

## INSPECTION REPORT

South Charnwood High School  
Markfield, Leicester

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique Reference Number: 120247

Headteacher: Mr James Etchingham

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Reporting inspector: Mrs Susan Simper  
12970

Dates of inspection: 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> June 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 704968

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:	10 to 14
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Broad Lane Markfield Leicestershire LE67 9TB
Telephone number:	01530 242351
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Cornwell
Date of previous inspection:	June 1994

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Bryan Findley, Lay Inspector		Leadership and Management Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development Attendance Support, Guidance and Pupils' Welfare Partnership with Parents and Community Staffing Learning Resources Accommodation
David Bray	Music	
Ann Davies	Physical Education	
Guy Dickens	English	
Maurice Edwards	Mathematics	
Maureen Harris	Information Technology	
Michael Lewis	Religious Education	
Janice Martin	Modern Foreign Languages	Assessment
Philip Mason	Equal Opportunities	Special Educational Needs
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	Design and Technology	Efficiency
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## **MAIN FINDINGS**

### **What the school does well**

- Pupils come into the school with below average attainment, make good progress and leave with above average attainment.
- The attainment of pupils is above average in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, information technology, geography and history by age 14.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and make good progress.
- Standards of numeracy are above average.
- The vast majority of pupils show positive attitudes to their work and behave well.
- Good moral and social values are promoted.
- Teaching is satisfactory or better in over 8 out of 10 lessons and good or very good in 4 out of 10 lessons.
- Good arrangements are made to ensure smooth transfer from primary schools and to upper schools.
- There is good financial planning, and resources are used efficiently.
- The school provides good value for money.

### **Where the school has weaknesses**

- I. At age 11, attainment in English, mathematics and science in national tests is below average and well below that of similar schools.
- II. Pupils' skills in writing and listening are below those of speaking and reading at age 11.
- III. Pupils' attainment is below average in religious education at all ages and music by age 14.
- IV. Unsatisfactory teaching is found in 1 in 7 lessons.
- V. Assessment information is not used sufficiently to help individual pupils improve, or to set school targets.
- VI. Reports to parents do not provide required information on progress or report separately on information technology.
- VII. Systems to monitor the academic and personal progress of pupils are weak.
- VIII. Too little time is spent on development planning, monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses.

South Charnwood High School aims to produce thinking, informed and compassionate young people, able to benefit fully from succeeding stages of education. The school is successful in meeting these aspirations. Pupils make good progress in most subjects, and leave the school as mature and confident young people with good standards of attainment.

### **How the school has improved since the last inspection**

South Charnwood High School was last inspected in June 1994. Since that time there have been sound improvements in attainment during a period of significant growth and change, and recent staffing difficulties. In the last report, although judgements on attainment were imprecisely expressed, attainment in mathematics, and most other subjects, appears broadly similar. Attainment in English and science has improved and is now above average. Attainment in history and geography has risen, but in religious education and music has fallen and is now below average. The quality of teaching has remained broadly similar, but temporary staffing arrangements affecting teaching during this inspection were not a feature of the last.

Progress against the key issues for action identified in the last report is as follows:

- IX. Issues 1 and 2: challenging older and able pupils. Sound progress has been made in increasing the pace of learning for older pupils. More able pupils are now sufficiently challenged, other than in science, modern foreign languages and religious education.
- X. Issue 3: assessment. Good progress has been made in the development of an assessment policy, and systems of assessing against national curriculum criteria have improved. Marking across the school remains inconsistent.
- XI. Issue 4: planning. There is now more long term planning, and the development plan is linked to financial planning. The school development plan is sound, but is still not used consistently in subjects to address the priorities of the school, and effectiveness has not been evaluated. The senior management team have reviewed and clarified their roles.
- XII. Issue 5: worship. Progress has been unsatisfactory. The school still does not meet the requirements for collective worship.

Overall progress against the action plan has been sound. The school has demonstrated the ability to improve standards of achievement and maintain an orderly environment in which pupils make good progress, despite difficult circumstances. The capacity for improvement under current circumstances is sound.

**Standards in subjects**

The following table shows standards achieved in national tests in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			<i>well above average</i> A
			<i>above average</i> B
Key Stage 2 Tests	D	E	<i>average</i> C
Key Stage 3 Tests	C	D	<i>below average</i> D
			<i>well below average</i> E

For pupils currently in the school, attainment in subjects is as follows:

By age 11, attainment is below national expectation in English and mathematics but close to the national average in science. Attainment in information technology is average. In religious education, attainment is below that expected for the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus. In other subjects pupils attain well in design and technology and art; in line with what is usually seen in geography, history, physical education and French; and below the usual standard in music.

By age 14, attainment is above the national expectation in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history and information technology. It is average in art, modern foreign languages and physical education. In music and religious education, attainment is below that expected.



## Quality of teaching

	<b>Overall quality</b>	<b>Most effective in:</b>	<b>Least effective in:</b>
Year 6	Satisfactory	Information technology	Science*
Years 7 - 9	Satisfactory	Information technology	History * Religious Education *
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

\* Although some of the teaching observed was unsatisfactory, in all these subjects there were also lessons of high quality and, in history and religious education, very high quality.

In over eight out of ten lessons the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory or better. It is good or better in four in ten lessons and very good or excellent in two in ten. These lessons enable pupils to make good progress and achieve good standards. One in seven lessons have notable weaknesses and are unsatisfactory. In most subjects there are significant variations in the quality of the teaching, which are principally caused by temporary staffing arrangements.

*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	With the exception of a few boys in Year 6, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils are trustworthy, and take care of the school environment.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Pupils are punctual at the start of the day and move promptly to lessons.
Ethos*	Positive ethos with commitment to high standards. Pupils have a good attitude to learning. Good relationships flourish and pupils develop independence and a mature approach to learning.
Leadership and management	The headteacher provides sound leadership. Senior managers have too many responsibilities and do not spend enough time evaluating the work of the school or planning for the future. The governing body is effective in managing the budget, but is insufficiently involved with other aspects of its role. Subject leadership is mainly good. The pastoral system is not effective in monitoring the progress of pupils. Monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning are a weakness at all levels. Development planning is sound for the current year, but is inconsistent in quality and use.
Curriculum	Good breadth, and makes provision for subjects required, but too little time for art, music and religious education. Positive contribution made to personal and social development. Good range of extra-curricular activities, especially sport.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Good provision for moral and social development. Sound cultural development, but insufficient cultural diversity. Spiritual provision unsatisfactory. Requirements for daily worship not met.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Most staff well qualified, and sufficient teachers to meet needs of curriculum, but current high levels of temporary staffing affecting teaching. Support and technical staff effectively used. Adequate accommodation of poor quality but well used and maintained. Resources adequate, but too few non-fiction library books.
Value for money	Pupils receive a sound education at economic cost, make good progress, and achieve good standards. The school provides good value for money.

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

## **The parents' views of the school**

### **What most parents like about the school**

- XIII. Their children like attending the school.
- XIV. Their children achieve a good standard of work.
- XV. Standards of behaviour are good.
- XVI. They approve of the values and attitudes promoted.
- XVII. They find it easy to approach the school if they have concerns or questions.
- XVIII. They feel well informed about their child's progress.
- XIX. Most are satisfied with the homework their children are set.
- XX. Their children are encouraged to be involved in activities outside lessons.
- XXI. The smooth transfer from primary school.

### **What some parents are not happy about**

- XXII. Some parents would like a clearer t.
- XXIII. Some are concerned that the school well.
- XXIV. Some would welcome greater f the school.
- XXV. Some parents are not clear about ey have concerns about their child.
- XXVI. Some parents expressed concern

The great majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire, or who spoke at the meeting for parents, agree or strongly agree with the positive views expressed about the school that are set out above. Approximately 18%, or fewer, respondents indicated they are not happy with the aspects indicated.

However, the inspection finds that:

- XXVII. reports received by parents provide insufficient information, as required, about the progress made by pupils, and information technology is not reported separately.
- XXVIII. the scheme of work for mathematics, of which parents complain, is used more effectively by some teachers than others, and is being phased out by the new head of department.
- XXIX. the pastoral system does not establish clear lines of communication for parents.

**Overall, the inspection supports the positive views expressed by parents.**

## KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To improve the quality of learning and standards of achievement, the senior management, governing body and staff should:

### **Strengthen management structures and systems to meet the changing demands of a growing school by:**

Providing the **governing body** with appropriate support and training to enable it to:

XXX. be more actively and fully involved in determining the strategic direction of the school;

XXXI. take responsibility for the management of governor committees;

XXXII. develop an effective evaluative role.

Modifying the roles of **senior managers** to enable more effective focus on:

XXXIII. analysing and using available data to set targets for improvement;

XXXIV. refinement and improvement of the development planning process;

XXXV. establishing effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

Improving effectiveness in **subject management** by:

XXXVI. improving the consistency of subject development planning and the monitoring of teaching and learning;

XXXVII. analysis and use of assessment information to inform curriculum planning.

Ref paragraphs 73-75, 77.

### **Improve the systems for the personal and academic support of pupils by:**

XXXVIII. establishing clear responsibilities for **form tutors** and **year heads** in monitoring and recording the academic and personal progress of all pupils;

XXXIX. using the information available about pupils to set personal targets;

XL. establishing clear lines of communication for **parents** of whom to contact in the school, and providing more information about what is taught;

XLI. improving the quality of reports to meet statutory requirements.

Ref paragraphs 55, 63, 67,68, 74.

### **Raise attainment in:**

XLII. **English** at Key Stage 2 by increasing teacher understanding of the National Literacy strategy and making full provision for it to be implemented;

XLIII. **listening skills** by an increased focus in all subjects;

XLIV. **music** by increasing the depth and coverage of National Curriculum requirements;

XLV. **religious education** by providing direction for the subject, improving teacher subject expertise and improving curriculum provision, to meet the requirements of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus.

Ref paragraphs 95, 97, 99, 100-101, 160-161, 164, 173-178.

### **Raise the quality of unsatisfactory teaching to the sound and better standards found elsewhere in the school by:**

XLVI. resolving temporary staffing arrangements;

XLVII. providing better support and mentoring for inexperienced and non-specialist teachers.

Ref paragraphs 4, 35, 40, 81, 108, 114, 144, 155, 175.

Other areas for development are identified in the following paragraphs: 45, 46, 48, 49, 52-56, 58, 61, 62, 65, 82, 83, 85, 102, 110, 115, 124, 132, 138, 139, 145, 146, 152, 155, 156, 172, 180, 185.

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## • **INTRODUCTION**

### • **Characteristics of the school**

- 1 South Charnwood High School is a mixed school, maintained by Leicestershire Local Education Authority. It takes pupils of all abilities from ages 10 to 14. The population of 531 is larger than average for schools serving this age range, and continues to rise. There are 43 more boys in the school than girls.
  
- 2 The school has a rural location to the north west of Leicester, approximately one mile from each of the neighbouring villages of Markfield, Thornton and Stanton under Bardon. South Charnwood High School serves a wide catchment area, drawing just over half its pupils from surrounding villages, with the remainder coming eight miles from Leicester Forest East. 95% of pupils travel to school by bus. The overall intake of the school does not show particular socio-economic bias, but includes pupils drawn from a wide spectrum of circumstances, including both advantaged and disadvantaged areas. At 5%, the proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is well below the national average, although not all eligible pupils entitled to a free school meal claim them. 5% of pupils has English as an additional language, which is higher than in most schools. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs, at almost 17%, is slightly below the national average of about 21%. The proportion of statemented pupils is slightly above average. The attainment of pupils on entry, based on testing by the school and primary school information, and confirmed by the inspection, is slightly below average.
  
- 3 The school has four principal aims: to equip pupils with the skills and knowledge necessary for life as active and responsible members of society; to enlarge pupils' understanding and awareness of the world; to help develop powers of imagining, questioning and reasoning, and their ability to make rational informed decisions; and to increase pupils' awareness of moral and spiritual values and encourage respect for peoples of different cultures and beliefs. These are expressed within a framework of: wishing to develop confident learners, knowledgeable and able to adapt successfully to life's changing circumstances and challenges; and equipping pupils to benefit from succeeding stages of education and ultimately to fulfil a useful role in society as thinking, informed and compassionate young people. Targets have been set in English and mathematics to raise attainment significantly over the next three years for pupils age 11. Whilst targets set in English follow a similar trend to those of the local authority, targets in mathematics exceed them. Targets have not yet been set for pupils age 14, but form part of the planning intentions for the next academic year. The development plan for next year has yet to be finalised, but future priorities follow those of the national agendas of literacy and numeracy; local authority priorities of development of the most able, and liaison and transfer arrangements; and school priorities of setting targets in both key stages, re-establishing the appraisal system, and responding to the findings of the Ofsted inspection. All of these are set within a context of expansion in the school, to an

estimated roll of over 600 within the next two years.

- 4 South Charnwood High School was last inspected in June 1994. Since then, the number of pupils on roll has increased by 95, representing a rise of 21% in the school population. The proportion of pupils taking free school meals has fallen. The school has, until recently, had a stable and experienced staff. The headteacher, deputy headteachers, and the majority of the teaching staff were in post during the last inspection. However, during this academic year, a number of long term absences, and late resignations requiring temporary staffing arrangements, have created problems in a number of subjects. Staffing difficulties have been mainly in the coordination of the humanities subjects of history, geography and religious education; in the teaching of science; more recently in the coordination of work in Year 6 including the literacy hour, and long absences by teachers responsible for music and drama. At the time of the inspection, four posts were covered by temporary, mainly inexperienced, teachers. Since the last inspection, new permanent appointments have been made in several key areas of academic and pastoral middle management. The chair of governors has been in office since the last inspection, together with most other members of the governing body, but a few governors have joined recently.

#### Key indicators

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	87	60	147

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	39(50)	42(41)	50(48)
	Girls	45(52)	29(35)	33(33)
	Total	84(102)	71(76)	83(81)
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	57(77)	48(61)	56(69)
	National	65(63)	59(62)	69(69)

  

<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	51(54)	46(42)	43(30)
	Girls	49(55)	32(40)	44(20)
	Total	100(109)	78(82)	82(50)
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	68(68)	53(61)	56(37)
	National	65(63)	65(64)	72(69)

1

Figures in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

### Attainment at Key Stage 3<sup>2</sup>

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	67	60	127

<b>National Curriculum Test Results</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	41(31)	44(31)	42(47)
	Girls	51(34)	44(31)	42(39)
	Total	92(65)	88(62)	84(86)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	72(66)	69(64)	66(80)
	National	65(56)	60(60)	56(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or	School	31(35)	44(44)	30(38)
	National	35(23)	36(37)	27(29)

above

<b>Teacher Assessments</b>		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	Boys	42(32)	44(42)	37(19)
	Girls	51(31)	51(39)	41(20)
	Total	93(63)	95(81)	78(39)
Percentage at NC Level 5 or above	School	73(72)	75(84)	61(41)
	National	62(60)	64(60)	62(60)
Percentage at NC Level 6 or above	School	30(31)	34(50)	14(22)
	National	31(28)	37(37)	31(29)

2

Figures in parentheses refer to the year before the latest reporting year

## Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed			%
through absence for the latest complete reporting year:	Authorised	School	6.6
	Absence	National comparative data	6.1
	Unauthorised	School	0.7
	Absence	National comparative data	0.4



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• **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	14
	Permanent	1

• **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	19
	Satisfactory or better	86
	Less than satisfactory	14

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

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

#### **· Attainment and progress**

- 5 In recent years standards of attainment on entry to the school at age 10 have been below the national average. Over the past four years, reading and spelling tests indicate there has been a rise in the levels of attainment on entry. The current Years 8 and 9 had lower levels of reading when they entered the school than did pupils now in Years 6 and 7. The current Year 6 had the highest attainment on entry for pupils currently in the school, but attainment was still below the national average.
- 6 Inspection evidence from lesson observations and scrutiny of work show that pupils make sound progress in Year 6, and overall attainment remains slightly below average by age 11. Between the ages of 11 and 14, there are variations in the progress made in different subjects but, in most, progress is good or very good, and in only religious education is it unsatisfactory. Better progress is made in Years 8 and 9 than other years. For pupils currently in the school, there is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls, except in English where boys at age 14 attain higher standards than found nationally.

#### **· Performance in national assessments**

- 7 In the most recent published tests in 1998, attainment at age 11 in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science was below the national average. Attainment over the past three years has remained below average in all core subjects, but is closer to the national average in English than in mathematics and science. Whilst in English and mathematics there is little difference in attainment between girls and boys when compared nationally, girls perform less well in science compared with girls nationally.
- 8 By age 14, attainment in national tests in 1998 was above average in English, mathematics and science. Over the past three years, attainment at this age has risen from being at the national average in 1996, to above average in 1997. Attainment fell slightly in 1998, but still remained above average. Whilst the attainment of girls and boys is above the national average, the attainment of boys in English is significantly higher than that of boys nationally.

#### **· Attainment and progress of pupils currently in the school**

For pupils currently in the school, attainment in the different subjects is as follows:

- 9 In **English**, pupils enter the school with below average attainment. They make steady progress in Year 6, but attainment remains below the national average by age 11. Very good progress is made in Years 7 - 9 and, by age 14, pupils achieve above the national expectation. At ages 11 and 14, boys achieve relatively well compared with boys nationally. Pupils are better at reading and speaking than writing and listening.

- 10 Pupils enter the school with slightly below average attainment in **mathematics**. They make steady progress in Year 6, but by the age of 11 attainment is still slightly below national expectations. Pupils make good progress in Years 7 - 9 and, by age 14, attainment has risen to an above average level compared with schools nationally. Pupils develop good skills in mathematical thinking, but confidence in handling number is more variable.
- 11 In **science**, pupils enter the school with slightly below average attainment. Sound progress is made in Year 6 and, by age 11, pupils achieve standards almost at the national average, and have developed practical skills above those normally found. Pupils then make good progress, attaining above the national average by age 14. They gain good knowledge across a range of biological, chemical and physical sciences, and can use equations for chemical reactions and understand some genetic causes of inheritance.
- 1 In design subjects, by age 11, pupils are able to understand the visual elements of **art** well and use them in their drawing and painting activities. By age 14, attainment is just in line with the national expectation, but progress is slowed by insufficient time to develop the pupils' skills. In **design and technology**, by age 11, pupils show good skills in practical work, using food, textiles and resistant materials confidently. Pupils then make good progress in their designing and making, and by age 14 are attaining above the national expectation in food, textiles and resistant materials.
- 2 By age 11, pupils show sound knowledge in **history** about events beyond living memory and when they happened. They are weaker in interpreting information. By age 14, pupils have made good progress, and attainment is above national expectations. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of different periods, of historical events and of key figures. They are able to use source materials well.
- 3 In **geography**, by age 11, pupils' knowledge of geographical vocabulary is sound and they have a sound grasp of basic map skills. Good progress is made in developing understanding of aspects of geography such as earthquakes, and by age 14 attainment is slightly above average. Pupils' demonstrate sound knowledge of terminologies, and good skills of enquiry.
- 4 By age 11 in **religious education**, attainment is below that expected. Pupils know basic facts, for example about Christian and Islam birth traditions, but are less clear about the significance of them. They do not see the relevance of the study of religions to their own lives, as insufficient attention is given to this. Progress is unsatisfactory between the ages of 11 and 14, and attainment at age 14 is below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils have sound knowledge of religions, and make good attempts to explain meanings, but have limited understanding of the significance of symbols, or the effects of belief on behaviour. Insufficient time is spent learning this subject.
- 5 Attainment in **information technology** is appropriate for pupils aged 11. By this age, pupils can use word processing across a range of subjects, create graphic images, generate graphs and handle data confidently. Elements of control and

measuring are less well developed. In Years 7-9, progress is good overall, but the rate of progress varies in different subjects. Good applications are made in history, geography and mathematics, where pupils are confident in designing and using complex surveys and investigating quadratic equations. Most pupils are skilled at using graphics and desk-top publishing packages, communicating information, using spreadsheets and modelling. Opportunities for using control are limited. Overall attainment is slightly above national expectations by age 14.

- 6 Pupils study **modern foreign languages** throughout the school. By age 11, pupils have made steady progress developing skills in listening, speaking, and reading and writing, appropriate for their age. By age 14, attainment in **French** and **German** is in line with national expectations. Sound progress is made in French and good progress in German. Most pupils can communicate basic information both orally and in writing, but the range of language used and opportunity for more extended writing are more limited.
- 18 In **music**, progress by age 11 is slow. Pupils are able to develop a simple musical piece, but their understanding and musical skills are not extended. By age 14, attainment is below the national expectations. Although progress in lessons is usually sound, pupils have insufficient time to develop their skills and progress is slow. They can use musical instruments at a basic level, but their compositions lack development.
- 19 In **physical education**, by age 11, pupils in tennis are able to hit the ball and understand the body positions needed to do this. Sound progress is made in developing skills. By age 14, most pupils attain in line with expectations, and some show better than average attainment in extra-curricular activities. Sound progress is made in a range of sports.
- 20 Pupils with **special educational needs**, because of good quality support, make good progress, both in achieving their individual education plan targets and in work in mainstream lessons. Pupils make good progress in increasing their reading and spelling ages and in developing social and language skills. In a few lessons where planning is poor, or no support is available, pupils make slow progress.
- 21 **Literacy** skills developed across the school are sound by age 11 and good by age 14. Pupils' reading skills are well developed in many subjects, especially history and geography. Whilst there are some examples of extended writing in lessons other than English, such as history, writing skills in other subjects are generally less well developed. Pupils have well-developed speaking skills, which are particularly evident in mathematics, history and geography lessons. Across the school, insufficient emphasis is placed on developing listening skills, especially in Year 6.
- 22 Standards in **numeracy** are better than those found nationally, but there is inconsistent use and application across subjects. Application of numeracy, other than in mathematics, is found in information technology through work with graphs and tables, and pupil confidence in interpreting data is improving with increased use of computers across the curriculum. In design and technology, measuring is widely applied by use of length and weight. In science, pupils can draw and use graphs at a sound level.

23 Presentation of work by pupils is generally of a good quality across all year groups and subjects. Writing is usually neat and corrections carefully made.

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## Summary

24 The attainment of pupils in all core subjects at age 11 is below the national average. When compared with national benchmarks with similar schools it is well below. By age 14, the school has improved the performance of pupils to above the national average, but below that of similar schools. This indicates the potential for still higher attainment by age 14. However, the attainment of pupils when starting the school is below average, and when leaving is above average. During this time, overall performance compared with similar schools improves, and good value is added in the progress made by the pupils, especially between the ages of 11 and 14.

25 From inspection evidence and teacher assessments carried out in the school, attainment by the time pupils leave the school at age 14 is above the national expectation in the core subjects, and four foundation subjects, representing just over half of the subjects taught. With the exception of religious education and music, attainment in other subjects is in line with national expectations. Attainment is lowest in subjects where pupils spend the least time.

### 17 **Progress against school targets**

26 The school has set targets for attainment in the national tests held in May 1999, the results of which are not yet known. These targets are challenging, especially in mathematics, but in lessons sound progress is being made towards their achievement.

17

### 17 **Parents' comments**

27 Of the parents who responded to the questionnaire, 77% indicated that they believe the school enables their child to achieve good standards of work. 13% did not. At the meeting for parents, the majority of parents present indicated satisfaction with the standards achieved, although many felt that pupils were insufficiently challenged in some mathematics lessons. The inspection confirms the view that the school enables pupils to achieve good standards of work and make good progress, but there remains scope for higher attainment to bring the school into line with broadly similar schools. The scheme in use in mathematics lessons, of which parents complain, is used more effectively by some teachers than others, and is being phased out by the new head of department. The school is well ahead in preparing for the national numeracy strategy.

### 17 **Progress since the last report**

28 Since the last inspection report of 1994, attainment overall has improved. Although the judgements made previously are imprecisely expressed, attainment in English and mathematics appears broadly similar, but attainment in science has improved from average to above average at age 14. Attainment in history and geography has risen from average to above average, but fallen in religious education to below average. Attainment in music has fallen from a satisfactory to an unsatisfactory standard. In other subjects, attainment has remained broadly similar to that found in 1994.

## Attitudes, Behaviour and Personal Development

- 29 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and frequently very good. Most pupils engage in their work with interest and respond well to good teaching. Pupils concentrate well and are confident in class discussions. They develop increasing levels of independence as they grow older, and can accept responsibility for their own work and behaviour. There are a few boys, particularly in Year 6, who have not adapted well to the more independent style of working expected in the school. They lack maturity and social skills and are frequently disruptive in the classroom, especially where teaching is unsatisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs work and behave well in response to the support they receive, and behaviour only deteriorates in the few lessons when there is an unsatisfactory match of work to their individual needs.
- 30 Standards of behaviour are good. Most pupils understand and follow routines well. They move around the site in an orderly manner and respond well to the trust placed in them to use facilities during lunch and break times. Pupils take good care of their environment. There is little evidence of litter around the site and the dining area is kept clean and tidy. Pupils are motivated by awards for achievement and usually respond positively when sanctions are applied. The exclusion rate is low for this type of school.
- 31 There is a distinct sense of community in the school, and pupils happily integrate in work and play. The generally high quality of relationships, and levels of co-operation beyond friendship groups, are successful responses to the positive approach of the school. Most pupils value and respect each other and show sensitivity to those in the school with specific needs. Amongst a small number of pupils relationships are sometimes strained, usually where pupils are competing for acceptance within peer groups, but incidents are infrequent and short-lived.
- 32 Pupils develop good personal skills during their time in the school. Most pupils acquire positive values and a personal moral code for behaviour. They participate effectively in the life of the school, such as through the school council and fund raising activities for charity. They also appreciate and respond sensibly to the influence and opportunities for self-organisation that are provided, for example, in lunchtime clubs.
- 33 Since the last inspection, attitudes, behaviour and personal development have remained good overall.

## 17 Attendance

- 1 Attendance is satisfactory and consistently in line with national averages. Rates are similar to those at the time of the last inspection and are consistent across all year groups. Unauthorised absence is at a satisfactory level and there is no problem of truancy. Pupils are generally punctual in arriving for sessions and move promptly to lessons when changing classrooms or returning from break or lunchtime activities.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

34

### Teaching

35 In over eight out of ten lessons [86%], the quality of teaching is at least sound or better. It is good or better in four out of ten [43%] and in almost two out of ten [19%] it is either very good or excellent. One in seven [14%] lessons have notable weaknesses and are unsatisfactory, but only two lessons were judged to be poor. Very good teaching is found in all years, but especially in Year 9. The lowest proportion of very good lessons is in Year 7. There are lessons with weaknesses in all years, but to a lesser extent in Year 7 than other years. In most subjects there are significant variations in the quality of teaching, but in information technology teaching is always very good or excellent. Good and better teaching is found in most subjects, but most consistently in English and design and technology. Subjects where at least two in ten lessons are unsatisfactory are science, religious education, history, modern foreign languages, and mathematics. Most of these subjects currently have some temporary staffing arrangements.

### 34 **Excellent and very good teaching**

36 Excellent or very good teaching occurs most often in English, mathematics, design and technology, history and information technology and occasionally in religious education and modern foreign languages. When teaching is very good or excellent, pupils make very good levels of progress and achieve high standards.

37 Characteristics of excellent and very good teaching include:

- teachers being very clear about what they want pupils to learn, and ensuring pupils know what is expected of them. This is translated into lessons with good pace, where pupils are set clear time targets for their work. Pupils respond very well, no time is wasted and very good progress made;
- teachers sharing their very high expectations of pupils by constantly interacting with them to encourage, praise and reinforce their work. This is a feature of all high quality lessons and leads to very good progress;
- a very good balance between teacher led activity and independent or group work by pupils, but with the pupils actively engaged at all times. *This is a feature of many English lessons;*
- the use of a very good range of activities for pupils to stimulate and challenge them, *as observed in a Year 6 lesson in mathematics where pupils were using codes;*
- clear demonstrations and explanations showing high levels of subject knowledge and expertise, *for example, in design and technology lessons so pupils learn how to work effectively and safely in practical lessons;*
- adapting the lesson when pupils experience difficulties or to ensure progress continues to be made, *for example, in a German lesson when pupils had difficulty with pronunciation;*
- very good management of the pupils and well developed relationships, with teachers able to both command attention from the pupils and give them interest in the subject, *as found in all information technology lessons;*
- exceptionally well prepared resources and support materials with pupils actively encouraged to contribute their own, *as seen in history lessons on World War 1 where family mementos helped children to relate to the topic through their own family histories;*



- complex ideas restructured and presented in a simple way to help pupils understand, *as in a science lesson on genetics*;
- very well prepared work and support for special needs pupils which ensures full participation in classroom activity, *as seen in a Year 6 literacy lesson where a special needs teacher was supporting two pupils in the classroom*;
- an enthusiasm for the subject by teachers and enjoyment in sharing it through teaching is a feature of all very good and excellent lessons.

· **Good teaching**

38 Good teaching is found in most subjects but most often in geography, design and technology, English and religious education.

Good lessons include many of the following features:

- teachers with a good command of their subject, *as in French*;
- clear instructions given so pupils know what to do, *as found in geography lessons on agriculture*;
- high expectations of pupil behaviour, *as found in physical education lessons*;
- work well related to the individual needs of pupils, *as observed in withdrawal work with special educational needs pupils and in good liaison between special educational needs staff and class teachers*;
- good choice of examples which are relevant to the lives and interests of the pupils, *for example in personal and social education in lessons where pupils discuss aspects of the law and citizenship, and consider the use and misuse of drugs*;
- well structured lessons within a well planned scheme of work which enables each lesson to build on the last, *as found in design and technology and art*;
- well organised and prepared materials, such as *in practical science lessons on photosynthesis*.

· **Satisfactory teaching**

39 In addition to the excellent, very good and good teaching, just over four in ten lessons are satisfactory. These lessons provide an acceptable level of teaching with neither particular strengths nor weaknesses. They are planned effectively and promote sound progress.

· **Unsatisfactory teaching**

40 Unsatisfactory teaching is found particularly, but not exclusively, in those subjects where temporary arrangements were in place at the time of the inspection, and in personal and social education lessons in Year 6.

Unsatisfactory lessons demonstrate one or more of the following shortcomings:

- teachers have insufficient subject knowledge to support their teaching. This is particularly found when lessons are taught by teachers who are not subject specialists. It leads to an over dependence on textbooks and other subject materials, with insufficient development to increase the learning of the pupils. It slows the pace of progress and does not enable pupils to fully develop their abilities;
- pupils are insufficiently well managed to keep them well behaved and involved in their work, and this disrupts their learning and that of others;
- a lack of clarity about what pupils need to learn, rather than what keeps them busy, and this leads to slow progress and lower attainment as tasks set are too easy;
- in some lessons, work is too difficult because pupils have not had the opportunity to build the skills and knowledge necessary for them to successfully undertake the

work they are asked to do;

- a lack of clear planning for special needs pupils.

• **Other factors in teaching**

- 41 Homework is set regularly in most subjects and is appropriate to extend learning. Diaries that assist in the management of homework are used inconsistently, and parents comment that there are significant differences in the quality and quantity of homework set by individual teachers. The inspection confirms this view. School facilities are available for pupils to use at lunchtime, but the library is under-used for this purpose.
- 42 Pupils mainly receive good oral feedback on their work in lessons, and this is particularly good in English, mathematics and information technology. Work is generally marked and assessed regularly. However, day-to-day assessment is weak in physical education where pupils are actively encouraged by comments from the teacher, but not told often enough how to improve; and in modern foreign languages where insufficient attention is paid to correcting pronunciation. Assessment of pupils in religious education is poor.

• **Special educational needs**

- 43 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs by specialist staff is good, and sometimes very good, because of their specialist skills. Classroom support assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Special needs staff understand and plan for the needs of the pupils very well. They enable the pupils to develop knowledge and understanding through sensitive and probing questions. All staff have a sound knowledge of their needs through the individual education plans, but are not yet using them consistently in planning. There are some examples where insufficient planning for their individual needs causes these pupils to make slow progress. For example, in some lessons an over-reliance on oral presentations when some pupils would benefit from a variety of approaches.

• **Changes since the last report**

- 44 Compared with the findings of the last report, the quality of teaching overall has remained broadly similar in the proportion of lessons of satisfactory or better quality, but fallen slightly in relation to lessons graded good or very good. However, in the last report, no lessons were identified as excellent, whereas now around 4% of lessons are of very high quality. Unsatisfactory teaching was found in one in ten lessons in Key Stage 2, and one in seven lessons in Key Stage 3. This proportion has increased slightly overall, with more unsatisfactory lessons in Key Stage 2. Where the quality of teaching was identified in individual subjects, it has remained largely unchanged. Considering the difficult staffing circumstances at the time of this inspection, which was not a feature of the last inspection, the quality of teaching has remained relatively stable.

## • The curriculum and assessment

### Curriculum

- 45 In Year 6, the curriculum is broad and largely balanced. It includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. It is enriched by lessons in French and drama. However, the literacy hour has not yet been fully established within provision. In Key Stage 3, the curriculum is broad, includes all required subjects, and drama which is taught as a separate subject. However, insufficient time is devoted to art, music and religious education and pupils do not develop a depth in their work and full capability in these subjects. In both key stages, the delivery of information technology through subjects is well managed, and largely successful in covering required aspects except in using control. Provision for the arts is just sound overall. A lesson of personal and social education [PSE] each week provides pupils with a progressive experience in social and study skills, health and drugs education. This aspect of provision is mainly well planned but, whilst the delivery of PSE is sound in Key Stage 3, it is more inconsistent and less satisfactory in Key Stage 2. Specialist units in Key Stage 3, such as those in first aid and citizenship, are successful in developing knowledge and understanding of aspects relevant to the lives and experiences of young people, and pupils show interest in them. Statutory requirements for sex education are met, but pupils in Year 9 would like more information on dealing with the emotional side of relationships. A policy on drugs education is in development, supported by staff training, and good use has been made of visiting drama companies to raise awareness for pupils of the dangers of drug use. The school has achieved a Healthy School Award in recognition of its work in promoting healthy eating and lifestyle.
- 1 All pupils have equal access to the curriculum other than in French, where lower attaining pupils are provided with an additional lesson of information technology rather than a third lesson of French. The effectiveness of this arrangement has not been evaluated.
- 2 Provision for careers education in the school is better than normally found in middle schools. Careers education is planned in conjunction with the Leicestershire Careers Service. Whilst there has been some discontinuity in the past, with the appointment of a new Careers Officer, improvements are already underway. The library has been audited, and whilst identified already as well organised and offering appropriate range, will be provided with increased stock. Pupils have access to a Careers Information Database, and will be taught use of the library. Pupils have open access to discuss individual concerns, and particular attention is paid to pupils with special educational needs. Careers officers attend parents' evenings and transitional reviews for pupils with special educational needs. In partnership with the local Training and Enterprise Council, the school has organised a number of workshops and special careers events.
- 3 The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is good, and pupils have good access to the curriculum. Pupils benefit considerably from the work of learning support assistants in the classroom, and withdrawal of pupils from lessons is arranged so there is minimal impact on curricular entitlement. However, individual education plans are not yet being used to systematically match work to individual needs in mainstream lessons. The school has no systems in place to evaluate the progress and attainment of pupils with English as an additional language in order to ensure the curriculum meets their needs, and this is a weakness in provision.

- 4 An appropriate homework timetable is in use, but the setting of homework is not always consistent with it, and parents at the meeting indicated that the volume of homework set declines during the school year, and that the homework communicators are not consistently checked by form tutors. The findings of the inspection confirm this view.
  
- 5 Good arrangements are in place through the local family of schools to ensure a smooth transfer from primary schools, and to upper schools. Parents present at the meeting were very pleased by the way their children had been introduced and welcomed to South Charnwood in Year 6. Good links with primary schools help this transition. The joint planning of targets for Key Stage 2 between the school and feeder primary schools is making a positive contribution to ensuring the progress of pupils continues in core subjects, and that appropriate targets for improvement in attainment are established. The introduction of a link project between South Charnwood and its two upper schools provides challenge for the pupils, and promotes continuity. It also provides a very good stimulus and challenge in what can be a difficult time for pupils between taking national tests and leaving the school. Planning within school to build on what pupils can already do, and help them make progress, is generally well developed in the core subjects, other than in Year 7 science, but is weaker in art, design and technology in Year 6, and physical education in both key stages. Across the humanities subjects of history, geography and religious education, planning in all years is weaker and has been affected by the absence of the head of department.
  
- 6 A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided, and there is a good take-up by pupils of all years, and by boys and girls. Pupils in all years are able to participate in visits and residential courses, including outdoor pursuits. A wide variety of sports are available at lunchtime and after school, including soccer, rugby, table-tennis, basketball, tennis, athletics, cross country running, badminton, gymnastics, dance and golf. The school enjoys considerable success in local events, and a number of pupils have been selected for county and national training, notably in badminton, basketball and football. Music activities usually offered have not been available for most of this term due to the absence of the teacher. A good variety of interest clubs are provided, covering crafts such as knitting, gardening and animal care, drama, computers and a rocket club. Pupils also run their own bank. In previous years, all pupils have been able to participate in a project week at the end of the summer term, where a wide range of visits and activities have been offered, but this will not be able to take place this year due to staffing difficulties. A reduced programme of visits has been arranged, and Year 9 pupils have been helping to organise these. Whilst most activities take place at lunchtime due to the high number of pupils travelling to school by bus, after school activities are well attended, largely due to the support of parents.
  
- 7 Whilst offering a broad and largely balanced curriculum, which is described in the prospectus, the school does not have a curriculum policy. There is no systematic planning for cross-curricular aspects such as spiritual education. Parents in the questionnaire, and at the meeting, indicated that they receive too little information about what is taught, and this is the area where they are least satisfied. Overall curriculum planning is an area requiring review at a time that coincides with imminent national changes.

- 8 Since the last report, extra time has been added to the teaching time to bring it up to the recommended hours. The integrated teaching approach in Year 6 has changed to the teaching of subjects more independently. Art, music and religious education still receive too little time to fully develop capability.

53

### **Assessment**

- 9 Assessment procedures are generally satisfactory. Whole-school assessment and marking policies are in place, but there is much inconsistency in their application within different subjects and by different teachers. Assessment procedures are good in science and mathematics. They are particularly good in geography and history, where there is a programme of regular and varied assessment events, which provide reliable information about pupils' performance, measured against National Curriculum level descriptions. Procedures are unsatisfactory in physical education because not enough information is collected about what pupils know, understand and can do, and in religious education, where there is no clear and consistent system for finding out about pupils' attainment. The operation and effectiveness of assessment systems is monitored, but not closely enough to ensure quality and consistency. Arrangements for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- 10 An aim of the school assessment policy is to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses, and the action which pupils and teachers could take to create more effective learning. Plentiful information is gathered, but there are few examples of it being analysed or actively used, either in subjects or across the whole school, in order to set targets, to check the progress pupils make, to raise standards of attainment, or to reshape the curriculum. There is almost no analysis of boys' and girls' performance in individual subjects, or by ethnicity, overall. Tests in Years 7 and 9 provide plentiful data about the abilities of the pupils but little use has yet been made of them. Information on pupils' attainment prior to arrival at the school is collected and is used for determining mathematics groupings and to identify special needs. In mathematics, there is good practice in using information from assessment for modification of the scheme of work. In geography and history, pupils and teachers are able to formulate short-term targets by referring to assessment details. Overall, this aspect of assessment does not meet the school's stated aims, and is very weak.
- 11 Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in improving assessment procedures. Insufficient progress has been made in analysing and using the collected information. The lack of activity in this area remains a major weakness. It impacts directly and negatively on the school's ability to understand the strengths and weaknesses of its pupils and to plan systematically for raising standards of attainment.

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

12 The values of the school are clearly stated in its aims. These provide a good basis for planning for the promotion of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils.

#### **57 Spiritual**

13 Although the school's aims state appropriately that it intends to strive to increase pupils' spiritual values, there is no school policy or guidance about how this is to be achieved. Provision is largely through assemblies, religious education and some unplanned occurrences in lessons. The half-school assemblies held twice a week, led by the headteacher and a small number of staff, promote spiritual themes and Christian values. For example, assemblies during the week of the inspection considered the consequences of personal actions. Visitors, such as the local Youth for Christ team or a representative from Africa Aid, sometimes lead assemblies and pupils listen with interest. Small groups of pupils make contributions to the weekly year assemblies. However, not all assemblies have a period of reflection or prayer, although, when this does occur, pupils are responsive. On days when there is no assembly, it is intended that teachers use a stated weekly theme during tutor-time as a stimulus for thought and reflection, but in practice this is not taking place. In religious education, spiritual growth is fostered and pupils consider how belief influences the lives of others. In Year 9, they write reflectively about their personal experience of life and their hopes for the future in a module 'Life, the universe and you'. There is no explicit promotion of spiritual growth in lessons across the curriculum, although some unanticipated opportunities do occur, such as in a mathematics lesson when Year 6 pupils displayed amazement when they discovered how to decode tables made up of letters rather than numbers. Such occasions are rare and, overall, provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory.

#### **58 Moral**

14 The school places a high value on its aim to increase pupils' awareness of moral values and provision is good. The school's moral codes are clearly set out in a range of policies such those relating to equality of opportunity, anti-racism and anti-bullying. The school rules for behaviour place strong emphasis on consideration for others, and the personal and social education (PSE) curriculum is focused on moral

issues and the consequences of personal decisions. A feature of pupils' moral attitudes is the large amount of money that is collected annually for the wide range of charities they choose to support. Staff set a very good moral example by the fair way in which they treat pupils and concern for their well-being. Pupils know right from wrong, and justify the trust placed in them through having open access to rooms at lunchtime. When moral lapses do occur and sanctions are applied, such as for minor bullying or disrespect, issues are discussed in order to enlighten rather than just to punish. Moral provision at South Charnwood is a strength and pupils respond well.

59

### **Social**

- 15 Good provision is made for pupils' social development. This appropriately realises the school's aim to develop social skills that will enable them to live and work in harmony with others. The PSE scheme of work provides a good range of topics that promote social attitudes; for instance, relationships, prejudice, citizenship and global issues. In subjects, appropriate activities are planned to develop co-operation through working in pairs and small groups. Pupils respond well to opportunities, particularly in English. Participation in the strong provision for sports promotes team spirit, and pupils are generous in their appreciation when their peers are presented with awards in assemblies. Residential experiences, including outward-bound activities, develop self-reliance and co-operative attitudes. Opportunities for developing social skills with adults are promoted well in Year 9 through the Wider Horizons and Enterprise Days, when pupils engage in careers awareness activities with representatives from industries and businesses.

60

### **Cultural**

- 16 Provision for cultural development is sound, although there are some weaknesses. The school provides pupils with appropriately broad cultural opportunities through the arts curriculum. However, the time available restricts the depth and quality of work in art and music. Lessons are supplemented well by annual visits of drama and orchestral groups. Trips are made to local theatres and the school itself undertakes two performances each year. Within the curriculum there are adequate references to life in other times and different cultures. For instance, issues of gender and race are discussed in English using the writings of Mark Twain; images from Eastern cultures are used as stimuli for designing surface decoration in textiles; and in religious education pupils gain insights into the practices of a wide range of faiths, for example, by visits to the Islamic Foundation. However, preparation for life in a culturally diverse community, such as in nearby Leicester, is given far less consideration. The school does little to use and celebrate the diverse cultural backgrounds of its pupils, and multi-cultural education is under-represented in curriculum planning.
- 17 Since the previous inspection, the school has strengthened its provision for moral



development in PSE which was criticised, and this is now strong. Spiritual development remains a weakness and the school still falls well short of the requirement for daily worship. Provision for social and cultural development has mostly been maintained at the sound level reported previously.

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

18 Relationships between staff and pupils are good, and staff interact well with pupils, both in and out of the classroom. On a day-to-day basis the level of support given to pupils is good, but systems to monitor individual academic and personal development consistently, over time, are weak. Opportunities to discuss academic progress, and issues connected with personal development, are insufficiently planned for, and tutorial times are not used effectively for this purpose. Guidance is mainly reactive as a response to problems, such as through the pupil incident forms used primarily for monitoring behaviour. The pastoral system lacks a clear framework, and the roles of the form tutor and some year tutors are underdeveloped compared with most schools. Senior managers are sometimes involved in dealing with aspects of pupil guidance at too low a level of concern. Parents are unclear about who they should first approach in school if they have concerns about their child. Procedures for reviewing the progress of pupils with special educational needs are good, and requirements for the Code of Practice are followed very well.

19 There are effective measures to promote good behaviour, underpinned by a positive ethos and practice that emphasises trust and respect for others. Expectations are made clear and the school responds promptly to any concerns, although there are a few teachers who do not insist sufficiently on good standards of discipline and behaviour in the classroom. Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils' day-to-day life in school is generally free from tensions. Behaviour and attendance are monitored efficiently enough to enable effective and timely guidance through individual action planning for improvement.

20 There are effective procedures for child protection and the welfare of pupils. Child protection practice follows recommended procedures, with a properly designated teacher to oversee arrangements in the school. Health and safety arrangements ensure the school is generally a safe place for pupils, but procedures for risk assessment are not in place and inspections are not sufficiently systematic to be fully effective.

21 Since the last inspection, a new Health and Safety policy has been put in place.

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

22 The school generally enjoys the confidence of the parents, and no significant concern was expressed in response to the questionnaire. There is an effective partnership with parents and the community that contributes positively towards pupils' learning and development. The quality of information parents receive about the life of the school is good, for example induction information and the high quality of formal literature such as the prospectus and Governors' report. However, at the parents' meeting, the view was expressed that parents would like more information about the curriculum and what is taught, and this was the area of least satisfaction from the parents' questionnaire.

- 23 Reports to parents about their children do not meet statutory requirements, as information is not always provided about the progress pupils make, and attainment in information technology is not always reported. Targets for improvement are not generally given. Arrangements to discuss pupils' progress with parents are effective.
- 24 Parental involvement in pupils' work is satisfactory and most parents take an active interest in their child's studies. School arrangements are generally well supported concerning attendance and the school dress code. Partnership arrangements with parents of pupils with special educational need are effective, and some parents are supporting individual education plan targets well at home. Most parents attend review meetings, and annual review reports give very clear information about progress towards planned targets.
- 25 There are substantial links with community organisations and groups, despite the geographical isolation of the school. The school takes advantage of opportunities to involve the pupils, for example, in tree planting with the National Forest, designing an observation platform for a local quarry and experience at a local equestrian centre. Pupils also receive an introduction to the world of work through a programme of careers education, in which they are introduced to a wide range of employers.
- 26 The school still enjoys the level of involvement of parents and the network of community links it had at the time of the last inspection. The information to parents about the school has improved, but weaknesses in the reports of pupils' progress have not been sufficiently addressed.

## THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

### 71 Leadership and management

27 South Charnwood High School aims to produce thinking, informed and compassionate young people, able to benefit fully from succeeding stages of education. The school is successful in meeting these aspirations. Pupils make good progress in most subjects, and leave the school as mature and confident young people with good standards of attainment. In the five years since the last inspection, the number of pupils in the school has grown considerably, and continues to do so. This has created additional pressures in physically accommodating all the pupils and in developing appropriate pastoral and curriculum provision for a much larger school. Appropriate targets have been set for improvements in attainment, and priorities for the coming year are clearly identified, but there is less clarity about the longer term development of the school.

28 The headteacher provides sound leadership and has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. He has successfully maintained the quality of education in the school through a period of significant changes and staffing difficulties. He is respected by parents, and provides a good role model in establishing expectations of good behaviour, based on courtesy and consideration for others. The headteacher is supported by two hard working deputy heads who, together with the headteacher, form a senior management team that has worked together for many years. Job descriptions have been redefined in response to the last inspection. However, all members of the senior management team still assume too many responsibilities. Much time is spent on day-to-day activities which, in most schools, are dealt with by pastoral and curriculum middle managers. The governing body depends upon senior managers to convene committees normally run by governors. Substantial teaching commitments, especially by the headteacher, leave less time than usual for strategic management activities. Recent staffing problems have created additional challenges in management. As a consequence of these factors, insufficient time has been spent in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, analysing data for future improvement and in increasing the effectiveness of development planning. The senior management team recognise that current and future development of the school require an increased focus on longer term strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation that is being undertaken and, to do this, current management responsibilities will need to change. The process of improving the pastoral system to better support all pupils, and to use staff more efficiently and effectively, has started, but is in its early stages, and a number of recent appointments have been made to key areas of curriculum responsibility. The day-to-day organisation of the school is good, with clear policies, routines and guidelines for staff, pupils and parents. Challenging circumstances of most pupils travelling to school by bus and supervision of difficult buildings and grounds are managed very well, at lunchtime and at the start and end of the day.

- 29 At middle management level, the overall quality of subject leadership is good. However, the temporary absence of coordination in the humanities subjects of history, geography and religious education is affecting the quality of education in these subjects, despite the hard work of subject teachers. Heads of department show enthusiasm and commitment, and generate a positive ethos for their subjects. In most subjects, recent curriculum review is leading to planning which supports the progress of pupils. Subject target setting is best developed in mathematics and English. Development planning within subjects is more inconsistent, with very good planning found in design and technology but with weaknesses in science and humanities. Weaknesses in subject management are in the monitoring of the curriculum, and the absence of formal monitoring of teaching. The recently appointed joint coordinators for special educational needs have quickly put into place some very effective procedures to support the needs of pupils and meet the requirements of the Code of Practice, but development planning is in its early stages in this area. Pastoral management by heads of year is inconsistent, and the pastoral system as a whole lacks clarity. This is an area requiring further development to meet the demands of a growing school and address the confusion expressed by some parents about whom to contact in the school.
- 30 The governing body, whilst generally supportive of the school, is not fully and actively involved in determining strategic direction, or in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The chair of governors brings valuable business experience to his role, but finds difficulty balancing the demands of his job with time to spend in school. The governor with responsibility for special educational needs provides active support, linking well with the special needs coordinators. The governor recently identified for numeracy has already begun to take an active role. The finance committee is the most effective of the governor committees, and since the last inspection, with the help of the Chair, the governing body has become active in managing the budget more effectively, and in linking it to the longer term needs of the school. Other committees meet far less regularly, and are largely dependent upon senior staff to convene them. Although visits are made to the school on a fairly regular basis by individual governors, these are principally used for familiarisation purposes, and are not planned sufficiently systematically to monitor or report back on the work of the school. The governing body express a lack of confidence in many aspects of their role, not recognising fully the value of a non-educationalist view in school management. Statutory requirements are met, other than in the reporting of progress to parents and the provision of a daily act of collective worship.
- 31 The school has a positive ethos which largely meets its aims as expressed in the prospectus. South Charnwood provides a mainly effective learning environment where good relationships flourish, and there is clear commitment to equal opportunities. The values of the school are supported by parents, but some would like a greater academic focus than is expressed in the school aims. Whilst not explicit in the published aims, commitment to high attainment is evident in the work of the school, especially in subjects where teaching is good and pupils achieve good standards.

- 32 The current school development plan is sound, but variable in subjects, and only detailed for one year. It is sound on identifying priorities, but weaker in identifying outcomes and the means of monitoring and evaluating. The school has much available data, but it is not analysed sufficiently to evaluate the academic progress of pupils, establish the value added by the school or to set more comprehensive targets than those required on a mandatory basis. There is insufficient use for monitoring the performance of individual pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups. The governing body is not sufficiently involved in the development process and the timetable for producing the plan is too late in the year. School priorities are not consistently well embedded in departmental plans.
- 33 The last inspection report indicated similar strengths in the management of the school, but also similar weaknesses. Whilst the senior management team has clarified its roles, the pressure identified on the deputy heads, with consequent lack of support for the headteacher in strategic development, remains. The school development plan is now more closely linked to the budget, but effectiveness is not fully monitored. Governors do visit the school routinely, but do not use this time effectively in a 'critical friend' role. The recommendation that heads of department needed greater influence on the quality of teaching and standards of pupils' work has been improved in response to standards, but not to teaching. Day-to-day routines and management remain good.
- 34 The school has demonstrated the ability to improve standards of achievement and maintain an orderly environment in which pupils make good progress despite difficult circumstances. The capacity for improvement under current circumstances is sound. However, as the school continues to increase in size, the process started of reviewing management arrangements needs to continue if the school is to increase its capacity for improvement.

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

#### **79 Staffing**

- 35 The school has an appropriate number of teachers with the qualifications and experience required to teach the curriculum. In most subjects, teachers' subject expertise is good. In humanities and religious education, recent staffing problems caused by absence have resulted in a few temporary and part time teachers covering subjects where they lack subject knowledge and experience. This has had a negative impact on pupils' attainment, particularly in religious education. Technician support is adequate for the needs of the school, and is particularly effective in information technology, art, and design and technology. There are sufficient other support staff to ensure that the administration of the school functions efficiently and effectively. Learning support staff are deployed well, are adequate in number, and often have a positive effect on attainment of special educational needs pupils in lessons.

- 36 The school has a recently written staff development policy. This has yet to be approved by the governors. Whilst the policy is sound, the practice it describes is not being implemented fully. Arrangements for the induction of staff are sound, but are not being applied with sufficient rigour. The amount of support available varies across departments and there is insufficient whole-school monitoring of induction arrangements in order to ensure that all newly appointed staff are supported well. So, although some recently appointed teaching staff have received good support and comment positively about induction arrangements, others have received less support than they would have liked. Good support is often the result of action taken by the appropriate head of department. Newly qualified teachers receive an adequate amount of non-contact time, but their induction experience is similarly variable. This variability was highlighted in the previous inspection report. The school does not currently have a system for the appraisal of teaching staff.
- 37 A relatively high investment has been made this year in professional development. The effectiveness of this investment has been too variable to represent good value for money. In particular, some training has not been linked well to development plans and the process for identifying training needs is not sufficiently effective. There has been a relatively large investment in in-house training. Whilst this has been effective in areas such as information technology, it has been less effective in other areas. Learning support staff have received good access to training which has had a positive effect on their contributions in lessons, and helped pupils with special educational needs to make good progress. Other staff have received appropriate training but the process for identifying needs is very informal and not sufficiently evaluated. The process used to evaluate the effectiveness of training has developed since the last inspection, but is still too informal and insufficiently rigorous.
- 82 **Accommodation**
- 38 The school occupies a large pleasant site, with an adequate range of specialist accommodation to enable the full curriculum to be delivered, but with wide variations in the quality of buildings. Approximately a third of lessons take place in mobiles or prefabricated buildings. This means that between lessons and lunchtime, pupils have to go outside to move between rooms. This is particularly unsatisfactory in poor weather. The quality of this accommodation is also variable. There are particular problems with the dampness in the mobile accommodation used for modern foreign languages, which prevents the use of electrical equipment, including computers. The number of science laboratories is barely adequate, with cramped preparation and storage areas. Lessons in classrooms under the hall, which is also used for physical education, suffer from noise from the activities above. Whilst improvements have been made to changing facilities for physical education and toilets, these are still unsatisfactory for the numbers using them at any one time. The inadequate car and coach park presents safety problems for pupils, but these are well addressed by the vigilance of staff at peak usage times. The buildings are well maintained by the site supervisor and the quality of cleaning is good. Staff and pupils have worked hard to create a pleasant teaching environment in many areas through interesting and stimulating displays of pupils' work. There is no graffiti and very little litter. Access for pupils with special needs is sound, although there are restrictions around the school, such as the stairs to mathematics rooms. The needs of visually impaired pupils have been addressed satisfactorily.

39 Since the last report, many improvements have taken place including: the provision of a better teaching environment for English and humanities; much improved design and technology facilities; the creation of a room for Special Educational Needs in the main building; and the provision of three small music practice rooms in addition to the music classroom. There is more coherent use of some spaces, so that subjects such as English, mathematics and humanities have their own departmental homes. There has also been an improvement in library facilities, with new shelving and new seating in the fiction area. Extensive building work is scheduled during the next two years, which provides an opportunity for further improvement in facilities and will address the needs of science.

#### 84 **Resources for learning**

40 Resources for learning are sound. Most subject areas have adequate books and equipment, although there are insufficient science text books for homework tasks and not enough good quality keyboards in music. Despite the recent investment made in updating and upgrading computer equipment, the ratio of pupils to computers, at 10:1, is below average for secondary schools. The centrally based information technology suite is adequate, but the provision of computers in subject areas is unsatisfactory. Areas such as science have computers which are outdated and do not meet the needs of the curriculum well. The library provision is just adequate. Effective use is made of the local library service for book loans and project boxes. The number of fiction books in the library is adequate, but there are too few non-fiction books and many are too old to provide an effective resource. Despite the fact that the management of expenditure on library stock is good, the amount spent on new books is too low to sustain the improvement needed to make non-fiction resources adequate.

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

41 The school plans its finances well. The budget is relatively modest and spending per pupil is typical for Leicestershire high schools serving the 10-14 age range, and much lower than typical secondary schools.

42 Long term financial planning has improved over the last four years and provides a good basis for the school to meet its development objectives. A five-year plan has been established which allows the school to model its projected budget for a variety of possible circumstances, and thereby provides a better strategic management tool. The school has also developed an innovative two year budget plan which gives the school greater flexibility in tackling larger capital developments. For example, the school has been able to make a major investment in information technology, with a large initial expenditure, which would otherwise have been less achievable if planned within a one-year budget cycle. The governors' finance committee has been very active in achieving this longer term financial planning, and effectively discharges the governing body's responsibilities for providing a strategic and questioning perspective on financial matters, as well as setting and monitoring the budget. Good quality information and analysis is provided by a deputy headteacher and the bursar for use by the finance committee. Evaluation of the effectiveness of spending decisions is less well developed than the financial planning, but is mainly sound.

- 43 The school's development planning is increasingly linked with the budget setting process, both at a strategic and an operational level. Spending on learning resources for subjects, although low by comparison with secondary schools of equivalent size, is effectively managed. Funding for future development is distinguished from that required to maintain the status quo; subject departments plan this spending around priorities within their development and bid for funding accordingly. The final allocation of funding is published to all heads of department. Funds for pupils with Special Educational Needs are appropriately spent on those pupils.
- 44 The school uses its staff efficiently. Teaching staff are effectively deployed to their strengths and, where there are staff shortages or absence, interim arrangements largely maintain efficient deployment. An over-commitment of senior managers to teaching, however, reduces their time and ability to carry out their management function. To a lesser extent, some middle managers lack time for their management role. Non-teaching staff are well used and learning support assistants are particularly effectively deployed.
- 45 Although the building has many shortcomings, accommodation is efficiently used to minimise these. Some rooms have been modified and re-designated to improve their use. Most rooms are heavily used, but the library remains an under-used resource. Spending on learning resources is fairly modest. However, these limited resources are generally well used.
- 46 Financial control is good overall. The bursar uses a computerised administration package to provide tight monitoring of expenditure. There is a regular flow of accurate financial information to senior managers; information about current and committed expenditure is also provided to heads of department who control budgets. The last financial audit highlighted a number of shortcomings in financial procedures, including the handling of petty cash in several areas. These points have largely been addressed. Many purchases are planned to ensure good value for money. Tendering is used for all building and maintenance work; bulk contracts are used; there is flexibility for local purchases. Administrative procedures are generally good and contribute well to the smooth running of the school.
- 47 Pupils receive a sound quality education at an economic cost, make good progress and achieve standards above the national average. The school therefore gives good value for money.
- 48 Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in the long term financial planning and the role of the governors' finance committee. The buildings and other resources are used more extensively and efficiently. Value for money has improved and is now at a good level.



**PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS****93 ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE****93 English**

- 49 In English, pupils benefit from good teaching and a broad curriculum experience. They make very good progress from a below average starting point.
- 50 Attainment in the 1998 National Curriculum English tests for 11-year olds was below average with only 57% of pupils attaining level 4 or above, compared with the national average of 65%. Over the past three years, attainment in English at this age has been close to the national average and pupils' performance in English compares favourably with their performance in mathematics and science. Boys' performance in English is slightly above the national average for their age group, while girls' performance is close to the national average. However, in 1998, pupils' performance in English was well below that of similar schools. Attainment in the 1998 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds was above average with 72% of pupils attaining level 5 or above, compared with the national average of 63%. Over the past three years, attainment in English has been close to the national average and pupils' performance in English is similar to their performance in mathematics and science. Boys continue to perform above the national average for their age group. In 1998, pupils' performance in English was in line with similar schools.
- 51 For pupils currently in the school, by the age of 11 attainment in English is below the national expectation, but there is variation across attainment targets. Pupils' spoken English is in line with expectation; they speak confidently and clearly, although many have restricted vocabularies. Listening skills are under-developed, particularly those of many boys. Standards of reading are in line with expectation and pupils respond to reading with interest and enthusiasm. The majority of pupils read fluently and have good levels of comprehension, but there are few examples of close textual study or critical evaluation, and the range of pupils' independent reading is often limited. Standards of writing are slightly below average, particularly in terms of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Writing also suffers from an unambitious choice of vocabulary by many pupils. Pupils make satisfactory progress by the age of 11 and many pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- 52 By the age of 14, attainment in English is above the national expectation. Standards of speaking are good and listening is satisfactory. Pupils read and respond positively to a very wide range of texts, and many pupils analyse their reading confidently, identifying genre features and evaluating the effects of language use. Texts are used well to promote writing in a range of genres and pupils are successful at structuring different kinds of writing, but there are relatively few examples of extended writing sustained effectively. Spelling errors persist in many cases, but standards of presentation are good. Pupils make very good progress by the age of 14, and many pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- 53 Literacy across the school is satisfactory in Year 6 and good by age 14. Pupils' reading skills are developed well in many subjects, particularly history and geography. Most subjects, notably mathematics, history and geography are effective at developing pupils' speaking, but across subjects there is generally

insufficient emphasis on developing listening skills, particularly in year 6. Writing is less well developed across the curriculum, although there are good examples of extended writing being fostered effectively in history.

- 54 Pupils respond well in English. Many demonstrate a high level of interest and enjoyment of all aspects of their work. Working relationships are positive and pupils co-operate well in group activities. Behaviour is generally good apart from some boys in Year 6. Pupils' concentration is often very good in Key Stage 3, but the listening skills of some younger boys are under-developed.
- 55 The teaching of English overall is good, with particular strengths in Key Stage 3. In four out of ten lessons, teaching is very good. Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge and are particularly skilled in helping pupils to analyse the effects of various kinds of language use. Some teachers of Key Stage 3 classes frequently make very effective use of enlarged text and whole-class annotation to extend pupils' understanding. Lessons are well planned, interesting and varied. In most lessons, a good pace is maintained and questioning is often used to good effect. Effective questioning was characterised by a Year 7 lesson on print and film versions of 'The Secret Garden' when pupils responded very well to the rigorous and fast-paced questions set by the teacher. Teachers' management of pupils is generally assured but, in some cases, teachers give insufficient emphasis to the importance of pupils listening attentively. Literacy teaching in Year 6 has several strengths, but the Literacy Hour has been only partially adopted, lessons are not as well paced as they are in Key Stage 3, and there is insufficient emphasis on guided reading and writing.
- 56 The leadership and management of the subject is good. A lively, broad and balanced curriculum has been established for Key Stage 3, but the direction of the Key Stage 2 curriculum is at a transitional stage, following the reorganisation of Year 6 for which the English department have relatively recently been given responsibility. An effective assessment model is being developed but the monitoring of teaching does not have a sufficiently clear focus on strengths and identifying areas for development.
- 57 Progress since the previous inspection has been good. Attainment at the age of 14 has improved and there is more pace, variety and challenge in the teaching. There are more opportunities for speaking and listening in the curriculum, and assessment practice has improved significantly. There has been less satisfactory progress in pupils' spelling and punctuation. The most important actions required are to develop pupils' listening skills further and to improve the Year 6 curriculum, particularly in order to develop pupils' writing skills.
- 102 **Drama**
- 58 Attainment in drama is broadly in line with expectation for pupils by the ages of 11 and 14. Most pupils perform drama with enthusiastic confidence and can employ a good range of dramatic skills and techniques, but some drama work lacks conviction when pupils do not sustain a seriousness of purpose. Pupils are more effective at creating drama than appreciating or appraising it, and often they do not listen or observe with sufficient attention. The teaching of drama is satisfactory. Teaching is lively, well planned and linked to clear learning objectives, but insufficiently authoritative in the management of pupils. There is not enough emphasis on ensuring that pupils exercise restraint and self-discipline.

**Mathematics**

- 59 Pupils receive a good education in Mathematics and make good progress during their time in the school, especially in Key Stage 3. The results in Key Stage 2 national tests and the teacher assessments in 1998 were low in comparison with national averages, and well below those of similar schools. In tests and teacher assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, attainment has been above national expectations, but was slightly lower in 1998 than 1997. Attainment is below that of similar schools. For pupils currently in the school, standards across the different attainment targets at both key stages show a similar picture. Attainment in number and algebra at both key stages is above average, especially for pupils of high prior attainment.
- 60 Progress is satisfactory during Key Stage 2. By the age of 11, the majority of higher attaining pupils are confident with number and mental ways of obtaining solutions to number problems posed in different contexts, and can calculate effectively with simple fractions, decimals and percentages. When using and applying mathematics, attainment is satisfactory, and many pupils are able to make decisions about mathematical ideas and talk confidently to the class about them. There is particularly good progress in developing mathematical thinking strategies. Pupils can explain the reasons for their decisions and co-operate well with each other when required to work in small groups. Lower attaining pupils find calculations difficult, especially those involving larger number and place value concepts. Table facts are not yet well known, but the introduction of ideas from the national numeracy framework is having a beneficial effect for all pupils on their facility with number. Attainment in shape and space and data handling is similar. Many pupils are able to take considerable initiative and achieve sound standards, especially higher attaining pupils. Information technology skills are soundly developed, including the sensible use of calculators. Computers are soundly used to enhance mathematical knowledge.
- 61 Progress is good during Key Stage 3. Approaches to number and strategic mathematical thinking are extended considerably during this key stage. By age 14, pupil's skills, knowledge and understanding in number and algebra are above average and well above average for high attaining pupils. Computer skills are especially well developed. However, for pupils in lower attaining sets, number calculations and routines are not well established, especially when large numbers are involved. Most pupils can use spreadsheets to solve complex problems successfully. A year 9 class, for example, was investigating number patterns. All pupils set up the spreadsheet correctly, and the ancillary support targeted pupils who were less confident. Patterns were quickly spotted and then nearly all pupils investigated what happened when the initial number inputs were enlarged. Many inserted 4 or 5 digit numbers and found similar patterns. One girl tried it successfully with decimal inputs. Pupils were pleased with their results. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in mathematics, especially when using computers to investigate number patterns.
- 62 Attitudes towards mathematics are good. Many pupils enjoy their work and can talk with enthusiasm about what they are asked to do. There are good relationships in almost all lessons and considerable initiative and responsibility given for their own work. A few pupils in year 6 find it difficult to concentrate, waste time and do not complete the work set.

- 63 Numeracy across the school is good. Mathematics makes good contributions to high standards, and the early introduction of the National Numeracy Framework is already having a positive effect on raising standards in both key stages. In most mathematics lessons, there are deliberate activities that focus on improving mental methods of estimating and calculating - many set in a game context, which encourages whole class participation. In other subjects, information technology makes a significant contribution through work using graphs, charts and tables. Pupils are becoming increasingly more confident in interpreting data. In science, aspects of measurement and drawing of graphs are mainly used satisfactorily, but on occasions some graphs are not always valid. In art, and design and technology, extensive use is made of measurement activities, including weighing. In history and geography, charts, tables and graphs are used and interpreted well.
- 64 Teaching overall is good. In most lessons teaching is at least sound or better, and in four in ten lessons it is excellent. However, in two in five lessons, which include withdrawal lessons for lower attainers, teaching is unsatisfactory. Where teaching is excellent, activities are designed to build effectively upon each other and previous mathematical knowledge, so that progress is effective and continuous. There are high expectations of strategic mathematical thinking and activity, including a precision of language that prepares pupils well for the next stage of learning. Short term, timed targets enable the difficult challenges to be undertaken. For example, a Year 9 class was investigating polynomials using spreadsheets. They were able to change the coefficients of the terms of a specific quadratic equation, complete the appropriate table of values and choose a graph to demonstrate this effect. Several pupils, by the end of the lesson, were able to make generalised statements and demonstrate their truth by reference to print-outs. Overall lesson planning is sound, although in some lessons preparation makes reference to only a limited range of teaching methods. In lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, pupils' errors are not corrected soon enough, the level of activity is not demanding and little progress is made. Planning is not detailed enough to target the specific needs of the pupils, support material to access mathematical concepts is not used, and questioning skills are limited.
- 65 The mathematics curriculum is good and balanced across the required areas of work. The current scheme of work is being phased out and more suitable resources obtained, to ensure better delivery of the National Curriculum. Assessment procedures are detailed, and accurate records are kept of pupil performance against national curriculum requirements. There is very good leadership of the mathematics department and a clear vision for improvements. The development plan is good although not costed in detail or prioritised.
- 66 The department has made significant improvements since the last inspection. The scheme of work is being updated and good account is taken of the National Numeracy Framework. There is still a limited range of teaching methods employed in some classrooms. In order to improve further, the department should improve the monitoring and evaluation of its work, especially teaching and learning in classrooms. Teacher assessment and national test results require more rigorous analysis to pinpoint specific improvements across the differing attainment targets.

**Science**

- 67 Pupils are interested in their science lessons, work well, make good progress and achieve above average standards, particularly in Years 8 and 9 where the science education is most consistent.
- 68 Results in the 1998 national tests for 11 year old pupils were below the national average, particularly at the higher levels. They were well below the results of schools with children from similar backgrounds. Over the last three years, results in tests at age 14 have been consistently above the national average and showing an upward trend. Boys have achieved slightly higher results than girls. These results are in line with those in the school's English and mathematics tests, but below those achieved in schools with children from similar backgrounds, indicating potential for further improvement.
- 69 Overall attainment in science at age 11, for pupils currently in the school, is close to the national level. Pupils enter the school at a standard in science close to that expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding of scientific ideas during their first year and develop good practical skills. For example, in Year 6 they can dissect a pea seed, identify the parts and explain their purposes. Pupils make good progress in their learning over the next three years, particularly in Years 8 and 9. They gain good knowledge across the range of biological, chemical and physical sciences. In Years 8 and 9, particularly in the upper sets, they develop a good understanding of underlying ideas such as the genetic explanation of inherited characteristics. They develop satisfactory experimental skills, such as beginning to weigh up the strength of evidence they collect in an investigation, using multiple readings and taking averages to improve reliability. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress in their learning. Progress is least consistent for higher attaining pupils in Years 6 and 7, who are often not sufficiently stretched. Overall, attainment by age 14 is above that found nationally.
- 70 There is considerable variation in the quality of teaching between very good and unsatisfactory. Whilst the balance overall is sound, it is unsatisfactory in Year 6. Teaching is most consistently good with the full-time specialist teachers. For other teachers, there is insufficient guidance about pitching the demand of the work at an appropriately high level or managing the work rate of pupils. The best teaching manages to communicate some enthusiasm and wonder for the subject, such as when a Year 9 lesson on inheritance was enriched by discussion of the amazing modern developments in genetics. High expectations are evident, both in the challenging high pitch of content to top sets and in the way in which demanding topics are adapted for teaching to lower sets. Examples of this include the way Year 8 pupils were helped to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of alternative energy sources through the use of a game, and the structured teaching of genetics to Year 9 pupils, helping them to appreciate the idea of recessive and dominant characteristics. The least successful teaching often under-estimates the capacity of higher attainers in mixed classes and builds the lessons around tasks which are too

simple, such as completing and colouring a worksheet about the life cycle of a flowering plant. Management of pupils' work rate and attention, particularly some of the Year 6 and 7 boys, whose attitudes are the least mature, is insufficiently firm and this is a significant factor in some of the weaker lessons. Other than this poorer attention and behaviour of Year 6 and 7 boys, pupils respond well to the teaching, they are interested in the subject and act responsibly and safely during practical work.

71 The science curriculum is good and well balanced, with the exception of the use of information technology. There are appropriate outline plans to further develop the curriculum, but greater precision in the learning objectives and activities in Year 6 and 7 lessons are needed. Assessment is regular and teachers keep good records. The collation and use of this information has developed to a satisfactory level, but offers further potential to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the work of the department. Evaluation of the department and strategic planning are weaker areas of the department's management, which otherwise operates smoothly and efficiently, and has continued to improve through a period of change and instability in staffing. The limited resources are well managed to minimise their shortcomings. The poor and otherwise austere accommodation is made into a more interesting learning environment by the display of pupils' work.

72 Since the last inspection good progress has been achieved in raising attainment at KS3 and improving pupils' investigative abilities. Curriculum planning and assessment arrangements have also improved.

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### **Art**

73 Pupils have a broad art experience in two-and three-dimensional media, but time available limits the depth of their visual experiences. They show positive interest, concentrate well and work hard. At the end of Key stage 3, the national teacher assessments were broadly average in 1997, but were below in 1998.

74 In Year 6, attainment in controlling line, texture and colour, using pencils and paints, is a strength. Pupils apply their understanding well, for instance when drawing portraits, and then translating images to make a three-dimensional facial relief using clay. Pupils show above average dexterity and develop good craft skills. They demonstrate average compositional capability when painting a large-scale imaginary seascape, and mix colours well to achieve realistic tones. Tonal drawing is only just average, due to insufficient practice of basic skills. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work of artists is at a level normally seen. Overall, they make steady progress.

75 By age 14, attainment is just in line with national expectations. Pupils' skills in creating ideas and making artefacts in a variety of three-dimensional media are stronger than when they draw and paint. The time available for art limits opportunities for them to make rapid progress, and for this reason many pupils of high prior attainment fail to realise their full potential. Overall, pupils develop average capability in representing visual ideas and feelings, as in Year 9 when they create a collage 'Myself', illustrating their own personalities. Also in Year 9, they record from first-hand observation, with a sound regard for spatial relationships, as when creating a large, still-life drawing using pastels. Design skills are sound, for example, when producing stencil patterns on a carrier-bag in Year 8. Good craft skills are evident in clay, for instance in Year 7 when they make slab tubes to form containers, decorated with sgraffito patterns. However, pupils' capability in observational, tonal drawing, and in gathering visual information to stimulate ideas, is below average. They have a satisfactory understanding of the work of some well-known artists. When pupils' own art is influenced by the styles and techniques of the artists studied, standards are typical for their age. For example, in Year 7, where string collages are inspired by the brush texture of Van Gogh, but opportunities for work of this type are infrequent. Pupils make steady progress during Years 7 to 9.

Those with special educational needs make good progress when they have targeted support.



- 76 Pupils are keen to engage in two- and three-dimensional activities. They concentrate well, even during the lengthy double periods. Consideration and care for the work of others is evident when pupils get out folders, and they clear away effectively. There is respect for each other when pupils express personal ideas, such as a Year 8 ceramics project based on the millennium theme 'Breaking out of the old, to the new'.
- 122 Teaching is consistently satisfactory. Lessons are thoughtfully planned to provide steady progression. Visual concepts, such as line, texture or pattern, and techniques such as colour mixing or applying clay using slip, are explored and practised well before pupils work on final pieces. This benefits the standards achieved. However, tonal drawing from first-hand experience is given insufficient priority. Objectives for lessons are explained well and demonstrations are clear, but some lessons close without a summing up or evaluation of what has been achieved. Difficult concepts, such as abstraction, are taught well by structuring activities into simple steps. For instance, in Year 8, pupils take a small area of a photograph, record it realistically, analyse its linear composition, cut it into shapes and then reassemble it into a free-standing structural form. The space within the room is well used and assists the good management of pupils. Interesting displays, including a gallery of pupils' work, set appropriate expectations for quality and create a well-organised, stimulating working environment. Teaching pupils how to look critically at the work of artists is sound, but is based wholly on reproductions. The schools' excellent art collection, which includes prestigious original works by artists such as Patrick Caulfield and Patrick Hughes, is not utilised.
- 123 The art curriculum has good breadth, with a higher proportion of three-dimensional activity than is normally seen. There is an appropriate balance of themes that can be interpreted using art, craft and design skills. However, the time available at Key Stage 3 is well below the recommended level and this has a negative effect on the depth achieved, particularly for most able pupils. Art is well organised within a department that also includes design and technology.
- 1 In the 1994 inspection, art was reported jointly with design and technology. Since that time, attainment remains broadly average and the course breadth has been successfully retained. The subject has benefited by moving away from a thematic approach, criticised in the last report, to a progressive scheme that is now matched well to the National Curriculum.
- 2 To raise attainment further the following action should be taken: increase opportunities for tonal drawing; use the sketch-book as a resource for visual investigation as well as for recording; make criteria for assessment more explicit so that pupils can set targets for improvement; and utilise the school's collection of original works of art for critical study.
- 125 **Design and technology**
- 3 Pupils respond very well to the challenges they are set in design and technology. They achieve good standards when designing and making, and teaching stresses the importance of achieving high quality in the products that pupils make. At the end of Key Stage 3, the national teacher assessment was above average in 1997 and 1998.

- 4 In Year 6, pupils make rapid progress in their ability to generate design ideas and they develop above average capability in communicating their intentions, using an increasing range of graphic techniques. For instance, this is seen in textiles where they make glove puppets to represent a fictional character of their choice. Pupils use a range of tools and equipment with increasing confidence, and work with above average accuracy and care when making products. This is seen across all media, and includes games made from plastics and wood, and party snacks in food technology. Not all groups who use resistant materials acquire the good level of design and graphic skills observed in parallel classes. Overall, standards are higher than in work typically seen at this age.
- 5 By age 14, a higher proportion of pupils achieves above average standards than is normally seen. In designing, pupils formulate precise specifications for their designs and draw on an increasingly wide range of sources to assist them in developing ideas. Their presentational skills are of a good standard when they record their designs, and pupils often incorporate text and graphics using information technology. When making, pupils show good levels of accuracy in working with tools to shape and form materials. They consider the needs of users well and evaluate their products against criteria. Good skills are evident in Year 9 when pupils work in wood and plastics to make clocks, fabrics to produce a picture book for a small child, and food when preparing a meal based on a careful analysis of nutrients. Literacy skills are extended well as pupils use appropriate technical vocabulary. They demonstrate sound numeracy competence when representing data graphically from surveys conducted in food technology. Pupils with special educational needs make consistently steady progress, and good progress when they are directly supported by learning support assistants, who know pupils' needs very well.
- 6 Pupils show a strong interest in design and technology and they work hard to produce outcomes of good quality. They are responsible with tools and equipment, working with an appropriate regard for safety. Relationships between pupils are very good and they help each other willingly, for example when learning to thread a sewing machine. They are willing to take initiative, and many incorporate innovative ideas in their designs, such as in Year 8 when they experiment with unusual toppings for a pizza that will appeal to young people at a millennium function.
- 7 In lessons, well over one half of the teaching observed during the inspection had many good features and some teaching, in food, resistant materials and textiles, was very good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Lessons are planned thoroughly and teachers have high expectations, particularly when pupils are making products in food technology and textiles. A very positive feature of planning is the production of high quality resources that provide a very clear structure to pupils' designing and making. In some lessons these are provided at different levels of difficulty so that they are matched to pupils' prior attainment. Teaching ensures good pace and retains pupils' interest during double periods, but they are insufficiently active in single periods in food technology. Pupils are given good support through verbal assessments of their progress when engaged in making activities. However, although assessments at the end of projects are thorough, the grades used lack criteria and pupils are not sufficiently clear how they can improve to higher levels.

- 8 Subject leadership provides clear direction, building further on the good standards already achieved. The two-year development plan provides a good framework for subject management, as well as supporting whole school targets. The curriculum has good breadth, and schemes of work for individual projects are very well planned. However, there is insufficient analysis of balance and progression. Also, because pupils do not have a common portfolio, it is difficult for teachers to consolidate and extend pupils' previous achievements when they move to a different materials area. Rooms are well organised, with displays that promote high expectations. However, in food technology old furnishings create a hygiene issue.
- 9 Since the previous inspection, above average standards have been maintained. The curriculum, which was organised around common themes across different media, now benefits from a closer match to the knowledge and skills set out in National Curriculum programme of study. A re-organisation of accommodation has created improved facilities, including better access to information technology.
- 10 Action to promote further improvement should include: documenting coverage and progression more clearly across the subject; enabling teachers to have access to pupils' work undertaken in previous units, so that they can reinforce and extend their capability; and developing clear assessment criteria for grades, so that pupils know what they have achieved and how to improve their work further.

### 133 **Geography**

- 11 In geography, pupils have the opportunity to investigate a wide range of places. They take part with enthusiasm and enjoy finding out about the world in which they live.
- 12 Pupils make steady progress in Year 6, and their attainment is similar to that normally seen. They have a sound knowledge of their local area, and the contrasting locality of Egypt, and are beginning to understand both physical and human geography. For example, they can describe some of the features seen in a river valley, and how these may affect the lives of the people who live there. They have a sound grasp of basic skills, such as giving directions and grid references from a map.
- 13 In end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1998, pupils attained slightly above the national average. Pupils currently in the school make good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9, and standards by age 14 are a little above those normally found. Pupils have a sound knowledge of places, including their local area, contrasting landscapes in other parts of the UK, and countries at different levels of development, such as Japan. They gain a good understanding of the subject through a range of case studies, including earthquakes and world population patterns. They have well developed geographical skills from the numerous opportunities to investigate relevant global issues, such as environmental pollution in the Antarctic.
- 14 The attitude of the pupils is good. They are keen to learn and take a pride in their work. They listen carefully to the teacher and have a sensible attitude. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the pupils worked together well to produce charts which showed a good understanding of the effects of the San Francisco earthquake.

Pupils' behaviour is generally good although, in some classes, small groups of boys cause some distraction through lack of concentration.

15 The teaching is effective with many good lessons. The specialist and experienced teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, and teach with enthusiasm, confidence and authority. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher used some rock samples from home to illustrate some teaching points, and to provide interest to the lesson. This helped the pupils to understand some of the more difficult ideas about river basins and the water cycle. The specialist teachers also have realistic expectations of their pupils. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the teacher had very clear objectives, which the pupils understood. He used a carefully prepared worksheet to set a sequence of activities, so that the pupils would gain a good understanding of the effects of earthquakes. Teachers use a good range of resources, including books and video. They make particularly effective use of information technology to support geography. For example, in Year 7 the pupils use spreadsheets to analyse the results of local shopping surveys, and in Year 9 the presentation of their work on environmental issues is greatly enhanced by the use of desk top publishing. However, temporary teachers, without specialist knowledge or experience of the subject, are less confident of the best approach to a topic, and set activities which do not stretch the pupils. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher was uncertain about starting a topic on Japan, and set an activity in which the pupils could only gain a very basic knowledge of facts, without any real understanding of the nature of the country.

16 Management of the subject has been affected by the long term absence of the head of department. The acting subject coordinator has worked with enthusiasm and commitment to provide very good support for her colleagues. There have been some particularly effective developments in literacy, and in the use of assessment. The absence of the head of humanities means there has been no effective monitoring of the teaching, or systematic use of assessment information to identify areas for development in the subject curriculum, or to set targets for future work.

140 Since the last inspection, progress in Year 6 has remained steady, and in Key Stage 3 standards have risen slightly, particularly in enquiry skills. This is the result of developments in investigative work, which includes the use of carefully structured activities and better use of pupils literacy skills. Action to promote further improvement should include extending the use of learning targets in teachers' planning and continuing to develop the use of investigative approaches to learning

### 139 **History**

17 In history, pupils benefit from the opportunities to investigate a wide range of events and personalities from the past. They enjoy studying the subject, and work with enthusiasm and commitment.

18 In Year 6, they make steady progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills, and achieve standards similar to those normally found. They have a sound knowledge of events which occurred during the past, such as the Gunpowder Plot, and can describe the way of life of people who lived in Ancient Egypt. Through drawing time lines, they gain a good understanding of chronology, but are less confident in interpreting different ways in which the past may be represented.

- 19 In end of Key Stage 3 teacher assessments in 1998, the attainment of pupils was slightly above the national average. Pupils currently in the school make good progress in Years 7, 8 and 9 so, by the time they leave the school, attainment is above typical standards. As a result of their studies of events from the Medieval period to the beginning of the twentieth century, they gain a broad knowledge of history. Through in-depth work on specific events, such as the Black Death and the Civil War, they develop a good understanding of the changes which occurred in the past. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are beginning to make links between events of the past and the present, for example between the events in Sarajevo at the start of the First World War, and in Yugoslavia today. Pupils can use a range of source materials successfully as part of their investigations. For example, Year 7 pupils use reproductions of the Bayeux Tapestry to find out about the Battle of Hastings.
- 20 The attitudes of the pupils are good. They are particularly enthusiastic and responsive when given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own investigations, and work with initiative and commitment. Their behaviour is generally good, although some pupils, usually boys, do not always apply themselves with sufficient concentration.
- 21 The standard of teaching overall is sound, and four in ten lessons are of high quality, but a similar proportion is unsatisfactory. A significant number of the teachers are specialist historians, and others have considerable experience of teaching the subject. They have a good knowledge of the subject, and can deal with the pupils in a warm, professional way. They teach, therefore, with authority and confidence. For example in a Year 9 lesson, the teacher had a sound knowledge of the history of the First World War, and a good understanding of the pupils in her class. She was therefore able to plan a series of lessons which made the best use of a carefully written assignment booklet and a selection of source materials. As a result, the pupils showed a high level of interest and commitment, and gained good understanding of the realities of aspects of the war. The temporary teachers with less knowledge and experience do not have the same understanding of the subject, and set less challenging tasks. For example in a Year 9 lesson on the growth of Hitler's Germany, the pupils were copying from the text book, with very little understanding of the meaning of their work. Most were making very slow progress in their learning, and some could not explain key words such as 'dictator' or 'democracy'.
- 22 Management of the subject has been affected by the long term absence of the head of department. The acting head of department provides very good day-to-day support for the other teachers. She makes suggestions for lesson activities and resources to help all her colleagues. She has enabled the department to make significant steps forward in the development of work in literacy. There are also good procedures in place to assess the progress of the pupils. The absence of the head of humanities, however, means that vital monitoring of the work of the teachers is not taking place to identify ways of setting targets for improvement.
- 23 Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in raising the standards above those reported in 1994, particularly through studies which place emphasis on the development of skills of historical enquiry. Many of the teachers are now making very good use of a wide range of resources, including the library and the computers in the information technology room. Action to promote further improvement should include: using assessment data to set targets for future learning; continuing to introduce studies in which pupils can develop their skills of

enquiry and interpretation; and extending the successful work in literacy so the pupils can continue to make progress in their abilities to communicate the higher levels of understanding

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### **Information technology**

- 24 Information technology education is good across both key stages, and all pupils make good progress during their time at the school. Results in the 1998 teacher assessments show pupils close to national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 with several individual performances above this. In 1997 the results were well above expectations.
- 25 By age 11 the attainment of pupils currently in the school is at the level expected. In the centrally taught course, all pupils are confident to log on and use both word processing and desk top publishing across a range of subjects. The majority can create graphic images and embed them in both text files and slide sequences, together with appropriate editing procedures to extend the applications. Many are competent at data handling and can generate graphs and charts from a created database. Nearly all can set up spreadsheets and enter and edit numeric data correctly. Attainment is close to the level expected for the majority of pupils, and above for a significant number. This good start enables pupils to make good progress during Key Stage 3 and, by age 14, attainment is slightly above average overall, with some pupils working at very high levels. Information technology is used well in history, where data bases are used well to support an investigation into causes of the First World War. In geography, complex surveys are used to investigate current environmental problems. The work of one pupil was exceptional in her use of computers used to design, analyse and present her findings. The work involved setting up appropriate hypotheses and testing these in commercial settings. The analysis, using spreadsheets, graphs and charts not only confirmed her hypothesis, but also opened up the avenue of quality assurance when interviewing factory personnel. Her attainment was high for geography as well as information technology. The majority of pupils are skilled at using graphics, including the use of digital images, to enhance their work across several subjects. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages and gain significantly in their ability to use computers to present their work. Across the school, attainment varies in the different aspects of information technology, being at least at or above the national expectation in most elements, but below in control where very limited provision is made.
- 26 Pupils show very good attitudes to the subject. All pupils sustain their concentration during lessons and can talk enthusiastically about what they can do. Relationships are very good and there is a real sense of achievement, often when pupils help each other to achieve a particular skill competency. The computer club at lunchtimes is very heavily booked.

- 27 Teaching is very good. In the centrally taught course in Year 6 it is very good, and in both key stages there are examples of excellent teaching, especially in history, geography and mathematics. Where teaching is excellent or very good, the skills to be developed are demonstrated in a relevant context for pupils and subsequent practice supported in a way that ensures pupils do it themselves. Supporting prompt sheets are of high quality and make extensive demands, both of computer and subject knowledge. Competencies learnt in the lesson are further developed in the following subject lessons, and pupils use this knowledge to considerably enhance their work. For example, a Year 9 class was investigating convergent, oscillating and divergent series in a mathematics lesson. They were able to input from algebraic form, a number of series illustrating the above phenomenon. There was intense excitement from many groups of pupils when they used the graph function to illustrate the behaviour of the series as  $n$ , the  $n$ th term of the series, increased. This enabled many of the pupils to investigate for themselves the types of series that generated these displays and they were able to appreciate, in an informal manner, the mystical properties of inverse functions around the asymptote. These year 9 pupils experienced graphing irregularities that are normally taught in A level Mathematics, an indication of the high levels of information technology and mathematics at which pupils were working.
- 28 The breadth and balance of curriculum are good, other than in the lack of coverage in control and measuring. The curriculum meets statutory requirements, but reporting to parents does not, as a separate report on information technology is not always provided. There is effective leadership across the school, although the head of department has other teaching and school responsibilities. These impact adversely on his ability to provide consistent support to other subject departments. It also restricts the development of the highest levels of attainment to those subjects who have that expertise. The curriculum is not presently mapped precisely across all subjects to enable each to contribute to the higher levels of attainment. It is insufficiently monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, and there is little analysis of teacher assessments to highlight particular areas for improvement. The technician provides very valuable support in the classroom. Despite a recent high investment, resources are close to, but below, national figures. The department is building up a portfolio of standardised tasks across several key curriculum areas, and moderation of results is showing improved effectiveness. Planning for teaching across the whole school is variable. The guidelines for subject heads of department in the information technology handbook are very good, but not all departments plan in sufficient detail for teaching the national curriculum requirements.
- 29 The school received a favourable report in the previous inspection and further improvements have since been made. The Key Stage 2 scheme of work uses very good national resource material to inform its planning. However, to improve further, the department should establish a more complete and detailed mapping of the subject across all departments. The quality assurance procedures across the school should be strengthened. Detailed analysis of teacher assessments is required to guide improvements in learning, higher levels of attainment and the acquisition of all competencies of the National Curriculum.



152 **Modern Foreign Languages**

152 **French and German**

- 30 Pupils begin French in Year 6 and reach appropriate standards in all parts of the language by the end of that year. Their rate of progress matches expectations for this age group. They can understand simple recorded and printed material. When speaking, they can give simple information about themselves with a satisfactory level of accuracy. When writing, they can copy accurately and can write simple sentences, often with a good level of accuracy. German is introduced for some pupils in Year 8 and, by age 14, most pupils reach the national expectation in French and in German. When listening and reading, pupils can pick out information from straightforward texts, but do not have enough practice with more complex printed or recorded material. When speaking, pupils can communicate basic information, but often French pronunciation is poor. Most written work is accurate but also quite basic and thoroughly prepared. By Year 9, examples of more ambitious and extended work emerge, which include the use of the past tense and original ideas. Pupils make good progress in German, acquiring a substantial amount of language in a short time. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in French, developing their spoken and written work from simple, brief outputs into longer more complex compositions. Pupils with special educational needs generally make appropriate progress, but some pupils with very low attainment make insufficient progress because the lesson activities, and the type of language they are expected to produce, do not match their capabilities. Some pupils of higher prior attainment are capable of much more complex work in French, but remain at a level below their full capacity. Most pupils make insufficient progress in developing the skills needed for independent study.
- 31 Attitudes and behaviour in Year 6 are good. Pupils enjoy their lessons. They are keen to answer questions and to use the language. In Years 7 to 9 pupils' response to French and German is at least satisfactory, and often good or very good. Pupils organise themselves efficiently, for example, when undertaking individual listening tasks with a personal stereo. They are very attentive and maintain their concentration at high levels.
- 32 Teaching of French in Year 6 is sound. Lessons are well constructed, leading pupils from a familiar starting point through new material in an organised way. There is an appropriate balance of challenge and support which meets the needs of all pupils. Too much time is spent on whole class question and answer work, focused on the teacher, so that pupils do not use their French actively and intensively enough. In Key Stage 3, teaching is good in German lessons and sound in French lessons. Teachers are enthusiastic, confident and fluent users of the language. Expectations are usually suitable for most pupils, but they are not clearly enough articulated to pupils, and do not systematically target the needs of the highest attaining pupils. Routines, instructions and explanations of grammar patterns are very clear. In the most effective lessons, lively whole-class presentation of essential material offers challenge, risk and enjoyment, and focuses on accuracy of key words, for example in a Year 9 German lesson which developed a mealtime conversation. In Year 9 lessons on the 'link project', tutorial work with individual pupils provides good support and advice during independent work. In less effective lessons, whole class speaking activity does not allow pupils to practise their pronunciation enough and to correct inaccuracies. Assessment systems are good, and detailed records are kept of pupils' performance, but they do not embody the criteria of the National

Curriculum. These criteria are not exploited enough in lessons to shape targets and expectations or to give a framework for raising standards. Teachers have received insufficient professional development in this area.

- 33 The school's curriculum is enhanced by French in Year 6. Some features of provision for French and German in Key Stage 3 need review. The extraction from French lessons of pupils with special educational needs causes discontinuity in their studies and affects their progress. Year 9 pupils who use one of their French lessons for extra information technology or English work are not receiving their full entitlement to modern foreign languages. Pupils studying two languages in Years 8 and 9 spend less time on French in order to study German, reducing their capacity to produce the higher levels of language of which they are capable.
- 34 The leadership and management of French and German are good. Documentation is clear and complete, and accurately reflects genuine practice. Planning for change and improvement is sensible, practical and effective. There is a clear sense of direction, shared by all colleagues, who work well together. Progress since the last inspection has been good.
- 35 The rooms used for French and German lessons limit the range and quality of work. Two are temporary structures, separated from the main school, where leaking water prevents the use of computers, television or overhead projectors. One room in the main school is separated from the stock of French resources. It has poor sound insulation and acoustics, which hinder listening and speaking.
- 158 **Music**
- 36 Prior to the inspection the teacher had been on long term sick leave and music lessons had been covered by non-specialist supply teachers.
- 37 In work observed in lessons, and on video, Year 6 pupils are able to compose pieces with a basic structure in a 'rap' style. They are able to add simple rhythmic accompaniments using body sounds. No evidence was seen during the inspection of singing or the development of more complex musical skills requiring control of elements such as dynamics or timbre. The attainment of pupils by age 14 is below expectation. In a recorded extract on the topic 'Variations' pupils are able to achieve basic control over instruments, such as keyboards, and change the melody from major to minor. These compositions are short and do not develop ideas using the level of sophistication expected for this age group. Similarly, when working on Indian ragas, pupils demonstrate an understanding of how the music is constructed, but their compositions are simple and under-developed. They explore the notes of the raga, but do not improvise fluently and very few make links with an associated mood which is a characteristic feature of this style of music.
- 38 Pupils make sound progress between Years 6 and 9. In lessons, Year 6 pupils make sound progress in developing a simple piece based on 'raps', but the task does not allow them to develop sufficiently their musical skills and understanding. Year 7 pupils make sound progress when practising simple melodic ideas based on gamelan music from Bali. Although progress is just sound, pupils do not develop in a sufficiently coherent way the skills they need to perform and compose more sophisticated pieces of music. This means that older pupils are not able to perform or compose pieces with sufficient fluency. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when a learning support assistant works with them individually

or in small groups.

- 39 Pupils have mostly good attitudes to learning. They generally show interest in lessons and mostly concentrate well. Their behaviour is nearly always good, and they rarely have to be reprimanded. In one Year 9 lesson several pupils were noisy and did not listen to instructions. As the lesson progressed other pupils also began to lose concentration, and by the end of the lesson the majority were not paying attention despite requests from the teacher to listen. Despite this, once pupils began to play instruments, most made some progress.
- 40 Teaching is sound. Good knowledge and understanding of musical cultures, such as Indian and Balinese, helps pupils to make progress. Clear time scales are given for the completion of work, although pupils are not always clear what to do once this task has been completed. For example in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were given a specified time by which they had to complete a performance of a simple 'gamelan' melody. This helped the pupils to focus their learning and get ready to perform their melody to the rest of the class. Pupils who completed the task earlier than the given time scale carried on practising the same idea, even though they were ready to move on to a more challenging task. Pupils are mostly managed well. In one Year 9 lesson, where teaching was unsatisfactory, pupils were unsettled throughout most of the lesson and did not listen well to instructions. A few lessons have over-long introductions. For example, in a Year 8 lesson pupils were introduced to a new computer software package. As the pupils needed to become familiar with the computer programme, and aspects of the twelve bar blues, the introductory explanation took up over half the available lesson time and some pupils became confused.
- 41 The music department has a scheme of work which outlines the activities which will be covered in lessons. The scheme does not refer sufficiently to progression across and between year groups. Pupils generally spend a below average amount of time studying music. Year 9 pupils study music in rotation with drama, and the amount of time they spend on music is well below average and this contributes to their below average attainment by age 14. The music department lacks sufficient good quality keyboards and a range of suitable listening resources. Sound progress has been made since the last inspection, but long-term planning still remains an issue which has not been addressed effectively.

### **Physical education**

- 42 During the inspection, lessons were observed in tennis, rounders and athletics but, because of poor weather, most of the lessons were taken indoors.
- 43 By age 11, pupils' attainment matches their experience in tennis and matches that normally seen in similar schools. Most pupils can make contact with the ball consistently and know at what height the ball should be hit in forehand and backhand strokes.

- 44 By age 14, pupils' planning, performing and evaluation skills are overall in line with national expectations, with several pupils achieving high standards in games activities. In tennis, most pupils can sustain a rally. Their performance of ground strokes is satisfactory overall and their performance of the lob is in line with their experience. Most pupils' performance of the serve is below expectations, although several pupils do serve well, showing accuracy and speed. Several pupils have good tactical awareness and use this to successfully outwit opponents. Most pupils' knowledge and understanding of the rules of the game, and the scoring system, are below expectations. In rounders, pupils' underarm throwing and bowling skills are in line with what is expected for their age. Most pupils have satisfactory hand/eye coordination when batting. Most pupils can throw accurately over short distances in practice, but only about half the pupils can do so in the games situation. In athletics, in the relay event, pupils are able to plan different strategies, implement them and evaluate their effectiveness. Most pupils know and understand how to warm up effectively for specific physical education activities. Pupils are achieving some good results in extra-curricular activities, especially in badminton, netball, basketball and athletics, with several pupils selected to take part at area, city and county levels in these activities.
- 45 Satisfactory progress is made by most pupils, including those with special educational needs, in knowledge, understanding and performance of physical education skills. Progress is, however, hampered by the undue repetition of some lesson content from year to year.
- 46 Pupils' attitudes to physical education are very good and they enjoy their lessons. Pupils are very well behaved and are always courteous to the teacher and usually to each other. They co-operate well in small groups and are very good at feeding the ball in practices in order to help their partners to hit it. They show respect for equipment. They show initiative in modifying tasks to suit their own ability.
- 47 Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers always have very high expectations in terms of pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Pupils and resources are usually organised quickly and effectively. Teachers usually use a range of appropriate teaching strategies, including pupil and teacher demonstrations, but the quality of demonstrations is sometimes poor. Lessons are always soundly planned, but the teaching objectives are often unclear. Tasks are sometimes not chosen well, or built up in logical stages, to bring about the desired learning outcomes. Neither are tasks always sufficiently challenging for the more able pupils. Whilst coaching points are given, sometimes the most relevant are omitted - for example, pupils were not told to punch the ball when producing a volley in tennis. Feedback is usually given to individual pupils, but this is often very general - for example, "hard luck" when a pupil misses the ball, instead of focusing specifically on what the pupil needs to do in order to contact the ball. Relationships with pupils are always good and often very good.

- 48 The curriculum is broad, but there is an imbalance in favour of games in both key stages. The curriculum is considerably enriched by the very good extra-curricular programme. Schemes of work are in place, but progress from year to year is not clearly identifiable in each physical education activity. Assessment procedures are in place, but assessment criteria are not sufficiently well defined to indicate clearly what pupils know, understand and can do. Reports to parents do not give a clear statement on pupils' progress since their last report. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' social development, especially through their participation in inter-form activities. Pupils from different year groups also work very well together to compose and perform dances for school dance performances. Changing facilities are unsatisfactory for the number of pupils using them at any one time. Boys' and girls' changing areas are situated at opposite ends of the school which makes supervision of pupils difficult.
- 49 Since the last report, there have been no significant changes in attainment. The amount of time for gymnastics and dance has been increased, but this is still insufficient, especially for Year 6 pupils. In order for further improvements to take place, progression in pupils' knowledge, understanding and performance of skills needs to be specifically identified in schemes of work and undue repetition of content omitted. The gaps before units of work are revisited should be reduced. Lessons need clear teaching objectives and tasks need to be selected carefully in all lessons to bring about desired learning outcomes.

## 172 **Religious Education**

- 50 Standards of attainment in religious education by ages 11 and 14 are unsatisfactory overall in relation to the expectations of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus. Pupils show sound knowledge of aspects of religions. For example, pupils in Year 6 can identify and explain the customs and traditions associated with the birth of a Muslim baby, and they can describe what happens at the christening of a baby in some Christian traditions. Pupils in Key Stage 3 can describe features of places of worship and some rites of passage, for example, bar mitzvah in Judaism. Pupils in Year 8 show a particularly good knowledge and understanding of the life and teachings of Jesus. They are articulate when expressing their own views and responses to questions of belief. Their research and organisational skills are generally good. Although pupils are well able to answer comprehension questions to do with factual knowledge, they often show difficulty in understanding why certain actions are important to believers. For example, pupils in Year 7 can identify aspects of the synagogue, but have very limited understanding of key beliefs since the concept of worship is not explored. Pupils in both key stages make unsatisfactory progress over time, although in lessons there are aspects which show sound progress. For instance, pupils develop a growing specialist vocabulary which they can use correctly, and skills of discussion deepen in maturity during Key Stage 3 when considering questions of meaning and purpose. Some aspects of understanding are not sufficiently developed, for instance, when topics such as Christmas are revisited, with little or no progression of learning taken into account. Pupils make slow progress in understanding concepts which are central to an understanding of religion, such as symbolism and motivation. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is slow affected by a lack of differentiated resources, subject related targets and the withdrawal of some pupils for literacy support.

- 51 Behaviour is generally good and in some Year 8 and 9 classes is excellent. Pupils work extremely well in groups and are able to discuss and collaborate in a mature way. They listen well to each other and show respect for the feelings and ideas of others. When given the opportunity to take responsibility for work, for example in projects, they respond very well. Where teaching is weak, some Year 6 boys show loss of concentration and interest in their work and misbehave. Some Year 9 pupils also show an unsatisfactory response to work when they are not engaged by the topic or activities.
- 175 Teaching in religious education is unsatisfactory overall. While some excellent lessons are taught, teaching is very inconsistent with a significant proportion of unsatisfactory lessons. Teaching over time has been unsatisfactory as shown by the quality of work in pupils' books. Where individual lessons are very good, teachers show confidence in identifying what pupils need to learn, and there is clear planning closely linked to the Agreed Syllabus and the experience and needs of the pupils. For example, in a Year 8 group on the life of Jesus, the teacher carefully planned groups with an appropriate mix of gender, abilities and personalities which led to very successful group activities. In successful lessons, teachers have very good relationships with pupils, and generate confidence in the pupils in sharing their thoughts, feelings and experiences. For example, Year 6 pupils were able to talk about their own family memories and photographs of babyhood as part of a lesson on baptism. Good pace in lessons is established through tasks with clear time targets. Learning is consolidated and reinforced through discussion such as in a Year 9 lesson on 'Who am I?'. Unsatisfactory teaching is principally due to long term staffing difficulties and lack of specialist subject knowledge and expertise. In unsatisfactory lessons, there is a heavy reliance on comprehension exercises, and lack of pace and challenge to stimulate questioning and deepen conceptual understanding.
- 176 The curriculum shows good breadth and balance across the attainment statements of the Agreed Syllabus, but does not include sufficient depth and content. Schemes of work do not take sufficient account of continuity and ensure the religious education content of some topics which are historically based. Many worthwhile opportunities for the spiritual and moral development of pupils through the discussion of beliefs and values are provided in the subject. A good example is the Year 9 topic 'Life, the Universe and Me' which allows a creative response from the pupils by linking ideas of life to pictures. Although valiant efforts have been made during this difficult time by the acting coordinator to support teachers by providing lesson plans, resources and suggested teaching strategies, the dissemination of good practice and monitoring of teaching is urgently needed to provide consistency of experience for pupils.
- 177 Since the last inspection there is now more clearly identifiable religious education in the humanities curriculum strengthened by provision in Year 9. However, insufficient time is still allocated to the subject.
- 178 Despite the teamwork of experienced teachers working hard to maintain standards during staffing difficulties, there remain significant problems in the management and teaching of the subject. To raise standards, the school needs to provide direction for the subject, improve curriculum planning and assessment, and monitor the quality of teaching and learning.

- 1 Assessment of pupils' special educational needs is good. The arrangements for the identification and assessment of individual needs, at the point of transfer into the school from primary feeder schools, are very good. The learning support staff continue to assess all pupils' literacy skills annually. This information, together with diagnostic assessment, is used to set individual education plans. These give very useful information to staff about the pupils' needs, and very good advice on how to support them. The targets are practical and relevant, although the range of diagnostic assessment is limited, and targets are insufficiently focussed for structured individual teaching. Progress towards achieving these targets is monitored regularly by support staff, but recording focuses on work done, rather than identifying strengths and weaknesses, which will lead to the next step in learning.
- 2 The individual education plans ensure all staff have a sound knowledge of these pupils' needs. However, mainstream teachers are not yet using them consistently in planning or identifying subject targets, and this sometimes causes these pupils to struggle with tasks. There is insufficient use of multi-sensory approaches to learning.
- 3 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs by specialist staff is good, and sometimes very good, because of their expertise. A detailed programme for developing spelling and reading, linked to the National Literacy Strategy, is being planned. Classroom support assistants make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Special needs staff understand and plan for the needs of the pupils very well. They enable the pupils to develop knowledge and understanding through sensitive and probing questions, and use a good range of teaching strategies to support learning.
- 4 Well targeted support enables pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in achieving their individual education plan targets. They make good progress in increasing their reading and spelling ages and in developing social and language skills. In a few mainstream lessons these pupils gain little where planning for their needs is poor, or no support is available.
- 5 The requirements of the Code of Practice are followed very well. The special needs register provides useful, relevant information for staff, as do the individual education plans. Procedures for reviewing these are good, with two or three well conducted reviews a year. The annual review procedures are very well followed, including arrangements for transition reviews at 14+. There is good involvement of pupils in reviewing their targets, and there are good links with outside agencies. The special needs database is efficient, although this is not linked with the school's assessment database. Pupils with behavioural difficulties on the special needs register are supported well. There are effective links with heads of year, who monitor the progress of behaviour targets.
- 6 Parents of pupils with special needs are appreciative of the quality of support. The homework diary is used well by support staff for communication. Parents are informed of the individual education plan targets and most attend review meetings. Some parents support targets at home. The annual review progress report gives very clear information about progress towards targets, and progress within national curriculum subjects. There are very good links with the special needs provisions in



the upper schools, which ensure a smooth, well-supported transition for these pupils.

- 7 The special needs coordinators are actively supported by the special needs governor. They are aware that monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the provision for special needs is an area for development. This is beginning, with an analysis of the progress of pupils with special needs. Currently there are no formal procedures in place for monitoring the quality of special needs teaching or learning. The development plan is sound, although procedures for monitoring its implementation have not been identified. There is no explicit focus on the raising of achievement of these pupils.
  
- 8 Staffing to meet the needs of pupils with special needs is good. Special needs staff are developing a good level of expertise through training, and there is frequent training on special needs for all staff. The special needs accommodation is good. Access for pupils with special needs is sound, although there are restrictions around the school, such as the stairs to mathematics. The needs of visually impaired pupils have been addressed satisfactorily.
  
- 9 Since the last report there has been a change of leadership of special needs. The department has been relocated, the policy reviewed, and individual education plans have recently been introduced across the curriculum. The special needs coordinators provide very good leadership. They have introduced very effective procedures to ensure that the requirements of the Code of Practice are met, based upon a very good policy for the provision for special needs.

**PART C: INSPECTION DATA****187 SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 12 inspectors spent the equivalent of 31 days in the school.
- 132 lessons were observed representing 122 hours, and covering all aspects of the curriculum.
- All full and part-time teachers, including specialist support teachers, were observed at least once and most on several occasions, with the exception of one teacher who was absent for the duration of the inspection.
- Many further observations, including assemblies, registrations and form time, a variety of extra-curricular activities, movement around and arrival and departure from the school site.
- 48 scheduled discussions were held with the school management team, teachers, non-teaching staff, the chair of the governing body, other governors and visiting specialists.
- 19 parents attended the statutory meeting for parents.
- 135 questionnaires were analysed representing 25.4% of the 531 sent out.
- Written and practical work of many pupils was inspected during lessons.
- The work of pupils outside inspection week was observed on video, in photographs and heard on audio tapes.
- 24 pupils, representing Years 6 – 9, with a wide range of abilities, provided a complete sample of their work collected over an extended period.
- Discussions were held with these and many other pupils about their work and their experiences at South Charnwood High School.
- One primary school, from which the school draws a significant proportion of pupils, and one upper school to which the school sends pupils, were visited by an inspector to discuss transfer arrangements.
- Many further discussions were held with staff, pupils and visitors to the school during the period of the inspection.
- Comprehensive documentation concerning all aspects of the school, including reports and records, was provided prior to and during the inspection, and this was analysed by the inspection team.

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· **DATA AND INDICATORS**

· **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y6 – Y9	531	19	90	28

· **Teachers and classes**

· **Qualified teachers (Y6 - Y9)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	29.50
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	18.00

· **Education support staff (Y6 – Y9)**

Total number of education support staff:	4
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	82.2

[Secondary schools]

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	79.5
Average teaching group size:	KS2 23
	KS3 23

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**Financial data**

Financial year:	1999
	£
Total Income	1029708
Total Expenditure	1065015
Expenditure per pupil	2005.68
Balance brought forward from previous year	27307
Balance carried forward to next year	- 8000

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	531
Number of questionnaires returned:	135

Responses (percentage of answers in each category expressed as whole number):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	8	54	24	13	1
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	19	61	6	11	2
The school handles complaints from parents well	13	42	28	10	5
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	7	57	18	17	1
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	21	54	10	11	3
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	21	56	10	12	1
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	13	59	15	13	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	9	62	14	8	7
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	16	57	19	7	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	11	61	16	8	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	27	56	10	4	1

### Other issues raised by parents

At the meeting for parents, and in further comments made in writing, a number of parents expressed the following views:

- The majority supported the values of the school and expressed positive views about its work.
- The majority were satisfied with the academic provision made by the school, but a small number suggested that the most able children are insufficiently challenged.
- Many parents wanted more information on the curriculum.
- Concern was expressed by many parents about the scheme used in mathematics.
- Parents at the meeting indicated that there was inconsistency in the setting of homework between teachers, and that the level of homework declined during the year.
- While form tutors know pupils well and school is caring, parents do not have a clear picture of how the pastoral system works.
- Induction into the school in Year 6 was felt to be very good.
- Parents expressed an interest in having greater involvement in the school.