level Certificate for the first time and have approached their work for this accreditation with interest and purpose.
193. Pupils in the ASD unit could recall many details of stories heard previously. They prepare well for their planned visit to a church. One pupil showed his interest in this when he said, "I'd love to go to a church". Older pupils showed good understanding of what they had seen in a video about churches and this was further exemplified in later writing and discussion. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 were calm and thoughtful as they discussed issues such as who cares for them. The LSA read a story from the 'Bible' and the teacher explained that the language in the 'Bible' is sometimes difficult to understand, but there are many easier-to-read versions of 'Bible' stories. Pupils listened well to a children's version of 'The Good Samaritan' and their comments show a good level of understanding. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 wrote knowledgeably about caring for the environment and they showed strong feelings about ways in which people damage it. They read their work back at the end of the lesson very clearly and know by the encouraging comments of the teacher that their efforts are appreciated.
194. Pupils in Year 7 worked quietly as they answered written questions about the 'Bible'. Higher attaining pupils found their answers quickly, and although pupils with lower attainment in reading found it hard, they took up the challenge with determination. When discussing the life of Mother Teresa, pupils in Year 8 could describe an accurate, good picture of her life and work. This method of learning was very appropriate and used well to extend pupils' understanding. They concentrated well when writing about their understanding of Mother Teresa's prayer. Pupils in Year 9 clearly benefit from the teaching of different religions. This causes them to consider the major features of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism Buddhism and Sikhism. They have learned that the world has many religions and are beginning to look beyond their essentially Christian experience. This has a positive impact on their spiritual development. To strengthen this further, they make relevant comparisons between places of worship, symbols and books that are special to individual religions.
195. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers of pupils in Years 3 to 6 are confident and plan carefully to provide opportunities for discussion, listening and writing and reinforcement of school rules within the lessons. They create a very good atmosphere for lessons so that pupils understand that religious education is a 'special' subject. Teachers consistently check and record pupils' achievements so that the teacher of older pupils has a good base of information about what pupils know and understand. The specialist teacher plans the subject well and this ensures coverage of the locally agreed guidelines so that pupils build systematically on their learning as they progress through the school. Management of behaviour in lessons is good, and very positive; because of this pupils are motivated to learn. There is good emphasis on learning 'from' the teachings of religion as well as learning facts and information 'about' religions. Celebrations of festivals such as Easter and Christmas are valuable opportunities to share this learning with parents.
196. The subject is led and managed well by the co-ordinator who is aware that more use could be made of visits and ICT. Assemblies, and the leaver's assembly, make a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, religious and personal development. Religious education further enhances pupils' personal development through opportunities for discussion and working together.

197. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Pupils' learning is better because lessons are more challenging and stimulating. These cause most pupils to direct their energy to learning rather than misbehaviour. Planning continues to be good and fully supports an interesting and informative range of learning that pupils undertake.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

198. Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress over time. The subject is taught discretely to Years 7 to 11 as well as being included in tutorial lessons, which all pupils receive, including those in Years 3 to 6. Where the subject is taught within tutorial periods the quality of teaching is good. Where it is taught as discrete subject the teaching is excellent. The difference is in the degree of knowledge and experience on the part of the teachers.
199. The impact of this good and better teaching is that pupils gain a very good understanding of moral and social issues and, because of this, they mature into well-balanced young adults by the time they leave the school. The knowledge and mature views of older pupils in Years 10 and 11, relating to drug abuse are very impressive. They are fully aware of the dangers that too much alcohol can bring. They know that alcoholic drinks are measured in units and most know the approximate size of a unit according to the type of drink. For example, they fully understood that a unit of whisky looks considerably smaller in quantity than a unit of beer. This understanding was brought to them by some very good teaching, which used coloured liquid to exemplify the unit quantities of different drinks.
200. Pupils also have a very good understanding of sexual morality and this is introduced to them at times appropriate to their understanding. By the time pupils are ready to leave the school they have a well-balanced view of sexual matters and they are as well prepared as they could be for their transition to the adult world.
201. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good and this accounts for why they achieve so well. Whenever individual pupils tried to make light of the subject matter, by telling jokes or showing off, the reaction of other pupils soon brought them into line because the majority failed to respond to this level of distraction. Discussion with pupils also indicated very good understanding of the topics and this was further substantiated by scrutiny of what they had previously written.
202. The co-ordination of the subject is excellent and this accounts for the high standards. This is in spite of the co-ordinator being in post for only a year. The curriculum is broad, thorough and benefits from detailed planning. Outcomes in pupils' learning are recorded well and the impact of lessons also noted. A weakness, of which the co-ordinator is fully aware, is the objectivity of some of the recording. Often this takes the form of what the pupils have been taught rather than an objective assessment of what they have learned. The issue is being actively addressed and the subject has a very good prospect of improving further.
203. Even in the short time available to her, the co-ordinator has involved all adults who are concerned in the personal development of the pupils. These include other staff, parents and local agencies. She has circulated questionnaires, which result in information to further develop the subject. She has provided briefings for staff so there is uniformity of provision throughout the school. The greatest strength, and one that contributes most to the quality of provision, is the imagination and determination that the co-ordinator brings to the provision. For example, although resources are adequate, the manner in which these are used makes them very effective.
204. Since the last inspection, the standard of provision has improved and pupils in the school now benefit from a secure and well-balanced programme that contributes significantly to their personal development.