



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
SUSI EARNSHAW THEATRE SCHOOL**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Susi Earnshaw Theatre School

Full Name of School	Susi Earnshaw Theatre School
DfE Number	302/6111
Registered Charity Number	1106006
Address	Susi Earnshaw Theatre School 68 High Street Barnet Hertfordshire EN5 5SJ
Telephone Number	020 8441 5010
Fax Number	020 8364 9618
Email Address	info@sets.org.uk
Head	Mrs Julia Van Ellis-Hammond
Proprietor	Susi Earnshaw
Age Range	11 to 16
Total Number of Pupils	45
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (20 boys; 25 girls)
Inspection Dates	10 to 13 March 2015

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous Ofsted inspection was in April 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Pamela Leech

Mrs Jessica Wheeler

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Principal, Society of Heads school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Susi Earnshaw Theatre School is a co-educational specialist stage school providing education for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. The school aims to provide a safe and friendly environment where individuals may grow in confidence and develop a love of learning as they explore academia and the performing arts. The school seeks to help pupils achieve the skills of self-discipline in preparation for the pursuit of a career in the performing arts.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1989 and is now housed in a fully functioning theatre with a recording studio in Barnet, London. An independent theatrical agency representing all pupils, and some ex-pupils, is managed from the school. Weekend activities based on the performing arts are provided for pupils and other local children. The school is owned by the two founders who are responsible for its governance. Overarching management is shared between the principal, who is also a proprietor and the recently appointed headteacher. The principal is responsible for strategic planning and the headteacher for day to day operations.
- 1.3 The school has undertaken a programme of development since the previous inspection, including the installation of a recording studio, a sprung dance floor and the addition of a science room. A new rain garden has been created utilising natural rainfall to create an outdoor garden within the car park. There is now disabled access to the rear of the building.
- 1.4 There are currently 45 pupils on roll, 20 boys and 25 girls. Pupils come from all over the country though all are based in the London area whilst at the school, and represent a variety of social, cultural and economic backgrounds.
- 1.5 Pupils are not selected for their academic ability but according to their higher than average ability in the performing arts. In discussion with the school and through observation, the academic ability profile is judged to be in line with the national average, although there is a wide spread of abilities represented. Thirteen pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom are provided with learning support at different levels according to their need. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and one has English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school endeavours to meet its aims to create a family environment where pupils feel individually valued and are encouraged to participate in all aspects of school life including the performing arts with confidence. Pupils develop good attitudes towards their learning and make sound progress academically. They work well independently, approach co-operative learning with enthusiasm and are supported by sound teaching. The curriculum is limited but offers an appropriate balance of academic and vocational subjects and is enhanced by a supportive extra-curricular programme. Assessment and monitoring procedures are not fully developed or consistently implemented. The use of self-assessment target setting is inconsistent and the quality of marking is variable. Pupils with SEND and EAL receive appropriate support and the more able pupils have some opportunities to extend their learning through provision of extra work once tasks have been completed. Pupils state they enjoy their lessons.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is good. Pupils behave well generally around the school and they are warm and genuine in their support for each other, demonstrating tolerance and respect. They are happy to take on positions of responsibility and are enthusiastic in their contribution to their community. They are proud of their school and genuine in their celebration of each other's achievements. They are appreciative of the support of the staff around them, and are confident of receiving help and guidance at all times; the pastoral care of the staff is good. Arrangements to secure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are sound with required policies and recruitment procedures now fully implemented.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are sound. The structure of leadership and management systems is closely affiliated with the proprietorial role. There is no formal strategic development plan to determine the future direction of the school. Pastoral systems are successful in supporting individual pupil needs. Insufficient emphasis has been placed on the oversight of teaching and learning and management has not ensured that staff have received appropriate training in SEND, especially dyslexia. Links with parents are strong because every effort is made to involve and engage with parents on a daily basis and through involvement in concerts and educational trips and visits.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Strengthen management oversight of teaching and learning with specific regard to monitoring pupils' progress, target setting and marking.
2. Provide staff with appropriate training to enable them to give greater support to those pupils with SEND.
3. Consider opportunities for improving changing and shower facilities for pupils to use after dance and other physical education lessons to supplement the current home-based provision.
4. Formulate a strategic plan for school development to include objectives, actions, time-scale and monitoring arrangements.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievement and learning is sound.
- 3.2 Pupils make steady progress and demonstrate a willingness to engage in academic studies and to develop their vocational skills, in line with the school's aims. They gain a solid base of subject knowledge through their curricular studies and this is enhanced by their engagement in a range of supportive extra-curricular activities. Pupils are articulate but do not often take the initiative in their learning. They attain sound standards in reading and writing, and demonstrate reasonable competence with grammar, spelling and punctuation. Pupils become familiar with mathematical principles and are able to apply logical understanding to scientific subjects. They use basic skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and confidently employ a range of techniques to express themselves physically and creatively through drama, dance and song.
- 3.3 Satisfactory achievement in extra-curricular activities supports the pupils' academic progress and their personal development. Some pupils achieve success in auditions for BBC radio and television programmes, theatre roles, and dance and film competitions. Pupils have achieved a high rate of success with their entries for a national poetry competition. Pupils participate successfully in external dance, drama and music examinations. They engage in co-operative learning with generosity of spirit and with commitment, as was seen in their positive attitude towards their activities and during rehearsals for a forthcoming performance.
- 3.4 The cohort sizes for this school are small, however the pattern of attainment from year to year is reasonably consistent. Nationally standardised data for BTEC qualifications are not available, however almost all pupils have achieved the A or A* for Performance Diploma and Sciences in 2012-2014. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE for all other subjects, including English and mathematics, have been similar to the national average for maintained schools, although results in 2014 were lower than in previous years. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress overall in relation to pupils of similar ability, though evidence from lesson observations, work scrutiny and interviews with pupils, indicate that current progress is only sound as it is hampered by limitations in teaching. Leavers are successful in gaining places in institutions for further education with some gaining scholarships in specialist vocational settings.
- 3.5 Small class sizes and subject clinics offering extra support enable those with SEND, EAL and those who have undertaken theatrical roles outside school to make sound progress. Additional work is sometimes available for the more able pupils, providing them with some opportunities to extend their subject understanding and make sound progress in line with their peers.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.6 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is sound.
- 3.7 In line with its aims to combine traditional learning with performing arts, the school provides a core of academic subjects at GCSE, comprising English, mathematics and a choice of one science. In addition to these, pupils may also take GCSEs in

performing arts, expressive arts, dance and film studies. Younger pupils in Years 7 and 8 also study humanities and a modern foreign language but these are not available as examination options. A well-structured PSHE programme, called life skills, covers topics relevant to pupils' ages and promotes respect between all pupils and staff. Pupils use ICT confidently, employing competent levels of skill with either laptops provided by the school or their own electronic devices. A very small minority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated they were unhappy with the range of subjects and areas of extra-curricular opportunity offered to their children. Inspection found the curriculum to be limited but carefully planned to allow a sound balance of academic and vocational subjects to be studied, making a suitable contribution to pupils' achievements.

- 3.8 Recent changes have been implemented to improve identification of pupils requiring support for SEND or EAL and the school makes sound provision for them. Pupils' progress is monitored through individual learning plans which are regularly reviewed. More able pupils are offered some opportunities for extension work, but more usually receive additional work once the class tasks for all have been completed.
- 3.9 A carefully structured careers programme ensures that pupils receive helpful and individually focused guidance from Year 9 onwards. This includes information on employment and further educational opportunities suited to the performing arts and more widely. Pupils also receive appropriate guidance and preparation for auditions and interviews.
- 3.10 The curriculum is extended by a suitable programme of extra-curricular activities for example exercise through various dance styles, creative writing and spelling, radio club, film and instrumental practice. Most pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed themselves as satisfied with the extra-curricular activities offered by the school.
- 3.11 Pupils participate in community work by preparing drama workshops for local school children to enjoy, organising and participating in the Barnet Christmas Parade, and working with adults who have learning needs. Local residents are invited to attend the many shows and concerts organised by the school. Pupils also visit some local sites of interest and travel into London to attend theatre performances.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.12 The contribution of teaching is sound.
- 3.13 Teaching broadly supports the school's aim to inspire pupils to work towards their full potential in all aspects of the performing arts and makes a suitable contribution to their achievements. The majority of pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they found the work interesting and are happy with the progress they are making. Parents expressed themselves as equally satisfied. Teaching promotes tolerance and respect and is non-partisan in the coverage of any political issues.
- 3.14 Teachers have good subject knowledge and are encouraging and supportive in their attitudes towards pupils. In a range of lessons, teaching methods instil pupils with the confidence to ask questions, helping pupils to engage with topics well. The most successful teaching is demonstrated when lessons are well organised, the pace is brisk and a variety of teaching methods are used to nurture pupils' interest and help them learn. In these lessons, pupils are encouraged to deepen their understanding and explore topics independently. Pupils make less progress in lessons where

teachers' expectations of work and behaviour are too low. In these lessons, the pace slows, pupils become distracted and behaviour deteriorates. As a result achievement is lower for all abilities. Teaching encourages good attitudes towards learning and most instances of low-level disruption are dealt with promptly. Pupils do not use ICT routinely in lessons and so have few opportunities to develop research skills in the classroom. Teachers give generously of their time before and after school to help pupils further in their learning and pupils are appreciative of this.

- 3.15 Pupils are generally aware of what they need to do to improve. The quality of marking is variable and clear systems to monitor marking and assessment are not established across all subject areas. The best marking offers detailed feedback and targets for improvement but much marking is perfunctory. In discussions with inspectors, pupils were appreciative when targets are set and value any oral feedback received from their teachers. Pupils find the school's 'level ladders' system for monitoring their progress helpful when they are used and, in a physical well-being lesson, self- and teacher- assessment enabled pupils to understand the level at which they were working and what to do next to improve. However, the use of self-assessment through target setting and the giving of informative feedback to pupils is not used by all staff.
- 3.16 The school has improved the use of tracking information to identify progress by collating pupils' data but the information is not used systematically to inform staff of the next steps in the pupils' learning or help them match tasks effectively to the needs of pupils in lessons.
- 3.17 The majority of pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that their homework helps them learn and in discussions with inspectors, pupils reported that they feel they receive the appropriate amount of homework. Year 7 pupils benefit from a 'catch up' session each week where they receive teacher support with the homework they have been set.
- 3.18 Leadership of SEND has recently been re-organised and the structured support system for these pupils is in an early stage. Individual learning plans are written for them and inspection evidence confirms that the support for pupils with SEND is sound. Formal staff training to support specific learning needs has not taken place. The school makes suitable provision to meet the requirements of statements of special educational needs and education, health and care plans.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good.
- 4.2 The personal development of the pupils is a strength of the school and reflects the school's aims to promote individual self-belief. By the time pupils leave the school, they have grown in confidence and they feel ready to embrace the next stage of their education, whether in further academic study or in the performing arts arena. They are tolerant and considerate towards each other and are enthusiastic about exploring the future awaiting them.
- 4.3 Pupils demonstrate good spiritual awareness. They consider the question of identity and personal belief effectively through their dramatic work, for example when exploring what it meant to be a soldier in the First World War. Younger pupils learn to empathise with others, as was seen when they reflected on the physical constraints of old age in a lesson based on a speech from Shakespeare. Year 11 pupils tackled the question of insecurity through GCSE dance routines, while younger pupils choreographed their own dance routine to express their feelings about depression. Pupils value the intimate size of their school community and extend their own spiritual awareness through tolerance and acceptance of the beliefs and views of their peers.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral awareness is well developed. Pupils show their understanding of what is right and wrong in their care for one another, and take responsibility for their own behaviour. They feel they are a 'big family' and demonstrate this clearly in their overlooking of any age differences. Younger pupils freely mix with older pupils and all generously offer support to each other. They are proud of their school and this is reflected in their good behaviour around the campus. Pupils demonstrate their burgeoning understanding of moral responsibilities as they approach issues such as criminal actions and their consequences in their life skills lessons.
- 4.5 The social awareness of pupils is good. They support each other well, respecting differences, and genuinely celebrating each other's successes. A few pupils, responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, felt they were not able to take on responsibility; however, inspectors found that opportunities were readily available. Pupils may offer help and support to each other by becoming buddies, or undertake the leadership of the school's charity focus as charity representatives. Many pupils develop an awareness of social responsibility by undertaking dramatic workshops in local primary schools, or by helping with Saturday school for local children.
- 4.6 Pupils demonstrate awareness of cultural issues. They explore issues of citizenship, English law and its public services and institutions, and Western cultural tradition in their life skills lessons. They demonstrate an appreciation for fundamental British values, including democracy; in the pupil voice assembly all had equal opportunity to speak and all opinions were equally considered. Pupils are tolerant of those with different views and beliefs and gain an appreciation of their own traditions and cultures through a range of visits to theatres and art galleries.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is good.
- 4.8 The quality of pastoral care throughout the school successfully meets the school's aim to ensure that pupils feel individually valued within the ethos of a caring family atmosphere, and it makes a strong contribution to the pupils' personal development. In discussions with inspectors, pupils reported that they feel extremely well cared for and thoroughly enjoy their school community. They cite strong relationships between themselves and their teachers, the 'family feel' and the care the whole community has for each other as reasons why they enjoy school life. Whilst there is no formal tutoring system, staff know their pupils well, and individual pastoral needs are discussed weekly at staff meetings ensuring that information is appropriately shared and effective action is taken to support pupils. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed themselves as highly satisfied with the care their children receive.
- 4.9 Relationships between pupils and staff are strong and characterised by mutual trust and respect. Pupils say there is always someone to talk to and are confident that they will receive help and guidance from their teachers should they have any concerns. The homely ethos of the school is clearly reflected in the pupils' attitudes. Older pupils enjoy helping younger ones and undertake their 'buddy' roles with maturity and commitment.
- 4.10 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very small number of parents felt that the school does not achieve high standards of behaviour. Inspection found that generally there are high expectations of good behaviour, supported by clear policies and properly kept records. However, in some classes teachers are too tolerant of low level disruption. Sanctions are consistently used in line with school's policies in these instances. The school's arrangements to guard against bullying are excellent. Instances of bullying are unusual and any that arise are dealt with quickly and effectively and correctly recorded. In responses to the pre-inspection pupil questionnaires, a very small minority of pupils reported that teachers are not always consistent in the way they give rewards. Through examination of pupils' books, discussions with staff and pupils, together with scrutiny of records available, evidence indicates that rewards are administered fairly.
- 4.11 Although a very small minority of pupils indicated their view that the school does not ask for their opinions or respond to them, weekly pupil voice assemblies and tutor group meetings offer pupils regular opportunities to express their views and pupils interviewed confidently described instances of change in response to their requests. An example of this is the current request for more lockers in an easily accessible place which the school is facilitating.
- 4.12 Most pupils bring a packed lunch to school as there is no canteen on the school site. More senior pupils may purchase lunch in the nearby town if they wish. The school encourages pupils to be healthy through physical well-being lessons where students learn about anatomy and adopting a healthy life style. Pupils discuss the benefits of eating healthily in science, and this is reinforced by the provision of fruit smoothies at break and a strict no fizzy drinks policy. Physical fitness is promoted through dance lessons and other fitness activities.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable accessibility plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is sound.
- 4.15 The school has successfully met its aims to provide a safe environment for pupils. There is an appropriate health and safety policy and the proprietors maintain and record regular visual checks of maintenance and health and safety matters. Risk assessments for buildings and equipment are reviewed annually. Changing and shower facilities are not provided by the school, which has established arrangements with parents whereby pupils change and shower in their homes after activities. Every effort is made to minimize the risk of fire with regular fire drills, staff training and thorough equipment testing with suitable records kept. Electrical tests have been undertaken on an annual basis. Accidents and incidents are properly recorded and monitored. Effective arrangements are taken to ensure the welfare, health and safety of those on school trips and those with special physical or learning needs.
- 4.16 Safeguarding policies are thorough with appropriate procedures and the proprietors undertake an annual review of these. All staff receive annual training in child protection matters from designated staff, in line with guidance from the local safeguarding children board. The school maintains close links with the local welfare agencies. Safer recruitment training was completed before the conclusion of the inspection, and the single central register of appointments is correctly maintained.
- 4.17 Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained and stored. Staff know what to do if a pupil were to go missing. All teaching staff undertake first aid training. Pupils who are unwell are properly cared for in suitable facilities until they are collected by parents.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 The responsibilities of governance are undertaken by the proprietors. The proprietors maintain oversight of the working of the school and are present throughout the working week, but they have not evaluated sufficiently the strengths and weaknesses of provision, including academic standards in order to establish effective strategic plans for development. Immediate needs are addressed and the proprietors make adequate provision for staffing, facilities and resources.
- 5.3 The proprietors maintain sound oversight of policies and procedures. One of the proprietors is the designated safeguarding lead and undertakes the training of staff in safeguarding matters, in addition to overseeing the safeguarding policy and procedures. Both proprietors undertake an annual review of safeguarding arrangements and their effectiveness and plans are in place to ensure the review, in future, includes an independent element.
- 5.4 The proprietors devote most of their time to the school. Of the small proportion of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, most expressed satisfaction with the school's provision.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is sound.
- 5.6 The leadership and management of the school by the principal is closely affiliated with the proprietorial role, however the role of the headteacher is less defined. The leadership strives to ensure that the school meets its aims to provide an education where pupils are encouraged to achieve to the best of their ability and to be well prepared to meet the challenges of the modern world. The nurturing atmosphere allows pupils to feel individually valued and to gain in self-confidence, developing good personal qualities. However, there is a lack of rigour in monitoring standards of teaching and learning. Procedures to monitor and evaluate pupils' progress, set targets and ensure consistency in marking are not effectively used to inform staff of the next steps in learning, and formal provision for pupils with SEND is in its infancy. The inspection evidence indicates that current oversight from senior management does not yet secure strong academic outcomes for pupils. Leadership is successful in promoting values which encourage respect for others and prepares pupils for life in British society. Appraisal for staff has been recently introduced and has identified opportunities for professional development.
- 5.7 Appropriate systems to ensure the recruitment of suitable staff are carefully applied, with all the required checks completed before staff begin work at school. Staff receive regular training for their roles in safeguarding and welfare, health and safety. Policies and procedures are reviewed at suitable intervals, although prior to the inspection policies were not up to date with the most recent regulatory requirements. By the end of the inspection, the school had taken suitable steps to ensure that identified shortcomings in documentation had been dealt with. A very small minority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed themselves as

dissatisfied with the quality of leadership and management of the school and the way the school handles any concerns they may have. Through examination of records, inspectors found that concerns are handled appropriately and in a timely manner, following the appropriate published procedures for dealing with complaints in accordance with requirements.

- 5.8 Links between the school and the parents are generally good, in line with the school's aims to promote positive dialogue. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, all parents indicated that they are satisfied with the progress their children make and also were positive in their view that their children feel safe and are happy in the school.
- 5.9 Throughout the school, close relationships with parents are encouraged through the open-door policy and easy availability of staff for discussion. In their responses to the questionnaire, a few parents stated that they did not find it easy to access policies, and that they did not receive sufficient information about their child's progress. Inspection found that parents of current and prospective pupils may access information about the school through the website, parental portal and a variety of meetings. Regular parents' consultation evenings enable parents to discuss their children's progress with staff, and evaluative, helpful reports are produced termly and sent to parents. All teachers may be contacted by email.
- 5.10 A few parents responding to the questionnaire did not feel they were encouraged to be involved in the school. Inspectors found that there are good opportunities for parents to take part in the routines of the school. Parents are welcomed at the many shows and concerts produced by the pupils and may accompany school trips.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.