

INSPECTION REPORT

WESTFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL

(Middle deemed Secondary)

Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique Reference Number: 109666

Headteacher: Mrs M. Morgan

Reporting inspector: Mrs C. Marsh

2113

Dates of inspection: 22th – 24th November 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708032

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 - 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

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Appropriate authority: Bedfordshire LEA

Name of chair of governors: Mr G. Colling

Date of previous inspection: 28th April – 5th May 1997

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Mrs M. Kerry, Lay Inspector	English as Additional Language	Teaching Leadership and Management Attendance Partnership with Parents and the Community Staffing, Accommodation and Learning Resources The Efficiency of the School
Mr D. Bolton	Modern Foreign Languages	Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development Curriculum and Assessment Pupils' Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development Support Guidance and Pupils' Welfare
Mrs E. Teacher	Special Educational Needs	
Mrs S. Wellsted	Mathematics	
Mrs K. Reed	Religious Education	
Mrs J. Maynard	English	
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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Pupils make very good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and standards have risen markedly in the national tests for eleven year-olds.
- Leadership and management are very good. Led by the headteacher, staff and governors have worked hard to bring about improvement, raising standards and raising the morale of staff and pupils.
- The school has a positive atmosphere. Pupils from different cultural backgrounds get on well together. Staff and pupils are committed to improvement.
- The school is good at helping pupils in their personal development. A particular strength is the way the richness and diversity of other cultures are valued and celebrated.
- The school has developed strong links with the community and is determined to build on these.
- Pupils with English as an additional language are well served by the school and make good progress.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. In spite of improvements, there are still weaknesses in some of the teaching, particularly in history and geography, and there are a few weak teachers.
- II. Standards in history, geography and French are too low.
- III. The school does not teach the National Curriculum in music.
- IV. Pupils need more opportunities in lessons to practise speaking at greater length.
- V. The school does not meet the requirements for teacher appraisal.

This is an improving school. Its weaknesses are outweighed by what the school does well, but they will form the basis of the governors' action plan, which will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has improved noticeably since the last inspection. Standards in English, mathematics and science have risen significantly. Standards in art have improved, and standards in design and technology, information technology, religious education and physical education have been maintained. However, standards in history, geography and French are still too low.

Effective action has been taken to tackle the serious weaknesses identified in the last inspection. This has been well planned and properly followed through, particularly since the appointment of a new head and deputy. Serious weaknesses in the teaching have been tackled with determination. The school has made satisfactory progress on this key issue, and, as a result, the quality of teaching has much improved, although some weaknesses still remain. The need to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy led the school to focus on raising attainment in the core subjects. Recent results in national tests show that this has paid off. Very good progress has been made on this key issue. The school has paid attention to accelerating the progress made by all pupils, with a more rigorous approach to assessing pupils regularly, setting targets and monitoring progress. This has begun to pay dividends. Provision for developing pupils' spiritual awareness, a weakness identified by the last inspection, is now good. At the time of the last inspection, a key weakness was that the school did not do enough to help pupils explore and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of its pupils in all aspects of its life and work. This former area of weakness is now a strength.

The vision and determination of the new headteacher have been critical in bringing about these improvements. She and other senior managers recognised that building the self-esteem and pride of staff and pupils would best be achieved by a concerted focus on raising standards of attainment. Senior managers have a clear insight into what needs to be done now to bring about further improvement. They have made sure that the school has in place plans and strategies which will help it to achieve its goals. There is a shared sense of determination to succeed and move forward.

• **Standards in subjects**

The table shows standards achieved by 11 year olds in 1999 based on the National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	with	Compared with similar schools	Key	
				<i>well above average</i>	<i>A</i>
				<i>above average</i>	<i>B</i>
English	C		A	<i>Average</i>	<i>C</i>
Mathematics	D		A	<i>below average</i>	<i>D</i>
Science	C		A	<i>well below average</i>	<i>E</i>

Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection. They have improved markedly this year, thanks to a concerted effort to raise attainment in the core subjects.

In 1999, standards in English and science were broadly in line with the average for all schools but well above average when compared to similar schools. Standards in mathematics were just below the average for all schools, but well above the average for similar schools. Pupils have made very good progress in these three subjects since their entry to the school.

• Pupils reach the standards expected in art, physical education, information technology and design technology and make at least satisfactory progress in these subjects. In history, geography, music, and French, standards are too low and there is too much under-achievement. In these subjects, pupils do not make enough progress over their time in the school.

Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in the school.

• **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 5-6	Satisfactory	Science, English	History, Geography
Years 7-8	Satisfactory	Science, English Physical Education	History, Geography, French
English	Good		

Teaching was at least satisfactory in 82% of lessons. In 39% of lessons teaching was good or better; in 15% it was very good or excellent. The proportion of satisfactory teaching has risen significantly since the last inspection. However, there are still weaknesses in some teaching and there are some weak teachers. 18% of lessons were unsatisfactory, but almost half of these were taught by short-term supply or student teachers, who were new to the school.

Teaching was of a consistently high quality in science. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons in English, design and technology, information technology and games. The teaching of mathematics was mostly satisfactory, and it was good in a third of the lessons inspected. In French, religious education, music and art, where most of the teaching seen was satisfactory, there were nevertheless weaknesses. In spite of some improvements, there was still too much unsatisfactory teaching in history and geography.

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

· **Other aspects of the school**

· Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good overall. With a noticeable fall in exclusions since the last inspection. However, in a minority of lessons pupils are too restless
Attendance	Satisfactory. Broadly in line with middle schools nationally.
Ethos*	Relationships are very good. Pupils get on well together. They show growing self-esteem and are proud of their school. The school is determined to prove to the wider community its commitment to raising standards and its success in fostering racial harmony.
Leadership and management	This is a strength of the school. The headteacher has a clear vision for the improvement of the school and communicates this effectively. She is well supported by a hard-working senior management team and by the governing body. Together they have effectively targeted school improvement, raising standards and raising the morale of staff and pupils.
Curriculum	A suitably broad and balanced curriculum, except for an important weakness in music (which, because of staffing difficulties, falls well short of what the National Curriculum requires). Pupils with English as an additional language are well served by the school.
Pupils with special educational needs	Support for pupils with special needs is well co-ordinated. Needs are properly identified, extra help is well targeted, and progress is carefully monitored. Pupils with special needs make good progress.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	The school is good at helping pupils in their personal development. It does this not only through the curriculum, but also through the climate it sets. A particular strength is the way the richness and diversity of other cultures are valued and celebrated.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	The school has had ongoing difficulties recruiting a specialist teacher for music. Otherwise, the school has enough staff and resources to teach the curriculum. The school has adequate accommodation and a programme of refurbishment has begun to make a big difference to the quality of the environment for staff and pupils.

Value for money

Satisfactory. Unit costs are high because the school is small, but the school is doing well for its pupils. Standards of attainment have risen. Teaching has improved significantly, although further improvement is needed, and the school caters well for pupils' personal development. This is an improving school.

**Ethos is the climate for learning: attitudes to work, relationships and the commitment to high standards.*

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The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

VI. Their children like school.

VII. The staff of the school are very approachable.

VIII. Parents are well informed about the progress their children are making.

IX. Parents are encouraged to play an active part in the life of the school.

X. The school helps their children to achieve a good standard of work.

What some parents are not happy about

XI. A few would like more homework for their

XII. A few have not been satisfied with the in the past.

Inspectors support parents' positive views about the school. They found that teachers know pupils well and that they communicate this to parents in a good range of ways. The school regularly sets homework and the amount of homework set was judged to be suitable and sensibly managed by staff. Inspectors found that communication with parents is good and that complaints and problems are handled sensitively and effectively, as the great majority of parents agree.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to raise standards further and to build on the improvements already achieved, the governors and headteacher, working with the staff, must:

- (a) **Improve the quality of teaching by:**
 - continuing to take management action to support and deal with weak teachers; (Paragraphs 20, 29, 68.)
 - continuing to develop the “critical friend” project and to implement the school’s improvement plan on developing teaching styles; (Paragraphs 20, 66.)
 - implementing teacher appraisal; (Paragraphs 69, 73.)
 - setting targets to reduce the amount of unsatisfactory teaching.

- (a) **Continue to raise standards further** in all subjects, but particularly in:
 - history; (Paragraphs 11, 138-142.)
 - geography; (Paragraphs 11, 132-137.) and
 - French. (Paragraphs 150-155.)

- (c) **Ensure that the National Curriculum in music is taught.**
(Paragraphs 30, 67, 69, 156-160.)

- (d) **Give pupils more opportunities in lessons to practise speaking at greater length.**
(Paragraphs 7, 27, 91.)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan. These are found in the paragraphs shown.

- There is too much restless behaviour in some lessons, particularly among boys.
(Paragraphs 13, 28, 90.)
- Some targets set by teachers for individual pupils are not specific enough.
(Paragraph 28.)
- Marking by some teachers is too cursory. It does not help or encourage pupils to improve.
(Paragraph 39.)
- Some form assemblies do not include an act of collective worship.
(Paragraph 42.)
- Some reports to parents do not include helpful targets for improvement, either suggesting general areas to strengthen or giving specific detail. (Paragraph 56.)
- The lack of specialist expertise in geography is affecting standards. (Paragraph 70.)

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1. Westfield Middle School is situated on the north eastern edge of Bedford town, on a large campus shared by another middle school (catholic), a catholic lower school and an upper school. Westfield Middle School caters for boys and girls from 9-13 years of age. There are currently 223 pupils on roll. It draws its pupils mainly from the Queens Park ward of Bedford - a ward with fewer than average adults in higher education, significantly fewer children in high social class households, and well above average numbers of children eligible to free school meals

2. The intake continues to have a high percentage of pupils for whom English is an additional language. This is currently at 92.7% of the school population. Half the pupils are Pakistani, the remaining half is made up of Bangladeshi, white, Indian, black Indian, and some asylum seekers from countries such as Croatia and Afghanistan. There is a wide range of attainment on entry to the school, but there is evidence which shows that there is a higher proportion of pupils than usual with a reading age below their chronological age.

3. The school was identified as having serious weaknesses in its last inspection in 1997. The HMI monitoring visit (November 98) showed some improvement in most areas of weaknesses. The school is an improving school and has made significant and good progress over two years, and some of the area of weaknesses previously identified are now strengths of the school.

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Key indicators

Attainment at Key Stage 2¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	26	33	59

National Curriculum		Reading	Writing	Mathematics
Test/Task Results				
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or Above	Boys	22	11	18
	Girls	26	16	18
	Total	48	27	36
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	72 (61)	46 (41)	61 (59)
	National	65 (63)	59 (62)	69 (68)

Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or Above	Boys	20	17	22
	Girls	26	18	23
	Total	46	35	45
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	78 (61)	59 (45)	76 (71)
	National	65 (63)	65 (64)	72 (69)

Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	6.9
	Absence	National comparative data	6.1
	Unauthorised	School	0.005
	Absence	National comparative data	0.6

.....
 1 Percentages in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

• **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	15
	Satisfactory or better	82
	Less than satisfactory	18

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· **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

· **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

· **Attainment and progress**

4. The school has had some considerable success in raising the standards of pupils' work since the previous inspection, two years ago. Results in the national tests (SATs) at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 confirm this, and this is substantiated by inspection evidence. A key issue after the last inspection was to "accelerate the progress made by all pupils, and particularly the most able". The school has been very successful in tackling this.

5. In the 1999 national tests for 11 year olds, in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, the school's results were broadly in line with the national average in science and English and just below the national average in mathematics. In all three subjects the results were well above the results achieved by 'similar' schools. There has been a significant, rising trend in attainment over the last three years. The school's data shows that, overall, both boys and girls improved their attainment by well over two National Curriculum levels between the time they took the national tests at the age of seven, and when again at 11. When account is taken of the high number of pupils eligible for free school meals, and the very high number for whom English is an additional language, these results are good. The focussed efforts the school has made to raise standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have paid off. The last Ofsted report observed that "pupils of higher prior attainment often do not make sufficient progress, particularly between the ages of 9 and 11." Inspection evidence from the current inspection (1999) shows that this issue has been successfully addressed.

6. In English, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with national expectations in the key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing, including spelling and handwriting. Standards in reading are slightly higher than in writing, although the written work of the highest attaining pupils is above average for their age. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in all aspects of the subject throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils in the early stages of learning English, and pupils with special educational needs, often make very good progress.

7. Pupils of all abilities in Year 7 continue to make good progress in English. The standards attained by most pupils in this year group are at least average for their age in all key English skills, and the written work of the highest attaining pupils is above average. In Year 8, there are a significant number of pupils who are just beginning to learn English as an additional language, and a relatively high number of pupils in the year have special educational needs. Whilst most of the higher attaining pupils in Year 8 attain appropriate standards for their age, standards of work for the remainder is well below average for their age and, overall pupils in Year 8 have made less progress than those in Year 7. In the school as a whole, the use of sustained speech by pupils, for example in the form of argument and debate, informal talks, presentations and formal speeches, is not sufficiently developed.

8. Standards in mathematics in the national tests (SAT's) for 11-year-olds have shown substantial improvement over the last three years. They are much nearer to those of all schools nationally and well above average when compared with similar schools. This rise in standards of attainment represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. At Key Stage 2 and in Year 7, pupils are attaining at or near to the national expectations, but in Year 8 more pupils are attaining below them. Most pupils make good progress in mathematics throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make very good progress. Most pupils make good progress in mathematics throughout their time in the school. Competences in number work and mental calculations are becoming strengths of the work of all pupils. This is an improvement from the last report. Pupils gain an appropriate breadth of knowledge across the different areas of mathematics. Whilst they can use and apply their mathematics, pupils are better at practicing skills than they are at applying them.

9. In science the proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected nationally improved considerably this year and is now in line with the national average and well above average when compared to similar schools. Pupils attain higher standards for their age at Key Stage 2 than they do at Key Stage 3. A number of strategies have been effectively employed to raise attainment. Pupils at both key stages are competent in practical work, which is an improvement on the last inspection. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have a more secure knowledge base than at Key Stage 3 and also use scientific terminology more confidently. Some older pupils confuse terms and have more difficulty making generalisations. Some still have difficulty analysing results and considering the strength of evidence, an area of weakness identified in the last inspection, which the school is working on. Pupils at both key stages generally make good progress in lessons, progress over time is greater at Key Stage 2. Higher attaining pupils are appropriately challenged and make better progress than was the case at the time of the last inspection.

10. In art, information technology, design technology and religious education pupils do well. Their work at both key stages is broadly in line with expected standards. For higher attaining pupils it is above national expectations. Attainment of pupils with special educational needs is in line with expectations in relation to their age and ability. At both key stages pupils make progress within lessons and over time. In boys' games, attainment when pupils enter the school at Year 5 is below national expectations, but by Year 8 is in line with national expectations. This represents good progress. In religious education attainment improves as pupils progress through the school and by the end of Year 8, they are developing a personal view of the major aspects of religion such as prayer and worship.

11. In history, geography and French, standards of attainment are too low and pupils do not make enough progress, particularly higher attaining pupils. Some higher attaining pupils achieve standards commensurate with their age in some aspects of the subjects. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress in both key stages especially higher attaining pupils. Over their time in the school, pupils do not make enough progress, because they are not covering enough and are not mastering the work thoroughly enough. The reasons for this include weaknesses in teaching and tasks that are not challenging enough. In geography there is lack of subject knowledge. In general, pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and those for whom English is an additional language, make sound or good progress because of the additional support they receive. In French however, some lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are finding it particularly hard to make sense of what they are doing and are not making enough progress.

Attitudes, behaviour and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good overall. The weaknesses noted at the time of the last inspection (for example, underlying racial tension, confrontation and a lack of

opportunity for pupils to learn to take responsibility) have been tackled effectively. More parents now believe that the school achieves high standards of good behaviour. Inspectors found that behaviour around the school was generally good. During the inspection, pupils were courteous, showing a growing self-confidence, and a pride in their own and the school's achievements. Pupils are developing a strong sense of loyalty to the school and a growing self-esteem. There has been a noticeable fall in exclusions since the last inspection. Last year there were no permanent exclusions, and the three fixed-term exclusions which did occur were handled appropriately.

13. In most, but not all, lessons inspected, pupils' attitudes to their work were satisfactory and often good. Pupils usually showed interest and enjoyed being actively involved. For the most part, they were keen to take part and to offer suggestions or answer questions, although their enthusiasm sometimes led to calling out. Most pupils co-operated well, helped one another readily, and were prepared to persevere to overcome any difficulties they met. When given the encouragement and opportunity, they showed that they could organise themselves and their own work. Many were keen to follow up their work in the library in their own time, and enjoyed working on projects in groups of two or three. In about one lesson in seven, however, attitudes and behaviour were unsatisfactory. In these lessons, concentration ebbed and flowed, and pupils needed too much prompting from their teacher to pay attention to detail. There was too much restlessness, particularly towards the end of lessons. Although most were keen to learn, some pupils (often boys) were easily diverted and had to be re-focused by their teachers. In two lessons inspected, behaviour was poor, quite out of character with the same pupils' behaviour in other lessons. This was related to weaknesses in the teaching.

14. Pupils now have a good range of opportunities to take responsibility, and many respond with enthusiasm and maturity. A team of volunteers looks after the school environment, making sure that litter is not left around and that plants are cared for. Monitors help organise clubs and activities, for example very proficiently organising and running a library club for younger pupils. They act as confidential "friends" to other pupils as part of the school's anti-bullying strategy. Members of the School Council feel a sense of responsibility for suggesting, planning and bringing about improvements in the school. Pupils take the initiative in fund-raising for charities. Although they are still rather shy when it comes to addressing larger groups, such as the whole school assembly, they nevertheless ask for the opportunity to do so, in order to share their proposals for new developments or to report what has been achieved.

15. Pupils are aware of the school's rules and code of conduct and accept their responsibility for working within these. When they do not live up to the standards set, they are usually quick to recognise what is, and what is not, acceptable, and to come into line. They treat the school's facilities with respect. The library, for instance, is recognised as a centre for learning, discussing, working and browsing, and is a hive of orderly activity each break and lunchtime. Pupils are developing their sense of right and wrong, of justice and fairness. They are learning to look beyond their own interests and to think about the consequences of their own decisions and actions, as Year 7 pupils showed in a personal and social education session led by the local police liaison officer.

16. Relationships among pupils and between pupils and adults are very good. Racial harmony is prized within the school community. Pupils take a genuine interest in the different cultural traditions represented in the school and appear to relish the diversity, showing sensitivity to values and beliefs different from their own.

• **Attendance**

17. Levels of attendance are broadly in line with national averages and are satisfactory. Attendance of pupils last year represents a reversal of a previous downward trend, and indications so far this year are that this improvement will be sustained. The school has therefore made good progress since the last

inspection. Unauthorised absence remains below average.

18. Registration procedures are effective and the attendance of each year group is tracked. Data collected by the school, and confirmed by register scans, show that the major factors lowering levels of attendance are extended holidays and periods of religious observance. The school consistently discourages parents from taking holidays during term time or extending absence around periods allowed for religious observance, because of the effect on pupils' learning.

19. Punctuality is satisfactory. Latecomers either to school or to lessons are left in no doubt what the school's expectations are. Pupils are clear that lateness is not acceptable and that absence needs to be explained.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

Teaching

20. When the school was last inspected, there were serious weaknesses in the teaching, with only 64% of lessons judged to be satisfactory or better. Since then, the quality of teaching has significantly improved. During this inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in 82% of lessons inspected and, in over a third of lessons, the teaching was good or very good. One reason for the improvement has been the concerted action taken by the school, with support from the local education authority, to raise the standard of teaching and to develop teaching styles. This continues to be an important thrust in the school's current improvement plan. The school is aware that further improvement is needed. In spite of the improvement overall, there remain some weaknesses in teaching and some weak teachers. In almost one in five lessons, teaching was unsatisfactory. (Almost half of these, however, were taught by short-term supply or student teachers, who were new to the school.)

21. Teaching was at its best in English and science where, in three quarters of lessons inspected it was good or very good. It was never unsatisfactory in these subjects. There was a significant amount of good and very good teaching in design and technology and in physical education (games), where half the lessons inspected were good or very good. The information technology teaching seen was never less than satisfactory. In mathematics, teaching was mostly satisfactory; it was good or better in one third of lessons, but unsatisfactory in two of the twelve lessons inspected (one of which was not taught by a permanent member of staff). In spite of some improvements in history and geography since the last inspection, there was still too much unsatisfactory teaching in these subjects. In French, religious education, music and art, where most of the teaching seen was satisfactory, there were nevertheless weaknesses.

22. The school has placed a considerable emphasis on improving schemes of work and lesson planning since the last inspection. Now, in the best departments, strengths of the teaching include effective planning, where learning objectives are clear, and where the teacher has identified suitable ways of assessing how well these objectives are achieved. Lessons are planned to have a variety of activities that motivate the pupils, and teachers choose appropriate methods to meet their needs.

23. During the inspection, teaching was at its best in lessons where teachers actively involved the pupils and used interesting and varied ways of doing this. On these occasions, pupils' interest was aroused and good use was made of the time. These lessons were taught with confidence, in a purposeful atmosphere, and had a well thought through conclusion. In such lessons, teachers showed a good

mastery of their subject and a good knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum.

24. In the lessons where pupils made most progress, teachers ensured a good pace by making the learning objectives explicit to pupils and then ensuring that these objectives were met, and seen to be met, in the time available. Pupils were well managed and teachers made good use of humour to maintain enthusiasm. They had realistic, but high, expectations of all pupils and a good understanding of the learning needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. High profile was given to developing subject-specific vocabulary and skills. Concise and immediate feedback for pupils helped them to improve and to evaluate their own performance and set future targets

25. In almost all lessons, teachers make effective use of support staff, whose expertise is valued. Most teachers explain things clearly. In the great majority of lessons, too, there are very good relationships between teachers and pupils.

26. A strength of much of the teaching in the school is the way teachers expect pupils to aim high and to succeed. There is a helpful emphasis on raising pupils' self-esteem through achievement in their work. This is particularly effective where the teacher also communicates infectious enthusiasm for the subject, as in science.

27. Conversely, a weakness which is common to much of the teaching is that, overall, there are too few open-ended questions in lessons, and teachers give pupils too few opportunities to initiate discussions or use their own ideas as starting-points for learning. In the school as a whole, not enough is done to develop the use of sustained speech by pupils, for example in the form of argument and debate, informal talks, presentations and formal speeches.

28. In the less successful teaching, a number of weaknesses emerge. Sometimes, learning objectives are not specific enough. Too much time is spent on activities that do not do enough to develop pupils' ability in the subject. In some cases, work is not planned at a suitable level – either failing to challenge pupils, or else proving too difficult for the lower attaining pupils. Some lessons concentrate too much on gaining knowledge at the expense of developing understanding and skills. The pace of some lessons is too slow and, as a result, time is not used effectively. Occasionally, where teachers are not subject specialists, resources are not well managed and their allocation takes too much time, making the lesson lose impetus. A few lessons inspected did not start well or end well. Sometimes, well planned lessons did not work out in reality, because the teacher did not hold pupils' attention or stop restless behaviour.

29. Building on what has been achieved since the last inspection, the school must continue its work to improve the quality of teaching. It has realistic plans and a determination to see that this happens.

• **The curriculum and assessment**

30. The school offers a suitable curriculum, except for a particular weakness in music. At present, the school is without a qualified music teacher. The current arrangements allow pupils to have a regular music lesson, which is keeping up their interest and enthusiasm for the subject. However, the work falls well short of what is required of music in the National Curriculum. In other respects, the curriculum is well planned and is broad and balanced for all pupils. It includes all the required subjects of the basic curriculum. In addition, pupils make an early start to learning French, taking up the subject for one hour a week from age nine, when they enter the school. Personal, social and health education is taught partly in separate sessions involving visiting speakers, and partly through other subjects. This is backed up by work done in form times, assemblies and, less formally, through the daily life and climate of the school.

Overall, the provision for pupils' personal development is good.

31. Recently, the school has been right to focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and on raising standards in these subjects. This has paid off.

32. The school has tackled the specific weaknesses in the curriculum which were pointed out at the time of the last inspection. Opportunities for spiritual and cultural development are now good. Religious education now meets the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus. Some drama is included within English, with plans to extend opportunities further. Drugs education and the health aspects of sex education are now covered appropriately. Although the school still does not offer swimming, local arrangements mean that swimming is included within Key Stage 2 before pupils move to their middle school. Subject teachers have given attention to those aspects of their subjects that needed more emphasis.

33. The literacy hour is working well in Years 5 and 6 and is having a marked impact on the attainment and progress of pupils of all abilities. A similar approach is now being incorporated into the teaching of English in Year 7. The school has made a good start on the National Numeracy Strategy, having already piloted similar methods in mathematics teaching before the National Strategy came into force this term.

34. Pupils with English as an additional language are given special support by a small team of specialist teachers and assistants. Their individual needs are assessed accurately and their progress is tracked systematically. Through a mix of individual intensive teaching and additional help with their work in normal lessons, they make good progress in mastering English. Much of this support is of a high quality. It gives pupils with English as an additional language access to the curriculum and makes a significant impact on their attainment and progress.

35. Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. Pupils' individual needs are identified, additional support is tailored to these, and pupils' progress is assessed against the targets in pupils' individual education plans. The school's special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) keeps a close check on how effectively the support is helping pupils to learn. She liaises closely with teachers, to make sure that pupils are being helped to keep abreast of their work in the various subjects, and with other senior managers, to keep an overview of the way that the school is meeting pupils' differing needs. Proper attention is given to both learning and behavioural needs.

36. Pupils go on visits and field trips related to the subjects they are studying. During the inspection, for example, pupils visited local places of worship, as part of their study of religious education. Visitors to the school also contribute to the curriculum, including poets, story-tellers, and a range of specialist speakers who help with work in personal, social and health education.

37. Most parents agree that the school encourages pupils to get involved in more than their daily lessons. The range of extra-curricular activities is not extensive, but is growing. Some of the recent initiatives have been well chosen, with an eye on fostering pupils' personal development and increasing their contact with the wider community and with other schools. Pupils have had an active involvement in setting up the breakfast club and in the anti-bullying survey, linked to the Healthy Schools project. In addition to formally organised activities, such as the Information Technology (IT) club or the library club, and initiatives led by pupils themselves, such as the dance club, pupils have taken part in local events and competitions, including the "Krypton Factor", the Children's Parliament, and the Technology Challenge. This year, the school was one of the host schools for the local Children's University (summer school). Pupils have opportunities to take part in sports, including cricket, athletics, hockey and football, and were involved in the opening ceremony of the East of England Millenium Youth

games.

38. The school has made a good deal of progress in the area of assessment since the last inspection, and the school's improvement plan includes sensible measures for taking things further. Particular areas of weakness mentioned in the last inspection (for example, in French, mathematics, science and design and technology) have been dealt with. There is now a sound assessment framework which leads to regular assessment and recording of pupils' attainment in all subjects. Pupils are aware of how the system works and what the grades mean. The information is being used to identify the needs of groups and of individuals, although the school is aware that more needs to be done by some teachers in this respect. In some subjects, for example in English, teachers are skilled at assessing pupils as a normal part of their day-to-day teaching, and at turning errors and misunderstandings into teaching points. Increasingly, assessment data, including national test results, are being analysed to diagnose aspects of work that need more attention in order to help pupils perform better. This is happening most in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. In all subjects, teachers tell their classes what they are aiming for with the group as a whole, and also set targets for individual pupils. Individual targets are more specific, and hence more useful, in some subjects than in others. In general, they are proving useful in helping teachers and pupils to assess the progress they make and in encouraging pupils to achieve higher things.

39. Pupils' work is marked up to date. The majority of marking gives pupils an accurate picture of how they have done and helps them to see how their work can be improved. Some written comments, are brief, but helpful and to the point, and are backed up by good oral feedback. In other cases, however, marking is cursory, giving pupils few pointers for improvement and little encouragement to try harder.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

40. The school is good at helping pupils in their personal development. It does this not only through the curriculum, but also through the climate it sets. The school sets out in its prospectus the values which it wants to promote. These include an emphasis on equality of opportunity, encouraging mutual respect, the satisfaction of working together, recognising the importance of the wider community, and developing a sense of responsibility for oneself, for others and for the environment. These values are reflected in the daily life of the school. They are linked to a commitment to raising standards and to promoting success. The resulting tone which is set in the school is an important factor in helping pupils develop as people, spiritually, morally, socially and culturally.

41. Pupils are helped to understand and gain insights into values and religious beliefs in religious education lessons and in assemblies. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their own spirituality and religious traditions. They readily do so, not only in lessons but also at break and lunchtimes, in the library and around the school. Prominent displays, which focus on faiths, values and feelings, help create an atmosphere in which such matters are seen to be important. In lessons and in assemblies, as well as in the informal contact between staff and pupils, pupils are taught that their ideas, suggestions and questions are valued. Teachers in a number of subjects take opportunities to encourage pupils to reflect on their own experiences and those of others, and on the way they see the world around them. In science, for example, the teacher used pupils' interest in a recent meteorite shower to convey a sense of the wonder of the universe.

42. Many assemblies, particularly whole school and key stage assemblies, make an important contribution to pupils' spiritual development, as well as to other aspects of their personal development. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. However, not all form assemblies do this well, and a few do not include an act of collective worship.

43. The programme of personal, social and health education sessions tackle a range of moral and social topics directly. This is handled well. In most subjects, moral and social issues are not glossed over, but are given proper consideration. For instance, pupils are encouraged to discuss the motives and intentions of characters in books, to think about the impact of scientific advances on the environment, and to consider the social implications of new technologies. Just as important is the constant reinforcement by staff of the values of honesty, fairness, respect and harmonious relationships, and the emphasis that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. Pupils are expected to take on responsibilities around the school, and to share in discussion and action to improve the school. Since it was set up earlier this year, the School Council has had a key role in deciding on the school uniform, reviewing and improving anti-bullying measures, negotiating the setting up of the breakfast club, and improving the school environment. Pupils are encouraged and expected to work together constructively, both in class and out of it, and most of them respond positively to this expectation.

44. At the time of the last inspection, a key weakness was that the school did not do enough to help pupils explore and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of its pupils in all aspects of its life and work. This former area of weakness is now a strength of the school. Displays, books, resources and work around the school celebrate cultural diversity. This is not restricted solely to the various cultures represented in the school itself, although the school works hard, and with considerable success, to engender in pupils a sense of pride, confidence and spontaneity in talking about their own cultural heritage. Teachers are good at drawing on pupils' own varied experiences, whilst at the same time helping them to deepen their knowledge and to develop a wider understanding and view of the world. Pupils are taught to be sensitive in exploring their own and other cultural traditions. The school has successfully created a climate in which the richness and diversity of other cultures are valued and celebrated.

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

45. The school fulfils its aim to provide a secure and safe environment in which pupils can grow in confidence and can be motivated and challenged to do well in their work. The educational support and guidance pupils receive is good, encouraging them to raise their expectations of themselves.

46. Key staff of the school, including senior managers, key stage co-ordinators and the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), have a very good knowledge of pupils and their individual circumstances. Pupils are confident that they have someone to turn to for advice and support. All staff, including those employed to help pupils who are learning English as an additional language and those helping pupils with special educational needs, work closely as a team to provide good pastoral care. The support and guidance they give pupils is rooted in a determination to raise standards of achievement and to help pupils make progress in their work.

47. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in monitoring both pupils' personal development and their academic progress. This is now recognised as a key responsibility of form teachers and key stage co-ordinators. Educational progress is checked on a regular basis, with teachers using a common system to record pupils' attainment in the various subjects, as well as their effort. Where pupils are seen to be under-performing, or where there are concerns about their attitudes or behaviour, further investigations are carried out, targets are set and action is taken to change things. The school's SENCO plays an important role in following up such cases, and her timetable deliberately allows some flexibility for her to do so. The school has made a good start on using information about pupils' attainment on entry as a basis for tracking progress and for identifying pupils who need extra support or encouragement.

48. The support given both to pupils learning English as an additional language and to pupils with special educational needs is good. Needs are identified, targets for improvement are clear, and progress is properly monitored.

49. The school sets clear expectations of good behaviour. These are shared with pupils and are regularly reinforced in assemblies, in form times, and in lessons, as well as through teachers' more informal contact with pupils around the school. Achievement and effort are rewarded with house points, a system which pupils find motivating. At the same time, there are clear sanctions for poor behaviour. The individual behaviour records in pupils' personal organisers help pupils and teachers to identify patterns of behaviour. There are good arrangements for following up incidences of misbehaviour, involving parents where appropriate. The school takes a strong line on bullying and on racist behaviour, an approach which commands the support of pupils. Through the School Council, pupils have been involved in carrying out a survey on bullying and in analysing the results. They have had a say in how procedures can be improved further and how they themselves can best help one another.

50. The school has suitable arrangements for encouraging good attendance and for following up absences and lateness. However, the school has had a number of different education welfare officers over recent years, and this lack of continuity has made the task more difficult. The school makes use of 'Junior Compact' and 'Passport to Progress' as a way of encouraging good attendance.

51. There are effective procedures to deal with child protection, with good liaison with external agencies. The school's day-to-day procedures help staff to take reasonable steps to protect the pupils in their care from harm and to ensure their health, safety and general well-being. The Healthy Schools project helps with this and, through the active involvement of pupils in the discussion and planning, makes an important contribution to their personal development.

• **Partnership with parents and the community**

52. There is a satisfactory and improving partnership with parents. The school has the support of its parents and strives to involve all parents in children's learning. Staff are seen as approachable. Not all parents are yet ready to take full advantage of the partnership offered by the school, but they have the opportunity to attend, for example, a workshop on helping their children with their reading. A few parents are able to support the school by listening to readers.

53. The parent teacher association has recently restarted and is planning events for the current term. Parents have also been involved in meetings with governors, as in the debate on school uniform. Where children have special educational needs, the school makes every effort to involve parents in annual reviews. Good use is made of translators, of specialist staff who support pupils with English as an additional language and of family members to enable effective communication at meetings or on home visits.

54. Information produced for parents is of good quality. The prospectus is accessible, detailed and consistently reinforces the approachability of the school and the desire to enter a dialogue with parents. The governors' annual report is attractively presented, informative and friendly in tone, although the financial statement is not as readily understandable as the rest of the report.

55. A helpful recent initiative is a regular newsletter which informs parents and also respond to their concerns and suggestions.

56. Parents have the benefit of termly reports in addition to the required annual reports. This means that they receive frequent information about their children's attainment and effort. A sample of annual reports showed that attainment is reported in detail through the use of grades and national curriculum levels. Some written comments usefully explain these levels for parents showing what strengths and weaknesses pupils have. Other comments focus mainly on attitudes or are too general. Some reports have helpful targets for improvement, either suggesting general areas to strengthen or giving specific detail. This good practice, reinforced by the guidance within the staff handbook, does not yet feature consistently in all reports for all year groups.

57. The school has very good links with the local community. For example, since the last inspection, links have been formed with the police, who make an extremely valuable input to personal and social education. A session observed during the inspection week on youth offences, showed a strong contribution to pupils' moral and social development and excellent rapport with pupils, who were eager to discuss questions of responsibility and culpability for various crimes. Pupils have also been winners in a crime prevention poster competition.

58. There are good links with local mosques and temples. A visit to the Gurdwara inspired pupils to produce written work demonstrating not only knowledge they had gained about the Sikh religion, but also exploring some deeper questions such as the position of women and how respect is shown in different religious traditions. The school works extremely sensitively and productively with all sections of the wider community, with good community representation on the governing body.

59. There is frequent community use of the premises, by local youth workers or through hosting events such as the Children's University or County orchestral rehearsals. The school is also willing to work closely with community projects, such as the consultation on local needs for the national childcare strategy. There is some involvement with local business in that the school benefits from sponsorship of 'Junior Compact' to improve attendance and from gifts such as a computer presented by a local company.

60. Pupils participate in activities, such as the Children's Parliament, which give them a sense of the wider community, enhance their understanding of citizenship and give them an opportunity to practice presenting themselves and their ideas to an adult audience. Links with performing arts groups enrich pupils' cultural experience and help them value their cultural heritage, through participating in an Asian dance and music workshop, for example. There has been experience of the community beyond the United Kingdom through a day trip to France for older pupils. Such opportunities have an important impact in broadening pupils' experience and supporting their increasing independence.

61. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection in involving parents and the local community in pupils' learning.

· **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

· **Leadership and management**

62. The leadership provided by the head teacher is inspirational. She has a clear vision for the school and has communicated this very effectively to pupils, staff and parents. She, the deputy headteacher and the two senior teachers have worked together to very good effect in tackling the serious weaknesses identified in the last inspection. These weaknesses have been dealt with effectively; indeed, one former area of weakness, concerning the celebration of cultural diversity, has been turned into a strength of the school.

63. The headteacher has established a clear plan of action for school improvement, with targets focussing on classroom teaching and raising standards of attainment for all pupils. The focus of the whole school is on moving forward and there is evident pride in the progress that has been made so far. The senior team has been successful in creating an ethos that promotes success through high expectations of staff and pupils alike. The deliberate, but not exclusive, focus on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science has paid off, and these subjects, in particular, have made very good progress since the last inspection. Results in the national tests for eleven year-olds show a big improvement and standards are now well above those achieved by other similar schools in English mathematics and science. This represents a very significant achievement by both staff and pupils.

64. The headteacher provides a firm steer to planning for improvement. The school has a comprehensive and well thought out school improvement plan, and separate plans for curriculum and the development of key stage teams. The planning processes for the curriculum and key stage teams are clear and appropriate. There are regular, planned meetings, which monitor and evaluate progress towards achieving the targets for improvement. School development planning processes are now secure. The whole school plan is driving the subject plans. The whole school plan has actions for each target identified, time scales are specified, and financial implications are taken into account.

65. The governors share the head teacher's vision for the school and are good advocates for its work and potential role in the local community. They are aware of the school's priorities for development and have started to take a more active role in the life and work of the school. Working groups meet regularly and take their role seriously. Minutes of meetings are well kept and actions followed up. Governors work well with the headteacher and senior staff to monitor the school's plan for improvement and to evaluate its effect. They are now well placed to plan and review targets for the next phase of the school's improvement.

66. The school's management systems and structures are operating well. They are efficient and effective. Members of staff have up-to-date job descriptions. Responsibility for whole school initiatives, such as the "critical friends" project, is delegated appropriately and unambiguously to senior staff who work enthusiastically to ensure success. The deputy headteacher provides very good support for both the headteacher and the staff, and works in close partnership with the headteacher to ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the school.

67. The senior teachers provide clear educational direction for the key stage teams which they lead and manage. Regular meetings, well chosen topics for discussion, including, for example, analysis of national test results, have helped ensure that all staff maintain a focus on the school's identified priorities. At subject level, teachers have worked conscientiously to address the issues raised in the last inspection, and, with the exception of music, where there have been long-term, ongoing staffing difficulties, every department has improved.

68. The headteacher has successfully created a team of staff who are positive about the future of the school and who are confident that their work is valued. Teachers give high priority to raising the attainment of pupils, and are encouraged by the headteacher to accept the support of Local Education Authority (LEA) advisers in their endeavors to do this. The headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the staff and, together with the governing body, is taking appropriate steps to manage any issues of performance that arise.

69. The governing body is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities, with the exception of teacher appraisal and National Curriculum music.

· **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

70. There are sufficient, appropriately qualified staff to meet the demands of the curriculum except in music, and, to a lesser extent, geography where lack of specialist knowledge has an adverse impact on standards achieved by pupils.

71. There is sufficient support staff for the needs of the curriculum. The administrative staff are aware and supportive of the whole school ethos and drive for improvement and they in turn play a valuable part in contributing to this. All support staff are very well deployed according to a careful rationale based on identified needs. This includes staff who support pupils with special educational needs and those who work with pupils for whom English is an additional language. The impressive skills of many of these staff are used effectively to help pupils in their learning. Their knowledge of individual pupils' attainment, learning needs and behaviour is put to good use in planning work.

72. Arrangements for professional development and staff induction are good. There are a number of recently appointed members of staff. Senior managers take care to help new staff into their role and to support all staff in increasing their expertise and skills. This enables those who are relatively new in post, such as the co-ordinator for special educational needs, to become effective in their roles very quickly, thus overcoming many of the problems associated with a significant number of staff changes.

73. Statutory requirements are not met with regard to appraisal, but good quality planned professional review and development are taking place. There has been a particular focus on improving teaching through a structured programme of classroom observation and feedback from peer observations, combined with external input. This has helped staff to evaluate and improve their own teaching styles.

74. There has been good progress in planning and prioritising professional development since the last inspection. Training has been provided in the subjects specified in the last report, although the impact of this has not yet been fully effective in geography and history. In physical education, the impact of training could not be ascertained, because of staff absence. Support staff have access to training specific to their jobs, whether they work in the classroom or in administrative areas.

75. There have been major accommodation improvements since the last inspection, which have improved staff morale and working conditions. The conversion of the reception area has been especially successful. The library accommodation is excellent, well furnished and attractively laid out. There is adequate specialist accommodation in all curriculum areas, with strengths in physical education, science and information communication technology, where accommodation is very good.

76. There are sufficient resources in all subjects, and these are well used by teachers to help pupils learn. In some subjects, good use is made of resources outside the school. For example, pupils have made a study visit to St Albans in history, and visited places of worship in religious education. However, in geography, pupils do not do enough fieldwork and not enough use is made of the local area to help pupils learn.

77. The library is enthusiastically used by pupils at breaks and lunchtimes. Older pupils run clubs for younger ones. The library is also used effectively as the base for particular projects, such as Book Week or visits from authors. Pupils are taught to use the library on entry to the school, and there is a good range of books and tapes for them to borrow.

The efficiency of the school

78. Financial planning and management are satisfactory. Forward planning is based at present around the current year, but is informed by likely future trends and projections. The resourcing of planned developments has received priority attention, which is sensible given the stage of development of the school.

79. Specific projects, such as the work on teaching styles, are clearly identified within the school improvement plan and costed. As yet, other parts of the plan have less detailed costing information. There has been planned reduction of the inherited surplus through effective spending targeted on priority areas such as the accommodation.

80. The finance committee has recently been reconstituted. Its members have a good understanding of the principles of strategic financial planning and the new committee is well placed to undertake its responsibilities in this area, particularly as its membership now includes the finance assistant who brings valuable knowledge to the committee's discussions.

81. Financial resources are well managed. The school actively seeks good value when spending money. Examples include the careful research into which integrated learning system best suited the pupils' needs, both linguistic and cultural, and the rigorous process used for purchasing computer hardware.

82. The use of teaching and support staff is satisfactory, with notable strengths in the use of staff funded to support pupils with English as an additional language, and those employed to meet special educational needs. Such staff are used very effectively and have a major impact on the attainment of pupils and the progress they make.

83. Accommodation and learning resources are well used. The library effectively supports pupils' literacy through a range of activities, both ongoing and special projects such as Book Week. Good use is made of the newly acquired information technology facilities at lunchtimes and before school. The new breakfast club will extend this use to the further benefit of pupils.

84. Financial control is satisfactory. Following the most recent audit report, many procedures have been documented, addressing all the areas identified within the report. All the recommendations have been addressed. There is good use of the finance assistant's skills to support budgeting and monitoring of expenditure and to assist the governors' finance committee. Routine administration is effective, supporting the work of teachers through, for example, keeping detailed attendance summaries.

85. As the school is small, its unit costs are high. The contextual factors are unfavourable. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection, notably in pupils' attainment. Teaching has improved significantly, but further improvement is still called for. Many aspects of provision, especially for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are of good quality, and pupils' learning is supported by strong and growing community involvement. The school therefore gives satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS

ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

English

86. The school's results in the national tests for eleven year-olds in 1998 were close to the national average and above the results achieved by similar schools. There has been a significant, rising trend in attainment over the last three years. In 1999, the school's results were broadly in line with the national average, and well above the average for similar schools. The school's own data shows that, overall, both boys and girls improved their attainment by well over two National Curriculum levels between the time they took the national tests at the age of seven, and 1999, when their performance was again assessed in the national tests at age eleven. When account is taken of the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, and the very high number for whom English is an additional language, these results are good.

87. Inspection evidence confirms the results of the national tests. Attainment by age eleven is in line with the standards expected nationally in the key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing, including spelling and handwriting. Overall, standards in reading are slightly higher than in writing, although the written work of the highest attaining pupils is above average for their age and demonstrates a high level of technical competence.

88. The quality of the work seen, and the lessons observed, show that pupils of all abilities make good progress in all aspects of the subject throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils in the early stages of learning English, and pupils with special educational needs, often make very good progress.

89. Good progress is sustained by pupils of all abilities in Year 7. The standards attained by most pupils in this year group are at least average for their age in all key English skills, and the written work of the highest attaining pupils is above average. Striking features of their work include not only good spelling, accurate punctuation and neat presentation, but also a confident command of standard written English. Many pupils use well chosen words drawn from an extensive vocabulary, demonstrate a mastery of both formal and informal language, and readily adapt the vocabulary, style and form of their writing to suit its intended purpose and audience. These same good features are also present in the written work of the higher attaining pupils in Year 8. Overall, however, the progress made by pupils in Year 8 is less marked than that of pupils in Year 7. Some Year 8 pupils, both boys and girls, are reluctant to participate and to engage meaningfully with tasks. In spite of this, and in spite of the discontinuity in their learning caused for this year group by staffing problems, most of the higher attaining pupils attain appropriate standards for their age. Overall, however, attainment in Year 8 is well below average: there is a statistically significant number of pupils in the year group who are just beginning to learn English as an additional language, and a relatively high number of pupils in the year have special educational needs.

90. Pupils' response in English lessons is never less than sound, and is often good, or better, in both key stages. In the best lessons, pupils are lively, attentive and enthusiastic. They are very keen to learn, and they contribute more than willingly to discussions. They are interested in the English language and in the texts they share with their teachers, and they want to do well. Often, they demonstrate a very mature determination to unravel the meanings of very challenging texts. They quickly recall language and ideas learned in previous lessons, and they apply what they know to new tasks. They work at a good pace, independently of their teachers, make ready use of word-books and dictionaries, and present their work neatly. They form constructive relationships with one another, with their teachers, and with other adults who work with them. Their behaviour is good. In a few lessons, however, particularly

(though not exclusively) in Key Stage 3, many girls and some boys are reluctant to contribute to discussions. This lack of response has the unfortunate effect of slowing down the pace of lessons, and is detrimental to pupils' progress. In a few lessons, too, pupils become restless when their answers or comments are not immediately welcomed by the teacher.

91. The quality of teaching is mainly good or better, and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. All specialist staff have a good knowledge and understanding of National Curriculum requirements and of the Literacy Strategy. They also understand the learning needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language. The Literacy Hour has been introduced successfully in Years 5 and 6, and is already having a marked impact on pupils' progress and attainment. Strengths of the teaching in both key stages include: effective planning; the high profile given to the development of vocabulary and to reading comprehension; clear learning objectives which are made explicit to pupils; skilful questioning and immediate, helpful feedback for pupils which helps them to improve; high expectations for what pupils can achieve, and the commitment and enthusiasm to help them to do so; the effective use of support staff whose expertise is valued; and, not least, the warm recognition of pupils' moment-by-moment successes, which raises their self-esteem. In a very few lessons which also have many of these strengths, there are, nonetheless, some weaknesses: teachers do not give pupils the chance, at the outset, to say what they already know about the topic which is to be studied, and closed questions invite only very brief spoken responses from pupils, giving them no chance to contribute their own ideas or to use their initiative. Overall, teachers give pupils too few opportunities to initiate discussions or use their own ideas as starting points for learning. In the school as a whole, the use of sustained speech by pupils, for example in the form of argument and debate, informal talks, presentations and formal speeches, is not sufficiently developed.

92. Assessment is a strength of the work in English. Most teachers are skilled in the spontaneous assessment of pupils' responses, whether spoken or written. Homework is marked regularly and sometimes provides a starting-point for further learning. Information gleaned from the monitoring of pupils' progress and from the analysis of national tests and other assessments is used to good effect by staff to organise sets, determine the nature of the support needed by individuals and groups, and to identify general weaknesses in pupils' performance which are then addressed through changes in the curriculum.

93. The co-ordinator is conscientious and hard-working, with the determination to see initiatives through to a successful conclusion, and with a strong commitment to raising the attainment of all pupils. In response to a recommendation in the last inspection report to increase her monitoring role, she has undertaken regular monitoring of teachers' planning and of pupils' work, and has introduced useful monitoring of teaching standards within the department, both by the teachers and by LEA advisory staff. She has also organised and co-ordinated an extensive programme of staff training in readiness for the introduction of the Literacy Hour, and, through these various measures, has been instrumental in achieving coherence and consistency in the work of the department. Both she and other staff give generously of their own time to give additional help to those pupils who need it or who seek it.

94. The first key issue in the last inspection report was to improve the rate of all pupils' progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing. As the encouraging results of the most recent national tests show, significant progress has been made towards addressing this key issue. The use of model texts and the modelling of forms and conventions by teachers, especially through work in the Literacy Hour, is having a marked impact on pupils' knowledge about language, on their skills and pleasure in reading, and on their ability to write with flair and accuracy for an increasing range of purposes. The use of worksheets and of de-contextualised exercises, also criticised in the last inspection, has been reduced to a judicious level, mainly for home-work or to consolidate very necessary skills. Challenging texts, both fiction and non-fiction, now provide the main focus for planned activities which appropriately integrate speaking and listening, reading and writing. Extended writing has largely replaced the use of exercises, although pupils' own writing is seldom used explicitly, during shared text work, to demonstrate the

nature and purpose of redrafting. All staff now emphasise the development of pupils' general and specialist vocabulary, and their sustained effort is rewarded by the pupils' swift assimilation and use of new words to communicate their ideas, thoughts and feelings.

95. The last inspection report observed that pupils of higher prior attainment often did not make sufficient progress, particularly between the ages of 9 and 11. Evidence from the current inspection indicates that this issue has been addressed successfully.

96. Resources for reading have been updated and increased, and the English department is now very well resourced. New books and other materials have been selected carefully so as to represent the social and cultural interests of the pupils, both boys and girls, and the library has been opened up to pupils at all times. As a result, pupils enjoy and make use of it, and boys, in particular have become much more motivated to read.

97. Provision for drama has been increased since the last inspection, primarily through extra-curricular activities such as drama workshops and annual productions. The schemes of work for English have been revised to include planned opportunities for drama and role-play.

98. The English policy document provides sound guidance for the development of language in other areas of the curriculum. All teachers highlight key vocabulary in their particular subject, and there are good examples of reading for information, note-making and writing for a range of purposes, particularly in science. In mathematics, pupils are required to explain the strategies they use in their calculations. In some subjects, opportunities for pupils to engage in discussion and critical evaluation are too often missed.

• **Mathematics**

• 99. Standards in mathematics in the national tests (SATs) for 11 year olds have shown substantial improvement over the last three years. Although still just below average for all schools, a sharp rise in the 1999 tests results has brought them much nearer to those of all schools nationally and well above average when compared with similar schools. This rise in standards of attainment in the subject is a marked improvement from the last report. Overall, both boys and girls improved their attainment by more than two national curriculum levels between the ages of 7 and 11. These results are good, particularly given the high percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and with English as an additional language.

100. Standards of attainment seen in lessons inspected and in pupils' work reflects these results as does attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 3, pupils are attaining at or near to the national expectations in Year 7, but in Year 8 more pupils are attaining below them.

101. Competences in number work and mental calculations are becoming strengths in pupils' work and pupils enjoy the mental and oral starts of lessons. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) has given good support to this. This is an improvement from the last report. Pupils' knowledge of multiplication tables increases through the school and, with the exception of the lowest attaining pupils, is generally sound. Pupils' work in shape and space is in line with their attainment and they know the properties of regular 2D and 3 D figures. Pupils gain an appropriate breadth of knowledge across the different areas of mathematics.

102. Pupils can use and apply their mathematics, for example in science where pupils estimated their measurements, in technology where pupils were able to measure accurately and in some French lessons

which reinforced pupils basic number skills. Overall however, both within mathematics lessons and across other subjects, pupils do not have enough opportunity to practice the application of the mathematics they have learned. As a consequence, they are better at practising skills than they are at applying them This is seen in mathematics lessons at Key Stage 2 where pupils were working on simple probability, and in Key Stage 3 where pupils were learning about averages.

103. Most pupils make good progress in mathematics throughout Key Stage 2. The introduction of the NNS, the booster classes and the targeted support for some Year 6 pupils, has had a real impact on raising pupils' standards and on the progress they make by the end of Key Stage 2. Target setting for each pupil is developing and has started to support the improvement of pupils' standards of work. Pupils with SEN and English as an additional language make very good progress. The setting arrangements with small sets for the lowest attaining pupils, and good support from EAL staff are key factors in this.

104. The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory and sometimes good. There was only one unsatisfactory lesson taught by a permanent member of the teaching staff. The one lesson in which teaching was poor was taught by a short-term supply teacher.

105. Teachers manage pupils successfully and have appropriately high expectations of their attainment and behaviour. They involve pupils well in oral and practical mathematics, with an emphasis on encouraging pupils to explain their methods of calculation. On some occasions, the plenary session at the end of lessons is less successful than the start of lessons. In the few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory there was insufficient attention paid to the needs of individual pupils, particularly those who were having difficulty with the work.

106. Most pupils behave well in the vast majority of lessons. They listen attentively to the teacher and are keen to take part orally. They relate well to the teachers and to each other. When opportunities are given they work well in groups. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good.

107. The department is managed efficiently by the co-ordinator. The LEA has provided good support for the development of the NNS, and the co-ordinator has worked well with other teachers to develop a good scheme of work and ensure a common approach to the structure of mathematics lessons. A start has been made on monitoring the quality of teaching within the department by the co-ordinator. Regular assessment of pupils' standards of attainment in mathematics, linked to target setting is continuing to develop. Support staff are used effectively and the department is well resourced.

• **Science**

108. Results in the national tests for eleven year-olds have shown a gradual improvement over the last four years, although there was a dip in 1998. In 1999, the proportion of pupils reaching the standard expected nationally improved considerably on any previous year and is now broadly in line with all schools. Results now are well above those in similar schools. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels, whilst being below the national figure, showed an improvement on 1998 figures, and brought attainment at this level in line with previous results. Lesson observation and inspection of pupils' work confirm this improvement in standards.

109. Pupils attain higher standards for their age at Key Stage 2 than they do at Key Stage 3. A number of strategies have been effectively employed to raise attainment. Pupils at both key stages are competent in practical work, which is an improvement on the last inspection. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have a more secure knowledge base than at Key Stage 3. They have, for example, a good knowledge of forces, with higher attaining pupils being able to talk about balanced and unbalanced forces. Pupils at

Key Stage 2 use scientific terminology more confidently, whilst, for example, pupils at Key Stage 3 confuse terms such as evaporation and condensation, freezing and melting, and have more difficulty making generalisations. Older pupils have difficulty analysing results and considering the strength of evidence, an area of weakness identified in the last inspection, which still needs further work.

110. Whilst pupils at both key stages generally make good progress in lessons, progress over time is greater at Key Stage 2. Higher attaining pupils are appropriately challenged and make better progress than was the case at the time of the last inspection.

111. Pupils' response was at least satisfactory in the great majority of lessons and good or better in two thirds of lessons. Pupils are interested in science and enjoy their work. They carry out practical work safely and carefully, and work well together in groups. They are attentive, able to concentrate for extended periods and apply themselves well to tasks. Pupils' response to questions varies; in some classes there is an enthusiastic response from most pupils, in others the same few pupils give all the answers. A minority of younger pupils behave immaturely at times.

112. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The substantial majority of lessons were judged to be good or better. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. Lessons, which often have a variety of activities, are well managed and there is a brisk pace. Questioning is used effectively. There are high expectations for all pupils. The co-ordinator has a good knowledge of the subject and communicates his infectious enthusiasm for science, drawing attention to the relevance of science to everyday life. Lessons conclude with an effective plenary. Sometimes, objectives for lessons are rather broad and, whilst work in lessons contributes to these, more precise learning objectives, communicated to pupils at an appropriate time, would help lower attaining pupils in particular. Sometimes lower attaining pupils would benefit from a narrower focus or work at a less complex level.

113. The department has a detailed scheme of work to support learning. Plans are in hand to introduce materials to improve pupils' skills in scientific investigation at Key Stage 3. Information technology is used very effectively to support pupils' learning in science. Although there is no formal written policy on science and language, the department makes a significant contribution to the development of literacy. Pupils' progress in science is monitored carefully. Specific targets are set for pupils, linked to levels of knowledge and understanding, which could usefully be extended to include scientific investigation. Marking of pupils' work could be improved, particularly for scientific investigations, to include comment about why work is good or is judged to be at a particular level, and how it could be improved.

114. The co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and believes in the pupils' capacity to improve. He manages change well and has a clear focus on raising standards. He is broadening pupils' horizons by involving them in events such as the science master class and the Children's Parliament of the Environment.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

Art

115. By age eleven, attainment is in line with the standards expected nationally in all aspects of the subject. By Year 8, attainment is in line with national expectations, and for higher attaining pupils it is above that standard. Pupils with special educational needs reach the standards expected for their age and ability.

116. At Key Stage 2, pupils display the ability to employ the skills of different approaches to art and design. They record their observations with detail and care, express ideas and feelings artistically and develop their visual literacy about the different ways in which ideas, feelings and meanings are communicated in visual form. Their work, for example in drawing and painting fruit and vegetables and developing them into print form, shows an appreciation of pattern and texture, shade and tone. They appreciate the artistic styles available in the locality, for example in producing watercolour paintings of a neighbouring school showing perspective and texture through differing use of paint. Pupils accept opportunities offered to review and modify their work as they progress. They develop their understanding of the work of major artists through study of, for example, the work of Van Gogh and its significance in the world of art.

117. By Year 8, pupils use technical and expressive skills to a higher level. They draw and paint skilfully, research and organise their findings of the work of major artists well, and use their knowledge to apply skills to their own work. Pupils make effective use of the range of resources available to them and extend their learning through experimentation and by refining plans and images. Pupils develop ideas from direct experience and imagination and work effectively in a variety of media, for example paint, pencil, chalk, pastel and collage. Pupils develop an appropriate art and design vocabulary, recording carefully in glossary books, which they find very useful.

1. At both key stages, pupils make good progress within lessons and over time. Pupils make greater progress at Year 8 than in Key Stage 2. Progress in lessons at both key stages is sometimes insufficient, however, given the abilities of pupils, especially higher attainers, where a lack of depth of lessons inhibits the development of more detailed and complex skills.

2. Pupils develop a growing appreciation of the work of major artists and the influence of art within the locality. They modify and refine their skills in using a range of media, and improve their control of the tools at their disposal. In general, pupils are keen and interested in their work. They are eager to participate and want to improve their performance. However, there are a significant number of pupils who display silly, restless behaviour, which interrupts their learning and the learning of others. They do not listen carefully to the teacher and cause fragmentation of lessons. Most children, though, appreciate the opportunities which are offered and respond well to teaching. They work well individually and offer appropriate responses to questions about their own progress and that of their peers.

120. The quality of teaching varies between satisfactory and unsatisfactory. At its best, teaching is well planned with clear learning objectives. The teacher has a secure knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the curriculum and chooses methods, which meet the needs of pupils. This is evident more at Key Stage 3 than Key Stage 2. The teacher gives clear and concise feedback to pupils which enables them to evaluate their own performance and future targets, concentrating appropriately on subject-specific skills and related technical vocabulary. Questioning is good and well targeted at individuals, encouraging response and debate amongst pupils. On the two occasions where teaching was unsatisfactory, this was because the lesson plan aimed to cover too much content, causing the lesson to be rushed and insufficient time provided for the development of detailed and complex skills.

121. The school meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and learning is planned through thorough and detailed schemes of work. Procedures for assessing work are sound and are completed successfully. There are good systems for pupils to evaluate their work and progress with their teacher, so that both self-assessment and formal assessment are recorded. These documents are then acted upon to help plan future teaching and learning. There are some weaknesses in the marking of work, though, especially at Key Stage 2, where written comments can be short and rather negative. There are some very good examples of constructive written feedback at Key Stage 3, which is acted

upon by pupils in developing their own style and ability. The curriculum meets the needs of all groups of pupils at both key stages.

122. Art makes a satisfactory contribution to the ethos of the school in allowing pupils the opportunity to consider the world around them and the chance to reflect upon the impact and effect of art in the community.

123. The quality of the subject leadership is sound and becoming good. The subject leader has worked very hard to produce effective schemes of work and acted upon development and action plans appropriate to the development of the subject. She has many good ideas for the future expansion of work within the department and provides a clear direction for the subject. She receives effective support and advice both from within the school and from the local authority, which she accepts and acts upon appropriately. She has worked hard to raise the profile of the subject and to raise standards achieved. Attendance at moderation meetings and liaison conferences within the locality and authority have enabled her to take the subject forward, and participation in collaborative exhibitions has instilled a sense of pride amongst pupils.

124. Since the last inspection there has been clear and sustained improvement. Issues raised have been acted upon and improved, although comments regarding the precision of short-term planning still apply. However, in all other areas the work of the subject leader, supported by the school, has led to great improvements in standards, progress, the quality of teaching and assessment. Involvement of local artists is an area which has shown a great benefit to pupils, raising the profile of, and achievement within, art.

125. The quality of the accommodation for art is satisfactory, with good provision for the exhibition of pupils' work and that of commercial artists. The quality and quantity of resources are satisfactory and they are well managed and suitably used.

126. The improvements made in the subject since the last inspection, the enthusiasm and dedication of the subject leader, plans for future developments and the supportive nature of the school mean that the subject is well placed to make further progress in the future.

119. **Design and Technology**

127. Pupils in all year groups produce design and technology work that is in line with national expectations. It is usually stronger in the *making* activities than in the *design* processes that the pupils cover, particularly when working in resistant materials or technologies such as electrical or mechanical control systems. In food technology, they carry out research into the characteristics of different ingredients and use the information to design variations to recipes and products such as dairy product drinks, soups and vegetarian burgers.

128. Pupils make good progress in skill development. They work with confidence using quite demanding equipment and tools across the different material areas. They make good use of the basic design concepts of shape, colour, texture and pattern in their textiles projects and demonstrate skill with sewing machines and various hand-stitching techniques. Unfortunately, they only rarely get opportunities to develop work that allows them to contribute to the design specification in a way that would help them to understand more fully the features that make a design successful. This limits the progress they can make.

129. Pupils listen attentively to instructions or demonstrations and they follow safety instructions

well, for example when soldering components to make an electrically activated model clown. They enjoy work in design and technology and collaborate well in joint projects, when sharing ideas or when advising each other on how to progress. There are opportunities to use IT in some of the work, such as the use of design software to help design packaging or the use of the computers on posters to promote healthy eating.

130. The teaching of design and technology, in all materials, was never less than satisfactory and in half the lessons inspected it was good. Teachers have sound subject expertise and they have done a lot of development work on the schemes of work and lesson planning since the last inspection. The subject co-ordinator provides effective leadership and management of the subject and has worked closely with other schools to ensure a realistic level of challenge and progression in the pupils' work.

131. The school is well provided for with accommodation and teaching resources for the subject. The workshop safety issues highlighted in the last report have been resolved.

119. **Geography**

132. Standards of attainment are below the standards expected nationally by the end of Year 6. Pupils can recall simple facts about the Swat Valley in Pakistan and higher attaining pupils can describe the landscape and the jobs which people do. They have some good locational knowledge. Attainment in map and enquiry skills is too low and pupils rarely draw their own maps and plans. By the end of Year 8, pupils have gained knowledge of different farming systems and understand the differences between primary and secondary industry. Some higher attaining pupils do achieve good standards, for example, in their work on tourism in Kenya. However, attainment overall is below national expectation by the end of Year 8. Pupils show a limited understanding of physical processes and some aspects of weather in particular.

133. Progress is unsatisfactory in both key stages. Pupils do make some progress in each key stage, but could make more progress if work was planned at a high enough level and matched more closely to meet the needs of individual pupils. High attaining pupils often find the tasks set in class too easy and should be making more progress. Pupils with special educational needs and in the early stages of learning English as an additional language make good progress because of the effective support they receive within lessons.

134. Pupils generally have positive attitudes to their geography work and Year 8 pupils often display a mature approach. Pupils are interested, settle to their tasks quickly and are usually well behaved. They work well together in pairs and small groups, but have little opportunity to take more responsibility for their own learning. However, a small number of pupils sometimes fail to listen attentively to their teacher or to each other and lack concentration. On occasion, pupils, especially girls, are reluctant to respond to questions from their teacher and take little active part in the lesson.

135. Although there has been some improvement in the teaching of geography, there are some weaknesses, identified in the last inspection report, which still need to be put right. Lessons do not always start crisply and pupils are not always managed well to ensure that they are listening. The pace of lessons is often too slow and time is not used effectively. On occasion, there is a lack of subject knowledge, especially in Key Stage 3. Work is not planned at an appropriate level and is not challenging enough. Lessons now have clear learning objectives, which are shared with pupils. Good use is made of praise, and activities are explained clearly. Homework is set regularly. A particular strength of the teaching is the consistent marking, which helps pupils to improve their work.

136. There are plans to revise schemes of work to meet the requirements of the revised National Curriculum. Present schemes of work do not provide enough guidance to ensure that pupils make good progress and build on the knowledge gained in their lower schools.

137. Some progress has been made since the last inspection in developing assessment procedures, but assessment is not used systematically enough to plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

119.

History

138. Standards of attainment are below the standards expected nationally by age eleven and by Year 8. Some higher attaining pupils achieve standards commensurate with their age, but attainment is not balanced across the various aspects of history. Although pupils have some good historical knowledge and understanding of the periods that they study, the development of historical skills is not as good as it should be, in particular, in terms of enquiry and of pupils organising and communicating their own ideas and findings. Some pupils are working more in line with the national expectation. For example, in one Year 5 lesson, pupils showed that they could make deductions using a range of artefacts and use the knowledge gained to answer questions about everyday life in Tudor times. Other pupils in Key Stage 2 are less secure in their use of historical sources, but can recall with enthusiasm, aspects of Spartan life in Ancient Greece. There has been some improvement in standards of work for higher attaining pupils in Key Stage 3, particularly in undertaking more in-depth enquiry, for example into the reasons why Henry VIII made the break from Rome; but overall, pupils are not able to select and use information from a range of sources, and work with any great independence.

139. Pupils make unsatisfactory progress in both key stages. Progress is limited by the level at which work is planned, the slow pace of some lessons, and in particular, the fact that work is not matched to the needs of individual pupils, especially higher attaining pupils. In general, pupils with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, make sound or good progress because of the adult support they receive. This is not always the case for pupils who are fluent orally, but do not read with confidence.

140. Pupils are generally well behaved. They are interested, and younger pupils enjoy their history lessons and are motivated by the activities. They mostly concentrate and listen well to their teacher and to each other and are learning to work co-operatively in small groups. Some older pupils find listening difficult and talk when their teacher is talking. Not all pupils are keen to respond to questions and, on occasion, girls offer no response at all.

141. The teaching of history varies. There is some very good teaching of the youngest pupils, and some satisfactory teaching of the oldest pupils. Teaching overall remains unsatisfactory because of a number of weaknesses. The pace of lessons is too slow and too much time is spent on talking to the pupils. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are too low and there is little challenge, especially for higher attaining pupils. However, in the best lessons, motivating activities are planned, and the work is well prepared with clear learning objectives. Teachers make effective use of praise, humour, support and encouragement. A strong feature is the use of keywords on the board, with language clearly explained. Marking of pupils' work is consistent and helpful.

142. History and geography are managed by the humanities co-ordinator. There has been some improvement in the management of history and geography since the last inspection. Some work has been done on developing schemes of work and there are plans to revise the schemes of work to meet the requirements of the revised National Curriculum. Medium-term plans are in place for both subjects, but these do not give sufficient guidance on how skills in both subjects are to be taught; in this respect,

planned progression through the key stages is not spelled out, building on pupils' prior attainment in their lower schools. At present, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to use information technology. The use of visits and visitors to enrich and enliven the history curriculum remains a strength, although fieldwork is less well developed in geography. Some progress has been made in putting into place assessment procedures, but more work needs to be done in developing a variety of assessment tasks and in using assessment to help plan the next steps in pupils' work.

119.

Information Technology

143. Attainment in information technology (IT) at both key stages is in line with expected standards. It is particularly strong in desk-top publishing work when pupils work on posters, illustrated poems and newsletters. Recent investments in new resources will help correct the absence of work with electronic communication, such as E-mail, information search on the Internet, and web page authoring.

144. Younger pupils soon learn to use the different computer platforms and models across the school. They develop confidence in accessing software, including that on CD-ROM, establishing files, saving, and printing. They use the mouse and correct keyboard skills to manipulate text and graphics. In Years 7 and 8, they demonstrate a good command of click-and-drag techniques, use icons and menus, and confidently navigate between multi-layered screens and programmes, as when researching CD-ROMs on bacteria or classifying rock samples in science lessons.

145. Pupils make good progress in their specific IT lessons, where the current focus is on communication and handling text and graphics. They are also progressing in their IT skills when they use IT in other lessons to enhance their learning, or in out-of-hours clubs, for example carrying out extended research into the history of Shakespeare from the library CD-ROM collection.

146. This commitment to using IT to support other work has led to a significant investment in an Integrated Learning System to help improve the literacy standards of younger pupils. There are still only limited chances for pupils to use IT for demanding independent learning, or for high order problem-solving work.

147. Nearly all pupils enjoy the subject and they demonstrate a good balance of enthusiasm and the self-control when they work as individuals or in small groups. Pupils take pride in their IT work, and the school takes every opportunity to celebrate their success with good quality displays.

148. The teaching in IT lessons and the way teachers use IT to support work in other subjects were always satisfactory and often better. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of the equipment, including those using the new PC network. Lesson planning is good, and the current scheme of work is under revision in recognition of the fuller opportunities the new resources offer. Pupils are expected to use their individual IT logbook to help monitor their use of IT and to make an initial self-assessment. Teachers are now introducing more rigorous assessment strategies in line with the school's policy, but assessment needs to include a recognition of progress made by pupils with IT facilities at home when planning future learning.

149. The department is well led and managed, and the school has committed itself to a large investment in new and re-organised facilities. Teachers have taken up the challenge of additional training to make best use of this in their own teaching. The focus of this work is on helping to improve pupils' own IT skills as well as on using IT to improve learning in the different subjects.

119. Modern Foreign Language

150. Pupils begin learning French from age 9, two years earlier than required. By the age of 11, when a modern foreign language becomes a compulsory part of the National Curriculum, they can already understand a range of basic French phrases. They can greet people, introduce themselves, and express simple opinions. They have learned a stock of useful words and phrases (including, for instance, numbers, colours, days of the week, dates, and school subjects). Most of them can understand short statements and questions in French using this familiar language, although many need a good deal of support (for example, through repetition and gesture). Often, they have trouble recalling words and phrases and pronouncing them accurately, and more should be expected of them in this respect.

151. By Year 8, standards are below what is expected for pupils of their age. They are lower than they should be when compared with what the same pupils achieve in some other subjects. The range of language they can understand and recall is too limited, particularly in view of their early start in Year 5. In speaking, they perform best when giving short, memorised presentations, for example, describing their daily routine. They find it difficult to adapt what they have learned or to answer questions. Mostly, they give short, simple replies, usually a single word or very short phrase. They find it hard to link words and phrases together. Very few can take part in short conversations. A few pupils speak with good pronunciation and reasonable fluency – more so in Year 7 than in Year 8. For many pupils, pronunciation is approximate, but understandable, and speech is halting. In a few cases, pronunciation is poor. Pupils understand familiar, well-rehearsed language. If recently practised language is combined with other language learned earlier, they are easily confused. They are not used to coping with the sustained use of French by the teacher. Few pupils have a sound grasp of language structure. Pupils in Year 7 have a better understanding of simple grammar than Year 8 pupils, but they still have difficulty working out how to say or write things for themselves. In writing, higher attaining pupils go beyond copying words and phrases to build up short descriptions or messages. For other pupils, written work is very disjointed and shows that many are not clear about the meaning or purpose of what they are writing.

152. In most lessons, pupils make satisfactory progress in terms of learning and practising new words and phrases. They are not learning well enough to apply and use these in combination with other language. Over their time in the school, pupils do not make enough progress, because they are not covering enough and are not mastering the work thoroughly enough. Also, progress is too slow in developing the skills needed to understand and use the language confidently. Some lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are finding it particularly hard to make sense of what they are doing and are getting left behind.

153. Most pupils are keen to take part, although, in their eagerness, they tend to shout out, often before properly thinking things through. They enjoy it most when they are actively involved. Most pupils are co-operative but some pupils, boys especially, need constant reminders to pay attention, to listen carefully and to concentrate. Pupils rely too heavily on English being used for the business of the classroom and are too easily put off if they do not understand things immediately. When answering questions, they rarely try to extend their reply beyond the bare minimum required – although pupils in Year 7 are better in this respect.

154. Whilst much of the teaching of French is satisfactory, there are some weaknesses. The teacher provides pupils with a good model of spoken French. In lessons inspected, the teaching was at its best when the teacher involved the pupils in activities which made them practise and use the language intensively, without the need for a lot of English. The teacher found interesting and varied ways of doing this, and set a good pace, especially when presenting and practising new language. Pupils' interest was aroused and good use was made of the time. At other times, however, the pace was too slow, and too much time was spent on activities that did not do enough to develop pupils' ability to

communicate. Sometimes, good ideas did not work out in practice because the teacher did not hold pupils' attention or nip restless behaviour in the bud. In general, there is too much emphasis on individual words and phrases, and not enough attention is paid to helping pupils learn how to join these together. In some lessons, there is an over-reliance on English and, as a result, pupils do not have enough contact with the sustained use of French. They are not being taught systematically enough the French they need for the business of the classroom.

155. Since the last inspection, a number of improvements have been made. A scheme of work has been drawn up which takes account of the National Curriculum. It includes clearer short-term goals for pupils. A system is now in place for assessing pupils' oral work on a regular basis, and, indeed, some pupils are keen to complete their end-of-unit assessments outside lesson time. Teaching methods have been extended and now include suitable ways of encouraging pupils to practise orally with a sense of purpose and progress. Ideas used in the National Literacy Strategy are being adapted for teaching French. More now needs to be done to raise the level of attainment, so that pupils cover more ground, recall words and structures more accurately, and improve their skills in understanding and using the language. This need has been recognised and is already being targeted in the subject development plan.

119. **Music**

156. Due to difficulties experienced in recruiting and retaining an appropriately qualified teacher with expertise in music, the school at present employs an unqualified teacher as an instructor on a temporary short-term contract. The teacher has worked within the music department for two weeks. The school does not at present comply with the statutory requirement to teach the programmes of study of the National Curriculum, and as such no judgement can be made regarding the attainment and progress of pupils against National Curriculum standards. There is also insufficient evidence for a judgement to be made about the leadership and management of the subject and the appropriateness of the curriculum offered. This situation is unsatisfactory.

157. At both key stages, pupils are working through a temporary scheme of work associated with the Kpanlogo rhythms of Africa. This is ensuring that they are receiving a musical experience and maintaining an interest and enthusiasm for music in general, but it falls well short of what the National Curriculum requires. Pupils at Key Stage 2 use and respond to rhythms played either by the teacher or by their peers. They work on "call-and-response" rhythms, progressing from individual play with hands, to using percussion instruments in groups and playing in parts. At Key Stage 3, pupils develop from the above programme to work through Kpanlogo rhythms of a more complex nature, again in a call-and-response fashion. This helps to foster their enthusiasm for music and gives them experience of music from a culture and part of the world different from their own.

158. The quality of teaching varies from good to poor. Where it is best, the lesson is clearly planned, with appropriate learning objectives. There is a good pace to the lesson and the teacher is secure in his knowledge of the aspect of music being taught. He teaches with enthusiasm and sets tasks which challenge pupils' understanding and develop their skills of playing a rhythm. Ongoing assessment within the lesson is good and is used to improve the performance of individuals. Where teaching is poor, this is because the pace of the lesson is slow and objectives are unclear. Activities do not challenge children to achieve and the teacher is unable to make clear teaching points because management of pupils is poor and pupils are not made to concentrate properly. The lesson deteriorates and control is lost. Resources are used inappropriately and their allocation takes too much time, thus making the lesson disjointed, losing any impetus.

159. The pupils' response ranges from good to poor. In lessons where it is good, pupils are well motivated and show enjoyment of the work. Most sustain concentration and work well in collaborative situations. They behave well and offer suggestions for improving their performance and that of others.

In lessons where response is poor, pupils are noisy and unsettled, displaying unruly behaviour and constantly interrupting the lesson with inappropriate comments and actions. Boys behave badly on such occasions and hinder the progress of girls, who attempt to make progress despite the fragmented nature of the lesson. When this happens, pupils show little respect for the teacher and are very noisy and unsettled when allocating, playing or putting away the percussion instruments.

160. Accommodation and resources for teaching music are satisfactory in both quantity and quality, with the exception of a few musical instruments which are in a poor state of repair. The issue of staffing is a serious one which must be addressed quickly. It was noted in the previous inspection that there had been frequent staff changes and this situation continues. Nevertheless, it is recognised that both the school and the teacher are making great efforts to rectify this situation and are continuing to provide a musical experience for pupils which is allowing many of them to maintain an interest in the subject.

119.

Physical Education

161. Because of timetabling arrangements and the absence of the subject leader, there was insufficient evidence to form a judgement on the attainment and progress of pupils in gymnastics, dance or girls' games. In boys' games, attainment when pupils enter the school at Year 5 is below national expectations, but by Year 8 it is in line with national expectations. In Key Stage 2, pupils develop skills of dribbling with both the inside and outside of their feet keeping a ball under control, in both widened and confined spaces. They begin to develop awareness of space available to them but as yet have little understanding of tactics and strategies for attack and defence. Pupils play small-sided versions of major games of an invasion nature and sustain energetic activity for appropriate periods of time. Their ability to find solutions to problems presented in game situations is not yet well developed and they find it difficult to make evaluative judgements about their own performance and that of others. By Year 8, pupils perform in a variety of small-sided versions of major competitive games and extend the skills and principles learned in earlier years. They develop rules and scoring systems for their games and devise strategies and tactics appropriate to exploit spaces on the pitch and weaknesses in opponents' play. Pupils adapt and refine existing skills, applying them to game situations and show the ability to use skills with precision. Pupils recognise the importance of rules and devise their own to extend learning and ability.

162. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout their time at the school. They move from the position of basic skill level, with little tactical awareness, to a level where they play major games with success and understand and appreciate the skills, tactics and strategies required to be successful. Pupils extend skills of technique and control at a rate which is appropriate for their age and ability.

163. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons is generally satisfactory. They are very keen and eager to participate, and enjoy the opportunities they are given. Relationships are sound and pupils make constructive comments about their own performance, and that of others, which are sensitive and thoughtful. This is especially true at Key Stage 3. Pupils are generally trustworthy and honest, keen to succeed and sustain concentration. Where attitudes are less satisfactory, at Key Stage 2, pupils pay less attention to their teacher and show little inclination towards making progress in their learning. As they do not listen carefully to their teacher, they often miss the purpose behind the task, causing disruption to their learning.

164. The quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and is sometimes good. Where it is best, the teacher has secure subject knowledge and lessons are taught with confidence. There are good relationships and good use of humour to maintain enthusiasm successfully. The teacher ensures a good pace to the lesson and is clear in assessing appropriate objectives to be achieved. The purposeful atmosphere within the lesson ensures that these objectives are met. Where teaching is less successful,

the pace of the lesson is slower and time is not well used.

165. Schemes of work are clear and detailed, linked closely to the programmes of study within the National Curriculum. All aspects of the curriculum are met within the school, with the exception of swimming at Key Stage 2. However, thanks to a successful local agreement, swimming is taught to pupils at Key Stage 2 before they enter the school. There is equality of access and opportunity to all aspects of the programmes of study. Procedures for informal assessment of pupil progress are satisfactory. Assessment information is not, however, used sufficiently to influence future planning and teaching, which keeps to a set format. Extra-curricular activities, such as the successful hockey league matches, rounders competition, cricket club and football coaching opportunities, undoubtedly make a sound contribution to the progress of pupils. If they could be extended further, the achievement and ability of pupils could be raised to a higher level.

166. Physical education makes a satisfactory contribution to the social development of all pupils with its emphasis on co-operation and teamwork. At Key Stage 3, it makes a good contribution, as wider opportunities are available for collaboration and collective decision-making. In addition, at Key Stage 3, pupils become more aware of the need for, and importance of, rules within games. This makes a positive contribution to their moral development.

167. Due to the absence of the subject leader it is not possible to make a judgement on the leadership and management of the subject. However, a member of the school's senior management team is overseeing developments in physical education. He is aware of the needs of the subject, has appropriate expertise and experience and is doing a good job in maintaining the profile of the subject and ensuring that appropriate opportunities are offered. In difficult circumstances, he is very successful in his efforts.

168. The management and use of available resources is good and the accommodation for the subject is also of a good standard.

169. Since the last inspection the school has worked hard to improve the quality of provision and the standards achieved. This work has been successful and there is evidence of clear and sustained improvement. Continuing difficulties with leadership of the subject due to ongoing absence need to be addressed, though, if this improvement is to be maintained.

119.

Religious Education

119. 170. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' standards of attainment are lower than the national expectations. They have gained knowledge about the sacred writings of a range of world religions including those of Jews, Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs. They also know about the use of symbols both in everyday life and in different religions. In both religious education (RE) lessons and in the general day to day life of the school, pupils show respect for these different sacred writings and for the beliefs of others. They are developing an awareness of some of the fundamental questions of life raised by human experiences and are developing positive attitudes towards other people. They have an increasing sense of belonging to different groups and understand that some of these groups may be based on religious beliefs.

171. Attainment improves as pupils progress through the school. By the end of Year 8, pupils standards of attainment are closer to the national expectations. They show good factual knowledge about Islam, about the life of Muhammad and the importance of prayer for a Muslim. They are also able to identify similar elements in worship and celebration across the main religions. In Key Stage 3 pupils are able to relate their knowledge about religious issues to their personal experience, and the teaching ensures that opportunities are provided for them to describe the relevance of the topics being studied to their own lives.

172. Over time, from Year 5 to year 8, pupils make good progress in both factual knowledge of the key aspects of the major religions and in developing their religious understanding. They make progress in developing a personal view of the major aspects of religion such as prayer and worship.. Carefully structured written tasks ensure that the lower attaining pupils and pupils with SEN, and EAL pupils make good progress. However, some activities do not challenge the highest attaining pupils thinking sufficiently, and more opportunities need to be given, in both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 to helping pupils to develop structured and reasoned arguments for their beliefs.

173. The quality of teaching seen in lessons inspected was generally satisfactory. Evidence from discussions with pupils, and the tolerant religious ethos of the school would suggest that it is successful. The teacher has a good knowledge and understanding of RE. Lessons are thoroughly prepared and consideration and thought is given to ensuring a variety of activities and approaches. Good use is made of resources in the community and visits are planned and used successfully to broaden and develop pupil's experiences and understanding. Positive teacher pupil relationships, along with encouraging feedback to pupils are consistent strengths in the teaching. In the most successful lessons, the teacher makes good use of pupils' previously learned knowledge to lead into new areas of learning. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, too much time was spent on a low-level task, which limited the progress pupils made in that lesson. Assessment is undertaken effectively as part of day to day teaching strategies. Pupils' work is regularly marked, and they understand the meaning of the grades awarded. Further development of assessment in terms of levels, in line with the recommendations of the Agreed Syllabus, would support the schools continuing emphasis on the raising of pupils' standards of attainment. The curriculum co-ordinator has identified the need for such development in the departments' development plan.

174. Pupils' response in RE lessons is frequently good and never less than satisfactory. They are interested in their work and behave well. Pupils are attentive and listen to each other. They have a positive approach to the subject, largely due to the supportive and encouraging teaching style of the specialist teacher.

175. The curriculum follows the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus and the time allocated to it is broadly in line with that recommend in it.

119. **PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

119. **SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

176. The inspection was carried out by a team of ten inspectors (including a lay inspector). The equivalent of 23 inspector days was spent gathering first-hand evidence upon which judgements were made. During the inspection, 71 lessons or part lessons were inspected. (This amounted to 66.4 hours.) All teachers present in the school were seen teaching. Other inspection activities included the observation of registrations, form times, assemblies, extra-curricular activities and the movement and behaviour of pupils around the school site.

177. A range of pupils' work from all year groups, representing the full range of attainment, was scrutinised. Planned discussions were held with these pupils. Further discussions were held with pupils about their work in science and in information technology, and pupils were heard reading. A sample of pupils' records was inspected, including those relating to special educational needs and attendance. School documentation was examined and analysed, including policies, schemes of work, teachers' planning, school development and action plans, minutes of meetings and financial papers.

178. Over thirty discussions were held with members of the teaching and non-teaching staff, the chair of governors, and the governor with responsibility for special educational needs.

179. The lead inspector held a meeting for parents prior to the inspection, which was attended by 6 parents. A questionnaire was sent to the parents of 223 pupils before the inspection; 80 responses were received and analysed.

119. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

119. **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	223	3	44	136

119. **Teachers and classes**

119. **Qualified teachers (Y5 – Y8)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	13.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	17.02

119. **Education support staff (Y5 – Y8)**

Total number of education support staff:	11
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	182

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	83%
Average teaching group size:	KS2 13
	KS3 21

119. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998-99
	£
Total Income	543,224.00
Total Expenditure	532,039.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,313.21
Balance brought forward from previous year	74,867.00
Balance carried forward to next year	86,052.00

119. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 223

Number of questionnaires returned: 80

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	25	61	8	6	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	38	49	5	3	5
The school handles complaints from parents well	21	51	13	12	4
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	24	47	18	10	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	37	49	3	6	5
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	29	56	8	5	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	29	49	14	6	1
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	33	45	10	9	3
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	22	55	17	5	0
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	23	52	17	5	3
My child(ren) like(s) school	44	44	5	4	3

NB: Percentages of responses are rounded to the nearest whole number, sum may not = 100