

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Abington Vale Middle School**

Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique Reference Number: 122076

Headteacher: Mrs Christine Harrison

Reporting inspector: Champak Chauhan  
T11643

Dates of inspection: 22 - 26 June 1998

Under OFSTED contract number: 710691

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## Information about the school

Type of school	Middle deemed Secondary
Type of control	County
Age range of pupils	9 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
School address	Bridgewater Drive Northampton NN3 3AF
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Appropriate authority	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors	Dr Tom White
Date of the previous inspection	27 June - 1 July 1994

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## Main findings

- 1 Abington Vale Middle School offers a mainly sound quality of education, with some notable strengths. Relationships within the school are very good and pupils learn within a secure and supportive environment. Teaching is a positive feature, having significantly improved since the last inspection. The behaviour of pupils is excellent. By ages 11 and 13, pupils attain at least national expectations for their ages in nearly all subjects, except information technology (IT).

## Standards

- 2 Pupils enter school at the age of nine achieving standards in English, mathematics, science and reading which are at, or above, the national average. By age 11 (end of Key Stage 2), pupils continue to achieve mostly above national expectations in almost all subjects, except IT. These findings are also supported by recent results in the national tests for 11-year olds in English, mathematics and science which exceed the national average for level 4 and above. In mathematics and science, test results have been improving and, for the higher levels, they exceed the average. In English, however, results for the higher levels are significantly below the average and have been falling for the last two years. By age 13 (end of Year 8), pupils attain the expectations for their ages in nearly all subjects, except IT.
- 3 In English at age 11, most pupils achieve national expectations and over a third achieve beyond them. At age 13, most pupils achieve at, or above, such expectations. At all ages, pupils' speaking and listening skills are strengths. They speak fluently and with confidence. Pupils listen well. They listen well. Most read accurately and frequently, with appropriate expression. Standards in reading are good. Pupils are able to read a range of texts, and many read for pleasure. All pupils can confidently use dictionaries. On entry to the school in Year 5, some pupils have weak literacy and handwriting skills, and write very short pieces of work. However, these skills improve enormously and by age 13 most pupils can write competently, accurately and at length. Higher attaining pupils, however, are not offered sufficient challenge.
- 4 In mathematics at age 11, most pupils achieve national expectations. However, pupils' understanding is not fully consolidated and their attainment in, for example, using and applying mathematics is below expectations. Higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged, particularly by non-specialist teachers. By age 13, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations for their age.
- 5 In science at ages 11 and 13, the attainment of most pupils meets national expectations

and the achievement of some exceeds these. Most pupils can use appropriate scientific terminology and can competently use skills of observation and prediction. They can also competently assemble and use apparatus for experiments.

- 6 Across most subjects, higher attaining pupils are not being sufficiently challenged; since this was an issue in the last inspection, progress in tackling this is unsatisfactory. At all ages, pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress and achieve appropriately when they have additional adult support.
- 7 Pupils have better than average skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening across the curriculum. The presentation of their written work is good. Pupils' standards in numeracy across the curriculum are appropriate for their ages.

### **Quality of education provided**

- 8 The curriculum is broad, generally balanced and meets legal requirements. The overall time for Key Stage 3 is below the national recommendation. The time allocation for music at Key Stage 3 is low which adversely affects pupils' progress. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.
- 9 Teaching is a particular strength of the school, a significant improvement since the last inspection. It is at least satisfactory in nine out of ten lessons inspected and mostly good in five out of ten. A significant minority of the lessons are very good and, occasionally, excellent. There are no major differences between the key stages, although slightly more unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Year 6 than in the other year groups. Most staff work hard. Lessons are generally well planned and based upon appropriate schemes of work. Teachers are very caring towards pupils, and lessons are characterised by good or very good relationships. The management of pupils is very good. Pupils, in turn, respond extremely well to their learning. Many are keen and wish to succeed. Teachers have mostly sound knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach; there is good classroom practice in Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 5. Time and resources are mainly well managed. Where the quality of teaching has weaknesses, a narrow range of styles and methods is used: higher attaining pupils are not offered sufficient challenge in most subjects; the use of day-to-day assessment and feedback are often unsatisfactory; and, homework is not regularly used to extend pupils' learning.
- 10 The provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is a strength of the school. It is very well led and managed, and support staff enable pupils to make good progress in their learning.

- 11 The school has developed some good practice in some subjects, such as science, in assessment, recording and reporting procedures. However, there are still many inconsistencies within and across subjects, and this is a significant weakness.
- 12 Links with industry, commerce and the wider community are still underdeveloped.
- 13 The school cares well for its pupils. General pastoral care, and the promotion of good behaviour and good attendance, are significant strengths.

**Provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- 14 The school is a well ordered community which is supported by parents. Pupils are well mannered. Their mature, caring attitudes and responsible behaviour are significant strengths. Pupils’ personal development is promoted well in a few subjects such as mathematics and French but, across the curriculum, they are not given enough opportunities for investigative work or to more fully develop their capacity for personal study.
- 15 Pupils’ moral and social development is enhanced well by the school. Pupils know right from wrong, and have a keen sense of justice and fair play. They are concerned about issues, such as animal welfare and the state of the environment. They raise relatively large amounts of money for charities, such as World Vision and St. George’s Homestead for the Elderly. Pupils are very co-operative, and work well with each other and with adults. The promotion of pupils’ cultural development is generally satisfactory. They study relevant classical literature, and are taught to appreciate Western artistic and musical traditions. However, outside visits to places of interest and learning are limited. Pupils’ preparation for life in a culturally diverse society is a weakness.
- 16 The promotion of pupils’ spiritual development is generally satisfactory, but there are important weaknesses. A few subjects, such as English and art, enhance pupils’ spiritual development but in many subjects it is not explicitly planned for. There is a regular programme of house, year, class and whole school assemblies. Assemblies provide good opportunities for the sharing of information and the maintenance of a collective identity. In the main, such assemblies also provide opportunities for silent reflection and prayer but they do not fully meet the requirements for collective worship. Pupils’ attendance rates are high compared with the national average. There have been no permanent exclusions (expulsions) of pupils in the last year, and temporary exclusions (suspensions) are minimal.

**Efficiency/management**



- 17 The governing body provides a satisfactory framework within which the school can operate. A few of the governors have had a long association with the school and many work hard on its behalf. The full governing body meets once per term and its work is supported by an appropriate committee structure. However, the governing body does not yet provide sufficient strategic direction to the work of the school. A very small number of governors also feel that they do not have an overview of the school because of weaknesses in communication within the governing body. There is some confusion about issues of governance and issues of day-to-day management of the school which need clarifying and addressing.
- 18 The headteacher is in her third year and was not in post during the last inspection. She provides strong, dedicated and very good leadership to the school. This is based on an absolute commitment to the educational entitlement of all children, and to enhancing their attainment and progress. She has been striving to implement changes based on this philosophy but a very small number of staff have found this difficult. The senior management team of headteacher and two deputies works closely, provides clear direction, and is mostly effective.
- 19 The process for school development planning is thorough. The current plan, for the period 1998-2000, has two main whole school priorities: language development and information and communication technology. These priorities are appropriate. Much of the planning is costed, with relevant staff and performance measures identified but not yet fully refined. The planning process is regularly evaluated. The financial planning of the school, however, is a weakness as it does not extend beyond the current year. The overall management within the school is mainly effective. Curriculum area leaders and year leaders manage their responsibilities well but the leadership and management of geography, history and the whole-school co-ordination of equal opportunities are unsatisfactory. Staff, accommodation and learning resources are generally well used.
- 20 Given the above average attainment of pupils on entry to the school at the age of nine, the mainly steady and sometimes good progress that they make, their average and above average attainment, their very good attitudes and behaviour, the generally good teaching that they experience, and the average unit cost, the school provides sound value for money.

## School improvement

- 21 The school was inspected in late June 1994 and a new headteacher took up appointment three years' ago. Progress in implementing the Action Plan was delayed as a result of this significant change. The school has responded well to some of the key issues identified in the previous report, but not to others. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school is still above average and pupils continue to perform generally well in the national tests for 11-year olds. However, across the curriculum, higher attaining pupils are still underperforming. In the last inspection, teaching was found to be good or very good in four out of ten lessons inspected but it was unsatisfactory in three out of every ten. Teaching has significantly improved and is now good or very good in half the lessons, although it continues to be unsatisfactory in about one in ten.
- 22 The school has strategies and systems in place to secure improvement. The roles of senior and middle managers have been considerably strengthened to monitor and evaluate standards and quality throughout the curriculum. Much effort has also gone into further involving parents in the life and work of the school. The aims of the school were also reviewed and appropriately redrafted in October 1996.
- 23 **Key issue 1:** the roles of senior and middle managers. The school has made very good progress in this. The headteacher introduced a thorough programme of monitoring and evaluation of provision, particularly in English and mathematics. Members of the senior management, year leaders and curriculum area leaders have received training and evaluate teaching. The work is being extended to other areas.
- 24 **Key issue 2:** clarity of school aims: a more differentiated curriculum; independent learning; higher achievement for above average ability pupils. Some progress has been made in this but much work remains to be done. The school's aims were redrafted in late 1996, involving parents, staff, governors and pupils. The aims are appropriate but have not impacted sufficiently on classroom practice in relation to a more differentiated curriculum, more opportunities for independent learning and challenging above average ability pupils.
- 25 **Key issue 3:** assessment, recording and reporting. Progress in this is, in the main, unsatisfactory. Curriculum areas have developed their own systems, some of which are effective but others which are not. Reports to parents have been reviewed and amended. Overall, however, assessment procedures and practices vary from subject to subject and there is little whole-school co-ordination and

direction. Assessment information is still not fully used to enhance pupils' attainment and progress.

- 26 **Key issue 4:** curriculum planning to more fully address cross curricular issues and that more use is made of the local context. The school has made some progress in addressing some cross curricular issues though the extension of the PSE programme but further work needs to be done. Links with local industry, commerce, other external agencies and the use of the environment remain weak. Progress in both is generally unsatisfactory.
- 27 **Key issue 5:** involvement of parents. Good progress has been made and much of the work has been driven by the headteacher. A Partnership in Communication and Learning (PICAL) group was established in Summer 1997, consisting of parents, governors and staff. This group meets regularly to find ways of constantly involving parents within the education of their children. Parents have also been involved in redrafting the aims of the school and are invited to participate in setting the priorities in the whole-school development plan.

#### **Key issues for action**

- 28 In order to enhance the attainment and progress of all pupils, the governing body, senior management team and staff should:
- 29 Improve standards in IT for pupils aged 11 and 13 by: extending the good teaching in the subject which already exists; ensuring that staff are appropriately trained; ensuring that IT is taught across the curriculum and that pupils' attainment is assessed and built upon; ensuring that the new scheme of work is implemented, and its impact regularly monitored and evaluated.
- 30 Improve whole school procedures for assessment, recording and reporting by ensuring that: the school's policy is consistently implemented in all subjects; there is regular monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the policy; all marking and assessment criteria are understood by all, including pupils and parents; assessment information in the school is used to improve teacher planning and help enhance pupils' progress; there is consistency in reporting to parents, particularly in the setting of short term targets for pupils.
- 31 Ensure that higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged in their learning by: setting more extension activities for them; providing more access to specialist teachers when possible; thoroughly assessing their attainment and progress and setting work accordingly; enhancing their capacity for personal study and the development of their research skills.
- 32 Ensure that there is a regular programme of homework for all ages by: having an agreed timetable for this for all ages; its regular setting in all subjects and the regular monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness; the effective co-ordination of this across the whole school.

- 33 Continue to improve the teaching and ensure that the small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is further reduced by: sharing the good practice which already exists within the school; ensuring that pupils are offered teaching and learning activities which are appropriate to their needs and abilities; ensuring that lessons are well paced for all pupils; giving pupils more day-to-day feedback on their achievements and use this to inform further teaching and planning; continuing to improve the subject knowledge of all teachers.

(Information technology is a priority in the current school development plan. Both assessment practices and procedures, and more challenge for the more able pupils were key issues in the previous inspection.).

## Introduction

### Characteristics of the school

- 1 Abington Vale Middle School, a mixed comprehensive, caters for pupils aged between 9 and 13. The school is situated in south east Northampton, is popular with parents and is currently over-subscribed. There are 607 pupils on roll, very large for a middle school. Most pupils live within the vicinity; the socio-economic factors for most of the residents are advantageous. Overall, there are slightly more boys than girls within the school (324 compared to 283), and the difference is quite marked in the present Year 7 (81 compared to 64). The attainment of most pupils on entry to the school at the age of nine, as indicated by reading and mathematics tests is at, or above, the national average. Data on achievement in English, mathematics and science supplied by lower schools also supports this. There has been no significant change to the attainment of the intake since the last inspection.
- 2 The school is predominantly white, but there is a growing proportion of pupils (19 per cent) who are of minority ethnic origin. This is a significant change from five per cent at the time of the last inspection.
- 3 Fifty four pupils (8.9 per cent) are entitled to free school meals, below the average for middle schools. There are 97 pupils (16 per cent) on the register for special educational needs (SEN). Seven pupils (1.15 per cent) having statements for such need, slightly below the average for the Local Education Authority (LEA). The school aims to: enhance pupils' learning experiences; offer a broad and balanced curriculum; provide a safe and welcoming environment; encourage greater parental involvement; and develop closer links with feeder and destination schools. It has two main priorities for the period 1998-2000: language development across the curriculum; and information and communication technology. The school has set agreed targets for the improvement of national test and assessment results. The targets for Key Stage 2 results for 1998 for level 4 and above are: English (69 per cent), mathematics (81 per cent ) and science (77 per cent).

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## Key indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 2<sup>1</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year:

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1997	85	64	149

National Curriculum	Test Results	English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	57	59	68
	Girls	49	47	53
	Total	106	106	121
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	71 (75)	71 (66)	81 (78)
	National	63 (58)	62 (54)	69 (62)

Teacher Assessments	English	Mathematics	Science	
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	52	56	60
	Girls	42	37	45
	Total	94	93	105
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	63 (69)	62 (73)	70 (78)
	National	63 (60)	64 (60)	69 (65)

### Attendance

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

		%
Authorised Absence	School	4.5
	National comparative data	6.0
Unauthorised absence	School	0.2
	National comparative data	0.5

### Exclusions

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

	Number
Fixed period	3
Permanent	0

### Quality of teaching

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good or better	19
Satisfactory or better	92
Less than satisfactory	8

<sup>1</sup> Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

## **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Educational standards achieved by pupils at the school**

#### **Attainment and progress**

- 1 Overall, almost all pupils in Year 5 make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment and just over half make mostly good progress. This rate of progress, however, is not maintained in Year 6 where pupils make sound progress in eight out of ten lessons inspected. The rate of good progress also slows down significantly. By the end of Key Stage 2 (age 11), pupils achieve mostly above national expectations in almost all subjects, except information technology (IT). These findings are also confirmed by recent results (1995-1997) in the national tests for English, mathematics and science which exceed the national average for level 4 and above in all three subjects. In mathematics and science, test results have been improving, and at level 5 and above they are higher than the national average. In English, however, test results for level 5 and above are significantly below the average and have been falling for the last two years.
- 2 At Key Stage 3, most pupils continue to make steady progress in relation to their prior attainment, and about a third make mostly good progress. By the end of Year 8 (age 13), the attainment of most, in nearly all subjects except IT, is in line with the expectations for their ages.
- 3 In all aspects of English, a very large majority of pupils at all ages make at least sound progress, with the progress of about a half in Years 5 and 6 being good. By the end of Year 6, most pupils achieve at least national expectations and over a third achieve above such expectations. In Years 7 and 8 most pupils make sound progress, with nearly a quarter making good or very good progress. By the end of Year 8, most pupils achieve at, or above, the expectations for their ages. At all ages, pupils' speaking and listening skills are strengths. They are articulate and speak with confidence. They listen well and respond sensitively to others. Most read fluently and frequently, with appropriate expression. Standards in reading are good. Pupils are able to read a range of texts, and many read for pleasure. All pupils can confidently use dictionaries. On entry to the school in Year 5, some pupils have weak literacy and handwriting skills, and write very short pieces of work. However, these skills improve enormously in Years 5 and 6 so that most can achieve satisfactorily in the national tests. By the end of Year 8, most pupils can write competently, accurately and at length. Higher attaining pupils, however, are not offered sufficient challenge to enable them to progress more rapidly. In the last inspection, pupils' attainment was reported to be broadly in line with national expectations at both key stages. There has been some improvement in this over the last four years.
- 4 On entering school at the age of nine, pupils achieve standards in mathematics which are at, or above, the national average and by the age of 11, their attainment meets national expectations. In Year 5, most pupils make good progress but this slows down considerably in Year 6 so that the progress of most is generally satisfactory but for a significant minority it is unsatisfactory. In such cases, pupils' progress is not fully consolidated, with the result that their understanding in, for example, using and

applying mathematics is below expectations. Higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged, particularly by non-specialist teachers. In Years 7 and 8, most pupils make sound progress and, by the end of Year 8, their attainment meets the expectations for their age. Pupils can calculate areas of plane rectilinear shapes and can solve problems of probability involving two mutually exclusive events. Generally, the progress of lower attaining pupils shows a marked improvement since the previous inspection. There has, however, been no significant change to pupils' overall attainment since then.

- 5 In science, most pupils make sound progress across Years 5 and 6, and the progress of a significant minority is good. By the end of Year 6, the attainment of most pupils meets national expectations and the achievement of some exceeds these. Most pupils can explain fair testing and can use appropriate terminology to discuss results and their observations. When the task does not confirm their prediction they learn new outcomes, persevering with the experiment. Pupils continue to make sound progress in Years 7 and 8, and the progress of many in Year 8 is good. By the end of Year 8, pupils reach and often exceed the expectations for their age. Pupils can use appropriate scientific terminology, and can describe and explain their work well. They can competently assemble and use apparatus for experiments, and the higher attainers are developing their evaluative skills well.
- 6 In all other subjects, except IT, most pupils achieve at least national expectations by the ages of 11 and 13. There have been no major changes to overall pupils' attainments since the previous inspection. Pupils' attainment in art and music is generally appropriate for their ages; no judgement can be made about attainment in dance and drama as these could not be inspected because of the nature of the timetable. Higher attaining pupils are not being sufficiently challenged in most subjects; since this was an issue in the last inspection, progress in tackling this is unsatisfactory.
- 7 At all ages, pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress when they have additional adult support. Their progress is very good in reading, writing, handwriting and numeracy. Pupils are developing word attack skills, are learning to write in sentences using demarcation and developing a clear and legible cursive style. Pupils' understanding and use of number skills are being well developed. Pupils are set clear targets for improvement in their individual education plans (IEPs). They understand these targets and work extremely well towards them.
- 8 It is too early to evaluate the targets for 11-year olds set by the school in English, mathematics and science.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

- 9 The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are significant strengths of the school. Pupils are eager to learn and succeed, and are very willing and co-operative. They listen carefully, enthusiastically undertake tasks, and can sustain high levels of concentration. Lapses in concentration occur, however, largely where the pace of teaching is slow. Pupils of all ages confidently offer opinions, and listen well to the views of others.



They collaborate extremely well with each other, and are able to learn well in a variety of group situations. Those with special educational needs have very good attitudes to their learning.

- 10 Pupils willingly share apparatus and equipment in science, design and technology and IT. They respond well when opportunities are given to them to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning, such as in mathematics, design and technology and French lessons. However, they are not offered enough opportunities for such personal development in some other subjects, such as geography and history.
- 11 Pupils' behaviour throughout the school is excellent and contributes to their purposeful and uninterrupted learning. They consistently demonstrate good manners, and are courteous and respectful towards their teachers, visitors and others in their school. They are considerate and supportive of each other. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, reinforcing expectations set by the school. Pupils work well together in mixed ethnic and gender groups. Instances of bullying are rare and, where they occur, are swiftly dealt with. No pupil has been permanently excluded within the last year and fixed term exclusions are at a minimal level. Pupils respect property, including the school buildings and learning resources. Good care is taken of displayed work in classrooms and corridors.
- 12 A house system encourages individual responsibility and group loyalty. Pupils respond willingly to involvement in planning and organising school activities or assemblies. They value the opportunity to contribute to school issues through a school council. Prefects in Year 8 provide additional positive role models in fulfilling duties around the school. Pupils are happy to attend school and are mainly very positive about their learning experiences within it.

## **Attendance**

- 13 The attendance of pupils is consistently very high and makes a positive contribution to their learning. The attendance rate at 94.5 per cent is higher than the national average. Both authorised absence and unauthorised absence are significantly lower than the national figures. Regular attendance is the norm across all year groups.
- 14 Pupils come to school on time. They are prompt for lessons, taking into account travel time across the site. Most lessons begin punctually, and learning is very rarely interrupted by individual lateness.

## **Quality of education provided**

### **Teaching**

- 15 Teaching is a particular strength of the school and has considerably improved since the last inspection. It is at least satisfactory in nine out of ten lessons inspected and mostly good in five out of ten. A significant minority of the lessons are very good and, occasionally, excellent. There are no major differences between the key stages.

- 16 Most staff work hard. Lessons are planned generally well, and based upon appropriate schemes of work. This is exemplified by many mathematics lessons which have appropriate and varied tasks to meet the needs and abilities of different pupils. In many art lessons there are clear instructions to pupils of what is expected of them; materials and equipment are also well organised beforehand. Planning is usually thorough and lesson objectives are made clear by the teachers. Many teachers, however, rely on a narrow range of teaching and learning styles, resulting in some pupils not making sufficient progress, particularly the higher attaining pupils. In design and technology, for instance, there are no detailed plans for each unit of work in textiles and resistant materials, resulting in a lack of clarity in the setting of learning objectives. In English lessons, drama is not explicitly planned for, resulting in a haphazard experience for pupils.
- 17 Teachers are very caring towards pupils, and lessons are characterised by mainly good or, sometimes, very good relationships. The management of pupils is generally very good, such as in history at Key Stage 2. Pupils, in turn, respond extremely well. Many are keen and wish to succeed. However, on a very small number of occasions, the behaviour of pupils in Key Stage 3 geography lessons is unsatisfactory and not properly managed by the teacher. In a very few instances, such as in some of the teaching of history and of religious education (RE) at Key Stage 3, or in art in Year 6, idle chatter between pupils is often not challenged.
- 18 All the teaching in Year 5 is at least satisfactory, with most that is good or, often, very good. In a particularly effective mathematics lesson in Year 5 on “What is an angle?”, the teacher had very good relationships with the class. Her subject knowledge was good, and intensive questioning was used to enhance pupils’ knowledge and understanding. Pupils, in turn, were encouraged to speculate about answers and to not be afraid of being wrong. Pupils were interested, they listened to each other and were willing to test their ideas out loud. The teacher took pupils’ ideas very well and integrated them into the flow of the lesson, which was well prepared. The pace of the lesson was very good and it was well maintained. Pupils’ books had been regularly marked.
- 19 There is good general classroom practice across Key Stage 2, but there is a slightly higher proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in Year 6. At both key stages teachers have, in the main, sound knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. There are some very good examples of specialist teaching in, for example, English at Key Stage 3, specialist IT in Year 7, modern foreign languages at Key Stage 3, music at all ages, and in physical education (PE), particularly at Key Stage 2. In a Year 8 English lesson on the “Rime of the Ancient Mariner”, the teacher had very good knowledge and there was powerful reading. The response from pupils was excellent and their reading of “verses in the style of Coleridge” was very good. Pupils were kept interested in the topic for the whole of the lesson, and there was a high level of involvement and interest. The school tries hard to ensure that all pupils in Key Stage 3 are taught by specialist teachers. However, where this is not the case, the lack of adequate subject knowledge restricts the progress of many, particularly the higher attaining pupils. This is evident in most subjects at both key stages, including English, mathematics and science. In history, non-specialist teachers have developed good factual knowledge of the subject so that they can teach more effectively, but

insufficient emphasis is given to the required “key elements”.

- 20 Time and resources are, in general, soundly managed. In the specialist IT lessons in Year 7 and in food technology, for example, time is well used and the pace of lessons is brisk. In art, however, the pace of work is sometimes slow as pupils are given too much time to complete work, while in modern foreign languages too much time is sometimes spent on repetitive single activities.
- 21 There is effective use of small group work in many subjects. Teachers organise pupils and activities well. In English at Key Stage 3 and in personal and social education (PSE) in Year 5, for example, boys and girls are made to sit together for intensive small group work. This works extremely well and pupils co-operate and discuss work in a mature manner. Teachers give good verbal feedback to pupils in lessons to help them progress. However, overall day-to-day assessment is a weakness in most subjects, apart from some notable examples, such as in mathematics. Regular day-to-day assessment by many teachers is not yet sufficiently used to inform further teaching and planning.
- 22 The specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs is at least always good or, sometimes, very good. Teachers have very good rapport with pupils and a very good understanding of the pupils’ individual needs. There is constant use of praise and encouragement. Teachers have a very good knowledge of how to teach reading and writing. A variety of effective methods is used, including word and board games. There is very good use of learning support assistants, who are well informed and have good communication with the class teacher.
- 23 The teaching of PSE is generally sound, with some good practice. Teachers plan lessons well and make good use of the materials prepared by the subject co-ordinator. The PSE programme is well documented and well planned, but does not cover careers education for older pupils. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, materials are not always properly used and pupils are not given enough opportunities to discuss and question. The one lesson at the moment, however, follows Friday assembly and a significant proportion of time is lost if the assembly does not finish on time. The PSE lesson has been scattered across the timetable next year so that this does not happen.
- 24 The school has a policy for setting regular homework for pupils in Years 7 and 8, but not for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The setting of homework by teachers in Years 7 and 8 is generally haphazard. There is no consistency, and no overall monitoring and evaluation of its effectiveness. This is a significant weakness within the generally good teaching that occurs, and supports the concerns of parents.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

- 25 The curriculum is broad, generally balanced and meets legal requirements. However, the time allocation for music in Years 7 and 8 is low and IT is not properly covered in subjects. The overall time at Key Stage 3 is well below the national recommendation of 24 hours. The planned curriculum effectively promotes the intellectual, physical and personal development of pupils. It offers a good foundation for further work in

upper schools that pupils transfer to at the age of 13. Health, sex, and drugs' education are appropriately planned for in science and in PSE.

- 26 The curriculum is extended well in some subjects by external visits, such as in art where pupils visit a specialist museum to study various cultural artefacts. In PSE, pupils spend time at a local centre where they engage in activities on safety. They also visit local upper schools to take advantage of their specialist facilities for IT and science. However, the local environment is insufficiently used for practical investigation, especially in geography, history and RE. Provision for the arts within the curriculum is satisfactory. Timetabled activities are widened by visiting performers, such as a drama company and a string quartet. There are good opportunities for pupils to experience residential activities, such as to an outdoor activity centre, an IT week at a specialist centre and visits to French families. All pupils are encouraged to participate in at least one residential activity, and finance is made available in instances of hardship to ensure all can benefit.
- 27 Careful planning and implementation ensure that all pupils have equal access to learning opportunities. The withdrawal of pupils with special educational needs for specialist teaching is carefully organised so they do not miss important whole-class learning. The requirements of the Code of Practice are fully met.
- 28 There is generally satisfactory planning for curriculum continuity and progression in Year 5 and in Years 7 and 8, although it is a weakness in Year 6. Planning is particularly good in the specialist IT provision and in mathematics. In some subjects, there is good planning for continuity between feeder lower schools and local upper schools. Very strong liaison exists across schools for pupils who have special educational needs.
- 29 There is a broad range of extra-curricular activities, with good levels of participation by pupils. A good programme of team and individual sports enables pupils to benefit from specialist coaching and participating in competitive games and events. This is well supported by PE teachers and a small number of other staff. The school achieves a good level of success in fixtures between other schools and pupils represent the town and district. Pupils participate in an appropriate range of extra-curricular music activities, including a wind band and choir. There is also a well attended chess club, an environmental society, and the "Lunchbunch" group for pupils' spiritual development. Drama and musical performances are part of the yearly cycle and they are well supported by pupils, staff and parents.
- 30 The school has a detailed policy on assessment, recording and reporting. However, there is little central monitoring and evaluation of the policy's implementation across different subjects, with the result that there is too much variation. Assessment in many subjects is not yet well used for curriculum planning, or in enabling pupils to enhance their attainment and progress. There are examples of good practice in, for instance, mathematics and science. There is also noticeable progress in assessment and recording practices and procedures in art, modern foreign languages and PE. However, some other subjects, such as geography, history and IT have made few improvements since the last inspection. The responsibility for monitoring and evaluating assessment practice rests with individual curriculum area leaders, but this process has not been effectively co-ordinated across the school.

- 31 Marking is used well in some subjects, such as in mathematics and science. In these cases, there are clear targets for pupils, an indication of National Curriculum levels and teachers' comments to help pupils to improve. Comments in some other subjects, including English, design and technology and history are not informative enough to be helpful.
- 32 The record keeping for pupils with special educational needs is of a high quality. Thorough assessments of pupils are made, and clear targets for improvement are set in their individual education plans. These are regularly monitored and reviewed, and shared with the pupils.
- 33 The school collects a good range of assessment data on pupils' attainment and progress in both key stages. This is used well in some subjects to provide long term targets, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- 34 Since the last inspection the school has considerably strengthened curriculum planning and organisation, and it has extended a well-planned PSE programme. Assessment, recording and reporting procedures, and their monitoring and evaluation across the school, however, continue to be significant weaknesses.

## **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

- 35 The school is a well ordered community where pupils learn within a caring and very supportive environment. Pupils are considerate of others and have very good relationships with each other, and with adults. The moral and social development of pupils is a particular strength of the school.
- 36 Pupils' moral development is enhanced very well. Pupils of all ages know right from wrong, and have a good sense of justice and of fair play. This is exemplified not only in their day-to-day behaviour but in their attitude to contemporary issues such as damage to the environment and the plight of endangered species (for example, tigers), which they are taught about in assemblies and in geography. Issues such as hunting animals for sport are dealt with in a mature manner and appropriate display work produced. Moral issues are dealt with well in, for example, English, PSE and RE. Pupils are also very active in raising money for various charities, such as World Vision and St George's Homestead for the Elderly.
- 37 Pupils' social development is promoted extremely well. Pupils work well together and are very caring and supportive of each other. Adults set a generally good example for pupils. Pupils undertake additional responsibilities well and are keen to participate in the life of the school. Their understanding of citizenship is well enhanced through opportunities of being prefects, or of being on the school council. Older pupils also regularly perform reception duties near the main entrance and this they do well. In extra-curricular activities in PE, for example, Year 8 pupils are keen to help younger pupils in the gym club. The house system underpins social cohesion and positively encourages the development of pupils' social skills.
- 38 The cultural development of pupils is, in the main, well promoted but there are some weaknesses. The school has a good range of musical activities, such as a choir, orchestra and string group. There is also a drama group which meets regularly. In English, a good range of appropriate literature is used, while in art, poetry is often used to stimulate pupils' imaginations. In French, there is good preparation in lessons for all pupils for the annual visit to France, even for those who are not going. The school attempts to teach all pupils about life in a culturally diverse society and some subjects, such as geography, history and RE do it well through the study of appropriate topics, for instance Kenya and St Lucia, and through the study of major world religions. However, this aspect of cultural development is in need of further strengthening.
- 39 The promotion of pupils' spiritual development has strengths but there are also weaknesses. The school has a weekly programme of assemblies: whole school, house, year and class assemblies. These assemblies provide opportunities for the sharing of information, and the fostering of a collective ethos. In one whole school assembly, a Year 8 class led the assembly and presented views on "Relationships". Normally such gatherings are for sharing information. A few assemblies had a little time for reflection and for ending with a prayer. However, some (particularly house and class assemblies) do not allow adequate time for reflection and for prayer. Elsewhere, there are very few opportunities for the promotion of pupils' spiritual development. A voluntary group ("the Lunchbunch") of pupils meet at lunchtimes for reflection but

planned provision within the curriculum is almost negligible.

## **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

- 40 The arrangements for supporting and guiding pupils are a strength of the school. Class teachers, in collaboration with heads of year, provide a good framework for academic and pastoral support. Pupils can readily identify and seek help and advice from a range of staff.
- 41 Good internal communications promote a swift response to pupils' needs. A "cause for concern" process about individual pupils has been introduced since the last inspection, and is well utilised. Effective use is made of the reward system to motivate pupils in different subjects, especially English. The system is highly valued by pupils and parents. Interactions between teachers and pupils are consistently good, enhancing pupils' learning. The school arrangements to recognise and celebrate success, and reinforce positive behaviour, are very good.
- 42 A PSE programme, extended from Year 5 at the time of the last inspection, enhances support provision for all pupils. The programme positively involves all staff in considering the personal development of all pupils. There are good arrangements for the additional support of pupils with special educational needs.
- 43 Behaviour management in the school is very good. Support to pupils is sensitive and constructive, and pupils recognise the contribution this approach makes to their improvement. Good attendance patterns are encouraged and underpinned by effective, clear procedures. Arrangements to monitor, communicate and follow-up absences or lateness are satisfactory. The school rewards individuals with high attendance levels, and pays good attention to sanctions and support when appropriate.
- 44 A school house system encourages pupils to develop a cohesive identity and involvement across the age range. There are plentiful opportunities to take responsibility or perform duties around the school, such as through form captaincy, the school council and the house system. Pupil responsibility is actively encouraged and the school makes good arrangements to support, recognise and celebrate initiatives and achievements.
- 45 The school has good measures to provide a secure learning and working environment for all. Pupils are taught to use apparatus and equipment in school safely. Departmental risk assessments are, in the main, satisfactory but need strengthening in the practical activities for design and technology. A health and safety policy has been approved and more detailed documented procedures are being developed. However, windows on the first floor have no safety catch, a potential health and safety hazard.
- 46 The school has effective child protection procedures. There is a designated teacher and members of staff are aware of the procedures.

## **Partnership with parents and the community**

- 47 The information available for parents is good. Written information for prospective parents is clear and sets out expectations for parental involvement to support study,



attendance and behaviour. Regular newsletters, including “The Messenger”, convey key information and involve parents in celebrating success within the school. Parents’ evenings allow opportunities to discuss their child’s progress, and good alternative arrangements are made for those unable to attend. Parents are informed and involved where there is a cause for concern. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are given very good support. They are fully involved at an early stage and contribute to pupils’ reviews.

- 48 The annual report to parents is satisfactory and meets requirements. The report clearly informs parents of pupils’ efforts and attainment, and includes information on participation in extra-curricular activities. In most subjects, however, the report does not set out the next learning steps to allow parents to further support their children’s progress. Half-yearly summary letters and reports are helpful and are welcomed by parents.
- 49 Information evenings about requirements for the three national tests at the age of 11, and for mathematics generally, have successfully helped parents understand the context of their children’s learning. Further involvement in mathematics has been fostered through the provision of a parent support booklet.
- 50 Since the last inspection the school has made good progress towards furthering parental involvement in learning. A Partnership in Communication and Learning (PICAL) group of staff, governors and parents has made a positive contribution to improving links. A home-school “communicator” was trialled for pupils in Years 6 and 7, and is to be introduced for all year groups from September 1998.
- 51 Opportunities to involve parents, however, in supporting their children’s learning through the regular setting and recording of homework are not well developed. There is good provision for parents to contribute to, and become involved in, the school development planning process.
- 52 Pupils’ learning and personal development are promoted well through involvement in fund-raising activities for charity. They also benefit from having community representatives who coach them in PE. Outside speakers are also invited in some PSE and RE lessons. The introduction of a school bank has raised pupils’ awareness of commercial issues. In science, a learning enrichment programme at a local upper school makes a good contribution to pupils’ learning. The school also organises a parents’ and daughters’ evening, and both parents and pupils are well prepared for any residential visits. However, wider opportunities to extend learning into the local community and the local environment are not well developed or properly co-ordinated. There is little utilisation of outside links or regular outside visits in subjects such as art, French, geography, history or RE.

## **The management and efficiency of the school**

### **Leadership and management**

- 53 Following the last inspection the governing body clarified the aims and objectives for

the school. The overriding aim is appropriate and places emphasis on enhancing pupils' academic and social well being. There are weaknesses, however, in providing all pupils with challenging learning experiences, and in delivering a broad and balanced curriculum.

- 54 The full governing body meets once every term and its work is supported by four main committees. Some governors have had many years' association with the school, and many work hard on its behalf. The governing body provides a relevant framework for the school. However, the governing body does not yet fully provide the longer term strategic direction that the school needs. Full governing body meetings sometimes deal at length with small detail that could have been discussed in committees. A few governors are very active within the school and individual governors are linked to different subjects and aspects of school provision. They write helpful monitoring reports and these are presented to the curriculum committee. However, this practice is still at an embryonic stage and is in need of further strengthening. Legal requirements are largely met but the school does not fully comply with the requirements for collective worship.
- 55 A very small number of governors feel that they do not have an overview of the school because of weaknesses in communication within the governing body. There is also some confusion about issues of governance and issues of day-to-day management of the school which need clarifying and addressing.
- 56 The headteacher is in her third year and was not in post during the last inspection. She provides strong, dedicated and very good leadership to the school. This is based on an absolute commitment to the educational entitlement of all children, and to enhancing their attainment and progress. She has been striving to fully embed this philosophy into routine school practice with structures, shared understanding and shared planning which reflect this. A very small number of staff, however, have found such changes difficult. The recently-elected chairman of the governing body works closely with the headteacher and is very supportive of her. The senior management team of headteacher and two deputies works closely, provides clear direction to the work of the school and is mostly effective. Much hard work has been undertaken in the recent past on implementing some very good whole school developments, such as the professional development of staff and the appraisal of teachers.
- 57 There is now a well established and thorough process for school development planning. The current plan is for the period 1998-2000 and has two main whole school priorities: language development and information and communication technology. Unusually, , parents and pupils also have an opportunity to contribute to the setting of the priorities. The whole-school priorities are appropriate and well supported by other plans. Much of the planning is costed, with relevant staff and performance measures identified, but these need further refinement.
- 58 The development planning process is regularly evaluated. It is also enhanced by a 'mentoring' process whereby members of the senior management team provide advice and support to specific middle managers and formally evaluate with them every year. A detailed programme of classroom observation has been set up by the senior management team, and all relevant staff have had training in this. Curriculum area

leaders for English and mathematics have started lesson observations, but the process is still limited to these subjects. Such activity is enhancing pupils' progress and the quality of their learning. The 'mentoring' process is valued by staff as it also gives them pastoral support.

- 59 The overall management is, in the main, effective. Curriculum area leaders and year leaders manage their responsibilities generally well, but the leadership and management of geography and history. The whole-school co-ordination of equal opportunities is also unsatisfactory, as there is no systematic collection of data and no analysis of trends for different groups of pupils. Communications within the school are mainly effective.
- 60 The leadership and co-ordination of special educational needs are very good. The governing body publishes appropriate information and regularly reports about the Code of Practice. There is a named governor for special educational needs and a "responsible person" who liaises with the LEA.
- 61 The governing body and senior management team have been acting on many of the key issues identified in the previous inspection report. The current headteacher, however, needed a necessary period of consolidation and reflection. The school has made good progress in clarifying its aims, in addressing the roles of senior and middle managers, and in attempting to involve parents more fully. However, significant weaknesses still remain in assessment, recording and reporting procedures, in some aspects of curricular planning and in having broader strategies for teaching and learning. The school has in place good systems for securing improvements and there is a widespread commitment to improve pupils' standards of achievement.

### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

- 62 The school is appropriately staffed. In Years 5 and 6, much teaching is class based but pupils are taught by specialists in some subjects, such as design and technology and PE. Most lessons in Years 7 and 8 are taught by staff who are subject specialists. Where this is not the case, almost all teachers have appropriate competence or further training. The staff is mature and stable. Over two thirds have taught for more than twenty years and almost half have taught at the school for fifteen years or longer. Many staff have appropriately developed their expertise for current curriculum demands. However, staff competence in teaching relevant applications of IT in subjects is a major weakness. There is an adequate level of staff for administrative and financial duties, and these duties are performed well. The school is the only local middle school with a French language assistant and benefits greatly from this. Non-teaching staff support well in the library, science and for IT. There is no such support in art or in design and technology, but this is being rectified in the next academic year.
- 63 All staff in the team for special educational needs are well qualified, and work hard to provide a safe, secure and welcoming learning environment for pupils. Both the teaching and non-teaching staff have undertaken good training, with qualifications, since the last inspection.

- 64 The school has a good induction policy for new staff, and supply teachers are given a helpful guidance document on the routines of the school. Professional development is very efficiently organised and is linked well to the priorities of the school development plan. Staff are offered good opportunities to further develop their skills. There is a mixture of school-based and external training, which is soundly evaluated for its effectiveness. The appraisal of teachers is very thoroughly undertaken and the school is now in its third cycle. Personal targets from appraisal are supported by suitable professional development.
- 65 The available accommodation is appropriate. Provision is very good for PE and the rooms provided for IT, science, and special educational needs enhance pupils' learning. Some of the classrooms are cramped for the size of groups, as is the case in the resistant materials' workshop. Staff have created pleasant learning environments in many areas through interesting displays, including pupils' work. The room for special educational needs is welcoming and well furnished. The library is adequate in size and conveniently located. The school has a rolling programme for maintenance and decoration that gives it a well kept appearance, although the external paint-work at the rear of the building is in poor condition. Most rooms are carpeted. There is no graffiti and very little litter. Surfaces in food technology present a potential hygiene hazard, and are shortly due to be replaced.
- 66 Resources for learning are generally good in range and quality. In most subjects, there are adequate numbers of books in good condition, although there is a high use of work sheets in geography, history and RE. The current ratio of pupils to computers at 18:1 is low for a school of this type. However, the IT room is under-used and rarely booked by subject teachers. Computers around the school are under-used, apart from those in the library. The book stock in the library is slightly above the norm, but some books are out-dated. The library is used quite heavily for English and French teaching which restricts access for other classes for investigative and research work. The library is not a dynamic resource centre for learning where large numbers of pupils regularly go to extend their studies. It is not open before or after school and access at lunchtime is restricted to specific groups.
- 67 Since the last inspection, middle management roles have been clarified. Information technology now receives technician support. An administration area has been added to the school. Information technology resources, which were judged to be good in 1994 have become out-dated, but are shortly to be up-graded. The school is currently being networked, the IT suite is being modernised and there will be access to the Internet.

### **The efficiency of the school**

- 68 The school has a comprehensive one year development plan that is costed and annually updated. Some targets in the development plan, however, extend to beyond the year 2000 but these are not adequately costed. The school plans well for the current year but there is very limited longer term financial planning, making the latter a particular weakness.

- 69 The finance committee of the governing body regularly monitors spending. Since the last inspection, a governors' curriculum committee has been set up to oversee the development of the curriculum and inform the spending decisions of the finance committee. However, systems are not yet in place to evaluate the impact of spending decisions on pupils' learning. There is no apparent progress in evaluating the cost effectiveness of spending decisions. No satisfactory system exists, for example, for determining the effects of this year's substantial reduction of the sum spent on learning resources on pupils' attainment, or on the quality of teaching.
- 70 The system for allocating funding to subjects and to year teams is based on the development plans submitted. Decisions about the relative allocation of this funding are made by the senior management team who take into account whole school priorities. The criteria used are not widely known, making the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of such spending by middle managers difficult.
- 71 The school uses the resources available to it efficiently and effectively. Staff, learning resources and accommodation are well utilised. All grants available to the school are used well and spending on special educational needs is very effective. The headteacher and bursar have very effective administration systems. Financial control is very good and day-to-day spending is carefully monitored. The most recent auditor's report (November 1997) indicates that financial administration systems are well controlled, and the school has implemented the six minor recommendations.
- 72 Given the above average attainment of pupils on entry to the school at the age of nine, the mainly steady and sometimes good progress that they make, their average and above average attainment, their very good attitudes and behaviour, the generally good teaching they experience, and the average unit cost, the school provides sound value for money.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **English, mathematics and science**

#### **English**

- 73 The attainment of a large majority of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 is above national expectations. In the 1997 national tests, almost three-quarters of the pupils gained level 4 and above, significantly above the average. However, the proportion of pupils achieving at least level 5 is well below this average. There is a slight downward trend in results at Key Stage 2, albeit from a high position. By the end of Year 8, the attainment of pupils is largely at, or sometimes above, national expectations. In the last inspection, pupils' attainment was reported to be broadly in line with national expectations at both key stages. There has been some improvement in this over the last four years.
- 74 Pupils' speaking and listening skills are particular strengths. Pupils are articulate and willing to express and debate ideas. They listen well and respond sensitively to others. Most read aloud fluently and with appropriate expression. Pupils' attainment in reading is well above expectations. They can competently read a range of texts. Pupils' skills in information retrieval develop well from Year 5 to Year 8 and all pupils can use dictionaries well. The small numbers of pupils who enter in Year 5 with reading difficulties make good progress, and by the end of Key Stage 2 many have caught up with their peers. Pupils' writing standards on entry show wide-ranging attainment, with some pupils writing brief responses while others write well for their ages. Pupils' handwriting skills are also a weakness but they are considerably improved throughout Key Stage 2 so that most pupils achieve satisfactorily in the national tests at the end of Year 6. By the end of Year 8, most pupils write competently and at length. They write accurately and with interesting content in a range of styles.
- 75 Across the curriculum, pupils' skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening are well promoted. In mathematics and IT lessons, for example, pupils are encouraged to talk about their work and to listen to each other. They are articulate in PE and can use the appropriate technical language, but are reticent in speaking in French lessons. Reading is encouraged in science and geography, for instance, while writing skills are positively enhanced in RE.
- 76 Pupils make at least sound at both key stages progress, and the progress of a significant minority is good. Pupils make the greatest progress in Years 5 and 8. Higher attaining pupils, however, do not always make the progress they are capable of. The last inspection report stated that weaker lessons were characterised by a lack of pace and challenge for pupils and this still remains an issue. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and their written work shows growth in accuracy, writing at length and fluency of handwriting. They are making very good progress in achieving the targets set for them in their individual education plans.
- 77 Pupils respond extremely well in all lessons and, occasionally, their response is either very good or excellent. They are interested in their work and enjoy their learning,

especially in Years 5 and 8. Pupils generally sustain concentration, persevere and take pains to present their work well. Pupils enjoy working with each other, which they do very well. The behaviour of pupils is generally very good. The isolated instances of poor behaviour are a result of ineffective classroom management and the setting of unclear tasks.

- 78 At Key Stage 2, all the teaching is at least sound, with the majority good or very good. At Key Stage 3, the majority of the teaching is at least sound; just over half is of high quality but a very few lessons have some weaknesses. The teaching is strongest in Year 5 and in Year 8.
- 79 The knowledge and understanding of teachers are variable, as might be expected where 17 teachers teach English and only seven are specialists. There are, however, examples of very good specialist and non-specialist teaching. The instances of poor teaching are small but there is a significant element of average teaching which does not sufficiently challenge all pupils. This is partly due to the lack of depth of knowledge and confidence of the teacher and also partly due to teaching methodology. Teachers' expectations of higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently demanding. Lesson planning is generally secure but drama and IT are insufficiently embedded into the schemes of work. Day-to-day planning by teachers is mainly sound. The range of extended writing, however, is not always fully exploited and there is a preponderance of short written responses from pupils and worksheet work for some classes, particularly in Key Stage 2. Teachers' methods and organisation are generally satisfactory, with effective small group working at both key stages. There are also useful strategies for enhancing the attainment of boys, particularly in Key Stage 3 through, for example, sitting boys next to girls and through mixed gender small group work. The management of pupils and maintenance of good discipline are generally excellent.
- 80 The subject is well managed and has rigorous leadership. Schemes of work at Key Stage 2, however, need strengthening to take more account of the national strategy on literacy.
- 81 The assessment of pupils' work has a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. Many teachers conscientiously mark work and have good internal moderation procedures. The range of pupils' written work, however, shows varied marking practice, from briefly congratulatory comments to the setting of targets and the system is not fully effective. The regular setting of appropriate homework is not consistent.

## **Mathematics**

- 82 At age 11, the attainment of pupils meets national expectations. Pupils' knowledge and skills in number, shape and space, and data handling are sound. Their ability to use and apply these skills in investigational and problem-solving situations, however, are below the level expected at this age. Results in the national tests at age 11 are well above the average at level 4 but broadly in line at level 5. By the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment meets national expectations. They can calculate areas of plane rectilinear shapes, reflect shapes accurately in a line and solve problems involving the probabilities of two mutually exclusive events. Higher attaining pupils can combine

transformations and identify the equivalent single transformation. Lower attaining pupils can make verbal and written statements about the likelihood of events occurring. Pupils use number skills across the curriculum competently. Good examples exist in geography, where they interpret rainfall and temperature graphs, and in science, where they create and interpret scattergrams. Pupils develop appropriate skills in IT. They use LOGO and spreadsheets well to support their learning and older pupils can use graphic calculators. In the last inspection, pupils' attainment was reported to be average; there has been no significant improvement to this since then.

- 83 When pupils enter the school at the age of nine, their attainment is above expectations. They make sound progress across Key Stage 2, with progress being particularly good in Year 5. In Year 6, however, this rate of progress is not maintained and there are instances of unsatisfactory progress where pupils learn simple skills but without understanding. In some lessons the progress of higher attaining pupils is restricted as non-specialist teachers do not provide sufficient challenge to them. At Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory progress, including in using and applying mathematics. Throughout their time in the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve the targets set for them in their individual education plans.
- 84 Pupils respond generally well to their learning, especially so in Year 5. At all ages, they listen very carefully to instructions and then concentrate on the work. Pupils' behaviour and their level of interest is mainly very good; this is particularly so when they are appropriately challenged or when they are set practical work. When pupils are given a clear task, and also the responsibility for finding their own ways of carrying it out, they display good initiative. Such opportunities, however, only occur in a small number of lessons.
- 85 The quality of teaching is generally sound at Key Stage 2. It is mostly good or very good in Year 5 but is occasionally unsatisfactory in Year 6. Almost all the teachers have appropriate subject knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well-paced and planned, with appropriately varied tasks to meet the needs of different pupils. Where the teaching has shortcomings, such as in Year 6, the teachers' knowledge and understanding are weak. This results in learning activities not being effective, adversely affecting the pace and outcomes of the lesson. For example, in an investigation activity in Year 6 about factorisation of the difference of two squares, the teacher was unaware of the underlying mathematical structure and could not relevantly question pupils about their findings. At Key Stage 3, the teaching is sound or, sometimes, good. In most lessons the content is clearly introduced and explained by the teacher using a variety of whole-class methods. The use of problem-solving and investigatory methods to teach content is less well developed. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in class by well-qualified staff and their progress is consistently and effectively monitored. The assessment of pupils' work in lessons is satisfactory. Books are frequently and consistently marked for correctness but there is insufficient guidance on remedying weaknesses. There is no homework set in Years 5 and 6. The policy for older pupils is very clear and homework is used well to help pupils consolidate their learning or to deepen their understanding.
- 86 The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The majority of staff are non-specialists and they are given very good guidance, advice and training. Teaching



at Key Stage 2 has been critically monitored and evaluated, with the results used to identify personal development needs. Provision for monitoring teaching at Key Stage 3 is a clear target in the subject development plan. Links with parents are maintained and enhanced through workshops in school and a handbook to suggest ways in which they can support their children's learning at home.

- 87 Since the previous inspection the progress of lower attaining pupils has improved considerably. At Key Stage 3, pupils have more opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts. Methods of self-assessment by pupils are now in place and generally well applied. The monitoring of standards of pupils' work is very well established and a system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is now being implemented.

## Science

- 88 By the end of Key Stage 2, the attainment of pupils meets national expectations and a significant minority exceed such expectations. Results in the national tests taken by 11-year olds are well above the average. The trend in these tests has been one of improvement in recent years. Pupils can explain how to conduct a fair test. They can use an increasing range of terminology to discuss their results and conclusions. Some pupils can evaluate the experiments they conduct and can confidently suggest improvements. Although pupils' recall of work already done is weak on occasions, most can remember recent work and build on it well. Their competent reading skills give them good access to written instructions and they use their numeracy skills well.
- 89 At the end of Year 8, pupils reach and often exceed the expectations for their age. A large majority of pupils can use logic to construct identification keys for both familiar and unfamiliar organisms, or can plan an experimental procedure. Pupils can assemble and manipulate apparatus well and are careful of the health and safety implications of some experimental work. They can obtain pure salt from rock salt, or can investigate a range of inks to separate pure colours. Most can use new equipment to confidently collect data. At all ages, pupils can use wide scientific vocabulary to accurately and confidently discuss their work. Their written work is always well presented and higher prior attainers use their evaluative skills well.
- 90 The progress of pupils in Key Stage 2 is always sound, and for some it is good. Pupils practise skills well, they persevere when the outcome is unexpected and eagerly apply new learning. At Key Stage 3, the progress of pupils is sound. Pupils' capabilities in scientific work are extended in, for example, separation techniques like chromatography, and in collecting and analysing data from the natural environment. Good support from learning support assistants and helpful classroom strategies help to ensure that pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Higher attaining pupils, however, do not always make sufficient progress.
- 91 The response of pupils to their learning is usually good. They are keen to learn. They concentrate well, support each other and willingly share equipment. They are courteous and are trustworthy and helpful when given responsibility.
- 92 Teaching at Key Stage 2 is nearly always sound or, occasionally, good or very good. Teachers have high expectations of both pupils' attainment and their behaviour. They maintain this with firm, friendly relationships in class. Discussions with pupils are positive and praise is used well to encourage and correct. Confident teachers allow the class to criticise the relevance of experimental results, and to challenge pupils to suggest improvements. Where teachers lack expertise and are not sure of the scientific principles underlying the task, they lack the confidence to develop pupils' investigative skills; they tell them the outcome hoped for and remove the joy of discovery in the lesson.
- 93 At Key Stage 3, the teaching is at least sound or, often, good. All teachers have the necessary knowledge and understanding to teach a new concept, such as an understanding of particles through separation techniques. The setting of a range of tasks when the class is handling environmental data, for instance, keeps pupils

- interested and allows them to learn in different ways. In an effective example of this, a pupil arrived half way through a lesson and used the computer to generate graphs that the rest of the group were drawing by hand from the same data. Where the teaching has weaknesses, higher attaining pupils are not set sufficiently challenging tasks.
- 94 The assessment of pupils' work is frequent and consistent, leading to useful curriculum planning. Teachers are able to set helpful targets for individuals, both on a daily and longer term basis. A good and effective range of homework is regularly set at Key Stage 3 to help extend pupils' learning. However, there are still inadequate opportunities for pupils to use IT.
- 95 The subject is well led and well managed, leading to strong teamwork. Some details of the scheme of work are still being finalised to strengthen the support available to non-specialist teachers. The laboratory technician makes a positive contribution to the subject.
- 96 Since the last inspection, more thorough assessment systems have been developed and are being well used. The self assessment of experimental and investigative science by older pupils enables them to plan more for their own achievement in investigative work. Monitoring and evaluation procedures for the subject are now well established. However, higher attaining pupils are still not making the progress they are capable of.

## **Other subjects or courses**

### **Art**

- 97 The attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 meets national expectations. In Year 5, pupils' skills in drawing vary considerably and some choose to trace images through lack of confidence in their own work. Most handle collage materials well and some pupils are imaginative in their use, such as in creating textures and patterns on Caribbean animal designs. Pupils in Year 6 competently interpret poetry through line drawings in ink. Their compositions are often imaginative but they do not undertake enough research of relevant sources. Pupils in Year 7 have below expected standards of skills in observational drawing. Their drawings of faces and hands do not show an understanding about the proportions of the body. By the end of Year 8, the attainment of pupils only just meets the levels expected for their age. They have sound understanding of using perspective and the qualities found in the work of Lowry. However, their final pieces do not express individuality as pupils are constrained by the narrow range of media used. At all ages, pupils are able to handle clay competently.
- 98 Pupils make generally sound progress at both key stages, but there are instances of it being unsatisfactory. They progress well in developing their sketchbook skills but the development of drawing skills across both key stages is weak.. Overall, pupils have insufficient opportunities to express their individuality and this restricts their attainment and progress, particularly at Key Stage 3. Those with an aptitude for art are not able to fully develop their skills. Pupils with special education needs make good progress when they are helped by support staff.

- 99 Pupils respond well to their learning, particularly when the work set is more challenging. Their concentration, however, falls when they are given too much time to, for example, finish drawings. In these lessons, there is excessive chatter and a few pupils wander around the room. Pupils behave well, are courteous and treat materials and equipment with care. They work very well together.
- 100 Teaching is generally sound at Key Stage 2, occasionally has good features but there are also weaknesses. At Key Stage 3, teaching is sound. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge. Most lessons begin well with pupils reminded about previous work, and clear instructions of what they are expected to do. Materials and equipment, such as collage materials, are well organised and ready for pupils to use. Relationships are good. Most teachers circulate well to help pupils with their work. Sketchbooks are usually regularly marked. Work is often shared and discussed at the end of the lesson. However, most work does not allow sufficient scope for individuality of expression or for pupils to select their own media. In some lessons, the pace of work is slow, resulting in pupils talking too much. The regular setting of homework to extend learning is a weakness.
- 101 The subject has clear policies and guidance. The curriculum offers adequate breadth in a variety of media, but the depth of work covered is basic and does not fully develop pupils' skills and abilities. Individual units of work offer some opportunities for pupils to make progress but the overall planning to enable pupils to consistently develop their skills over time is a weakness. There is insufficient provision of IT. The subject has sufficient overall time, and time in Year 6 is generous, but the rotational timetabling with design and technology provides a disjointed experience for pupils and hampers their progress. This factor was identified as problematic in the last report.
- 102 There have been no significant changes in attainment since the last inspection. Satisfactory progress has been made in the development of an appropriate assessment system, and monitoring of this by the subject co-ordinator has begun.

### **Design and Technology**

- 103 The overall attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 8 meets national expectations but their making skills are stronger than their designing skills. At Key Stage 2, pupils can use a specification when gathering information, organise their ideas, and recognise the needs of users. They use tools and equipment accurately when marking out and cutting materials. At Key Stage 3, pupils can use reference sources to develop ideas, such as in food technology in Year 8 when they use image boards for party foods. However, pupils' graphic presentation in recording their designing in resistant materials and textiles is a weakness. In their making skills, pupils use a range of tools and equipment with increasing control, such as the careful use of sewing machines. Pupils' evaluation of their work is good in food technology but it is a weakness elsewhere. Higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged.
- 104 Pupils make sound progress at Key Stage 2 and it is more rapid in making than in designing. At Key Stage 3, pupils' progress is sound overall, but they make

insufficient progress in recording design decisions in resistant materials and textiles. They make satisfactory progress in planning a sequence of stages for making food products in food technology and in evaluating the outcomes of their making. There is steady development of new making skills, such as in the making of bags in textiles Year 7, or in learning to bend thin aluminium sheets in resistant materials when making the chassis of a buggy in Year 8. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

- 105 Pupils show a very high level of interest in their work and are well behaved. They show respect for the materials, tools and equipment that they use. They work well together. They respond very well, when they are expected to take the initiative, such as in Year 8 when preparing an individual design for a child's party cake.
- 106 The quality of teaching is sound at Key Stage 2. It is at least sound or, occasionally, good or very good at Key Stage 3. However, the expectations of teachers are inconsistent in the design element of the course, but are appropriate when pupils use materials for making products and models. In all materials' areas, teachers promote positive relationships. Long term planning is good, but there are no detailed plans for each unit of work, resulting in a lack of clarity in setting learning objectives for pupils. Time is generally used well and the pace in food technology lessons is brisk. Pupils are well managed and equipment is readily available in rooms. Teachers support pupils well and give regular oral feedback to them. However, there is little marking of work in folders, and the end-of-project assessments for designing and making are not clearly matched to criteria.
- 107 At both key stages, pupils experience a good balance of materials and processes. However, planning for work in each material area does not have sufficient detail to determine the precise learning that will be achieved before pupils move on to new experiences. The subject co-ordinator provides good guidance on many aspects of day-to-day organisation and sets a good personal example. However, the teaching team lacks consistency in striving to achieve the department's aim of enabling pupils to make good quality designs and products. The quality of the learning environment and use of display work, for instance, varies from imaginative to non-stimulating. Health and safety procedures are generally good but risk assessments have yet to be made for practical activities. There is no regular homework for older pupils.
- 108 In the last inspection, pupils' attainment was reported as being good. It remains good in food technology but is now satisfactory in resistant materials and textiles. Pupils' skills across the different areas are still not sufficiently consolidated. An assessment system is now in place and development planning has considerably improved.

## **Geography**

- 109 The attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 8 meets national expectations. At Key Stage 2, pupils understand geographical vocabulary and are able to describe weather patterns, record statistics in graphical form and analyse data to compare two places. They understand how maps work and what keys and symbols mean. Younger pupils are able to use and apply their good understanding of

number and data handling in a geographical context. At the end of Year 8, however, there are inconsistencies in the attainment of the pupils. Most pupils have a good understanding of rivers and are able to compare contrasting locations and settlements. Some pupils have good research and enquiry skills and use these skills for independent research projects. In a minority of lessons, however, pupils make few gains in learning and their attainment is unsatisfactory.

- 110 At Key Stage 2, pupils make at least satisfactory or, often, good progress. However, at Key Stage 3 there are wide variations in the progress. The majority of pupils make at least satisfactory gains in their geographical knowledge and understanding. They are suitably challenged and encouraged to follow their own lines of enquiry, and for some progress is good. However, for a minority of pupils progress is unsatisfactory because of the undemanding tasks that are set. The development of their skills is also often restricted. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and are given very good support.
- 111 Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to work at Key Stage 2 are always good and often very good. They are highly motivated and keen to learn. At Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils respond positively and the presentation of their work is very good. The behaviour of a significant minority of pupils, however, is unsatisfactory. They are slow to respond to instructions and there is a continual undercurrent of private conversations between them.
- 112 Teaching at Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 5, is mostly good or very good. Lessons have a very good structure and pace. There is good teacher exposition, resources and the board are prepared well in advance of the lesson and a good range of activities is set. In a particularly effective Year 5 lesson on comparing temperature and rainfall between Northamptonshire and St Lucia, pupils discussed variable and unpredictable weather patterns, constructed graphs using their own symbols and keys, interpreted the data, calculated the average rainfall and discussed the outcomes. At Key Stage 3, most of the teaching is satisfactory and a significant proportion is good or very good. In these lessons, there is good teacher knowledge of the subject and pupils are given appropriate individual support. There is a good balance between pupil/teacher speaking and listening so that pupils have the opportunity to articulate what they have learnt, such as the differences between subsistence and commercial farming. In the very small proportion of lessons where the teaching has shortcomings, the poor behaviour of pupils goes unchecked. There are also low teacher expectations in the tasks set, resulting in short responses from pupils and not challenging them to reason for themselves.
- 113 The curriculum meets requirements. The co-ordination of the subject, however, is unsatisfactory. The scheme of work provides little guidance on continuity and progression in the skills that are to be taught and there is an over-emphasis on content and worksheets. Opportunities for field work or the use of the local environment are not identified or clearly linked to units of work. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory, with wide variation in practice. Little evidence was seen of pupils using IT to support their learning. There has been unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection.

## History

- 114 By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment meets national expectations. They recognise that the past is divided into different periods of time and have a good grasp of chronology. They have acquired knowledge and understanding and are able to describe key events and personalities from the past and pupils in Year 6, for example, are able to describe the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians about the afterlife. Higher attaining pupils, are not, however, sufficiently challenged to produce more extended writing which contains their own original ideas and research. Pupils with lower prior attainment are sometimes confused between what is history and what is legend.
- 115 By the end of Year 8 pupils' attainment is just in line with national expectations. They are able to extract relevant information from a variety of sources and organise it to answer appropriate questions. In Year 7, for instance, pupils can produce accounts of what happened at the battle of Wounded Knee. Pupils are able to distinguish between fact and opinion and they know the difference between primary and secondary sources. A continuing weakness since the last inspection is that pupils with high or average attainment still lack the deeper understanding they need to analyse and evaluate evidence.
- 116 Overall, across Key Stage 2 pupils make sound progress. They acquire knowledge and understanding about the past and develop skills of enquiry. Progress is appropriate for the lower and average attainers but slow for the higher attainers who are not sufficiently challenged. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is good when they have additional adult support. Progress across Key Stage 3 is unsatisfactory. Pupils gain factual knowledge but their detail of understanding is less secure. The pace of lessons is slow and pupils complete insufficient amounts of work.
- 117 Pupils are interested in and enjoy their work. Their behaviour is very good and they are keen to answer questions. Pupils' listening skills are well developed and their concentration is largely sustained, although their attention wanders when they are unclear about the tasks set.
- 118 At Key Stage 2 half the teaching seen was satisfactory and half was good. At Key Stage 3, teaching is largely sound or, sometimes, good but a significant proportion is unsatisfactory. The mainly non-specialist teachers have developed good factual knowledge and make effective use of questioning which encourages pupils to more fully express their ideas. In most lessons, there is good classroom management and high standards of discipline. Some teachers use interesting paired-work or card games, such as "interviewing Napoleon" in Year 8 or categorising changes in the 1950s in Year 5. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, lessons lack pace and challenge. Tasks are allowed to drift on with no clear time scale or feedback to pupils. Instructions to pupils are not always clear and not written down for pupils to refer to. Insufficient emphasis is given to the key elements, particularly interpretation of history, in planning and assessing work. This means the higher order skills, such as developing overviews of historical periods and examining different historical perspectives are not given enough emphasis. Teachers rely on a limited range of methods.

- 119 Assessment practices and procedures are a weakness. Little progress has been made since the last inspection on improving assessment to enhance pupils' progress. The overall leadership and management of the subject is unsatisfactory.

### **Information Technology**

- 120 By the end of Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 8, the attainment of pupils' is below national expectations. However, pupils in Years 5 and 7 attain appropriate standards for their ages in the separate IT lessons. Younger pupils can use a basic word processing program to generate, amend and organise text to present a short poem. They can control a robot to follow a path and they can use instructions to complete sentences in French using a multi-media computer. However, few pupils achieve the understanding and skills that are expected at age 11. By the end of Year 8, most pupils can combine different types of information to create publicity material for a simulated company. They can follow instructions to control images on the screen to create geometrical shapes. Pupils can use spreadsheets well. Most can enter, sort and interrogate information when using a database as, for example, in producing scatter graphs to compare and discuss information about the planets. However, these skills are below the level expected for their age. A significant minority of pupils show higher level skills in some aspects; they can create a page for a magazine showing an appropriate awareness of audience by age 13.
- 121 Pupils' progress is good in all years when their current work is compared to the start of the school year. Pupils who have special educational needs make more rapid gains than might be reasonably expected. Many pupils who have computers at home bring knowledge and skills that assist them to make rapid progress in lessons.
- 122 Pupils respond very well to their learning and they are keen to use IT. A few, however, find it difficult to sustain full concentration towards the end of a span of four lessons. Pupils co-operate very well. They help each other to understand tasks and correct errors. Almost all pupils try hard and persevere with the tasks set.
- 123 Teaching in Years 5 and 6 in the separate IT lessons is sound and in Year 8 it is good. In Year 7, teaching is very good. Learning is well managed and engages pupils in a range of different tasks that are undertaken at a good pace. Planning is very thorough at all ages and lesson objectives are clear. Tasks are structured well so that they can be tackled by all pupils. Good opportunities are made to make work relevant to pupils' interests, as in work on "The Borrowers" in Year 6. The use of self-assessment sheets by pupils is positive and they get good feedback from teachers on their attainment. In most other subjects, however, teachers do not extend pupils' learning by the regular use of IT, although in French the teaching of vocabulary and pronunciation is supported well by the use of appropriate software.
- 124 The leadership and management of the subject are very good and this contributes well to pupils' good progress in the separate IT lessons. The new schemes of work are making a significant contribution to raising pupils' attainment. There is a wide variety of computers in the specialist room and in different subjects, but many are now dated.



This creates difficulties for staff and pupils. The school has planned very thoroughly for an extensive network of modern computers that is to be shortly installed as a result of national funding. The four-year strategic plan for the development of IT across the curriculum provides a very good basis for future development.

- 125 Since the last inspection the school has developed an IT policy. A steering group of subject representatives has been recently formed. Pupils' attainment still requires improvement, but good progress is now being made. Some limited staff development has taken place, but this remains a major area for future development.

### **Modern Foreign Languages**

- 126 By the end of Year 8, most pupils meet the expectations for their ages in listening, speaking and writing in French. When pupils hear information on topics such as holidays or daily routine, they have sound understanding. They can ask and answer questions quite confidently in pairs and groups, but experience some diffidence when talking to the whole class. In their reading work, most pupils attain standards which are above the usual expectation. They choose and read simple stories and cope well with unfamiliar words. Most pupils produce an acceptable level of accuracy in basic written work. There are examples of original compositions such as descriptions, poems, interviews and letters and, by Year 8, pupils can use the past tense of verbs in holiday descriptions.
- 127 Most pupils make sound progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially in reading. Higher attaining pupils, however, do not progress significantly faster than the majority, but they develop greater confidence and competence in what they do. By Year 8, they produce fewer more complex written and spoken outcomes than expected.
- 128 Pupils behave well and maintain good concentration. They respond well when exacting demands are made of them. They organise themselves efficiently in pair work, group work and independent tasks during library lessons, although they lack urgency in completing their tasks. Pupils respond with particular enthusiasm in those lessons where lively activities encourage their personal involvement and enjoyment.
- 129 Teaching is mostly good or very good. Teachers have high expectations, although expectations for the highest attaining pupils are not well defined. Teachers have good subject expertise and use French confidently for most aspects of lessons. Instructions and demonstrations are clear and incisive. In particularly effective lessons, for example, when presenting and practising "holiday activities", the teacher's dynamic style engages interest and enthusiasm (especially of boys) and maximises pupils' involvement. There are clear linguistic objectives for all lessons, which are reflected in appropriately chosen activities. The pace of work is usually satisfactory, and in the best lessons there is a strong emphasis on pupils' alertness and participation. Sometimes, however, too long is spent on repetitive single activities or on individual library tasks, which reduce the pace and impact of the work.
- 130 The subject is well co-ordinated. Leadership has a clear direction and ensures a high

level of consistency. Day-to-day administration is efficient and documentation is up to date. Communications within the subject are good. Strategies for raising standards are in place and are beginning to have an effect, but the monitoring and evaluation of their impact are incomplete. Assessment systems are thorough and accurate, but pupils are not well informed through marking or in lessons about their day-to-day progress or attainment.

- 131 The issues proposed by the last inspection have been recognised and addressed; progress has been significant but incomplete. Speaking skills were reported then to be limited, with few opportunities for pupils to ask questions. This skill is now at a satisfactory level and pupils can ask questions, but they are reticent when speaking in public. Higher attaining pupils were judged to have few opportunities to forge ahead. Many opportunities are now offered, but their effectiveness is inconsistent.

## Music

- 132 By the end of Key Stage 2, the attainment of pupils is above national expectations. Pupils have a good understanding of many aspects of music and can, for example, talk with confidence about calypso rhythms and relate this information to songs they have sung. They have good rhythmic skills and are able to maintain quite complex patterns well. Singing is satisfactory but lacking in expressive control and pupils often do not sufficiently sustain vocal sounds. By the end of Year 8, the attainment of pupils meets the expectations for their age. This reflects the less than average amount of time that pupils in Years 7 and 8 spend studying music. Pupils in Year 8 have a good understanding of music and are able to find a range of chords on keyboards. However, they do not have sufficient time to consolidate and develop their performance skills and sometimes lack fluency.
- 133 Good progress is made by the majority of pupils at Key Stage 2. Rhythmic skills develop well and pupils relate practical skills effectively to their understanding of music. Their ability to listen to each other when performing within an ensemble improves between Years 5 and 6. Singing shows more limited improvement and pupils do not sing with sufficient expression. Across Key Stage 3, however, pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. The key factor which inhibits progress is the lack of available time. Once pupils have settled, organised themselves into groups and started to work, their progress is good. However, the thirty-five minute lesson allocated to the study of music in Years 7 and 8 is insufficient for them to maintain progress and this has a detrimental effect on their performance skills and fluency.
- 134 Teaching is mostly good at both key stages. Good teaching occurs when pupils have clearly focused tasks and are expected to complete these within a specified time. In a Year 8 lesson based on the song "Stand by me", for example, pupils were asked to play a melody pattern, bass riff or chord sequence. Clear targets were set, good support was given to pupils and effective self assessment sheets contributed to their learning. This was achieved within a very short period of time. Where teaching is sound, the pace of lessons is sometimes allowed to slacken. In a Year 6 lesson on dynamics, the introductory session contained some information not directly related to the task and this slowed the progress of the lesson. Once pupils were involved in a

practical task the pace of learning increased.

- 135 Pupils' response is very good in all years. They listen well to instructions, work well in groups and show respect for instruments. They listen well to recorded music and to each other when performing in groups, even when the lack of suitable accommodation leads to high noise levels and makes concentration difficult.
- 136 The subject is well managed and maintains a positive ethos for learning and an agenda for improvement. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and, with the exception of time available for pupils in Years 7 and 8, all the issues noted have been addressed. The department is presently sited in accommodation which is adequate, except when there are instrumental teachers present. On these occasions, accommodation is not adequate and has a detrimental effect on pupils' learning. Lack of suitable spaces leads to practical work being curtailed and high noise levels which do not encourage the development of expressive musical performances. Plans to use one practice room as a computer room in the future will further exacerbate this problem, although there are also longer term plans to use alternative accommodation.

### **Physical Education**

- 137 The attainment of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 and by the end of Year 8 meets national expectations, with a significant minority exceeding such expectations. Younger pupils understand the importance of warm-up activities. They know and understand the correct techniques for sprinting and the triple jump. Most pupils have a basic knowledge and understanding of survival techniques in swimming and a few are able to put this into practice. Most pupils can swim 25 metres by the end of the key stage. In cricket, pupils' skills in batting, throwing and catching are generally in line with expectations but most do not know how to position themselves correctly in relation to the batsman. By the end of Year 8, most pupils know the principles of throwing events in athletics but some are not yet able to put these into practice. In basketball and hockey, pupils show very good spatial awareness. Many have good passing and receiving skills, and good tactical knowledge and understanding. Some very good results are obtained in extra-curricular fixtures, especially in basketball, football, hockey and netball.
- 138 Pupils make at least sound progress at Key Stage 2 and the progress of a significant minority is very good. At Key Stage 3, pupils' progress during the school day is satisfactory. Pupils attending extra-curricular games activities make good progress but they do not always do so in lesson time. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to that of their peers.
- 139 The response of pupils is totally dependent on the quality of the teaching. It is at least sound at Key Stage 2 or, occasionally, very good. Most pupils enjoy their activities and sustain concentration throughout the lesson. When given the opportunity, they are keen to help each other to improve the quality of their performance. At Key Stage 3, the response of pupils is satisfactory. Most pupils are motivated at the beginning of the lesson but their motivation decreases when they are not sufficiently challenged, or kept sufficiently active.

- 140 Teaching is mostly good or very good at Key Stage 2 and it is sound at Key Stage 3. When teaching is good, tasks are clearly set and activities are built up progressively to enhance pupils' progress. A variety of appropriate teaching strategies is used, including teacher and pupil demonstrations, and question and answer sessions. These clarify aspects of technical skill, especially in the teaching of the triple jump and sprinting. Where the teaching has weaknesses, too many coaching points are given at the same time and pupils are given too few opportunities to practice and refine their skills. This is particularly the case in athletics when throwing events are being taught. In several lessons, higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged.
- 141 The school benefits from very good indoor and outdoor facilities. The subject is effectively led and meets National Curriculum requirements but, as reported in the last inspection, there is still an imbalance at both key stages in favour of games. There is a good programme of extra-curricular games. Since the last inspection more time has been allocated to dance, but the dance programme of study at Key Stage 2 is still not being adequately covered. More than two thirds of dance lessons at Key Stage 2 are taught by first year PE students on teaching practice. The system for assessment, recording and reporting has been reviewed since the last inspection, but reports to parents still lack enough detail. Statutory requirements for outdoor and adventurous activities at Key Stage 3 are now being met.

## **Religious Education**

- 142 At the end of Key Stage 2, the attainment of pupils meets the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have a good understanding of symbols in religion and what they stand for. They are beginning to develop an understanding about values and beliefs, and of traditions and festivals that are celebrated by the major world faiths. Pupils make sound progress in their knowledge and understanding and the way that religious beliefs affect the way that people live their lives. At the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment meets the expectations for their age. They demonstrate good understanding about personal values and are able to write their own creed and mission statements. They understand how God is represented in faiths other than their own. Pupils' written work at both key stages is of a consistently high standard. Pupils make sound progress and those with special educational needs make good progress because of additional support.
- 143 Pupils of all ages respond well to their learning. Younger pupils are interested in the subject and are confident enough to ask questions, to express their opinions and to talk about their own experiences. Older pupils at Key Stage 3 concentrate, listen and respond well to questions. Pupils have a good command of language which they use to good effect. In a very small minority of lessons, however, pupils do not fully engage with the task set and there is some inattentive behaviour. Too few opportunities are provided for them to plan and work co-operatively.
- 144 Teaching at both key stages is mostly good. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and there are very good relationships, based on respect and value for the individual. Most lessons follow the same sound structure where learning objectives are shared with pupils, and direct teaching and discussion are followed by a

written activity. Artefacts, like the Khanda in the study of the Sikhs, are of good quality and are handled with care and respect. Where the teaching is particularly effective, questions are used well to make pupils think and express their own opinions, such as “What kind of help might the untouchables need ?” Where the teaching has weaknesses, talk between pupils goes unchecked and lessons are not well paced.

- 145 The subject benefits from very good and effective leadership. Good support is provided, through the scheme of work, for the 14 teachers who teach the subject. These are supported by the use of good quality artefacts. However, there are insufficient reference books in the library. Assessment procedures for pupils’ achievements are satisfactory but they are not consistent with assessment procedures in other subjects. Homework for older pupils is set on a regular basis.
- 146 Visitors are invited to the school talk about aspects of their religion. This has not yet been fully developed to ensure that there is equity and balance in relation to the faiths that are represented. Sound progress has been made since the last inspection.

## **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

### **Summary of inspection evidence**

- 147 The inspection team consisted of 12 inspectors who between them spent 35 days in school during the inspection. A total of 146 teaching sessions was inspected. Inspectors also inspected 34 registration periods and attended two whole school assemblies, and three house and three year assemblies. A further four class assemblies were also inspected. All full-time teachers were seen teaching at least once and some were seen on several occasions. Some lessons of part-time and temporary teachers were also inspected. The total time spent on lesson observations, discussion with pupils and evaluation of their work was just over 119 hours. The inspection of art and of design and technology was constrained because of the rotational arrangements within the timetable.
- 148 Thirty discussions were held with various members of staff and governors. The vice-chair of the governing body was standing-in for the chairman, and meetings were held with seven other governors. The school's education welfare officer and the school's nurse were also interviewed. In addition, all the available work of a cross-section of pupils, six from each year group, was inspected and planned discussions held with them the following day. Discussions were also held with many pupils in classrooms and around the school. Some extra curricular activities, particularly in music and PE, were observed. Further information was provided before the inspection at the parents' meeting which was attended by 27 parents. Six hundred and seven parents' questionnaires were sent out and an analysis undertaken of 109 (18 per cent) questionnaires returned by parents. A large amount of documentation submitted by the school was analysed before, during and after the week of the inspection.

**149**

## Data and indicators

### PUPIL DATA

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y5 - Y8	607	7	97	54

### TEACHERS AND CLASSES

#### Qualified teachers (Y5 - Y8)

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent)	28.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.22

#### Education support staff (Y5 - Y8)

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked each week	223.5

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	81.2
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Average teaching group size	Key Stage 2	26
	Key Stage 3	27

### FINANCIAL DATA

Financial year:	1997/1998
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	£
Total income	1,072,658.00
Total expenditure	1,072,699.00
Expenditure per pupil	1,790.82
Balance brought forward from previous year	18,780.00
Balance carried forward to next year	18,739.00

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:

607
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Number of questionnaires returned:

109
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Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	11	64	10	9	4
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	23	68	3	6	1
The school handles complaints from parents well	7	48	27	4	2
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	7	63	14	15	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	16	65	7	8	3
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	26	64	6	3	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	22	57	15	4	2
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	16	53	6	20	3
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	31	50	13	4	2
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	25	60	11	2	1
My child(ren) like(s) school	38	50	6	4	3

Note: Not all the questions were answered by all parents, so some responses do not round off to 100 per cent.