

INSPECTION REPORT

HILLSIDE SPECIAL SCHOOL

Plymouth

LEA area: Plymouth

Unique reference number: 113648

Acting Headteacher: Gill Drake

Reporting inspector: Jayne Clemence
22629

Dates of inspection: 9 – 12 June 2003

Inspection number: 260029

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bodmin Road Whitleigh Plymouth
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Mike Thomas
Date of previous inspection:	June 1998

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19639	Gill Anderson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with the parents?
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18621	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology (DT) Music Educational Inclusion	
18206	Elizabeth Mildner	Team inspector	Science Religious education (RE)	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hillside is a special school in Plymouth for 135 pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 with moderate, emotional and behavioural learning difficulties. Many travel long distances from outlying areas. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Approximately two thirds of the pupils are boys and one third girls. The vast majority of pupils are from a white British background, and a very small minority from other ethnic backgrounds. There are no pupils for whom English is an additional language. Almost half the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. Many pupils come from circumstances that are disadvantaged, both socially and economically. A high proportion of teachers left during the last two years and during the inspection a significant proportion of teachers were temporary to the school. The school has experienced considerable turbulence and trauma during the current academic year. The local education authority and school agreed a review that was conducted in October 2002. As a result, the school was closed on the second day of this review, due to serious concerns about discipline and the health and safety of the pupils and staff. The school reopened shortly afterwards with an acting headteacher drafted in to lead and manage the school. The governing body was reconstituted and a new chair of governors appointed during the spring term. Since the previous inspection, there are more pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The previous headteacher retired in December 2002, and the previous Chair of Governors retired in May 2003.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. There are many weaknesses in the basic building blocks for improvement. The leadership and management of the school are unsatisfactory. Pupils' achievements are being hindered by deficiencies in teaching and learning, an unsatisfactory curriculum, poor assessment procedures and staff absence. Resources, including time, staff and materials are not always used efficiently, and there is duplication of effort. The school provides poor value for money.

What the school does well

- The acting headteacher has made a significant impact on the pupils, parents and staff, creating a level of order and security to the school; the governing body has strong leadership, a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the tenacity to bring about change
- There are sound opportunities for pupils to follow courses leading to nationally recognised awards; provision for guiding the pupils in their careers is well planned and relevant
- Newly appointed, temporary teachers and some more experienced staff are making a positive impact on the pupils' learning
- Pupils achieve well in art and design due to the good teaching and high expectations

What could be improved

- Standards are low in relation to the pupils' starting points and achievement over time is unsatisfactory; the poor provision for developing the pupils' literacy skills restricts their learning in many areas of the curriculum
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in key areas; the role and contribution of the deputy headteacher is poor and subject leadership weak, and the school has a very poor culture of monitoring its work or evaluating the impact of its actions
- The high proportion of unsatisfactory and poor teaching hinders the pupils' learning and the amount of good or better teaching is low; strategies for managing behaviour are unsatisfactory with unacceptable variations in the pupils' attitudes and behaviour between classes
- The unsatisfactory balance within the curriculum means that there is an excess of time devoted to some subjects and an absence of others, and this limits the pupils' opportunities and achievements; provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is unsatisfactory and they are not well prepared for life in a multi-cultural society

- Assessment procedures are poor and pupils' achievements not tracked systematically; targets for their education and behaviour lack precision and work is not always well matched to their needs
- Links with parents are underdeveloped and the information provided about their children's progress is unsatisfactory; this limits understanding and involvement in their children's education
- Attendance is unsatisfactory; pupils' education is adversely affected as a result
- There are health and safety issues relating to the poor accommodation; procedures for the care, well-being and safety of the pupils are insecure.

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

In accordance with section 13(7) of the School Inspection Act 1996, I am of the opinion, and HMI agrees, that special measures are required in relation to this school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Improvement since the previous inspection in 1998 is very poor. Weaknesses identified at that time have not been addressed fully and where previously the school was judged to be good, it is now failing. Key issues at that time remain areas of weakness, including ineffective strategies for managing the pupils' behaviour, a lack of parental involvement, weak individual education plans and unsatisfactory attendance. The school has declined in many areas where previously it was judged to be satisfactory or better, including teaching, learning, the curriculum, assessment and leadership and management. These weaknesses have contributed to the pupils' unsatisfactory, and sometimes poor, achievements in many areas of their school life.

STANDARDS

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

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

Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory overall, and sometimes poor throughout the school. The weaknesses in teaching and learning, and the deficiencies in the curriculum and assessment procedures are having a direct and negative impact on standards and pupils' achievements. The school has helped some pupils to achieve satisfactorily in the past, for example in mathematics. Results for mathematics in the Certificate of Educational Achievement are rising, though the results and number of pupils entered for GCSE are falling, even though more pupils are being referred to the school with higher academic ability than in the past. Inspection evidence found that in many subjects pupils are not achieving as they should. Pupils' achievements are poor in all aspects of English including speaking, listening, reading and writing, as there is no strategy for developing those skills in the school. As a result, pupils' achievements are hindered in many other subjects. Achievement in mathematics is

unsatisfactory, as numeracy skills are not developed systematically, either in the subject or across other subjects of the curriculum.

In ICT, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their skills across the curriculum, and pupils cannot achieve satisfactorily in DT because the subject is not taught systematically, and there is no longer a DT room. Some work has been started on improving the quality of the targets set for the pupils, but they remain poor because they are not well matched to the pupils' current levels or needs. Neither the staff nor the pupils can use the targets as a benchmark to assess rigorously the pupils' learning. Standards for the pupils' personal, social and health education are poor as knowledge and skills are taught ineffectively and sometimes very poorly, and the lessons lack the necessary atmosphere for learning skills such as respect and consideration. Pupils with additional special educational needs achieve poorly as their needs are currently inadequately met. Many are not included fully in school activities and have a narrow and disjointed curriculum. The school has emerging links with local secondary schools, and a few pupils in Years 7 to 9 have returned to mainstream schools.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Unsatisfactory; pupils do not realise the importance of effort and hard work in order to improve; the atmosphere for learning has a negative impact on their attitude to school
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory; pupils have limited understanding of the impact of their actions on others; their behaviour varies unacceptably between lessons
Personal development and relationships	Unsatisfactory; there are limited opportunities to develop the pupils' personal skills; relationships between pupils and some adults are unsatisfactory
Attendance	Unsatisfactory; a significant proportion of pupils do not attend school regularly, and lose continuity in their learning as a result

Where teaching is effective, pupils have positive attitudes and show enthusiasm for learning and pride in their achievements. Their behaviour is also positive when work is appropriately matched and effective strategies are used for maintaining discipline. The high proportion of unsatisfactory, poor and very poor teaching has a negative impact on the pupils' attitudes and behaviour and they do not develop the personal skills required to make the most of their learning. Relationships between pupils and some staff are negative, and there is a lack of consideration and respect towards pupils. The unsatisfactory attendance is a longstanding weakness.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11
Quality of teaching	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

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.

The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall, and the amount of good or better teaching is low. Teaching in English, including communications, is poor and there is a lack of expertise in teaching the basic skills of literacy. The school is not familiar with the national initiatives to develop literacy skills. Teaching in mathematics and numeracy is unsatisfactory, as work is not sufficiently challenging, and there is little good or very good teaching in the subject to promote good learning. Teaching in science is unsatisfactory over time and pupils are not developing scientific skills systematically due to weaknesses

in the curriculum. Teaching in personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory, and occasionally very poor. Pupils' personal skills are not taught in a manner conducive to building social skills or quality relationships. The school is currently not meeting the needs of its pupils. Higher attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently and those with additional special needs do not have work that is suitably modified. Teaching in geography, history, music and PE is at least satisfactory overall throughout the school.

Strengths in teaching and learning include:

- Good teaching and learning in art and design, and secure subject knowledge; pupils develop confidence and pride in their art work
- Examples of good teaching in geography and history, taught and communicated in a lively, interesting style that engages the pupils and sustains their interest and motivation

Weaknesses in teaching and learning include:

- Insecure knowledge of subjects, including literacy and numeracy, and pupils' skills not developed systematically as a result
- Unsatisfactory strategies for managing the pupils' behaviour leading to much lost time for learning and a disordered and chaotic atmosphere
- Low expectations for what the pupils could achieve and work not well matched to their wide ranging needs; pupils have little sense of pride or achievement in their learning as a result

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Unsatisfactory; the curriculum lacks breadth and balance; some subjects have major omissions, whilst others are poorly organised; pupils' knowledge and skills are not developed systematically
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Unsatisfactory; pupils are not supported sufficiently in developing their personal skills, independence, self-control or social maturity; they are unprepared for life in a multi-cultural society
How well the school cares for its pupils	Poor; there are important health and safety issues to be addressed in order to ensure that the pupils are supervised rigorously and cared for appropriately

The school is making efforts to build relationships with parents, but this is from a very low baseline. The curriculum for English and literacy is poorly developed, and statutory requirements are not met for RE and French. There is little DT taught, and the curriculum for PE does not cover all aspects of the National Curriculum. The learning environment and aspects of the accommodation are not conducive to ensuring that pupils are well cared for or supervised adequately. Staff supervising the pupils are inadequately trained, and on occasions are the victims of abuse and physical assault, and more vulnerable pupils are overlooked. The accommodation has numerous areas to hide and pupils exploit these opportunities regularly. Accommodation for DT, art and design is inadequate for its purpose and the food technology room is a poor learning environment.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Unsatisfactory; the acting headteacher is making a clear impact and together with the assistant headteacher forms a strong partnership, but the school's weaknesses are widespread. The role of the deputy headteacher is poor and subject leadership is weak; the pace of change has been very slow over time

How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Unsatisfactory and underdeveloped; however, the recently appointed chair of governors provides strong leadership, and together with the governing body is moving swiftly to address areas of weakness
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very poor; there is no strategy for evaluating the impact of the school's actions on standards, teaching and learning
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory; staff time is not always used efficiently and there is duplication of effort in the absence of co-ordinated whole-school strategies

There are sufficient staff to teach the pupils, though there is unsatisfactory expertise to do so effectively. Accommodation is poor in places and hinders standards, for example in DT. Learning resources are inadequate. There is no DT room, and a lack of suitable reading materials for developing literacy skills. Playgrounds are impoverished and sparsely furnished, leaving pupils with little to occupy them. The school seeks to follow principles to ensure best value for money, though in practice, resources, people and time are not used effectively to ensure that pupils learn and achieve.

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 would feel comfortable approaching the school • The school expects their children to work hard • The teaching is good • The school works closely with parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They would like more homework for their children • They would like to be better informed about their children • The school is not helping their children to become sufficiently mature

Inspectors agreed that the school is now becoming more approachable to parents, and some, but not all of the teaching is good. Inspectors judged that the school does not ensure that their children work hard enough, and agreed with all aspects that the parents would like to see improved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory overall throughout the school. In some subjects, for example English, pupils' achievements are poor. The school has been successful in helping some pupils to achieve well over time, including in external examinations. Some pupils leave school with nationally recognised awards for mathematics, though the proportion of those achieving GCSE is declining, despite more higher attaining pupils entering the school.
2. Many pupils arrive at the school with attainment that is below, and sometimes well below average, due to the nature of their special educational needs. Although judgements do not compare what pupils achieve at Hillside with standards nationally, pupils could realistically be achieving more in many areas of their work. Higher attaining pupils do not always have work that is appropriately challenging, and pupils with additional special educational needs do not have suitably modified work. Weaknesses in managing the pupils' behaviour result in many pupils losing valuable time for learning, and their achievement is poor over time. The poor assessment procedures and weak targets for improvement hinder the pupils' achievements, as work is not always well matched to their needs.
3. By Year 9, pupils' achievements are satisfactory in geography, history, music and physical education, and good in art and design. Their achievements are unsatisfactory in mathematics, science, ICT and French, and poor in English. By Year 11, pupils' achievements are satisfactory in geography, history, music and PE and good in art and design. Their achievements are unsatisfactory in mathematics, science, ICT and French, and poor in English. The pupils' achievements over time in RE are unsatisfactory as the subject is not taught systematically through the school and there are weaknesses in the RE curriculum.
4. The pupils' achievements in literacy are poor, and their attainment in speaking, listening, reading and writing is well below the levels that could realistically be expected. The pupils' performance in national tests in Year 9 and in external examinations in Year 11 confirms this poor achievement over time. The National Literacy Strategy has not been adopted or modified, and there is currently no coherent plan for developing the pupils' literacy skills in the school. The pupils' achievements in numeracy are unsatisfactory, because the teachers lack secure knowledge in the use and application of the National Numeracy Strategy.
5. The weaknesses in literacy and numeracy are exacerbated by poor procedures for assessing the pupils systematically, and targets for improving such skills are insufficiently well matched to their individual needs. The development of the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is not planned for systematically, and there are missed opportunities to develop such skills across the curriculum. The good work carried out by individual teachers is not sufficiently co-ordinated to make maximum impact on the pupils' achievements and standards. Homework is not set systematically and there are missed opportunities to assist the pupils' learning further as a result.
6. Standards since the previous inspection have declined in many areas. Whereas previously, standards and progress were judged to be satisfactory or better, there are many subjects where pupils' achievements are now unsatisfactory. The pupils' poor achievement in literacy hinders their learning in many other subjects. The pupils' achievements are hindered by a combination of factors. The weaknesses in teaching and learning, and the deficiencies in the curriculum and assessment procedures are having a direct and negative impact upon standards and the pupils' achievements. Some staff are long-standing members of the team, though there has been a high level of sickness and absence in the last academic year that has affected the continuity of pupils' learning. The school has a high proportion of temporary teachers who are making a positive impact on the pupils' learning in lessons, but their contribution is only short term, due to the temporary

nature of their contracts. The pupils have had disjointed and fragmented teaching, and a lack of consistency in developing their skills over the past academic year. This, coupled with the school reaching a critical point in the autumn term, has added to the overall poor picture.

7. Improvements since the previous inspection in standards have been poor overall, with such a marked decline in standards from those reported previously.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are unsatisfactory. There are many reasons for this linked to weaknesses in teaching, ineffective strategies for managing the pupils' behaviour, and unsatisfactory provision for developing the pupils' personal and social skills. Where teaching is effective, pupils have positive attitudes, show enthusiasm for learning and take pride in their achievements. Their behaviour is positive when work is matched appropriately to their needs, and effective strategies are used for managing their behaviour. Evidence of good attitudes and behaviour was seen, for example, in art and design, science and ICT. There has been a decline in the pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development since the previous inspection, and improvements in this aspect have been unsatisfactory overall.
9. Pupils' behaviour and the incidence of exclusions are unsatisfactory. There is an exceptionally high level of exclusions: the number rose from 155 last year to 233 already this academic year. The high levels in the autumn term were due to a breakdown in pupils' behaviour but have been falling since January due to new initiatives by the acting headteacher. Overall, behaviour is unsatisfactory. It is poor at times outside lessons, with pupils exploiting the poor accommodation in the playground areas, where inappropriate parts of the huts such as the roof area can be accessed. Pupils are bored due to the impoverished facilities at play. The problems with behaviour beyond the classroom have continued since the last inspection.
10. There are numerous incidents of oppressive behaviour, including bullying, sexism and racism. This presents a poor picture as there is no overall ethos of mutual respect, and pupils' social skills are limited because of unsatisfactory provision for their moral and social development. Meal-time assistants suffer frequent verbal abuse, and at times physical abuse, and incidents were discussed with the acting head teacher. The situation was worsened when it came to light that the deputy head teacher was absent during one of his lunchtime duties. However, meal-time assistants remain vulnerable to abuse and although the school trained them adequately in the new behaviour management system, unacceptable incidents continue to occur in the playground. There is no purposeful activity in the bleak playground, and hidden corners create opportunities for poor behaviour.
11. Pupils' personal development and relationships are unsatisfactory overall. Their social skills are poor and they find it difficult to empathise with others. This results in an unsatisfactory level of respect for others. There has been a deterioration since the last inspection when personal development was judged satisfactory. In a Year 7 music lesson, pupils were rude and antisocial, as the class teacher did not have strategies to manage difficult behaviour beyond raising and lowering their voice. Pupils' understanding of the impact of their actions on others, and their respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others, are unsatisfactory. They lack empathy and have difficulty in explaining themselves and articulating their feelings. Pupils show little initiative and personal responsibility, partly because there is a lack of opportunities. Nevertheless the occasional pupil will show courtesy in spite of his peers and offer a chair or open a door. Relationships are unsatisfactory because spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision has not sufficiently developed pupils' self-control, social and friendship skills. The quality of relationships between teachers and pupils is inconsistent, and teachers do not always provide the best role models for pupils. For example, some teachers with unsatisfactory skills for managing the pupils' behaviour are inclined to shout, and the rapport is not always secure between teachers and pupils. However, a few teachers, including some of the more recently appointed and temporary teachers, do set a good example.

12. Attendance is unsatisfactory as it is below the national average and has declined since the previous year. High absence levels are due to unauthorised absence taken by over half the pupils on roll. Following the introduction of a system to telephone parents on the first day of the pupil's absence, there has been a significant reduction in unauthorised absence. Very high levels of exclusions, which have increased this academic year, have also contributed to high absence figures, but exclusions are now reducing significantly due to the new approach of the acting headteacher. Pupils are generally punctual for school and for lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall, and the proportion of good or better teaching is low. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has declined and there is now a greater proportion of unsatisfactory and poor teaching, and less good teaching than previously reported. The weaknesses in teaching were seen across the school, and they are having a direct and negative impact on standards, pupils' learning and achievements. During the week of the inspection, one quarter of the teachers were either temporary or providing supply cover, due to the absence of permanent staff. The permanent staff have experienced a very challenging and difficult history in the school where pupils were growing increasingly beyond control, and the school was no longer judged a safe place to be. This event is still relatively recent history for pupils and staff alike, and the atmosphere for learning is tense and fractious in parts of the school. The temporary and supply staff are making a very positive contribution overall to the school, and they are not the sources of weaknesses in teaching.
14. In a little more than three quarters of lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory or better. In one third of lessons, teaching was satisfactory. A little more than one quarter of the teaching observed was good and in approximately one in every six lessons, teaching was very good. However, in one in every four lessons, teaching was unsatisfactory or worse, and occasionally poor or very poor. The unsatisfactory teaching was characterised by a lack of rigorous subject knowledge and poor assessment of the pupils' individual needs, leading to a mismatch of work. Poor teaching included poor management of the pupils' behaviour and weak development of their knowledge and skills. Very poor teaching included harsh, abrasive and confrontational strategies that were entirely unacceptable approaches towards any pupils. The environments in parts of the school are not conducive to pupils' learning. The outside huts are in poor structural condition. The food technology room presents an unacceptable standard of health and hygiene. Cookers have congealed food in and around them, and part of the door to the room has been vandalised and kicked, with wood that remains damaged. This communicates poor messages to the pupils, and does little to instil any sense of pride, effort or enthusiasm for their work.
15. Teaching in Years 7 – 9 is satisfactory in geography, history, music and PE and good in art and design. Teaching is unsatisfactory in mathematics, science, ICT and French, and poor in English. Teaching in Years 10 – 11 is satisfactory in geography, history, music and PE and good in art and design. Teaching is unsatisfactory in mathematics, science, ICT and French, and poor in English. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on teaching in religious education.
16. Teaching in literacy is poor due to the poor planning and provision for the subject. The pupils' skills are not developed systematically and there is no consideration for developing literacy skills across other subjects of the curriculum. Teaching in numeracy is unsatisfactory overall as the pupils' numeracy skills are not developed systematically. Plans for developing numeracy across other subjects of the curriculum are underdeveloped. The use of ICT across other subjects is similarly underdeveloped.
17. Strengths in teaching include the following characteristics:
- The good teaching in art and design is helping pupils to grow in confidence and have a sense of pride in their work; secure knowledge of the subject conveyed in a lively and interesting style sustains the pupils' interest and motivation throughout lessons.

- Examples of very good teaching in history where pupils were learning how England changed from being a Catholic to a Protestant country; the very effective revision at the beginning of the lesson from previous learning ensured that pupils understood the context. The very positive relationships between pupils and the teacher helped them to engage fully in the activity and show genuine interest and curiosity in the historical enquiry. Activities were very well planned and modified appropriately for the range of pupils' needs.
 - Very good teaching in geography due to the high expectations for pupils to achieve, very effective management of their behaviour and very good feedback to pupils about their learning and behaviour at the end of the lesson, well received by pupils and a very positive basis for further improvement academically and socially.
 - Very good teaching as part of the Youth Award Scheme for pupils in Year 11 as they learned to plan a journey by public transport using a map and bus timetables; the lesson had aims that were understood clearly by pupils from the start; very effective emphasis upon key words, helping to develop the pupils' reading, speaking and listening skills further; the teaching style was lively and humorous whilst being challenging at the same time. The bus route and timetables were not straightforward and pupils had to think hard about the most appropriate journey and bus times in the process, as there was no direct route to use. Pupils learned very effectively and developed independent skills, including reading for information.
18. Unsatisfactory teaching include the following characteristics:
- Unsatisfactory strategies for managing the pupils' behaviour, leading to lost time for learning, and pupils spending much time out of the classroom being supervised elsewhere, missing considerable parts of their schooling as a result.
 - The teachers' use of behaviour management strategies is inconsistent; the traffic light system, whereby pupils earn points towards golden time at the end of the week, could work, but in practice, the points are not awarded at the end of the lesson, or if they are, it is carried out in a rushed fashion, with pupils not fully engaged in the process. The implementation of the system is meaningless for some pupils, whilst others seek actively to undermine its worth by deliberately trying to lose points and end up in detention on Friday, thus ensuring they spend time with their friends. This means that in effect it acts as a reward and not the sanction intended. These factors hinder the pupils' learning further.
 - Low-level activities that did not match the pupils' needs or interests, leading to restless and lethargic responses from the pupils; higher attainers left unchallenged and pupils with additional special needs struggling to learn effectively
 - Missed opportunities to engage the pupils in evaluation of their own learning, for example during athletics training, and low expectations regarding health and safety such as inappropriate kit and unsupervised changing arrangements.
19. Additional characteristics of poor teaching:
- In English, inappropriate tasks and the same activity provided for all pupils, regardless of their individual attainment, a slow and disjointed pace, poor subject knowledge and a lack of any teaching of letter sounds for pupils, exacerbated by ineffective management of the pupils' behaviour and poor control of the group
 - Very poor teaching in personal, social and health education, where pupils had no opportunity or warning to modify their behaviour before being reprimanded and sanctioned in a harsh, abrasive and confrontational manner; undermining any values of respect that the subject is designed to develop or encourage.
20. Improvement in teaching since the previous inspection has been poor. The teaching is not underpinned by a coherent curriculum, and therefore the pupils' skills are not developed systematically. Poor assessment procedures hinder the teaching and learning. Teachers are not fully aware of the National Curriculum levels, or entirely familiar with national initiatives such as the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies. A significant proportion of the teachers are struggling to manage the pupils' behaviour and the current behaviour strategies are not used consistently by all staff. This leads to unacceptable variations during the school day for pupils, with very different expectations established in different lessons and by individual staff.

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

21. The curriculum is unsatisfactory. There are weaknesses in subject planning, organisation and delivery of the timetable and in staffing arrangements, and the curriculum lacks sufficient breadth, balance and relevance. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements for religious education and a modern foreign language, and there are major omissions in the curricula for DT and PE. The quality and range of learning opportunities are unsatisfactory in more than half of the academic subjects provided and there is a particular weakness in the crucial area of literacy. In addition, provision for the personal development of pupils is unsatisfactory.
22. A significant number of pupils have additional special educational needs in the form of emotional and behavioural difficulties. These are not well catered for. Planning and target-setting for these pupils lack sufficient focus on their individual needs, and are not linked with specific strategies to improve their behaviour. Assessment of their progress is poor. These shortcomings are most clearly demonstrated in the learning support centre, in which an indeterminate number of pupils are placed for varying periods of time. The alternative curriculum offered here is inadequate. Apart from its small group or one-to-one teaching arrangements, it provides no specific strategies to address pupils' individual needs. The curriculum offered is limited in scope, does not build upon the pupils' prior levels of attainment and does not maintain adequate links with the ongoing work of the classes from which the pupils have been removed.
23. Some parents have also expressed their dissatisfaction with the arrangements for pupils who have particular needs in their speech and language development. From the sample of Statements of Special Educational Needs seen, these concerns are justified. The specified provision of "access to advice from a speech and language therapist" and "to a structured communication skills programme in conjunction with advice from a speech and language therapist" is clearly not being made. This is an issue which was identified in the last inspection report and no effective action has been taken to address it, despite the school's request for provisions from the appropriate authorities.
24. The arrangements for the teaching of literacy skills are poor. They pay virtually no attention to the National Literacy Strategy. There is no effective whole-school planning, scheme of assessment or target-setting and the school has failed to address the inadequate knowledge of staff in this area. As a result, pupils' progress in literacy is poor and it restricts their learning in all aspects of the curriculum. Strategies for the teaching of numeracy, while better developed than those for literacy, are still unsatisfactory.
25. There is a sound planning framework for the provision of personal, social and health education. Sex education and drug education are included and good work has been done in particular on planning for the introduction of the citizenship element of the programme. Planning includes a list of visiting speakers to support these and other aspects of the subject. Overall, however, the provision for the personal and social development of pupils is unsatisfactory. There is unsatisfactory co-ordination of the various opportunities that arise for the teaching of personal and social skills, for example, in tutor periods and in subjects of the curriculum other than the discrete periods for the subject itself. The subject's main failing, however, is that it does not effectively teach those values, such as respect for others, awareness of the effects of one's actions and personal responsibility, which lie at the heart of the subject. The principles of good citizenship are underdeveloped and unsatisfactory overall as they are not being taught effectively. In the lessons observed during the inspection week, pupils were not sufficiently engaged or challenged and teaching itself did not reflect the attitudes it was trying to promote. These findings echo those of the last inspection report. There has been unsatisfactory improvement in the subject since then.
26. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including some very successful outdoor pursuits activities, for example pupils completing a physical challenge across Dartmoor and having to plan and prepare for the expedition using their initiative. The computer club makes a positive contribution to the pupils' ICT skills, and the rapport between the pupils and teacher is very good.

27. There have been some good developments in the provision of vocational education, which was identified as an area for improvement in the last inspection. There is now a well-planned programme which is developing well. In the written work of Year 11 pupils, in displays and photographs and in conversations with the pupils themselves, there is abundant evidence of the benefits and enjoyment which they have received from activities such as 'Flameworks', from their work experience placements and from taster courses at a local college of further education. Through the active links with this and other colleges, there is good preparation for the next stage of pupils' education. There is a satisfactory range of accreditation opportunities for Year 11 pupils. Careers Education is effectively managed. Pupils' work for the "World of Work" section of the Youth Award Scheme indicates a sound range of relevant activities. These aspects of the curriculum show good improvement since the last inspection and are well placed under a very forward-looking co-ordinator to improve further.
28. The development of opportunities in extra-curricular activities and in vocational education provides evidence of the sound use which the school makes of the resources available in the local and wider community to enrich the curriculum. There are also satisfactory links with educational partners, particularly with colleges of further education, and plans are in place to extend these. There are growing links with schools attended by the pupils prior to them starting at Hillside.
29. There has been a significant decline in the quality and range of learning opportunities provided by the school since the last inspection. While there has been an improvement in the provision of vocational education, the school has failed to establish a coherent framework for a curriculum which can offer quality, breadth and balance in all aspects of pupils' development. A major factor in this situation has been the school's inability to monitor the quality of curricular planning and delivery. Much of the current school development plan includes targets and action plans for subjects but these are not based on an accurate audit of the subjects, and they lack reference to the underlying problems which have caused the deterioration of the curriculum since the last inspection.
30. The overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is unsatisfactory. This is an unsatisfactory level of improvement since the previous inspection. Planning for the development of these areas does not appear systematically either in school improvement or subject planning although in some subjects including religious education, music and humanities, teachers include some elements of spiritual and cultural issues in their lessons.
31. Provision for spiritual development was judged as unsatisfactory in the previous inspection and it remains so. There is no class, year or school assembly where a moment of reflection takes place. Isolated events such as a recent school visit to the Zoo enable pupils to experience the wonder of watching animals at close quarters, for instance, but in general opportunities are not developed which would help pupils explore and express their inner responses to their lives or the environment around them.
32. Provision for moral development is unsatisfactory. The majority of pupils know right from wrong and have a keen sense of justice and fairness. Many, particularly the younger pupils, try to do the right thing. In the recent past there has been a period where groups of pupils have shown little care or concern for the school, each other or themselves. The acting headteacher reports that antagonism between pupils is lessening and that overall, pupils have respect for school property. This is, however, a "fragile peace" and a significant number of pupils do not have the self-control to maintain responsible behaviour without considerable adult support. When available this support is given sensitively and effectively on a short term, one-to-one basis but without that level of support the situation rapidly deteriorates into antagonism, confrontation and disaffection.
33. The provision for the pupil's social development is unsatisfactory and results in pupils not developing sufficient independence and social maturity to help them as they move through the school and particularly when they leave for college or employment. A group of Year 11 pupils about to leave school found it very difficult to find the words to speak with any clarity about their life in school or their hopes for college. There is no school council where pupils could have a say in

the organisation of their school. Each class has designated tutor time with a regular teacher. This means that each child has an adult to whom they can go with their concerns. For some pupils this is an important and supportive relationship. With the high level of staff changes and absence, however, many pupils have not been able to develop that relationship. On occasions teachers have been anxious about organising visits outside school for fear of poor behaviour but events during the inspection week, for instance, a visit to a local secondary school and a visit to Dartmoor, showed that pupils can respond well to these outings when supported by good organisation. A team of six pupils from Years 8 to Years 11 have recently completed the Ten Tors Challenge, which involved the team in camping out and navigating themselves on the demanding hike across rough ground over two days. This shows the potential that some pupils have for perseverance, taking initiative and developing teamwork when well prepared.

34. Lunch times were seen to be difficult times. There are some clubs which attract small numbers of pupils, and the ICT club is popular. Whilst pupils enjoy the meals, the atmosphere in the dining area does not foster social interaction. The playground areas are bare, lacking furniture or any focus where pupils could congregate for chat or to share an activity. A few teachers give up their lunch break to play basketball or football and pupils very much appreciate this but for many the lunch break is an aimless and sometimes lonely time which can too easily deteriorate into squabbles and silly behaviour.
35. The provision for pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory. The school has maintained a range of activities such as a school production of Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat at Christmas (which was then presented publicly at the Buckfast Abbey Celebration) and a visiting jazz band. There have been some group visits to the theatre and cinema. Overall, however, there is no consistent planning either as a school or in subject areas to foster pupils' understanding and enjoyment of their own culture or that of other societies. The development of awareness of other cultures is limited to small areas within religious education, art and music. Overall pupils are ill prepared for life in our multicultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are poor overall because whilst child protection procedures are now secure, general provision for their care is not. Child Protection procedures at the last inspection were judged very good but they have deteriorated until recently. They are now well managed and there is very good agency support from the educational welfare officer and school nurse. However, in spite of the high level of pupils' needs the school nurse's offer to contribute to the personal, social and health education programme has not yet been taken up. All staff have the basic training in Child Protection.
37. The care of pupils is not yet secure as there is a lack of nurturing. Care for pupils is largely dependent on form tutors and provision is variable. Parts of the school environment are not conducive to feeling cared for, as some accommodation in the huts is below an acceptable standard and does little to make pupils and staff feel valued.
38. Health and safety provision is poor as there are numerous issues relating to the buildings and grounds, many of which have already been identified by the governing body who are seeking to improve the situation as a matter of urgency. A parent governor is now bringing good professional expertise to address the issues. The huts are unfit for their purpose as the structures are poor, access is bad, and additional concerns have been identified. Food technology provision within one of them has poor health and safety features. The playgrounds have potential hazards including steps that are crumbling. Hidden areas create opportunities for truanting. The poor nature of the accommodation adversely affects behaviour management and is not conducive to good learning. There are many areas for pupils to hide in and abscond within the school and its grounds. Although some risk assessment is carried out, the issues identified in the process have not been addressed adequately, and risks remain

39. The monitoring and supporting of pupils' academic performance and personal development are poor as there is no tracking of the pupils' academic achievements, and ineffective monitoring of the pupils' personal development. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are unsatisfactory. Although there are some good features in the more recently established system, there is a lack of clarity, consistency and rigour in its use and rewards, sanctions and its implementation are too variable. They do not provide a tool for pupils to learn how to behave better or for them to reflect on their actions. Teachers mix the new initiatives with other strategies, resulting in a lack of clear expectations for pupils, and occasionally abandon them altogether and succumb to shouting. There is a lack of individual education targets for behaviour. Meal-time assistants are not yet trained in behaviour management yet they bear the brunt of much of the unacceptable pupil behaviour.
40. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are unsatisfactory. Although there are some guidelines, staff do not always approach incidents with sufficient rigour and incidents are not followed through consistently as a result. Behaviour in the playground is unsatisfactory. Meal-time assistants have experienced adverse incidents when they can be targets. In spite of this and reported incidents of racism the meal-time assistants have not received adequate training in behaviour management or been involved in new initiatives. The problems of negative behaviour at play times have continued since the last inspection and have not been addressed, which is poor. Pupils' poor social skills are at the root of much of the negative behaviour but the school lacks effective procedures to address this problem. Procedures are not implemented or followed through consistently by staff, and pupils are not dealt with systematically as a result.
41. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are unsatisfactory overall, although they have shown some recent improvement. Recent initiatives since April are not yet well enough established, but the system of telephoning parents on the first day a pupil is absent has had a major impact by reducing the number of pupils with unauthorised absence by a half. The acting headteacher's initiatives to reduce the number of pupils excluded are also beginning to improve attendance.
42. Assessment throughout the school is poor. Although a co-ordinator was appointed in September 2002 there are no formal procedures to track pupils' attainment and progress as they move through the school. There is also no marking policy, a weakness identified at the time of the last inspection. Teachers tend to work in isolation and lack sufficient guidance. In many cases their knowledge and understanding of assessment and the National Curriculum Levels are weak. Current assessment practice in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science is rudimentary at best.
43. The poor assessment procedures means that the curriculum provision for pupils is not always matched closely to their wide-ranging needs. The school is currently unable to demonstrate rigorously the pupils' achievements over time, or ensure that the pupils' individual needs are being met adequately. Day-to-day assessment, in the form of questioning different groups of pupils, does not always challenge the higher attaining pupils. The marking of pupils' work leaves much room for improvement. In several subjects work is just ticked or a comment is made. Marking rarely contains any comments that will help pupils to improve their work. Teachers are too accepting of badly presented work; in some classes their writing in books and work on the board sets a poor example for pupils to follow.
44. Although there has been some very recent improvement in individual education plans they are still unsatisfactory overall. There is considerable variation in the quality, style and objectives. It is unclear how individual education plans are used by teachers for planning or as an assessment tool and to what extent they feature in annual reviews. Some targets are very weak; for example, "Continue to read widely" or "Work towards the mathematics test".
45. There is a significant number of pupils in the school with behaviour difficulties. They do not have individual behaviour plans to help them to improve. Currently, the school does not have an effective way of managing these pupils. The "Traffic Light" system, devised by the assessment co-ordinator,

lacks sophistication and is not implemented rigorously enough to be effective. The pupils are able to manipulate the system too easily.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Parents' views of the school are unsatisfactory. The opinions expressed by them in the parents' questionnaire recognize the recent improvements in the school, but some parents remain very unhappy about their child attending the school. The partnership with parents at the last inspection was judged unsatisfactory and the negative situation described then still remains. The strengths identified by parents in the questionnaire are not supported by the evidence of the inspection, although improvements are beginning in the school's partnership with parents. Parents are unhappy about the amount of homework, a view which reflects the minimal amount the school actually provides. About a fifth of parents do not feel well informed about how their child is getting on and the inspection evidence supports their concerns, which closely mirror those of the last inspection. Some parents are very concerned that speech therapy is not provided despite being identified on their child's statement. Parents' comments over health and safety issues are supported by inspection evidence. However, parents do report a gradually improving atmosphere in the school and appreciate the approach being taken by the acting headteacher.
47. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is unsatisfactory. The information for parents, particularly about pupils' progress, including the Annual Reviews, has been poor. Parents have not been well informed and are justifiably angry at not being kept up to date. Annual reports lack clarity and their usefulness is therefore limited. There have been limited opportunities for parents to be active partners in their child's learning. Parents attending the newly formed support group report that their children have regressed in literacy since their arrival in September but that they are limited in what they themselves can do to help by the lack of feedback from the school.
48. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school and their contribution to learning at school and at home are unsatisfactory, partly because the school has not included them sufficiently, and partly because of the individual circumstances of families. Parents have felt excluded and many lack the confidence to approach the school. The acting headteacher recognizes the situation and is beginning new initiatives to address it.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The leadership and management of the school are unsatisfactory in key areas of its work. The role and function of the deputy headteacher is poor and although the post has an appropriate job description, there is a lack of clear understanding of the strategies required to improve the school. Long-standing issues have not been addressed with the required urgency and there are unrealistic expectations of what external agencies should do to support the school, delaying effective action that should take place within the school itself. The pace of change has been slow and improvements hindered as a result. There has been a limited strategic contribution from the senior management of the school.
50. Subject leadership is unsatisfactory as there are major aspects of the role that are not fulfilled, including monitoring of standards, teaching and learning. Many subject leaders have little idea of what is going on in other parts of the school in their subject. They are unable to identify priorities because of a lack of a comprehensive understanding of their role. The acting headteacher, appointed immediately after the local education authority review, has made a significant impact on the school, bringing a sense of security and order to the staff, pupils and parents alike. All aspects of the school's work had major areas of weakness, and the immediate priorities centred upon health and safety, discipline and order. The acting headteacher and assistant headteacher work effectively together and have mutually compatible skills. They work hard to hold the school together, though when one or both may be otherwise engaged or off site for justifiable reasons, this leaves the school in a weak and fragile position as a result. The acting headteacher acts with great determination, tenacity and courage, seeking to address and overcome wide-ranging weaknesses,

at times against all odds. The management of special educational needs is unsatisfactory as those pupils with additional needs are not being provided for appropriately.

51. The newly established governing body, including a chair of governors who provides strong leadership, with relevant expertise and experience in education, has a clear understanding of the school's relative strengths and weaknesses, and what must be done in order to bring about the required improvements. Many governors have been appointed because of their specific and relevant skills for the challenge of governing Hillside School at this time, and other longstanding governors are making a full contribution to this process. Despite these improvements, the role of the governing body is unsatisfactory. It is underdeveloped in areas of strategic monitoring and evaluating the school's work, though there is a clear schedule for this to take place as a matter of urgency.
52. The school improvement plan is short term and written in the light of the school's critical position at the beginning of the academic year. There is yet to be a comprehensive and strategic plan of action to address the school's widespread weaknesses. There have been significant changes in the composition of the staff since the previous inspection. There remain fundamental weaknesses in the strategies, systems, structures and policies of the school that add to these problematic features.
53. There are broad and appropriate aims for the school, though they remain largely aspirational. There is demoralisation and disaffection amongst some staff, and reported staff bullying, in particular towards more recently appointed and temporary teachers. There is an unhelpful and negative atmosphere of blame in some areas, with staff seeking to deflect responsibility for weaknesses upon others. The level of staff absence and sickness is high, resulting in a changing timetable, at times on a daily basis. This in turn is creating further insecurity, lack of continuity, and a chaotic atmosphere. Pupils are grouped unhelpfully together, or find themselves in the learning support centre without any planned focus for their learning or even adults with the expertise to teach them effectively. The strategies for ensuring that pupils are fully included in what the school has to offer are unsatisfactory as pupils with additional special educational needs are not having those needs met adequately. There is a statement or policy for promoting racial equality that was approved in April 2003. Although there have been improvements in relationships, the school does not have the full confidence of all communities represented, and those parents who are involved with the school have justifiable concerns.
54. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance is very poor as there is no system for either function. The procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching are unsatisfactory as there has been limited attention given to formal observations of lessons. The school has no proper structure for appraisal and performance management, and the poor procedures for assessing the pupils' achievements mean that the impact of teaching upon the pupils' learning cannot currently be quantified. The strategies for tracking the pupils' learning and achievements are embryonic. There is no systematic approach to demonstrate what impact the teachers are having on the pupils' learning or in raising their achievements.
55. There are no formal methods for evaluation. This means that the school does not evaluate the impact of its actions on standards, teaching and learning. Weaknesses in strategies, systems and procedures are repeated and a cycle of failure perpetuated. The use of management information systems is underdeveloped.
56. The school has satisfactory procedures for managing its finances. The management of finances by the acting headteacher, administrators and chair of finances is satisfactory. In the absence of a rigorous strategy for long term school improvement, finances are broadly linked to the school's current priorities. The use of specific grants such as those linked to the pupils' additional special educational needs, for example, is unsatisfactory. There is limited use of new technology in tracking pupils' progress, assessment procedures or setting targets that could reduce the paperwork for staff. Currently there is insufficient consideration given to how bureaucracy could be minimised for staff. The duplication of effort, where occasionally teachers have their own systems for assessing the pupils, is just one example where the school's lack of systems adds to

teachers' workload rather than relieving it. The financial carry forward in the school budget has been allocated for designated developments, including building works. This is judged to be reasonable in the circumstances.

57. The accommodation is poor in parts of the school. The six huts sited on the playground, used as classrooms, are unfit for their purpose and structures for stairways are crumbling. Pupils work in classrooms that are poor in quality and appearance, and do nothing to convey any sense of value and worth to the pupils or staff in their work. The food technology room is in a poor state with equipment that requires cleaning to reach an acceptable level of hygiene. The impoverished playground area has hardly anything for pupils to engage in, and the layout of the buildings and huts has many passageways and areas that the pupils exploit in the absence of robust supervision. The main teaching block has classrooms that have been refurbished and equipped appropriately for their purpose. The library facility is well equipped and carefully organised. It is situated as part of a class base, and therefore opportunities to pursue independent enquiry are too limited.
58. There would be adequate staffing if all teachers attended regularly, however this is not the case and the breadth and knowledge to teach the full curriculum are lacking in key areas such as literacy and numeracy. Some learning support assistants support the pupils effectively and are engaged in their learning. The learning support assistant who responds to requests for additional support to pupils throughout the day, makes an exceptional contribution in reducing and resolving conflicts for the pupil's. Some other assistants require further training in supporting pupils with special educational needs in order to engage purposefully with them and build appropriately positive relationships.
59. The school aims to ensure that the principles of best value are applied to its decisions, though in practice this is not yet being achieved. Strategic use of resources is unsatisfactory. The hall is underused and information and communication technology resources around the school underdeveloped. Staff time is not always used efficiently for the core purpose of teaching and learning due to the weaknesses in the implementation of systems that have been established. The level of bureaucracy is not being minimised and this is not currently a school priority. There is poor shared commitment and capacity because there is not a strong sense of team work or team spirit established amongst all staff This results in a fragmented and dysfunctional work force where individual efforts are undermined. There are also limitations due to the lack of skills, knowledge and expertise in key areas such as literacy and numeracy. The leadership and management of the school have declined since the last inspection and improvement has been very poor. It was previously judged as good. The school provides poor value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. In order to raise standards further and improve pupils' achievements, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

(1) Raise standards, giving priority to English, mathematics, science and ICT:

In English by:

- providing leadership for the subject, including training and relevant expertise in teaching basic literacy skills
- establishing a coherent whole-school English curriculum, and following the National Literacy Strategy systematically
- ensuring that literacy teaching is at least good or better
- identifying opportunities for developing the pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum
- improving resources for literacy
- ensuring that reading, writing and letter sounds are taught effectively

As referred to in paragraphs 1,2,4,5,16,19,20,21,24,61-67

In mathematics by:

- ensuring the National Numeracy Strategy is taught effectively
- providing greater challenge to higher attaining pupils
- establishing opportunities for developing the pupils' numeracy skills across the curriculum

As referred to in paragraphs 1,2,4,5,15,16,20,24,68-73

In science by:

- improving curricular planning
- identifying appropriate scientific targets for the pupils
- raising expectations of what the pupils could achieve

As referred to in paragraphs 3,15,74-81

In ICT by:

- planning for pupils to have systematic opportunities to develop their ICT skills across the curriculum
- improving ICT resources
- developing teachers' skills in using ICT in order to assist the pupils more effectively

As referred to in paragraphs 3,5,16,66,72,79,86,95,96,103-108,110,129

(2) Improve leadership and management by:

- establishing a clear and strategic direction for the school
- developing the roles of the deputy headteacher and subject leaders
- identifying rigorous methods for monitoring standards, teaching and learning
- establishing a framework for evaluating the impact of actions on the pupils' learning and achievements

As referred to in paragraphs 39,49-59,66,72,80,89,96,102,123,129

(3) Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:

- eradicating unsatisfactory, poor and very poor teaching
- setting higher expectations for what the pupils could achieve
- ensuring that work is well matched to the pupils' individual needs
- establishing effective strategies for managing the pupils' behaviour
- including pupils in the identification and review of their academic and behavioural targets
- building consistently positive relationships with pupils that support their learning
- helping pupils develop more positive attitudes and behaviour
- establishing a professional development programme in order to develop teachers' skills knowledge and expertise

As referred to in paragraphs 6,8,10,13-16,18-20,65

(4) Improve the curriculum by:

- establishing a coherent curricular framework for all subjects that develops the pupils' skills and knowledge systematically
- providing effectively for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and ensuring that they are prepared for life in a multi-cultural society
- improving the provision for developing the pupils' personal and social skills
- ensuring equality of opportunity and access to the full range of activities for all pupils

As referred to in paragraphs 6,8,10,11,20-35,79,87,106,109,123,125,128

(5) Improve assessment procedures by:

- establishing rigorous strategies for assessing the pupils, tracking their achievements and ensuring that work is well matched to their wide-ranging needs
- identifying precise targets for the pupils academically, behaviourally and socially
- improving the quality of marking pupils' work and ensuring they understand how to improve further
- ensuring that teachers understand the National Curriculum, and levels of attainment within it, in order to assess the pupils' work more accurately, and establish a starting point from which to measure progress

As referred to in paragraphs 2,5,14,22,24,42,43-45,54,65,71,79,81,91,100,128,131

(6) Improve links with parents by:

- including them more fully in school life
- providing quality information about their childrens' progress

As referred to in paragraphs 46-48

(7) Improve attendance and ensure more pupils come to school regularly and stay in class for lessons

As referred to in paragraphs 9,12

(8) Ensure arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety are effective and improve the accommodation and learning resources for the pupils

As referred to in paragraphs 14,16,18,34,36-38,40,41,57,65,80,88,89,115,122

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	63
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	0	9	18	21	10	3	1
Percentage	0	14	29	33	16	5	2

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	135
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	67

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	5.6

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	134	155	2
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	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	1	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	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes**Financial information****Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8
Average class size	10

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	398

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	971,019
Total expenditure	907,942
Expenditure per pupil	7,192
Balance brought forward from previous year	48,173
Balance carried forward to next year	50,051

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	142
Number of questionnaires 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.	48	30	7	7	7
My child is making good progress in school.	41	41	7	0	11
Behaviour in the school is good.	44	26	11	0	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	18	33	18	0
The teaching is good.	59	22	4	0	15
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	51	22	15	7	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	22	7	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	26	0	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	55	30	4	7	4
The school is well led and managed.	48	41	4	7	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	30	11	4	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	15	0	7	30

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents at the parents' meeting spoke of Hillside school prior to the arrival of the acting headteacher as hostile, unwelcoming and aggressive. They did not want their children to attend the school, but there appeared to be no alternative.

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

ENGLISH

61. Pupils' achievements in English are poor throughout the school. Their achievements in speaking and listening, in reading and in writing are well below the levels of which they are capable. The performance in statutory assessment at the end of Year 9, and in external examinations at the end of Year 11 exemplifies this poor progress. Their results are significantly below both the levels they achieve in the other core subjects of mathematics and science and the national average for English in schools of a similar type.
62. In their speaking, pupils' ability to express themselves clearly and to use a more formal vocabulary and tone of voice when appropriate, has been particularly slow to develop. This is noticeable in all subjects of the curriculum. By the end of Year 9, most of them are still unable to sustain a sensible contribution to whole-class oral work. Their ability to listen attentively and to respond with relevant comments and questions is also poorly developed. For example, in a Year 10 lesson involving the planning of a journey by public transport, older pupils showed that at times they are capable of careful listening and can ask appropriate questions when prompted by good teaching to do so. At other times, however, pupils' frequent inability to communicate their own ideas and to listen to those of others provides evidence of their poor progress in these skills. Another Year 10 class, for example, in a formally structured discussion of the legal ages for various activities, and a group of Year 11 pupils, who were interviewed about their plans for the future, both displayed a lack of maturity and a very restricted formal vocabulary in their responses.
63. In reading, pupils' lack of progress hinders their learning across the curriculum. The lower attaining pupils make poor progress throughout the school in the basic skills of sounding out letters, combining letters and using other strategies to make sense of a simple text. These pupils, and others who are of average attainment in the context of the school, are hesitant readers, reliant on adult support. They have great difficulty in correcting their mistakes or checking the meaning of what they are reading. Higher attaining pupils do develop their confidence by the end of Year 9 and are able to read with growing fluency and expression. Their understanding of what they read, however, particularly in fiction, is not always secure. When asked to talk about a story, about particular characters or what they enjoy about it, for example, their response is very limited. In Years 10 and 11, lower attaining pupils continue to struggle with the basic skills required to read the simple, often primary-level texts which they are given to read and which are not appropriate to their age and interests. Their ability to read independently remains at a very restricted level. Higher attainers are able to make more effective use of reference and non-fiction books but too few of them are moving on to achieve a more perceptive appreciation of different kinds of literature or to wider reading for pleasure.
64. Pupils' writing presents a similar picture of poor progress at all levels of attainment. However, in some of the written work which they have completed in English since the start of the spring term, evidence is emerging of an improvement both in the quantity and quality of what they write, particularly in the range of purposes and different styles which they are tackling. The current work of a Year 9 class, for example, includes a greater amount of independent writing than previously attempted, with some interesting poems and creative writing as well as evidence of a growing ability to draft, revise and edit their work. As a result, there has clearly been an improvement in the short term in the presentation of their work, in the accuracy of their spelling and use of punctuation, for example. A similar picture emerges in the English folders of a Year 11 class, with some sensitive and imaginative work linked with their reading of "Of Mice and Men". These are promising developments, linked with the recent appointment of staff who are setting more interesting and relevant tasks in the teaching of writing, but the achievements of pupils over time indicate poor progress. The written work of the lower and average attainers gives little evidence of improvement in their ability to produce pieces of writing using complete sentences independently. By the end of Year 11, their work shows unsatisfactory progress in spelling, punctuation and in the

quality of their handwriting, which remains very immature and erratic. The range and quantity of writing produced by the higher attainers by this stage is inadequate. Too much time is spent, in other subjects of the curriculum as well as in English, on undemanding tasks, such as the completion of worksheets requiring one-word answers.

65. There are numerous factors which contribute to pupils' poor progress in English. There is evidence of some improved teaching of the subject during the current academic year but an unacceptably high proportion of lessons seen during the inspection week was unsatisfactory. English teaching over time is poor and is not having the required impact on developing the pupils' literacy skills. There is a general lack of expertise in the teaching of basic literacy skills. There is too little focus on individual needs and there are low expectations of what pupils, particularly the higher attainers, can achieve. Teachers lack the knowledge to make an accurate assessment of pupils' levels of attainment or their progress in the subject. The National Literacy Strategy has not been adopted and there are no coherent schemes of work or of assessment for the subject. There is a dearth of suitable materials for the teaching of pupils who have basic literacy problems.
66. Much of this situation arises from the fact that English has lacked and continues to lack effective co-ordination. The school is aware of the need to raise standards in the subject but the current school development plan does not address the underlying problems with sufficient clarity or urgency. There are no whole-school targets and the lack of accurate assessment information makes it very difficult for these to be set at an appropriate level. There is limited use of ICT in English and pupils have few opportunities to draft and edit their work on the computer.
67. There has been a drastic decline in standards in English since the last inspection. Given the current extent of the subject's shortcomings and the absence of effective leadership in it, the school's capacity to reverse this situation in the near future must be regarded as extremely problematic.

MATHEMATICS

68. Throughout the school pupils' achievement in mathematics is unsatisfactory. There are a significant number of pupils who are not achieving the standards of which they are capable. In most classes the work given to higher attaining pupils is far too easy and does not challenge them. Standards have fallen since the last inspection.
69. The main reasons for the underachievement are rooted in the quality of teaching, and the unsatisfactory behaviour and attendance by a minority of pupils. Staff changes have also had a significant impact upon teaching. The teaching observed during the inspection was sound overall, although there was some unsatisfactory teaching. Most of the teaching lacked pace and rigour, and there is not enough good and very good teaching to improve pupils' learning and raise standards. Evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' work shows that teaching over time is unsatisfactory and teachers' expectations are too low. The contribution of teaching assistants is variable; some support pupils' learning very effectively, whilst others do not have clearly identified roles.
70. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work show that further training is needed for staff teaching pupils in Years 7 to 9 in the National Numeracy Strategy. The marking of pupils' books is cursory and rarely helps pupils to improve their learning. Work is often just ticked or has comments such as "Well done" or "Good work". Far too many worksheets are used; this restricts the opportunities for pupils to learn how to set out their work properly. Where they do use exercise books, working-out is not always shown so it is not clear how some pupils have arrived at their answers. Whilst results in the Certificate of Educational Achievement are rising, the results and numbers entered for GCSE are falling. The pupils' poor literacy skills are evident in the work of GCSE pupils; for example, they sometimes struggle to read and then interpret what the questions are asking them to do.
71. Assessment is poor. The school has collected a good deal of data through various forms of testing, but this is not being used effectively to inform teachers' planning. There is a wide range of

ability in each class, but the majority of teachers are not planning adequately for the different groups of pupils. Teachers' knowledge of the National Curriculum is inadequate to assess and level pupils' work with any degree of accuracy. However, a good example was seen of assessment in one lesson where Year 11 pupils were revising for their GCSE examination. The teacher had identified strengths and weaknesses in their work from previous test papers and had planned effectively to address aspects of geometry. Good probing questioning and clear explanations reinforced by diagrams using the overhead projector helped the pupils to clarify their thinking and work out the angles of different triangles.

72. Subject management is unsatisfactory. Currently there is no monitoring of teaching, therefore the co-ordinator has no clear picture of the quality of teaching throughout the school. Insufficient thought has been given to the use of ICT and how it can support pupils' learning. During the inspection ICT was not seen being used during lessons. A few examples were seen of mathematics being used in other areas of the curriculum; for example, bar graphs in science. However, the application of mathematical skills in most subjects is a weakness, and as such, needs careful planning to overcome it.
73. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection and many of the previous weaknesses remain.

SCIENCE

74. Achievements overall in science are unsatisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their lessons, but their achievement over time is unsatisfactory. This is because planning of the curriculum is not sufficiently effective in maximising the pupils' potential by raising the level of their skills and understanding of science as they move through the school. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 prepare for, and Year 11 pupils are successful in, a range of external accreditations. However, weaknesses in the curriculum and low expectations prior to Year 11 mean that many of these pupils are underachieving and could do better in those examinations. Pupils can take the Welsh Joint Examination Council (WJEC) single science award and double science award at entry level and foundation level GCSE. This means that all pupils have a chance to gain a qualification and all those who complete course work do so. Last year, 2002, 14 pupils achieved a grade (E-G) at GCSE.
75. The youngest pupils in Year 7 were successful in measuring their pulse rate before and after exercise. By following instructions carefully and measuring with the aid of a stop watch they were able to make some interesting observations and compare each other's change of pulse rate. All pupils are confident in using investigation to develop their learning. Pupils in Year 9 were able to set up a simple electrical circuit to get a light bulb to flash or a buzzer to sound. This was part of a challenge to send a message. Pupils were able to activate the light but because they lacked the ability to consider the most effective method few were able to complete the challenge to design a code and send a message. Those in Year 8 investigating the most effective design for a paper bridge to carry weights were keen to set up their experiment and by trial and error gradually found an effective design. A Year 10 group carried out the Hooke's Law experiment, measuring the extension of a spring as weights were added. They were, with support, able to record their data on a table and then onto a line graph. The work, however, needed a good deal of adult support to ensure that the procedure was carried out accurately. This indicates that the skills of fair testing and accurate measuring and recording have not been consolidated sufficiently in previous years.
76. Work seen in pupils' notebooks shows a range of topics covered including safe practice in the lab and how to use the equipment, study of a range of materials and their properties as well as organs of the body and how they function. These notebooks are unsatisfactory in the quality of presentation as a record of work achieved and they are not a resource for pupils to use for building up a body of knowledge. The books contain a mixture of unrelated work, often undated and frequently without explanation. Marking consists of praise but has insufficient comments which would help pupils to improve. This means that pupils have been given no standards to which they can aspire. Many pupils in the school have severe weaknesses in writing and spelling and there is insufficient support given, particularly to lower attaining pupils, to help them with printed text or

vocabulary lists. Higher attainers are encouraged in lessons to explore their conclusions but they are not expected to consolidate that by writing in their notebooks. The notebooks do not show progress of knowledge and understanding as pupils move through the school and much of the work is incomplete. Priority has been given to covering the activity and moving on rather than consolidating skills and understanding. It is this that makes the pupils' learning and the teaching over time unsatisfactory.

77. Teaching seen in lessons was satisfactory overall with some elements which were good and some unsatisfactory. Teaching over time in science is unsatisfactory as the pupils' scientific skills have not been developed systematically. Teachers have a good rapport with pupils and hence pupils are confident to try new things and to follow teachers' directions. There is firm, calm discipline in the lab and so pupils know and follow good safe practice. Teachers have good subject knowledge and the experience to present activities which engage the pupils. Much of the work is investigative. Praise is used well to encourage pupils to persist but there is too often a low level of challenge to support all pupils in achieving their potential. There were times when pupils were left to experiment with the equipment for too long without the necessary interventions from the teacher to get the pupil to think constructively of what they were trying to achieve. On those occasions when the teacher asked focused questions to get pupils to think and predict the learning improved and pupils' investigations became more productive. The pupils' science vocabulary is weak and they do not have the skills to explain themselves. When the teacher started the lesson with a clear demonstration of the experiment, consolidating the name of each piece of equipment, the pupils were able to get on at a better pace and made progress in the lesson. Whilst the teachers are aware of the objective of the lesson this is not always made clear to pupils who may see it just as an activity. The time used towards the end of lessons, including the plenary sessions, is insufficiently developed to identify and consolidate the learning of the lesson.
78. Pupil's attitudes and behaviour in lessons are never less than satisfactory and often good. They show interest and behave sensibly in the lab. They treat equipment carefully. They can work independently but sadly there were too few examples of collaborative work. Pupils complete practical work in class but have not been encouraged sufficiently to take real care with their writing or drawing in their notebooks.
79. The planning of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Whilst the expectations of the National Curriculum and the syllabus of the WJEC and GCSE examinations are covered, the half termly plans do not have sufficient detail and do not focus on the expected skills and understanding to be learnt in each module of work. Planning is not based on National Curriculum level expectations which would ensure that the skills, knowledge and understanding of the programmes of study are developed consistently as pupils move through the school. ICT is currently underused in the teaching or learning of science. Individual pupil targets, when they exist, are ad hoc and not related to those National Curriculum expectations. The subject leader has devised an assessment system which gives a simple grade to record pupil success at the end of each module of work. It is not based on any criteria such as National Curriculum levels and hence cannot be used to inform future planning or targets for pupils. This is unsatisfactory.
80. Since the previous inspection there have been alterations in the priority given to science in terms of staffing and time allocation. The subject leader has worked well to maintain the subject and accreditation levels for pupils in Year 11. However, elements of subject management are not in place, which makes it unsatisfactory. A subject development plan has been written with action plans. Many of these have been achieved but the plans are not sufficiently focused on expected improvements which would raise the standards of pupil achievement. There is no process in place to monitor or to evaluate the effectiveness of the work of the department in terms of planning, teaching or, due to the weakness in assessment, whether pupils are achieving their potential. Resources in the subject are adequate and equipment, including chemicals, is kept safely. Appropriate risk assessments have been carried out.
81. Improvements in the subject since the last inspection are unsatisfactory. Although accreditations at the end of Year 11 have been maintained, achievements in Years 7, 8 and 9 are unsatisfactory.

The quality of teaching is less effective than it was at the time of the previous inspection. The department has not been kept up to date with current curricular or assessment expectations.

ART AND DESIGN

82. Pupils achieve well in all year groups and make good progress during their time at Hillside School. There were no lessons of art with Year 11 during the inspection week, but evidence from work seen indicates that by the end of Year 11 pupils achieve well and make good progress in lessons and over time.
83. In Year 7 pupils have worked on a group textile hanging, led by a textile artist in residence and based on the work of the Impressionist Monet. They do not have a coherent programme of learning that introduces all aspects of art, but what they are taught they are taught well. Observational studies are a weakness in the early years, but pupils have a very good experience of ceramics, including wheel throwing, and they make good progress in their understanding of clay and how it can be worked in different ways. The art teacher's own knowledge and skills in ceramics ensures a high standard of finish in the glazed work. From a study of the watercolours of the Japanese artist, Hokusai, pupils create individual portraits using tissue, print and spatter techniques. Higher attaining pupils remember the facial proportions they have been taught and use colour very effectively in the Fauvist style. Lower attaining pupils do not draw facial features well and often use juvenile imagery in developing their paintings. By Year 10 pupils learn about Mehndi body patterns used in the Indian culture and produce effective Asian patterns on their hand drawings. They model colourful masks from mod-roc and embellish them with rich ethnic colours, clearly enjoying the lessons and working hard to produce a result that they are proud of. They also build up striking skyline compositions, using cut silhouettes against an Impressionist sky, with individually designed foregrounds. Lower attaining pupils are quick to ask for support in drawing and cutting and are not always provided with sufficient opportunities to develop as independent learners.
84. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good and pupils are positive about the subject, working hard to produce work that can be proudly displayed around the school.
85. The quality of teaching is good overall, and sometimes very good. The teacher has a very good knowledge of her subject and is well supported by effective learning support assistants. Together they build very good relationships around the class and are very positive and encouraging of all pupils. In one lesson seen during the inspection, in which two classes had been brought together unexpectedly, creating a potential problem, the teacher and her assistant worked sensitively and positively to ensure that the pupils were all engaged and got the best out of the lesson. The management strategies for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are used effectively and a very good method is used to ensure that pupils are quiet and listening carefully during the final session in which work is evaluated.
86. The subject leader has recently returned from a long-term absence and has had to work hard to recover from the disorder that stemmed from a move of room in her absence. The present accommodation is unsatisfactory, having limited sink facilities and poor storage space. It officially serves as a shared room with design technology, although the design technology teacher does not use it in practice, because of its unsuitability. The curriculum is not supported by visits to galleries and museums and observational studies are a weak aspect of it. Poetry and art are sometimes combined to good effect and the subject supports literacy development well. There is currently no accredited art examination course, although standards of work certainly justify one. The subject does not make any contribution to the development of information and communication technology and the two computers in the room are not connected to any power supply. Progress since the previous inspection has been unsatisfactory, largely because of the recent long-term absence of the subject leader, during which the subject was largely neglected. The progress of pupils has slowed from its very good position at the previous inspection, and the quality of teaching and learning has gone down. Visits have declined and the accommodation, although new to the subject, remains unsatisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

87. There is currently no design and technology curriculum for pupils in Year 10 and 11 and it is not possible to make any judgements on teaching, learning and the progress of pupils. Only three lessons of design and technology were seen during the inspection week and it was not possible to make a secure judgement on teaching and learning, although it was noted that teaching in the learning support centre was far from satisfactory and pupils learned very little. Pupils in Year 9 benefit from a very recent inclusion initiative and are able to attend a weekly design and technology lesson at a nearby specialist technology college, where they receive very good teaching led by a specialist teacher. Because of accommodation problems, pupils in Years 7 and 8 receive a minimal experience of design and construction, although they are able to use the poor food technology accommodation for lessons of food preparation and cooking. Year 7 pupils learn basic cutting and construction skills in their own classroom and some use is made of a basic design software program in the computer suite.
88. On limited evidence, pupils learn at a satisfactory level in their lessons, but their achievements over Years 7 to 9 are unsatisfactory because of the curriculum and accommodation constraints on the subject. By the end of Year 9 pupils have learned to use a coping saw and wood files to cut and smooth a curved surface. Higher attaining pupils have had some previous experience and are able to cut a curve effectively, whilst others find it very difficult to control the saw and to use the draw and cross-filing techniques for smoothing the wood. The very good demonstration and support of staff ensure that all pupils improve their understanding and use of the tools. The accommodation and resources offered by the technology college enable pupils to benefit from a very good workshop experience; pupils respond with exemplary behaviour and a positive approach to the subject. Pupils from the learning support centre learn to prepare a vegetarian rice salad in the food technology room, although the high level of staff support given to them does not enable them to develop as independent learners. The poor accommodation and resources for food technology make it difficult for staff to develop an effective environment for learning.
89. The leadership and management of design and technology have much potential to develop the subject, but are restricted by many factors beyond their control. The poor accommodation and resources and a curriculum that is not active across all years and which has only the beginnings of control technology are just some of the unsatisfactory features of the subject. There is no co-ordination between food technology and resistant materials, with the subject being offered on a more or less ad hoc basis. This has led to a deterioration of the subject since the last inspection, when the school had specialist accommodation, albeit in need of refurbishment. Overall this is a most unsatisfactory subject with only one current prospect for improvement, that being the link with the specialist technology college.

GEOGRAPHY

90. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in geography. Geography is taught as part of a humanities course in Years 9 to 11. During the period of the inspection Year 11 pupils were on study leave and only one geography lesson was observed in Year 10. However, discussions with pupils and teachers, scrutiny of teachers' plans and pupils' work in books and on display enable judgements about pupils' achievement and progress to be made.
91. There has been little improvement since the last inspection. A revised policy and a scheme of work linked to the National Curriculum programmes of study have been developed and agreed by staff and governors but medium term planning lacks an end-of-topic evaluation. Assessment strategies including opportunities for pupils to make their own assessment of achievement have yet to be developed. Resources are limited although the temporary co-ordinator has made good use of display to make the mobile classroom an attractive learning environment. The use of information and communication technology is insufficiently developed to help pupils' understanding of the impact of the environment on people around the world.
92. By Year 9, pupils are beginning to find similarities and differences between places locally and in different countries. Year 7 pupils discuss the concept of a settlement, and identify the reasons

people choose different locations to live and work, however the lack of opportunities to carry out geographical investigations based on direct experience, local fieldwork and practical activities limits pupils' learning. Year 8 pupils are aware of the importance of tourism to the area around the school; they can provide information about local tourist attractions including Plymouth and Dartmoor National Park. These pupils investigate the amenities and attractions of different places and produce posters and fact sheets to encourage visitors, and present their findings as an interesting display in the school hall. Year 9 pupils use their enquiry and mapping skills to locate places and countries associated with famous football teams. They begin to understand the economic links between football clubs and employment, identifying through class discussions many related jobs.

93. By Year 9 most pupils have some understanding of the world and can point to several different countries on a map or globe, observe changes in the weather and recognise some of the effects of weather on people around the world. Their mapping skills move on from simple maps to using atlases and map references to locate major cities around the world. Higher attaining pupils use books to find information about different countries. Older pupils are beginning to grasp the environmental aspects of pollution and its impact on people. By Year 9, pupils use their developing geographical skills to make effective use of secondary information resources such as books and pictures to compare lifestyles. For example, Year 10 pupils discover facts about South American rainforests and the need to preserve the trees. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to improve pupils' use of technology, including the Internet, to provide information related to their geographical enquiries.
94. Teaching and learning in geography are satisfactory overall, and in one lesson seen were very good. Where teaching was at its best, the teacher was creative and planning was thorough with a good focus on maintaining pupils' interest throughout the lesson. Learning was brought to life through the involvement of pupils of all ability levels who were pleased to be able to contribute to the discussions about places and people. They were inspired to give their best efforts and able to achieve the objectives set. Conversely, where teaching was less successful, the work was dull, uninspiring and not suitably planned to match the skills and needs of pupils of differing abilities. Pupils with additional special needs make satisfactory progress when they are given additional support.
95. Literacy and numeracy are promoted well through reading, use of reference texts and writing factual information. Information is recorded in tables although the use of graphs to present information was absent in pupils' work books. Pupils use atlases and maps and are developing an understanding of scale and coordinates. Geography makes a good contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development through the study of different countries and cultures. For example, Year 8 study Italy, its location as a tourist destination and the different food associated with the country. The use of ICT in the subject is underdeveloped.
96. The geography co-ordinator has a good knowledge of the subject. Despite being a newly qualified teacher on a temporary contract she has provided good short-term support for the subject and has, with the acting headteacher, drawn up a subject action plan. However, the overall co-ordination of the subject is unsatisfactory and needs to be addressed by the acting headteacher and the governing body.

HISTORY

97. Pupils' achievements in history are satisfactory throughout the school, reflecting the satisfactory standards of teaching. History is satisfactorily taught as part of an externally accredited course at Key Stage 4, providing pupils with an opportunity to extend their historical knowledge and understanding.
98. During the period of the inspection Year 11 pupils were on study leave and history was not timetabled for Year 10. However, discussions with teachers, scrutiny of teachers' plans and pupils' work in books, folders and historical displays enabled judgements about achievement and progress to be made.

99. By the end of Year 9 pupils make satisfactory progress in their historical understanding, for example they are familiar with some of the significant figures and events in British history, such as the First World War and the impact of the factory system on the working life of men, women and children. They have experienced topics on the Romans, North American Indians, local history and the Victorians, and are beginning to have some concept about how things change over time. Dressing as Victorian children, linked to visits and special occasions, reinforces their knowledge and understanding of previous times. Pupils develop a good sense of chronology and look systematically at life in different periods in the past, and are becoming increasingly aware of time lines. They have experienced topics on the invaders and settlers. Year 8 pupils have a sound knowledge of the events of the Tudor era and with support can name some of Henry VIII's wives. Higher attaining pupils recall the dates of key events such as when Mary became queen and the reasons that England changed from being a catholic country to being a protestant one. Lower attaining pupils also make satisfactory progress in their understanding of events due to the good support they receive from teachers and support assistants. Pupils use a variety of sources to discover facts about events and people in the past including the use of books and items from the past. By Year 11 pupils are able to build on their previous learning by completing the requirements of an externally accredited course in history. The majority of Year 11 pupils who completed the course this year are expected to achieve at least a pass in the certificate of educational achievement.
100. There has been little improvement in the subject since the last inspection. The assessment of pupils' progress is an area identified for development at the last inspection and is still an area to be developed and should be a priority in a revised subject action plan. The subject still lacks a base where history work could be displayed and resources housed; instead history is taught in a number of classrooms. However, the history policy has been revised in line with recent developments, resources are improving and some use is being made of information and communication technology to support the subject by Year 10 and 11 pupils as part their course work.
101. Teaching in history is satisfactory overall. During the inspection four lessons were seen and two were very good. Where teaching was at its best the teacher was enthusiastic, work was well planned and pupils were keen to complete activities designed to reinforce their learning. Learning was well directed at the different levels of ability so those pupils were able to succeed in their learning objectives. Pupils were eager to show their history work. Older pupils used their books to illustrate points made. Photographs, and historical texts are effective in stimulating pupils' questions and provide good opportunities for pupils to use their historical enquiry skills. Photographs and text are used well by pupils in Year 9 to research aspects of the end of the First World War. Firm and clear guidance helps pupils with educational and behavioural difficulties to concentrate on their learning. The use of interesting and interactive history displays and illustrated timelines would celebrate pupils' achievements and reinforce their learning. However the good use of planned plenary sessions allows pupils time to reflect on key learning objectives. Literacy and numeracy are promoted well through reading, use of reference texts and writing factual information. Information is recorded in tables and graphs. History makes a good contribution to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
102. The history co-ordinator has an enthusiasm for the subject. Despite being a recently qualified teacher on a temporary contract he has provided good short-term support for the subject and has with the acting headteacher drawn up a subject action plan. However, the overall co-ordination of the subject is unsatisfactory and this needs to be addressed by the newly appointed headteacher and the governing body.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

103. Throughout the school pupils' achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory. This is mainly because they do not get the opportunity to apply their newly learned skills in other subjects.

104. The lessons observed in the ICT suite and taught by the co-ordinator were good overall. Evidence from the scrutiny of work shows that pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding have improved since the last inspection. Samples of pupils' work in Year 9 showed word-processing in relation to work about Macbeth, the integration of text and graphics, the design of posters for a talent show, and clips from the Internet. Work for pupils in Years 10 and 11 follows an accredited course, but achievement could be higher in some aspects of the work such as modelling and communicating information. Pupils enjoy their lessons in the ICT suite, they are enthusiastic, keen to learn and most treat the computers with respect. The lunchtime computer clubs are very popular.
105. Whilst teaching by the co-ordinator is good, very little teaching was observed elsewhere during the inspection. Teaching over time is unsatisfactory. The skills being developed by pupils in discrete lessons are not being utilised by teachers in other lessons. Opportunities are being missed to research for information using CD-ROMs and the Internet, to correspond by email and use tables, graphs and charts to record findings. There are issues over hardware and software, much of which needs replacing. Some staff need further training in areas such as modelling, control and aspects of the new technology.
106. The curriculum is unsatisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Although the school is following national guidelines these have not adapted and modified to meet the needs of the different groups of pupils. Assessment is poor; whilst a record of pupils' skills is kept, pupils have no means of knowing how well they are doing. There is, for example, no self-assessment or evaluation at the end of each unit of work.
107. Subject leadership is unsatisfactory. Although the co-ordinator is an enthusiastic teacher there is insufficient time and there are too few opportunities for him to develop the subject. Time has not been allocated for the monitoring of teaching, therefore, the co-ordinator does not know how effectively ICT is being taught and used in the different subjects. In order to raise standards there is a need to ensure that teachers receive further training and that the planning in all subjects of the curriculum includes use of ICT.
108. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory and weaknesses identified at that time have not been addressed fully.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

109. Pupils' achievements in French are unsatisfactory. The subject was removed from the curriculum during the period 2000 to 2002 and it is not taught in Years 9 to 11. Current pupils in Years 7 to 9 started the subject at the same time, at the beginning of the current academic year. Pupils in Years 7 and 9 have one lesson a week for half a year. Pupils in Year 8 experience a more irregular programme in the subject because of timetabling difficulties but receive a similar amount of tuition. The result of these arrangements is that there is neither sufficient time nor continuity for pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. In the two lessons seen, for a Year 7 and a Year 8 class, pupils' ability to understand simple commands and questions in French or to speak using single words or short phrases in the language was very limited. They know numbers up to ten and, in some cases, to twenty. They have acquired a small vocabulary of words to do with topics such as food and drink and sports. The higher attaining pupils repeat new words with an approximate but intelligible pronunciation. In the key skills of memorising words and phrases, of using clues to guess meanings and of listening carefully to discriminate sounds, however, the inadequate time given to the subject is clearly evident in the minimal progress made.
110. Pupils' attitudes to French are satisfactory. Teachers make good use of games and visual resources to stimulate interest and in the lessons observed pupils maintained their concentration well. Insufficient opportunities are given, however, for the higher attainers to practise and extend their language skills. The potential of information and communication technology to support this and other aspects of the subject is not effectively exploited.
111. Planning includes a range of topics which provide satisfactory opportunities for pupils to learn about the French way of life. It does not, however, refer specifically to attainment in language

learning, by the use of National Curriculum levels, for example, and there is no effective scheme of assessment in the subject. The use of ICT in the subject is unsatisfactory.

112. There has been unsatisfactory development of French since the last inspection. Teaching continues to be satisfactory in lessons but planning and assessment are still unsatisfactory. Insufficient time for the subject is still a major issue. It limits opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills and this, together with the enforced break in the continuity of pupils' learning because of timetable constraints, is the main factor in their unsatisfactory achievement in the subject. In these circumstances and given the non-compliance with the statutory requirements for modern foreign language in Years 9-11, the co-ordinator has limited scope to develop the subject.

MUSIC

113. Because of timetabling constraints it was not possible to see lessons of music with Years 10 and 11. From evidence of work seen during the inspection it is clear that pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well overall. They learn about the music from different cultures, such as African and Chinese, and produce some interesting harmonies on keyboard, backed up by pleasant-sounding percussion. Some African drums have been bought in recently and pupils are improving their skills and understanding in African drum sessions. A "junk band" has been built recently and it is expected that this will increase the enjoyment, as well as the learning of music. Vocal work is a weakness generally and the annual "Talent Contest" this year was of a disappointingly low standard, from video evidence.
114. Owing to the absence of the subject leader, all lessons were taken by a supply teacher and pupils in Years 7 to 9 did not behave well during the inspection, creating management difficulties that the teacher was unable to confront satisfactorily and a subsequent weakening of achievement and slowing down of progress. Standards are below expectations, although pupils did learn about the "pulse" in rhythm and higher attaining pupils were able to demonstrate "weak" and "strong" beats in 4/4 time. Year 7 pupils were given an interesting range of percussion instruments to play and were able to offer appropriate comments in response to the sounds they made. They learned the word "timbre" and showed a keen interest in playing the different instruments. Weak behaviour management and inappropriate lesson planning slowed the progress of this lesson down to an unsatisfactory level, although there was ample support given to the supply teacher.
115. The subject is well planned and good schemes of work are in place, along with a good system for monitoring the progress of pupils on a termly basis. The absence of the subject leader made it difficult to make a secure judgement on leadership and management of the subject, although it is clear that the subject has been well set up and is offering pupils a rich and positive experience. The accommodation is unsatisfactory, being small and with no soundproofing, but it is attractively presented, with some good learning resources displayed and a good range of instruments well stored. The subject makes a good provision for the cultural development of pupils and has made a good improvement since the previous inspection. Curriculum provision and planning have improved, along with assessment procedures. Resources for the subject have improved and additional expertise has been brought in from time to time. There is still no provision for the use of information communication technology in the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

116. Overall there has been little improvement in the provision of physical education since the last inspection, due to recent staff changes and the increasing number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour have deteriorated and some of the lessons observed were disrupted because of instances of poor behaviour.
117. A limited range of activities was seen during the period of the inspection but there is sufficient evidence to show that the achievement and progress of the majority of is satisfactory. Appropriately chosen activities in lessons ensure that pupils involved make satisfactory progress

in acquiring and practising new skills in games and athletics. Pupils also acquire and practise new skills in swimming and appreciate aspects of fitness and health.

118. By Year 9, pupils' know about the importance of warming up and recovering after exercise and have developed skills in volleyball, basketball and football. Games such as soccer are a popular choice during the Friday afternoon activities session, when pupils are able to choose from a number of options as a reward for good behaviour. Most pupils are also confident in water skills, and receive certificates of achievement when they reach certain levels of proficiency in swimming. By Year 11 pupils are able to build on their previous learning by completing the requirements of an externally accredited course in physical education, and the majority of Year 11 pupils are expected to achieve at least a pass and a certificate of educational achievement associated with this course. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are entered for the youth award course complete units and challenges associated with exercise, which include water activities and games.
119. Competitive games also make a contribution to pupils' development and progress, which is evident when pupils play games against other schools or compete in inter-school cross-country tournaments. However, the poor attendance and behaviour of some pupils significantly reduces the number of pupils available for games lessons and fixtures. The introduction of golf to the older pupils is successful and a group of Year 10 and 11 pupils make good progress in establishing skills with golf clubs and balls, working with a group of skilled golf players working along side school staff. Opportunities such as the "Ten Tors' Challenge" make a good contribution to the pupils' overall personal and social development.
120. Teaching in physical education is satisfactory overall, and volleyball in particular is effectively taught. Pupils achieve well in improving their levels of performance in volleyball due to the teacher understanding the coaching needs of individual pupils. She is knowledgeable about the subject and encourages pupils well, using clear instructions and demonstrations to keep them interested, focused and working hard. In the less successful lesson observed pupils' learning was inconsistent and inappropriate behaviour was not always dealt with effectively. When all pupils were actively involved in lessons and able to control themselves, they made good progress. For example, an outdoor activities session on Dartmoor included activities that improved pupils' skills of moving to targets before being intercepted, whilst also encouraging whole-class co-operation. Another task encouraged pupils to support each other and work as a team.
121. The behaviour of pupils observed during the inspection was satisfactory overall, as pupils understand and accept the recently introduced whole-school behaviour policy used by all teachers. Pupils are beginning to listen carefully and follow instructions. Pupils with additional special needs make satisfactory progress when they are given additional support. Pupils who behave well during the week are able to take advantage of the Friday afternoon activities session, which includes football and disco dancing.
122. The outdoor facilities for physical education are satisfactory with a large area of grass used effectively for athletics and games. The hard play area, however, has inadequate fencing as reported at the last inspection, restricting its use for ball games such as basketball or tennis. The small gymnasium with associated storage and changing facilities is satisfactory for most aspects of physical education including dance and gymnastics. However, some of the fixed equipment and a large unused trampoline should be repaired and used or removed to provide additional space. The school makes good use of local facilities including the swimming pool and local activity centres.
123. Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory, as the resources available, including staffing and accommodation, are not being effectively used to raise standards within a broad and balanced scheme of work. The co-ordinator does not have the time and necessary training to enable them to monitor the teaching of physical education in order to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning across all aspects of the school's curriculum. The curriculum should be reviewed to establish a broad and balanced scheme of work relevant to the needs of all pupils, developing their skills across an appropriate range of activities to include opportunities for dance and gymnastics. Satisfactory use is made of the evaluation of pupils' performance at appropriate points during

lessons although few opportunities for pupils to appraise the performance of others were observed during the inspection. Procedures for monitoring, assessing and recording pupils' achievements overall are unsatisfactory and should be part of a review of the subject.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

124. The pupils' achievements in religious education (RE) are satisfactory in lessons, but unsatisfactory over time, due to weaknesses in the curriculum and older pupils not being taught the subject. The subject leader has been on leave of absence for a considerable part of the year and there was limited evidence of the pupils' past work. During the subject leader's absence there has been a range of supply teachers, ably supported by a representative of the Christian Resources Project. RE is now being taught more regularly by a temporary member of staff with RE experience and the situation is more stable.
125. Currently RE is only being taught to pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils in Year 7 are finding out about the Jewish religion. They remembered the reason for the Seder meal as a memorial of part of Jewish history. They were able to identify and understand the symbolism of each element of the meal. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 have been learning about the Sikh religion. They are all producing a good quality topic folder and have a clear understanding of the history of the religion and why some elements of it are so special to Sikhs. They were learning about the five Ks and by the end of the lesson all could identify them with the correct name.
126. Pupils' behaviour during lessons is always satisfactory. They showed interest and listened attentively. They treated the artefacts they were looking at with respect and care. They showed respect and consideration for the customs of Judaism and Sikhism. These attitudes to their lessons are a big improvement since the previous inspection, when attitudes were poor and pupils showed little interest in the subject.
127. Teaching is never less than satisfactory in lessons, and is more frequently good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when teaching was unsatisfactory with elements that were poor. There was insufficient evidence to give a judgement of teaching over time. Teachers have good secure knowledge of their subject so that pupils are able to explore the implications of the ideas of each religion. For instance, the fact that the Sikh ceremonies involved the whole community and were followed by a meal where all families and age groups met together. Pupils were also given an accurate understanding of the elements and reasons for those ceremonies. Resources were well used. A doll dressed in the five Ks of Sikhism gained the pupils' attention and they realised the significance of the artefacts. This meant they then handled the artefacts with care and respect. Management of behaviour was effective, keeping the pupils' interest with a range of activities: reading from the text; handling artefacts; a game to test memory and a short video of a ceremony. All this kept pupils concentrating and well involved.
128. The curriculum for RE is unsatisfactory. The lack of RE taught to pupils in Years 10 and 11 denies them the entitlement to a subject which should be part of the school's provision to foster these pupils' awareness of moral and social issues. Since the previous inspection the subject leader has developed a scheme for teaching RE to Year 7, 8 and 9 that is based on the locally agreed syllabus with material suitably relevant to those pupils. Due to the turbulence in teachers over the past year it has not been consistently delivered but work from Years 8 and 9 shows that some pupils have followed elements of the module on Christianity. There is no assessment system to measure or record pupils' achievements in the subject. This is unsatisfactory.
129. Resources for the subject are now satisfactory. The school has made good use of the local RE resources centre and the expertise of their staff. There was no element of ICT being used in the subject.
130. Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory. The leadership of the subject is currently being held by the acting headteacher and little development has been possible. There is no monitoring or evaluation of pupils' work or of the delivery of the curriculum.

131. Although lessons seen showed considerable improvement since the last inspection in the interest and attitudes shown by pupils when taught stimulating and well-planned lessons, the level of improvement overall is unsatisfactory. This is due to the lack of religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11, the lack of assessment procedures and the inconsistency of the delivery of the subject over the past year.