

INSPECTION REPORT

Gosforth Central Middle School
Gosforth

LEA area: Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Unique Reference Number: 108519

Headteacher: Mrs D Darwin

Reporting inspector: Mr P J Scott

Dates of inspection: 4th – 7th October 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708014

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle
Type of control:	County
Age range of pupils:	9 - 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Great North Road Gosforth Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE3 1UN
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Eunson
Date of previous inspection:	14th – 18th November 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members	Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
P Scott Registered Inspector	Mathematics	Attainment and progress Teaching
J Griffin Lay Inspector		Leadership and management Attitudes, behaviour and personal development Attendance Support, guidance and pupils' welfare Partnership with parents and the
L Bappa	History Religious Education	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Equal Opportunities Special educational needs
R Castle J Elsley	Geography Art Music	
D Innes	English Physical Education Modern foreign languages	Assessment Curriculum
M Lafford J Martin R Robinson	Science Design and technology Information technology	Efficiency of the school Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

The inspection contractor was:

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London WC2B 6SE

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- Attainment is above the standard expected in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2.
- Good progress at Key Stage 2 and at Years 7 and 8.
- Excellent relationships, very good pupil behaviour and very positive attitudes to learning.
- High levels of pupil attendance.
- Good teaching.
- Excellent extra-curricular activities.
- Very good support and guidance for pupils with very good provision for personal, moral, social, spiritual and cultural development.
- Strong commitment from parents and guardians and effective partnerships with the school.
- Very good leadership and management.
- Excellent ethos.
- Good value for money.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Provision for information technology does not fully meet statutory requirements.
- II. Insufficiently specific and well-defined targets to help pupils with special educational needs make the same progress as other pupils, in most subjects.
- III. Limited support for a small number of pupils who have limited or no experience of the English language.

The school has many more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection will be addressed. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has continued to improve the quality of education and has improved standards of achievement overall, although fluctuations in attainment in mathematics and science have occurred in national tests since the last inspection. In English, there has been a steady improvement year by year since 1994. The school has overcome most of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection, although there is more to do on a few. Attention has been given to planning the curriculum at Key Stage 3 through improved teamwork by teachers. Curriculum continuity between the contributory primary schools, the school and the receiver secondary school has been improved through close working of teachers with responsibilities for subjects. The management and organisation of the art and music departments have been addressed successfully. The teachers' personal and professional development have been successfully helped by the training, preparation and introduction of the national initiatives for literacy and numeracy. The needs of the higher-attaining pupils continue to be addressed. All issues relating to safety, reported in the last inspection, have been resolved successfully. Both the school's improvement and its capacity to continue improving are good.

Standards in subjects

The following table shows standards achieved by 11 year olds in national tests in 1998:

Performance in:	Compared with all schools	Compared with similar schools	Key
			very high
			A*
			well above average
			A
			above average
			B
			average
			C
			below average
			D
			well below average
			E
			very low
			E*
English	A	A	

Mathematics	C	C
Science	C	C

Pupils' provisional results in national tests taken by 11 year old pupils in 1999 show a significant improvement in all core subjects over the 1998 results. More pupils reached higher levels of attainment than in any previous year since the last inspection.

• **Quality of teaching**

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 5-6	Good	Geography, music.	-
Years 7-8	Good	Geography, music, modern languages	-
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Teaching is never less than satisfactory. It is good, often very good and occasionally excellent in about seven out of ten lessons.

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	Very good; behaviour is supported by most pupils' desire to learn and high levels of motivation.
Attendance	Very good; it is well above the national average.
Ethos*	Excellent; the school has a commitment to high standards. Relationships are excellent, and pupils' attitudes to work and learning are very positive.
Leadership and management	Very good; the school benefits from the very good leadership of the headteacher who is well supported by an efficient governing body.
Curriculum	Satisfactory; except in information technology where legal requirements are not fully met. Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. Good opportunities for learning modern languages at Key Stage 2.
Pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory; but weaknesses in the provision of imprecise Individual Education Plans.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Very good; particularly in moral, social and personal development.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory; insufficient non-teaching staff to support pupils with special educational needs and pupils with a restricted understanding and experience of the English language.
Value for money	Good

**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

- The high standards of teaching and expectation of the pupils
- Respect between pupils and teachers and between pupils
- The leadership of the headteacher

What some parents are not happy about

- The quantity of homework set, particularly
 - The school not giving them a clear indication
- dren

- It provides a friendly and stimulating environment where most children are happy
- The caring attitudes of all adults working in the school

Parents' and guardians' views were obtained from the responses of those who completed the questionnaire and those who attended a parents' evening or made written responses before the inspection. The inspectors agreed with what parents liked about the school. They felt that homework set was not excessive and that most pupils enjoyed extending their learning at school by continuing their studies at home. The school had recently responded to parental wishes by reducing the number, frequency and lengths of projects and improving their co-ordination. It was found that, in some year groups, parents are given an indication of what is taught each term but that inconsistency across other year groups exists.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

In order to improve further the quality of education and standards achieved by the pupils, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- I. **Establish the use of information technology to support learning in the subjects of the curriculum and introduce procedures for assessing attainment to measure the progress of individual pupils. (paragraphs 11, 17, 22, 32, 35,37, 40, 60, 66, 67, 73, 84, 95, 99, 111, 115, 117, 118, 122, 127)**
- II. **Improve the quality of the individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs by identifying and stating the targets more precisely so that teachers can use them more effectively in their planning. (paragraphs 19, 32, 73, 82)**
- III. **Introduce procedures which better support pupils who have limited or no experience of English through:-**
 - (i) **Increasing the use of adult support in class;**
 - (ii) **Improving the range of bilingual resources;**
 - (iii) **Making the teachers more aware of the learning needs of these pupils. (paragraphs 12, 20, 29, 37, 41, 62, 63, 73, 109)**

In addition to the three key issues above, the following less important weaknesses should be considered by the governing body for inclusion in the action plan:

- IV. Subject leaders not monitoring the quality of teaching in their subject * (paragraphs 29, 59, 62, 83, 99, 111, 121)
- V. Curriculum continuity between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 in science (paragraphs 37, 90)
- VI. Consistency in the use of assessment and recording in all subjects but particularly in art, design and technology and music (paragraphs 36, 40, 41, 95, 137)
- VII. The provision of non-teaching staff for science and design and technology (paragraphs 63, 70, 90)
- VIII. Availability and deployment of non-teaching support for pupils with special educational needs ** (paragraphs 12, 19, 80, 82)
- IX. The inadequate library facilities ** (paragraph 65, 76,83)

* Identified by the school

** Procedures already in place

· **INTRODUCTION**

· **Characteristics of the school**

1. Gosforth Central Middle School is a large, local education authority controlled, middle school with 502 girls and boys on roll aged 9-13. In recent years, applications for places have exceeded those available, however, the school has admitted a steady entry of about 126 pupils. Overall, there are about the same number of boys and girls, although in Years 6 and 7 there are significant differences in the balance between the sexes. Most pupils come from homes which are privately owned with a few coming from local authority-owned houses. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment which are above average. More parents and guardians than the national average have received, or are receiving, higher education. The school is located on a single site about three miles from the centre of the city of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Approximately two pupils in eleven are on the school's register for special educational needs. This is broadly in line with the national average. Of these pupils, four have statements. This is well below the national average. The number of pupils assessed as having special educational needs has increased steadily in recent years. Most of the pupils on the special educational needs register have moderate or specific learning difficulties, some associated with speech, hearing and physical difficulties. A small number of pupils have special educational needs related to emotional and behavioural difficulties. Approximately one in ten pupils is eligible for free school meals. This is below the national average for similar schools. One in nine pupils is from an ethnic minority groups. They represent a wide range of cultures. Most speak English as an additional language. The number of pupils from ethnic minority groups and others with a diversity of cultural backgrounds has increased steadily in recent years.
2. The school aims to provide a purposeful and stimulating environment for learning and one in which everyone is respected and valued. It expects and encourages high standards of achievement and behaviour whilst recognising the need to make education an enjoyable experience. The curriculum is designed to provide both breadth and balance and to recognise the needs of all children. The school aims to give pupils confidence through planned experiences designed to encourage personal responsibility, tolerance and understanding of others. It seeks to promote equality of opportunity for all pupils and to raise their awareness of, and involvement in, belonging to a community and all that this entails. In partnerships between children, teachers, parents, governors and the wider community, the school seeks to foster self-confidence and independence, encouraging enquiring minds and preparing pupils for successful and fulfilling futures. The current priorities for development include improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom and raising pupils' achievement in literacy, numeracy and science against stated targets. The targets for 2000 include 85 per cent of pupils reaching level 4 or above in standard attainment tests and tasks at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science.

2. **Key indicators**

Attainment at Key Stage 2¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for latest reporting year (1998):	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1998	64	61	125

2. **National Curriculum Test/Task Results**

		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	48	38	47
	Girls	54	38	46
	Total	102	76	93
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	81(80)	61(70)	74(71)
	National	65(63)	59(62)	68(62)

2. **Teacher Assessments**

		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	40	46	45
	Girls	49	46	51
	Total	89	92	96
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	71(61)	73(59)	76(67)
	National	65(63)	65(64)	71(69)

.....
1

Percentages 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 (1998/9):	Authorised absence	School	4.8
		National comparative data	6.1
	Unauthorised absence	School	0.01
		National comparative data	0.4

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Exclusions

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year (1998/9):		Number
	Fixed period	1
	Permanent	0

2. **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	32
	Satisfactory or better	100
	Less than satisfactory	0

2. **PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

2. **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

2. **Attainment and progress**

Evidence from the inspection includes observation of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with pupils about their work.

2. **Key Stage 2**

2. **English, mathematics and science**

1. The 1998 National Curriculum test results in English show attainment well above the national average. In mathematics and science, they are close to the national average. The main reasons for the high performance in English, compared with the results in the other two core subjects, is the high levels of literacy skills which most pupils have, their positive attitudes to learning and the good teaching they receive. In recent years, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in English has been consistently above average and improving. In mathematics, following an improvement between the last inspection in 1994 and 1996, there was a decline in attainment until 1998. Attainment in science has continued to rise year by year since 1996.
2. Provisional results for the core subjects in 1999 show a significant improvement over the previous year to levels which are anticipated to be at least above the national average in mathematics and science and, in English, well above. The most significant improvements have been made by higher-attaining pupils in mathematics and science.
3. Pupils entering the school at Year 5 have attainment levels in the core subjects which are above national expectations. Inspection evidence shows that most are making good progress to maintain levels in the core subjects which are above the respective national averages and, for higher-attaining pupils, levels which are well above expectations.
4. From 1996 to 1998, the performance of boys in the core subjects, taken together at the end of Key Stage 2, was above the national average, whilst the girls reached levels well above the national average. The difference in attainment between boys and girls is less than that which occurs nationally. Overall girls are reaching standards approximately five months in advance of similar aged girls in other schools. For boys the difference is about four months.
5. Evidence from the inspection shows attainment to be above national expectations in English at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils' speaking skills are above expectations. They speak confidently, clearly, fluently and at length, in well formulated sentences using a wide range of vocabulary. Pupils listen carefully and read well. However, a few lower-attaining pupils have difficulty in explaining the meaning of more difficult words, and with spelling, usually words with double consonants. Writing skills are above expectations. Pupils' skills in presentation are good. They use a wide range of writing skills and an extended use of vocabulary. Pupils transfer and use words from most subjects to enrich their writing. Grammar and punctuation are usually used correctly. Skills in the use of literacy are successful in raising attainment in English to above expected levels. This is mainly because the teaching is good and all teachers are appropriately trained and are using recently introduced literacy techniques successfully.
6. Inspection evidence shows that, by the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in mathematics and science is above national expectations. In mathematics, pupils are confident and competent in using the four rules of arithmetic, which are being tested successfully by daily mental agility tests. They have a good understanding of simple fractions and their interconversion to decimals. A few, mostly lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, find some difficulties with understanding new words which express more complex mathematical ideas. Pupils interpret pictorial representations of numbers correctly. Good literacy skills, successfully used, are improving levels of attainment in mathematics.

7. In science, pupils measure accurately and read identification keys successfully. Pupils, except those with higher attainment, have difficulty in understanding and applying new technical words which summarise scientific ideas. Lower-attaining pupils are weak in transferring ideas from mathematics to help in improving attainment in science, for example, an understanding of volume. Pupils' skills in art are used successfully in raising standards in science by examples of observational drawings which show excellent attention to detail.
8. Overall the introduction of activities and methods associated with the National Literacy Project is having a positive effect upon the pupils' attainment and progress in the core and other subjects of the curriculum. There is some evidence, for example, of improved speed and accuracy in the use of number, to suggest that the National Numeracy Project, one month after its introduction, is having a similar effect in raising standards in other subjects, but it is too early to make judgements on the full impact.

10. **Other subjects**

9. Evidence from the inspection shows that pupils make good progress in all subjects, except art where progress is satisfactory and geography where it is very good. Progress is usually good because expectations of teachers are high, pupils have a good inclination to work, they have positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is very good. In music, where teaching is very good, pupils make good progress to reach expected levels of attainment. Staffing difficulties in music have, until recently, led to some discontinuity in learning. In art, pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory. Higher-attaining pupils make better progress than others because they are creative and imaginative. The correct and confident use of a wide range of tools and equipment helps pupils make good progress in design and technology. Attainment, however, is satisfactory because planning and designing are weaker than making. In geography, high teacher expectations and very good use of time and resources help pupils to make very good progress and raise their attainment. Pupil motivation and lesson planning in history are significant contributory factors in helping pupils make good progress and reach levels of attainment which are above expectations. Well targeted questions assist pupils in making good progress. Higher and average attaining pupils make good progress in information technology because they have a wide range of skills in using computers and access to specialist teaching. However, the use of these skills in information technology to raise attainment and assist progress in other subjects is unsatisfactory because of inadequate resources in most classrooms, and a lack of an assessment policy with which to monitor progress. Good progress in modern languages is because pupils are interested and attentive to good teaching which includes clear objectives, good planning, high expectations and brisk pace. These features help pupils to reach above expected levels of attainment. In physical education, teachers' good knowledge, understanding and skills, in addition to very good relationships, assist in raising pupils' attainment and good progress is being made. Attainment in physical education is above national expectations because of the good teaching and the school placing a strong emphasis on extra-curricular activities. Pupils reach high levels of attainment in dance. In religious education, pupils' attainment reaches above the levels expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Progress is good.
10. Overall, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress at this key stage. Their progress is good in modern languages and religious education and very good in geography. In all other subjects progress is satisfactory. However, imprecise individual education plans and limited, yet effective classroom support are insufficient to help pupils with special educational needs and a few lower-attaining pupils make the same progress as higher and average-attaining pupils. A few pupils with a restricted understanding and experience of the English language make less than satisfactory progress because of insufficient specialist support to attend to their varied needs and most teachers are limited in their awareness of the issues relating to the learning needs of these pupils.

12. Key Stage 3

English, mathematics and science

11. Inspection evidence shows that, by the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment in science is as expected, is above expectation in English and well above in mathematics. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. In English, at Key Stage 3 pupils are confident in the use of a wide range of skills in literacy and oracy. They give fluent answers at length and use extended speech with good vocabulary. Skills developed in drama serve to raise attainment in speaking where using, modulating and projecting the voice are increasingly used. Listening skills are good. Most pupils read with understanding, confidently, fluently, accurately and with expression. Progress in the accurate use of grammar and punctuation is good except for lower-attaining and special educational needs pupils who have weaknesses in spelling and sentence structure. Presentation is good. High-attaining pupils write imaginatively with flair and vision. Their progress is aided by a desire to learn and good recall and retention. The momentum of progress commenced at Key Stage 2 is maintained in Years 7 and 8.
12. In mathematics, pupils make good progress at Key Stage 3 with most pupils, except those with learning difficulties in the use of number, reaching levels of attainment well above those expected of similar-aged pupils. This is because pupils receive specialist teaching from teachers who have a deep understanding of the subject, and they are strongly motivated by a desire to understand and use mathematics. At this key stage pupils extend their basic use of number techniques and begin thinking in the abstract, expressing their ideas succinctly. They work quickly and accurately. Higher-attaining pupils widen their understanding of mathematics, whilst lower-attaining pupils begin to find difficulties with more complex ideas. The differential between the understanding of higher-attaining pupils and others begins to open up differences in rates of progress.
13. In science, pupils begin to extend successfully the idea of fair testing to controlling scientific variables. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, have difficulty in understanding higher level scientific ideas, for example, photosynthesis and energy. Understanding and using new vocabulary does not come easily and, overall, the good progress made in Key Stage 2 becomes satisfactory. However, the attainment of these pupils is at about the level expected nationally at the end of Year 8.

15. Other subjects

14. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' attainment is in line with expectations in art, design and technology, information technology and music. In history, physical education, modern languages and religious education it is above expectations. In geography it is well above expectations. The progress overall at this key stage is good. In geography it is very good and satisfactory in art, science and information technology. In all other curriculum subjects, progress is good.
15. In geography, well above average levels of attainment are reached. Very good progress is made in geography because specialist teaching involves matching tasks closely to pupils' prior attainment, using non-teaching support wisely and asking probing questions which stimulate thinking. Higher and average-attaining pupils make good progress in history building up a body of knowledge with understanding. All pupils, aided by good skills in literacy, begin to assess and express ideas relating to the correct use of historical evidence. Lower-attaining pupils have some difficulties in visualising historical events. In modern languages, pupils reach above expected levels of attainment and make good progress. Pronunciation and comprehension skills are improved. Pupils make good progress because the teaching is very good with a wide range of methods and strategies used. They are enthusiastic and want to learn modern languages. Confidence, nurtured by the teacher, assists pupils in making good progress. Dance contributes effectively to the good progress and above expected levels of attainment reached in physical education. Pupils progress with confidence in co-operative teamwork, movement, rhythm and physical co-ordination which they transfer and use to good effect. They improve ball skills and begin to evaluate and modify practice. In religious education, pupils know, understand and use correct terms associated with other religions. Studying the religions of others assists in pupils making good progress in understanding moral and social issues. Writing and speaking skills are used well and help pupils reach a level of

attainment above that expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Good progress is made in music with many talented pupils reaching high levels of performance because the quality of teaching, including specialist instrument tuition, is very good. Other pupils reach expected standards in performing and listening. In art, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress from Key Stage 2. They improve their manipulative skills and widen their techniques to produce work which is at nationally expected levels. A few higher-attaining pupils do not make good progress on occasions because they are not kept on task sufficiently and lessons lack pace. In information technology, pupils use computers with confidence. They access and close programs quickly and manage more than one application simultaneously. They know a wide range of techniques. Progress is satisfactory and attainment reaches expected levels. Opportunities to apply their skills in information technology to other subjects are not sufficiently exploited and this limits pupils from reaching higher levels of attainment. Many pupils have home computers and a few have developed high level skills. In design and technology pupils reach levels of attainment in line with national expectations. Pupils use tools safely and make satisfactory progress in all aspects of food, textiles and materials technology. They learn new skills including soft soldering, assembling components and using computerised sewing machines. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress in design aspects using imagination and creativity to produce original plans for making objects. There is no evidence of significant differences between the progress of boys and girls at this key stage.

17. **Key Stages 2 and 3**

16. Reading tests in 1999 in Year 4, immediately prior to joining the school, show that 86 per cent of pupils have reading scores which are average or above. 31 per cent have reading scores well above average. This means that, overall, pupils upon entry to the school have attainment which is above average. Over the two years at Key Stage 2 they make good progress to maintain levels of attainment which are higher than national expectations. Progress at Key Stage 2 is supported by good teaching and pupils' desire to learn. They make a sound beginning in learning French, and Italian is introduced successfully in Year 6. Good progress is continued until the end of Year 8, and levels of attainment are reached which are above expectations at the end of the key stage. Higher-attaining pupils make very good progress and reach levels of attainment well above national expectations in some subjects, for example in mathematics and geography. In all subjects at the end of Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 8 attainment meets expected levels.

17. Overall pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in most subjects. The best progress is seen when pupils are supported in lessons, for example, in geography, and when they work in small teaching groups as in English, French and mathematics. However, targets for those pupils with individual education plans are too general and lack the specificity to aid further pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy. Insufficient in-class support sometimes constrains the progress of pupils with special educational needs.

19.

18. During their time in school, most pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve as expected. The school has a very supportive culture, in which these pupils are an integral part. For beginners, there are occasional examples of uncharacteristic pupil behaviour when they experience difficulty expressing themselves in English, both orally and in their writing. When their level of understanding is better than their peers, they show frustration because of their inability to communicate effectively in English. Overall, pupils for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress and at times good progress. Many pupils, who are at the early stages of learning English are hesitant when discussing ideas or using reading and writing purposefully. There is insufficient support provided to cover the needs of pupils for whom English is an additional language and especially for those who have limited or no experience of English.

20. **Literacy**

19. Pupils use language effectively across the curriculum. In most subjects, pupils have good opportunities to speak at length in discussions. When asked to offer reasons for their opinions and evidence for their judgements, they do so with the use of wide general vocabularies and confident use of technical terms, though only rarely in science or information technology. The strategies of the literacy hour are well

established. They are reinforced in subjects, particularly in the development of technical vocabularies, the encouragement of language development and by teachers reading aloud to pupils and sharing with them their enthusiasm for books. At Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils can identify significant detail, understand implication and record data in note form, from which they can then extend in writing on topics such as 'Shakespeare and his Times' or 'Lives of Great People of France.' Topic books written in Year 8 are of very good quality and provide pupils with good opportunities to develop a wide range of skills in writing. Pupils write creatively in prose and verse. The quality of some verse written in Year 8 is exceptional. Standards of handwriting and accuracy of spelling, grammar and punctuation are well above average.

21.
Numeracy
20. There are good opportunities to use numeracy across the curriculum. In geography and history, periodic assessment tests the pupils' application of number in new situations. In science, design and technology, art and music pupils carry out calculations, for example when measuring materials, drawing perspectives and timing rhythms. They use calculators correctly and appropriately. Pupils have few opportunities to use information technology as a tool for learning in subject areas due to a lack of suitable computers and software. Accuracy when expressing numbers in mathematics is not always transferred to science, where axes of graphs are sometimes not labelled and points are not plotted accurately. In design and technology, teaching demands that pupils are accurate in expressing numbers. Good evidence was seen in mathematics, science and art of pupils solving problems using number skills. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, show good transference of skills when interpreting tables, graphs, charts and diagrams. In geography they read four figure grid references accurately, draw simple scale maps and use simple statistics to analyse data. Pie charts, line graphs and bar charts are read in English and history. Pupils are given opportunities to collect and represent data in English, science and history, when compiling family trees. Vocabulary learned in mathematics is used with understanding in other subjects, for example, symmetry when designing and making masks in art.
22. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
21. The pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are a strength of the school. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and show very good personal development. Their behaviour, linked to excellent relationships, is very good. These have a very positive impact on educational standards by making a major contribution to the school's excellent ethos and positive climate for learning. Since the previous inspection, standards in attitudes and behaviour have been broadly maintained, with some improvement in pupils' personal development.
22. Most pupils like school. They arrive promptly and quickly settle to work. Most pupils show interest, good concentration and perseverance during activities and when they are listening and responding to whole class teaching. Most pupils listen attentively, ask questions confidently and volunteer answers or suggestions enthusiastically. At the end of many lessons, a number of pupils show their interest in learning by staying behind to ask the teacher some further questions. Pupils, in all year groups, consider that the set homework deepens their understanding and sometimes stimulates curiosity. They also recognise that they learn new things by doing homework, such as the spelling and meaning of words which are new to them. Attitudes of special education needs pupils are good in lessons.
23. Overall behaviour in classrooms during lunchtime and playtimes is very good. In almost all lessons, pupils behave very well. Pupils confirm that they wish to learn and do their best in their school work. In a very small minority of lessons, mostly involving Year 6 special needs pupils, a number of pupils become distracted and can move off task. Pupils move about the school without any running or jostling. They hold doors open for visitors and for each other, even when there is no adult present. The atmosphere in the playground is strikingly calm and relaxed. Pupils confirm that incidents of bullying or other anti-social behaviour are very rare. They were clear that they would inform adults and provide peer group support in such an event. The level of exclusions is very low. There was just one fixed term exclusion during the previous academic year and only one permanent exclusion in the past nine years. There is no evidence of vandalism or litter on the school site. Pupils are courteous and trustworthy. For example, when questioned

in groups many pupils let others speak first and answer politely when questioned. Pupils take care of property and resources and help keep the school in attractive condition. Parents are very positive about pupils' behaviour.

24. Relationships between adults and pupils, and among pupils, are excellent. Adults in the school show respect for pupils and nearly all pupils treat others in a similar way. Teachers value pupils' work and effectively praise effort and good work. Pupils respond in a positive manner. They have a real sense of respect and care for each other, which sometimes expresses itself as delight in the achievement of others. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, the pupils spontaneously applauded a pupil who rapidly answered a difficult mental mathematics question. Parents are similarly struck by the way pupils show delight in others' achievements at the Year 8 annual awards. Almost all pupils work well in pairs and small groups and the great majority comfortably collaborate when opportunities arise. Racial harmony is very good. Pupils' personal development is very good overall.
25. They offer to help and respond well to the opportunities to take responsibility in the day-to-day running of their form and classroom. Pupils, in all year groups, are members of a wide range of school sports teams, developing discipline, personal application, team spirit and a sense of fair play. Pupils help in the library and with the organisation and running of some school clubs. They are actively involved in fund raising for charities and they show good levels of responsibility on educational visits. Responsibilities steadily grow as pupils move through the school. For example, a parent of a Year 6 pupil is struck by how responsible and independent her child has become in just over a year at school. Year 8 pupils have a wide range of responsibilities. Eight house captains, from Year 8, regularly review pupils' suggestions on improvements to school life and consider, with a head of year, how these suggestions might be implemented. Year 8 pupils operate as 'late monitors' each morning. They monitor behaviour outside the classroom at lunch and break-time and help out at parents' consultation evenings by welcoming parents and directing them to the appropriate classroom. All Year 8 pupils gain an appreciation of the world of work through a mentoring scheme. Homework provides pupils with real opportunities to evaluate and reflect on their work, as well as their strengths and areas for development. Project work, which forms a significant part of homework, gives pupils very good opportunities for independent learning.

27.

Attendance

26. Attendance is very good. The attendance level of 95.2 per cent for both 1997/8 and 1998/9 reporting years is well above the national average. Attendance has risen by 0.8 per cent since the year of the previous inspection. The unauthorised absence level is consistently very low compared with the national average. Punctuality is good. Nearly all pupils come to school on time and are prompt to most lessons. The prompt and calm start to lessons contributes favourably to pupils' progress, self discipline and time management.

28.

PROVIDED

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

28. Teaching

27. The quality of teaching is predominantly good. It is a strength of the school. In about one lesson in three, teaching is very good or excellent. There are no unsatisfactory lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection and is because a wider range of teaching styles is being used; more recently trained teachers with specialist knowledge have been appointed; and lesson planning is more effectively matched to pupils' levels of attainment. The quality of teaching is better at Key Stage 3 (Years 7 and 8) than at Key Stage 2 (Years 5 and 6). This is mainly because of specialist teaching by experienced, knowledgeable and well qualified teachers. The quality of teaching, as measured by the number of lessons judged very good or excellent, improves steadily from Year 5 to Year 8. Teaching is good in all subjects at Key Stage 2, except in geography and music, where it is very good, and art where it is satisfactory. At Key Stage 3, teaching is good in all subjects except geography, music and modern languages where it is very good and in science and art where it is judged satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs receive the same quality of teaching when supported in lessons. However, insufficient non-teaching support is available for all special educational needs pupils, mostly those who are not statemented, and this means that they do not receive the

same quality of individual teaching as do other pupils. Pupils for whom English is not their first language, receive the same teaching as others once they have made improvements in the use of English. A small, but significant number of these pupils have specialist teaching in English before they move to the same groups as other pupils. However, most subject teachers have limited awareness of the learning needs of these pupils. Because this support is very limited their movement can be delayed.

28. Overall, at both key stages, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach. In modern language at both key stages, and geography and music at Key Stage 2, teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good. In geography at Key Stage 3, they are excellent. In all other subjects teachers' knowledge and understanding are good. This expertise is put to effective use, when teachers skilfully ask questions which extend and challenge pupils and which are pertinent, well-conceived, and effectively targeted. Teachers are able to give succinct instructions and lucid explanations because of their secure knowledge and understanding of the subject matter taught. They use technical language appropriately and their practical skills selectively, as in a good food technology lesson when the correct and safe use of a food liquidiser was demonstrated. On a very few occasions, mainly at Key Stage 2, some teachers limit pupil progress through excessive exposition and asking too many questions which do not extend pupils' thinking. Overall, the teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach contribute effectively to the standards pupils reach and the progress they make.
29. Most teachers make rigorous and realistic demands. These serve to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem. In mathematics, geography, history, modern languages and music expectations are very high at both key stages. In English, pupils are encouraged to use imagination, originality and independent thinking whilst, in modern languages, a wide vocabulary with correct pronunciation is used. With sensitive teacher support and appropriately matched activities, demands upon pupils with special educational needs and lower-attaining pupils are no less in English; these pupils make at least satisfactory, and sometimes good, progress. Higher-attaining pupils are challenged by demanding work set against timed targets or by discursive questions to develop their thinking skills. At Key Stage 3, teachers expect pupils to be assiduous in their work and meticulous in their presentation. Usually they are not disappointed. In English, poems which stimulate thinking and passages which demand expressive reading are set to extend and challenge pupils. Demands and expectations of the pupils start early. In one very good lesson, taught to newly arrived pupils in a Year 5 English literacy hour, pupils were urged to show inspiration, imagination and originality in their written work which, when completed, reflected the teacher's expectations. A culture for learning, together with a strong work ethic, fuelled by teachers' realistic expectations, ensure that most pupils take an increased responsibility for their own learning and make good progress. On a very few occasions, lessons were observed where ambitious expectations exceeded pupils' capabilities. For example, in a science lesson in which information technology skills were to be used, assumptions were made which were incorrect. Most pupils made little progress for part of the lesson because the work was largely too demanding. This mismatch, however, was quickly adjusted and satisfactory progress followed.
30. Teachers' planning is good in all subjects, except art, where it is satisfactory. Usually teachers plan lessons well and they are very clear about what is to be taught. Teachers' planning at all levels and at both key stages is a strength. It is also an improvement since the previous inspection. There is an abundance of effective practice. In most subjects at both key stages, learning objectives are focused and usually shared with the pupils. Lesson plans are thorough and well structured, especially those for Key Stage 2 pupils who are following the national requirements for literacy and numeracy. Planning in all subjects, except information technology, conforms with the requirements of the national curriculum. Work and resources such as worksheets, are mostly well matched to the needs of pupils of different attainment, including those with special educational needs. In one Year 5 lesson in mathematics, which was a model of planning, content, matched closely to needs of pupils of different attainment, was put into very effective practice. The lesson objectives were shared with all. The teacher slowly and painstakingly took the whole class through the content, altering the pace accordingly and assessing all pupils against their work on the same exercise. Only when the ideas were fully understood by all did the teacher introduce different matched work for pupils of different levels of attainment. The pace was then increased and all pupils were expected to complete the work against timed targets. The pupils were secure in their successes, including those with special needs and lower-attaining pupils, and made very good progress. At both key stages, teachers' planning is carefully linked to previous and future work, assisted by effective planning for curriculum continuity in most subjects, both within the school and between schools which receive and contribute

pupils. Individual educational plans for pupils with special educational needs have long-term targets. However, many of these plans are insufficiently developed. They are not clearly focused on achievable short-term targets in order to improve the measurement of pupils' progress.

31. Teachers' methods and organisation are good in all subjects at both key stages, except in science and physical education at Key Stage 3, where they are judged satisfactory. Since the last inspection, teachers have extended their professional skills to include a wider range of activities and strategies. This is an improvement resulting from sharing practice, attending courses and preparing for the introduction of the national literacy and numeracy projects. Teaching methods, grouping strategies, matched activities and many resources are used to assist the teachers' planning. In mathematics, mental tests are used to stimulate pupils and in information technology and design and technology, technical language is correctly introduced. In modern language lessons a wide range of large and small group activities designed to engage pupils in their own learning are used. Safety issues and pre-activity exercises are correctly used in physical education. In English, geography and history, the teachers circulate and support pupils, and in most subjects teachers use pace to control effective learning. In a modern language lesson for lower-attaining Year 8 pupils, effective planning, with a range of activities and resources, helped the pupils to make good progress in knowing and understanding time. Teachers check extensively that pupils understand by revision at the beginning of a lesson, consolidation at the end and re-capitulation as activities proceed. At Key Stage 3, especially in Year 8, teachers help pupils to begin to think in the abstract but are ready to provide concrete examples if necessary. A few weaknesses, however, still exist. These are mainly the missing of opportunities which are present in a few lessons, for example, in science. Rarely was narrow teaching observed, however in a science lesson there was little opportunity allowed for class discussion and in an English lesson the teacher dominated the lesson giving the pupils few opportunities to engage in their own learning. Overall, teachers' methods and organisation contribute effectively to pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour and the progress they make.
32. The management of pupils is very good at both key stages and is a strength. Classroom control is based largely on mutual respect between pupils and teachers, and pupils recognising that teachers have expert knowledge, skills and authority. Teachers are aided in their management by most pupils who have a strong desire to work, learn and make progress. Relationships are excellent. Classrooms are invariably relaxed, yet purposeful. Humour is shared and pupils receive sensible praise, encouragement and support for their learning. The result is classroom environments which are conducive to learning. On the very few occasions when classroom control is challenged, reprisal and sanctions are swift, fair and firm. Recognition and respect for the headteacher and mature interactions with adults are factors which contribute effectively to pupils' good progress and contribute to an atmosphere of relative calm and happiness.
33. The teachers' use of time and resources is satisfactory overall. In music and geography at both key stages and modern languages at Key Stage 2 their use is very good. In most subjects resources for learning are well prepared, ready for use and used appropriately. Lessons have a quick start, except some which involve movement to and from physical education. Most lessons have controlled pace with well defined objectives set against time limits. In a few lessons, teachers' control of pace is weak. These lessons, in mathematics, science, art, design and technology and religious education, start vigorously only to lose pace towards the end. However, most teachers use time effectively and efficiently to keep pupils on task and give their teaching rigour and momentum. When available to teachers, non-teaching support staff for some pupils with special educational needs are used very well. They help plan and assist generally. In a mathematics lesson at Key Stage 2, in which pupils placed data on spreadsheets, information technology skills of the support teacher not only assisted the special educational needs pupils but others who were having difficulties entering data on to the computer. Most worksheets are well prepared and are of good quality. They are used appropriately and not excessively. Many are original and are used to grade and supplement classroom work usually as a means of matching activities to pupils' attainment. In a few lessons, commercially prepared worksheets were inappropriately photocopied and used without checking, leaving some pupils confused and reducing the pace of otherwise satisfactory lessons. The newly equipped room for teaching information technology is used fully at all times of the school day. Demand exceeds availability. Classroom computers lay largely unused because of inappropriate, incompatible or unavailable software. Some have not been maintained. This means that the good specialist teaching of information technology is under-developed by subject teachers in the classroom and pupils' established

skills are not being extended fully into other areas of the curriculum.

34. The teachers' methods and use of assessment of pupils' work and progress have more strengths than weaknesses and have a positive effect upon learning. They are satisfactory at both key stages. In most subjects, teachers assess individual pupil progress by well directed questioning and marking work with feedback during lessons. Regular tests with appropriate evaluations are used to assess effectively the progress of groups and individuals. The teachers use the results of assessment to plan further work, and most will not introduce new topics or ideas until they have judged that all pupils are ready to move forward. In music and art, peer assessment is used to good effect and pupils respect the comments of others to help them improve their work. Not all assessments are recorded but those resulting from homework and extended work are retained, some to be used in pupil portfolios. Marking is usually thorough and contains helpful constructive comments. Assessment procedures in design and technology, art and music at both key stages are insufficiently developed. There is no systematic assessment policy in information technology to help teachers monitor their own work and pupils' progress. A wide range of homework tasks is set to support learning and extend progress. Homework is timetabled and generally well marked. Pupils take much pride in having their effort recognised. Most parents and many pupils view homework positively and are keen to extend learning outside the classroom. The teachers are aware of the demands placed upon pupils when they are given excessive homework, and arrangements to better define individual project requirements and co-ordination between projects are improving.

36. **The curriculum and assessment**

37. The school curriculum is broad and balanced. Sufficient time has been allocated for the teaching of National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The National Literacy and Numeracy Projects have been fully implemented at Key Stage 2. The curriculum is enriched by the inclusion of French and Italian in Key Stage 2. National Curriculum requirements are being met in all subjects, except information technology, and schemes of work for religious education match the locally agreed syllabus. Information technology is being taught effectively to all pupils in both key stages. However, it does not meet statutory requirements because its systematic use across the curriculum is under-developed. The school uses a wide and flexible range of grouping strategies, including setting, mixed-ability and banding to meet successfully the requirements of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils. The school makes sound provision for personal, social and health education with sex education and a drugs awareness programme forming an integral part. Satisfactory schemes of work are in place for all subjects, although, in science, planning for continuity across the key stages is unsatisfactory and in drama they do not indicate the stages at which skills will be introduced nor how they are to be developed. The school makes adequate curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs. No pupils with special educational needs are disapplied from the National Curriculum. There is insufficient curriculum support for pupils whose experience of the English language is limited. This does not enable them to gain confidence, particularly those pupils who are at an early stage of learning the language.

35. A wide range of educational visits is undertaken by pupils. Some of these are residential. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 take part in residential visits to North Yorkshire and Year 7 pupils can go on a skiing holiday to France. Year 8 pupils can choose between staying in Normandy and the Isle of Arran. A very high proportion of the pupils are learning to play a musical instrument. A strength of the school is its excellent provision for extra-curricular activities which currently includes string orchestras, choirs and a wind band, as well as a wide range of sporting activities including football, netball, cross country, circuit training, hockey, rugby and table tennis. There is a lunch time club for homework as well as clubs for keen readers and information technology.

36. Since the last inspection the balance of the curricular provision for physical education has improved and provision for art now satisfies statutory requirements. More time has been allocated to the teaching of class music.

37. Procedures for assessing pupils' work and progress are generally good and have a positive effect upon learning. Most subjects follow the school guidelines, and there is greater consistency than was noted at the time of the previous inspection. Consistency of marking and assessment is supported by standardisation of

work within departments and between representatives of the area's pyramid of schools. Assessment is inadequate in information technology. Assessment procedures in design and technology, music, art, drama and physical education are insufficiently precise. Pupils are encouraged to assess their own work and progress, and many do this to good effect. Most marking of pupils' work includes balanced comments and advice on the means of improvement.

38. Good use is made of test data at a whole school level and in some subjects to identify appropriate targets for groups and individuals. The main recommendations of the Code of Practice for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs have been adopted successfully, but some individual education plans lack clearly identified and precise targets. Initial assessment is used satisfactorily to monitor the attainment of pupils for whom English is an additional language. Some teachers use this valuable information to develop further their teaching and learning activities. The school is using various kinds of evidence to identify its most gifted and talented pupils. In lessons, most teachers aim to provide appropriate challenge including opportunities for enrichment and extension of learning for these pupils. The school is aware of its duty to its many higher-attaining pupils and has recently returned to the key issue from the last inspection and commenced work on compiling a register of pupils to help focus more closely on their needs. Some parents have expressed concern about the amount of testing which is done by the school. There is no evidence of pupils' enjoyment of learning and their progress being adversely affected. They take considerable pride, for example, in their end of topic investigations into life in Shakespeare's times or lives of great French people and develop skills of value for the future. The school uses assessment data to establish targets and to monitor pupils' progress towards their attainment to good effect. There are appropriate arrangements in place for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs, both prior to and after admission to the school. Pupils' targets are reviewed regularly by teachers.

41. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

39. The overall provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good and is a strength of the school. The school has successfully created an atmosphere in which the dignity and worth of each individual is safeguarded and its aim, of providing a purposeful and stimulating environment for learning and one in which everyone is respected and valued, is upheld.
40. The provision for spiritual development is good. Assembly themes are well planned and are used consistently whenever pupils meet together. The same weekly theme is used in class assemblies. The themes cover a broad area of human experience and deal with such issues as responsibility, racism and tolerance. There are adequate moments for reflection and sometimes a peaceful and contemplative mood is set by an appropriate choice of music. The school meets the requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. It has succeeded in establishing a clear ethos which teaches pupils how to value imagination, inspiration and contemplation. Further opportunities to deepen pupils' spiritual awareness and self-knowledge are provided in several areas of the curriculum and there is a growing awareness of the contribution which subjects can make to this aspect of pupils' development. Displays around the school, such as photographs of the solar eclipse or Year 6 work on what to include in a magic box, encourage pupils to value imagination and self-knowledge.
41. The provision for pupils' moral development is very good and the impact is apparent upon pupils' behaviour. The school has a clear ethos in which teachers provide good role models and pupils show respect for them and for each other. Many assemblies are based around moral issues and are well used to reinforce the school's values. The code of conduct clearly sets out a principled approach to moral behaviour and what is expected from pupils in terms of respect and rules. Moral issues are discussed in many subjects such as English, humanities and religious education. History, for example, contributes to this area through examining the rules of war and Cromwell's actions at Drogheda.
42. The school makes very good provision for the social development of its pupils. There are many opportunities in lessons and in extra-curricular activities for pupils to cooperate and work with each other. In many subjects they are provided with opportunities to exercise responsibility in the classroom and make decisions for their own learning. There are opportunities for pupils to exercise additional responsibility through the election of house captains. Pupils were extensively consulted when the school drew up its equal

opportunities policy; as a result quiet play spaces were designed for pupils who prefer football-free breaks. Sanctions and rewards are used to support good social behaviour.

43. The provision for the cultural development of pupils is good, being well catered for through subjects such as English, history, geography and religious education, which teach pupils to appreciate the richness and diversity of the cultures represented in Great Britain. History, for example, examines the problems of stereotyping, while assemblies celebrate religious diversity through the inclusion of Jewish or Muslim prayers at relevant times in the year. Visits from Sikh story-tellers, Czech poets and an African drum group help pupils to understand the diversity and richness of other cultures. Extra-curricular activities extend pupils' cultural experiences, for example through music performances and events such as a visit to see the Welsh Ballet Company. With a growing range of cultures represented by the pupils, the school has recognised the potential to improve further multicultural aspects of the curriculum.
46. **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**
44. Overall the school provides a very good standard of support, guidance and welfare for its pupils and this is a strength of the school, which make a positive contribution to pupils' attainment, progress and personal development. Since the previous inspection, standards have improved. The monitoring of academic progress and provision for personal, social and health education have improved, whilst the previous health and safety issue has been resolved.
45. Procedures to monitor pupils' academic progress and personal development are very good overall. Procedures are in place to assess pupils on a regular basis in the core subjects. As a result, pupils are grouped to make progress in line with their ability and any underachievement is rapidly identified. Student planners work well as tools to encourage pupils who are succeeding and to identify those in need of further support. Mentoring of pupils is part of the role of form tutors and heads of year. Good quality pupils' annual reports provide further monitoring of pupils' progress in subjects and more general personal development. Good work and attitudes are celebrated in class and whole school assemblies. This recognition and reward provides pupils with frequent and public confirmation of what is good in their lives and helps raise self-esteem. For special educational needs pupils, the identification and monitoring arrangements are good, especially for statemented pupils.
46. The school's procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour and discipline are very good. The behaviour policy has been successfully converted into a practical set of school rules, which are clear to staff, pupils and parents. Year 5 pupils confirm that full discussion on the rules is an important part of their first weeks in school. A clear set of rewards and tiered sanctions are also defined. The main emphasis is on recognising and rewarding good behaviour, and most pupils have responded positively. Parents confirm that the school operates on mutual respect between staff and pupils. Pupils know that sanctions will be fairly applied if they step out of line. Most teachers use praise effectively and maintain clear and consistent boundaries between what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Very rare incidents of bullying are dealt with as part of the sanctions system. Year 8 pupils are effectively involved in helping to maintain good behaviour outside the classroom. The arrangement, whereby a mix of teaching staff and lunchtime staff supervises the pupils at lunchtime, helps to maintain the calm and relaxed playground atmosphere.
47. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance, including punctuality, are very good. Parents are clear on the need to contact school in the event of absence. The school, with the valued help of the education welfare officer, effectively focuses on the pupils and families where regular attendance or punctuality is an issue. Individual awards are given for full attendance over a term and a school year. The form with the highest level of punctuality over a term receives an award.
48. Child protection arrangements are good. An appropriate policy is in place and cases or concern are regularly monitored and reviewed. The arrangements are known to staff who operate under the direction of the designated staff member. Pupils are made aware of this issue, as part of the personal, social and health education curriculum.

49. Procedures to promote pupils' well-being are good. Pupils confirm that teachers, form tutors and heads of years are approachable if they have problems. The atmosphere in school is calm and supportive, and this has a positive effect on pupils' learning and well being. Form tutors and heads of year maintain regular dialogue and identify pupils giving cause for any concern. Any unresolved cases are discussed at a monthly meeting between the headteacher and heads of year. Parents confirm that school is quick to notice and respond if pupils are struggling either academically or personally. The school has good arrangements for the induction of Year 5 pupils. For example, pupils complete a practical guide booklet during their pre-visit and this is a good reference at the start of their first term. Year 8 pupils, who nearly all transfer to the nearby high school, confirm that they are well prepared.
50. Procedures to promote pupils' health and safety are satisfactory. The health and safety policy effectively defines responsibilities and arrangements in school. Local authority inspections provide the school with a valued external view on health and safety. Fire alarm testing, evacuation drills and the inspection of portable electrical equipment are routinely carried out. The practical arrangements, including first aid to deal with any incidents or accidents, are well established and appropriate. An aspect of health and safety is a standing item at each governing body meeting.
- 53.

53. **Partnership with parents and the community**

51. A strong feature of the school is the partnership with parents and the wider community who make a very good contribution to the quality of education provided and the standards achieved. The school maintains very good community links, provides very good quality information for parents, who are very effectively involved in pupils' learning and the life of the school. Since the previous inspection, standards have improved, particularly the quality of pupils' annual reports and the links with schools and colleges.
52. The overall quality of information provided for parents is very good. Pupils' Records of Achievement contain the written annual reports which are of good quality. Parents are given a realistic view on pupils' academic progress. Clear targets are set for pupils who also comment on their progress, successes, and targets for improvement. Valuable comments are also included by teachers and pupils on pupils' attitude to learning, work organisation and development of the key personal skills of working alone and with others. If pupils' attendance, behaviour, homework completion or general organisation fall below expectations, heads of year promptly involve parents, thereby leaving parents and pupils in no doubt when improvement is needed. The quality of information for parents of special needs pupils is good. They are informed at an early stage and are invited to contribute to reviews. Regular newsletters keep parents well informed about school life. The prospectus gives parents a clear impression on the school's expectations and character. The governors' annual report is clear, concise and well presented.
53. Overall there is a very good level of parental involvement in pupils' learning and the life of the school. Parents find school approachable. The Student Planner allows parents to check regularly that set homework is done and send messages to school, as needed. Parents are more positive about homework, now that the guidelines for the large amount of project work are well defined. They confirm that the planner makes a purposeful link between home and school and thereby keeps them informed on school work. Pupil consultation evenings and school concerts are very well attended. Prior to parents' consultation evenings, pupils do self-evaluation homework, which helps to provide real issues for the consultation. Curriculum workshops on a range of subjects, such as French, science, literacy, drugs and sex education are generally well attended. Parents were fully consulted prior to the introduction of a home-school agreement, which nearly all parents have signed. Elections are frequently needed to fill positions on the Governing Body. An active parent teacher association regularly holds highly successful fundraising events which typically raise £3000 to £4000 each year. The group involves pupils in their events, thereby deepening the partnership between pupils, parents and staff. A number of parents help in the library and on school trips, whilst several parents are mentors for Year 8 pupils.
54. Community links make a very good contribution to pupils' progress and personal development. Local community and church links are very good. Pupils sing carols at a range of local events and distribute harvest gifts and cards to adjacent residential homes. Pupils also involve the senior citizens in their topic work in history and food technology. Speakers from other faiths, such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism and the local vicar all speak at assemblies. Pupils, in all year groups, are members of a wide range of school sports teams, developing discipline, personal application, team spirit and a wider awareness of the district and its communities.
55. Pupils raise considerable funds for charities. Through Action Aid, pupils' collections pay for the education of a named child in Bangladesh who writes regularly to them. Funds are also raised for St Oswald's hospice and pupils hold a talent contest in support of Red Nose day. Pupils learn to appreciate that by working together they can make a difference to other peoples' lives. School enjoys good links with public services such as the police and library services. For example, the police provide advice on personal safety and drugs education as part of the personal social and health education curriculum. Business links are good. Each pupil in Year 8 has a mentor from an outside company or organisation. Under supervision, pupils visit the mentor's workplace with a set of questions. All pupils thereby gain a valuable appreciation of the world of work. Good curriculum links exist with contributory and receiver schools. There are regular meetings between curriculum co-ordinators and heads of departments planning effectively for curriculum continuity for pupils as they progress from Year 1 to Year 11. The school takes trainee teachers, university students and sixth form pupils of different cultures as part of their work on equal opportunities. The educational visits programme further develops pupils' understanding of the wider world and promotes

effective learning in various areas of the curriculum.

58.
EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

THE MANAGEMENT AND

58. **Leadership and management**

56. The headteacher's personal qualities, professional expertise and management skills contribute significantly to the very good leadership of the school. This leadership is complemented and fully supported by an experienced, involved, committed and well-led governing body which carries out its functions efficiently and which has a clear vision for the direction the school is taking. Relationships are harmonious, and the headteacher is accountable for the management, organisation and administration of the school to the governing body, in which debate of issues is carried out thoroughly, properly and critically to continue raising standards. The level of recorded debate is high, and this has contributed towards continuing to improve standards and undertaking developmental planning thoroughly and with attention to detail. This is best evident in recorded discussion by the governing body as to how much target setting can further be used to raise academic standards, which are already approaching an 85 per cent target success at level 4 and above in the core subject national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. The headteacher and members of the senior management monitor carefully the work of the subject departments. Heads of department have been trained to carry out a full range of tasks associated with leadership at middle management level. However, except in English, where the National Literacy Project has provided sufficient time to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching, subject leaders do not carry out this function; they do not have a clear picture of the quality of teaching in lessons. The implementation of the National Numeracy Project will soon allow this responsibility to be extended to mathematics. In all other aspects of monitoring, for example attainment or the curriculum and use of resources, subject leaders are carrying out a full range of tasks associated with their responsibilities. Whilst improvements have been made in the devolution of responsibilities to middle managers since the last inspection, monitoring teaching remains to be addressed.
57. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in curriculum development. The introduction of the national initiatives for literacy and numeracy, the inclusion of Italian for Year 6 pupils, revisions to schemes of work stimulated by changes in the National Curriculum and involvement with research bodies in curriculum projects are a few of many examples of the school sensibly improving the curriculum. Close attention to monitoring and evaluating innovation and using the outcomes have served to raise standards. The involvement of governors in regular visits to monitor innovation and individual governors taking responsibility for special educational needs, literacy and numeracy are helpful in developing the curriculum to meet the needs of the pupils. In all subjects, except information technology, statutory curriculum requirements are met. The school has already identified this as an area for development, and governors have recently committed resources for a newly equipped room for teaching the subject. However, this is insufficient, and more remains to be done in using the subject as a tool for learning in all lessons.
58. The school aims, as published in the school prospectus, are met fully and contribute significantly to the values and ethos of the school. These aims are linked loosely to a vision statement and foundation statements as published in the school improvement plan, which is a well-conceived, logical and lucid document, and which serves effectively as a template for managing, monitoring and evaluating structured change. The governing body views the aims of the school as aspirational. However, they strongly reflect the leadership of the headteacher, the commitment of the staff and the attitudes of the pupils. They serve successfully to promote high achievement, excellent relationships and effective learning. Because of these strengths the school has an excellent ethos.
59. The school has made good progress since the last inspection. It has addressed successfully many of the weaknesses identified. A few remain to be addressed whilst work on others continues. The school has continued to improve the quality of education and standards achieved. Curriculum planning and continuity, particularly with the contributory and receiver schools, have improved. The management and organisation of art and music have been improved. Teachers' professional development needs to meet those of the pupils, have continued with training for the introduction of the national literacy and numeracy initiatives and changes in the National Curriculum. The needs of able pupils continue to be addressed and all issues

relating to health and safety have been resolved. The number of pupils for whom English is an additional language, has increased significantly since the last inspection and has presented the school with a new challenge. The policies, strategies and practice are at an early stage of development. The role of subject leaders has been developed; however, the responsibility for monitoring teaching in all subjects of the curriculum remains to be developed further. The school has a good capacity to continue its improvement and raise standards further.

62. **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

60. Teaching staff are sufficient in number for the teaching of the school's curriculum. With a few exceptions in mathematics, physical education and religious education, teachers have a satisfactory match of subject qualifications to the subjects that they teach. The use of non-specialist teachers, teaching specialist subjects at Key Stage 3, does not adversely affect the standards of attainment. The school has recently had to cope with frequent staff changes brought about by illness and other circumstances. These changes have been covered effectively by appropriate supply teacher arrangements. Skilled non-teaching staff contribute effectively to the administration and organisation of the school. There is limited provision of non-teaching staff to support the curriculum, for example technical assistance in science and design and technology. A few pupils, with a limited experience of English language, receive insufficient adult support to help them progress satisfactorily. Most teachers have insufficient awareness of the issues relating to the learning needs of these pupils. There is a lack of books and resources, especially those with bilingual text, to support the needs of these pupils.

61. Systematic appraisal of staff performance is in abeyance. There are plans to base a new appraisal plan on advice expected locally and nationally. There are good procedures for the induction of newly qualified teachers. Students on teaching practice and student-tutors also receive good support. The arrangements for in-service training of staff in departments are closely linked to the school's needs as expressed in the school improvement plan. Recent professional development in literacy and numeracy has been efficient and effective.

62. The accommodation overall meets the needs of the curriculum satisfactorily. There is satisfactory provision in all subject and general areas for the effective teaching of the curriculum. Specialist facilities are adequate. Since the last inspection a new science laboratory has been furnished and equipped. Computer facilities have been improved by the re-furbishment and equipping of an existing classroom to provide a very good resource area. The toilet facilities for boys have been remodelled. The school library is small and cramped when used for class learning. Its effective use is limited. The school benefits from the services of a caretaker and team who keep the building well serviced and cared for using an efficiently managed programme of planned repairs and maintenance. Litter is removed each day.

63. The use of information technology across the curriculum is under-developed. For all subjects, access to the recently equipped room for information technology is limited due to demand. The ratio of computers to pupils is about the average nationally. Good use is made of computers at lunch-time by pupils for extra practice of class work.

64. The previous inspection drew attention to the lack of a staff development policy. There has been improvement, and the school improvement plan identifies staff training needs within the subject areas. Resources for learning are adequate to meet the requirement of the curriculum. Resources in information technology are greatly improved, although classroom machines are little used because some are unreliable, and there is insufficient software.

67. **The efficiency of the school**

65. The school manages its resources well. The quality of financial planning in the school is satisfactory. Since the previous inspection better procedures have been put in place to ensure the needs of each department are considered alongside whole school issues. Specific grants, including funds allocated to support pupils with special educational needs, are well used.

66. Educational developments are clearly identified in the school improvement plan. Initially subject co-ordinators and their teams prioritise areas of concern. Each department also identifies ways in which it can support whole school issues. The plan is then linked to the school budget and finalised after consultation with the governing body. The procedures used are efficient. The governors ensure there is good financial control over spending plans. Although funding for the school is low in the current year, and has been low in recent years, the planned use of the budget is satisfactory. The successful implementation of the national numeracy and literacy initiatives have resulted from efficient and careful planning. A review of the school improvement plan is currently in progress. The school takes advice from a business manager to assist in efficient school budgeting. This advice is taken into account in both long and short term planning. The governing body recognises the substantial under-spend of the available income in 1998/9 to leave a surplus of 6.9 per cent. Financial plans for 1999/2000 indicate that the surplus is to be reduced by 2.5 per cent to improve staffing and increase resources for learning and teaching. Within this surplus the governing body holds, on behalf of seven schools involved in an educational project a sum of £10.750 for further training. Governors take an active part in financial planning especially with regard to staffing and maintenance issues. They have recently approved a loan arrangement for improving the provision and maintenance of computers.
67. The school has efficient and effective financial controls. The most recent auditor's report commends the schools for the administration and management of the school budget. Some minor matters requiring governor approval have been dealt with speedily. Satisfactory use is made of teaching staff. Time spent by teachers in the classroom is similar to that in other schools. There has been a number of changes in staff in the last year and this has resulted in a decrease in the overall cost of teachers. The savings have been re-allocated to other resources. Overall expenditure per pupil is low, as is expenditure on resources. The limited technical support in science and design and technology results in an inefficient use of teaching time with teachers having to prepare resources for lessons and carry out first-line maintenance of equipment. Accommodation, although limited, is efficiently used, but, due to the age of the buildings its upkeep is costly and the governors retain an above average contingency fund in case of emergencies. The school's administrative procedures are efficient. Financial accounts, assessment data and attendance records are computerised, enabling staff to retrieve accurate data when needed. This contributes to the smooth day to day running of the school.
68. Given the high quality of provision, particularly the predominantly good teaching, improving educational standards, the excellent ethos of the school, clear management strategies, and the very good extra-curricular provision and low unit-cost, the school is judged as giving good value for money.

71.
AREAS AND SUBJECTS

71.
MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

ENGLISH,

71. **English**

69. In tests taken at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1998, standards of attainment were well above the national average and the average for similar schools. The provisional results for 1999 indicate continuing improvement and this has been the pattern in recent years. Girls perform better than boys but by a narrower margin than applies nationally. The school is meeting targets set by the local education authority and its governors.
70. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards of work in all elements of English are well above the national expectation at the end of Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 8. At Key Stage 2, pupils benefit from the balance of activities central to the content of the Literacy Hour and establish good foundations on which to build in Key Stage 3. In both key stages, pupils speak confidently, often drawing upon wide vocabularies and are able to use appropriate terminology effectively. At Key Stage 3, they are able to take full advantage of opportunities in most lessons to discuss, explore and report group judgements to the full class. Pupils develop good skills of reading aloud and benefit from hearing teachers read to them. When reading for understanding, pupils comprehend at least the main sense and many at Key Stage 3 can identify significant detail and recognise implication with only limited guidance by teachers. These skills were especially evident in Year 8 classes reading poems by Yeats or Seamus Heaney or comparing and contrasting characters in a novel. There is wider variation in the skills of writing. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and develop neat cursive styles of handwriting. At the end of Key Stage 2, almost all write in recognisable sentences and paragraphs and can organise their material in extended pieces. Frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar offset other qualities in the writing of a significant minority and often persist into Key Stage 3. At this stage, the majority are or become able to produce good narrative or autobiographical writing, letters for different purposes, reports for newspapers and a range of creative writing in prose and verse. Evidence of ability to write creatively is evident in Year 5, and in Year 8 there are examples of prose and, especially, verse which are of exceptional quality. Smaller classes of the lowest-attaining pupils perform at much lower levels. The majority read well enough to understand the main sense and in writing can communicate their ideas to a sympathetic reader. They gain in confidence and make identifiable progress but attainment remains well below expectation for their age. Targets set in individual education plans, for pupils with special educational needs, are sometimes too imprecise for teachers to understand how they might contribute to their achievement. Some pupils with limited but expanding knowledge of English appear to be misplaced in these groups. Pupils are well able to use skills of information technology to improve the presentation of their work, but the subject makes no planned provision of opportunities to extend these skills.
71. Most pupils make good progress at Key Stage 2 and in Years 7 and 8, because they are well-motivated, interested and willing to work. They remember earlier work and are able to build upon it. They respond positively to challenge and have very good relationships with teachers and each other. Standards of behaviour are very good and good levels of attendance support the efficiency of teaching and learning.
72. The quality of teaching at both key stages is mostly good, often very good and never less than satisfactory. At Key Stage 2, teachers work to the expectations of the Literacy Hour with confidence and skill. In both key stages, lessons are fully prepared and well structured to include a balanced range of activities linked to previous and future work. Explanations are quick and clear. Questions are used to confirm and to extend understanding, and pupils are required to provide reasons or evidence to support what they say. The pace of lessons is crisp, and time limits are frequently set for units of work. Teachers often provide mid-lesson evaluations to share ideas, clarify expectations and provide advice as well as end-of-lesson reviews to emphasise key points. Skilful pupil management is based upon good relationships and high expectations of effort and attainment. Teachers have good understanding of National Curriculum requirements, work confidently and often infect pupils with their own enthusiasm for words and literature. They ensure that

pupils are given full opportunities to be active participants in their learning, a strength not evident at the time of the previous inspection. Homework linked to class-work is set regularly, marked in accordance with school policy and where appropriate, is returned with advice on the means of further improvement.

73. The curriculum has good breadth, balance and relevance to the needs of all pupils. It meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. The strategies of the Literacy Hour have been introduced successfully to the benefit of pupils' learning. Resources for teaching and learning are generally sufficient. However, there is a lack of modern verse collections including examples of poems from other cultures and the school's library facilities are inadequate for full class teaching. The development of the subject benefits from clear-sighted and dedicated leadership which is highly supportive of colleagues and of pupils at all levels of attainment.
74. Since the last inspection standards in English have continued to improve. Planning of activities for pupils with different levels of attainment has been addressed and the school improvement plan now takes account of financial and staff resources for the teaching of English when planning for the future. The head of department is able to monitor teaching as part of the implementation of the National Literacy Project.

77. **Mathematics**

75. The 1998 national test results at the end of Key Stage 2 were close to the national average for similar aged pupils. Higher-attaining pupils reached standards which were above the national average. When compared with the performance of pupils in mathematics in similar schools, standards achieved were broadly in line with the national average. There was no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Provisional results for 1999 national tests show a significant improvement to levels well above the national average for 1998 and an improvement on the 1997 results. The school attributes the significant improvement in 1999 to an increased number of higher-attaining pupils in the year group, the introduction of regular mental agility exercises and regular testing with analyses of results being used to identify weaknesses and to improve the attainment of individual pupils. Since the last inspection, pupils' performance year by year has remained sometimes above, on occasions close to and never below the national average.
76. Most pupils enter the school in Year 5 with attainment in mathematics above the standard expected. In Year 5, they maintain an overall standard above the expected level. By the end of Key Stage 2 higher-attaining pupils are reaching standards well above expectations. Average-attaining pupils reach above average standards. With few exceptions, notably special educational needs pupils, lower-attaining pupils reach standards which are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils enter the school with a secure foundation in the basic rules of arithmetic. They can add, subtract, multiply and divide successfully. They have a good understanding of appropriate technical words and simple operations in mathematics. They convert fractions to decimals correctly and understand decimal place value. Logical reasoning, prediction and deduction are developed systematically. Higher-attaining pupils can estimate and approximate correctly. Most lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are confident and competent in using number. However, a few have difficulty in expressing decimals to correct places of significance and accurately placing decimal values on number lines. In Year 6, pupils of average attainment increase their knowledge and understanding of technical words such as mode, median and mean. They use other words, such as factor, minimum, maximum and range spontaneously and correctly. Higher-attaining pupils begin to estimate, deduce and hypothesise making sensible predictions and reasoning logically. Lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, factorise simple numbers and interpret bar charts and pie diagrams accurately. Most of these pupils mentally calculate suitably matched problems correctly but have some difficulties in expressing verbally the processes they use. All pupils can read instructions in text books with understanding. At Key Stage 3, in Year 8, a few higher-attaining pupils are reaching levels well above national expectations. They understand increasingly complex number sequences and begin to express abstract ideas symbolically. They solve problems by different methods and are competent in the use of metric units and sub-units. Average-attaining pupils are able to collect and classify data and display it appropriately using computer technology. They show skills in using the keyboard and understanding computer commands. The skills of all pupils in information technology, however, are undeveloped and largely unused, due to most classrooms in which mathematics is taught not having working computers with appropriate programs. In Year 8,

higher-attaining pupils move quickly ahead. All are well above national expectations. They understand equations such as $n \times 0 = 0$ and $2^0 = 1$. They examine critically and generalise solutions to problems. Knowledge, understanding and skills previously learned are put to effective use to increase further their competence in mathematics. Average-attaining pupils continue to develop their understanding and use of mathematics, and many reach standards which are above national expectations. Achievement in mathematics is good because pupils want to learn, the teaching is effective and teachers and pupils have high expectations of themselves and each other.

77. All pupils except those with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages. There is no difference in the progress made by boys and girls. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. It is less effective than the progress of other pupils because there is insufficient classroom support to assist those finding difficulties, especially at Key Stage 2. Overall progress is good because teaching is skilful. In one lesson, in a Year 5 class with pupils of a full range of attainment, the progress was good because the teacher took small steps initially to ensure complete understanding before extending the activity, increasing the pace and matching the work to individual pupils' attainment. In most lessons, progress is good because teachers stimulate pupils at the beginning of the lessons with a range of questions to test their mental acuity. Good retention of previous work helps pupils to engage quickly in new and more demanding work.
78. Pupils' attitudes are very good. Most pupils like mathematics and take pride in learning the subject. They are enthusiastic, highly motivated to learn and show an interest in using numbers. They listen attentively and concentrate intently. A small minority of lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, find the duration of a lesson of one hour sometimes too demanding, but they persevere. Behaviour is exemplary. Rarely does a teacher have to reprimand a pupil, and when it does happen it is to gain attention. From Year 5 onwards pupils have a mature attitude to learning. They work hard with application, are fully involved and carry out activities quickly and accurately with close attention to presentation. They respect each other and the teachers' authority. They work co-operatively and independently when required.
79. Teaching is good. None is unsatisfactory and some is excellent. Teachers have sound subject knowledge which they use well in questioning and explaining. They are helped by the pupils' positive attitudes towards learning. They have high expectations of pupils who are frequently challenged and whose understanding is regularly checked. Lessons are well planned and activities are usually closely matched to pupils' attainment. Extension work is set for pupils who work quickly. More demanding exercises are given to higher-attaining pupils. Teachers use a wide range of methods and the pace of lessons is carefully controlled to consolidate learning. The management of pupils is very good and sometimes excellent. It is based on authority and mutual respect between pupils and teacher. This leads to relaxed, purposeful lessons where relationships are positive and where activities are enjoyed by teachers and pupils alike. Time is well used. Pupils arrive promptly and lessons are efficient in the use of time. Resources are appropriately used but on occasions worksheets have imperfections which have not been previously checked; this leads to lessons in which otherwise good progress is arrested or reduced. Support teachers for statemented pupils are well used. They work co-operatively with the teachers. There is, however, insufficient to meet the needs of all pupils on the register of special educational needs. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are available but find little use because they are too general and they do not identify targets for improving pupils' numerical skills where there are weaknesses. Teachers assess pupils through regular well-targeted questioning addressed to boys and girls equally. In one excellent lesson the teacher introduced ideas associated with frequency of events, associated with probability. Through skilful questioning, pupils' understanding was checked and developed until the theory relating to Pascal's triangles was discovered. The homework set, as in most lessons, is according to the timetable. It is relevant and extends the pupils' new-found knowledge. The consistently good quality of teaching at both key stages contributes significantly to the progress which pupils make.
80. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Prompted by the introduction of the National Numeracy Project, the curriculum is being developed successfully. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Curriculum continuity with the contributory and receiving schools and within the school is very good. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and using the results to plan the curriculum are

good. Monitoring the work of the department at present is restricted to that which does not remove the teacher responsible from personal teaching duties. The requirements of the recently introduced National Numeracy Project at Key Stage 2 are being met but no judgement on its impact could be made because of limited evidence one month after its introduction. The department has satisfactory accommodation and resources for learning except for the unsatisfactory number of books devoted to mathematics to be found in the school library. The department is efficient and the ethos for learning is very good.

81. Since the last inspection overall standards of achievement have continued to improve. The quality of teaching has improved and pupils, except those with special educational needs, continue to make good progress. Regular use of mental tests has greatly improved pupils' acuity, and a wider range of teaching methods are now used. However, department documentation remains incomplete. Curriculum continuity has been more systematically planned, and the coverage of the National Curriculum is better balanced. The use of number by other subject departments remains under-developed. Teachers are now suitably deployed. In-service training to improve the teachers' knowledge, understanding and skills in mathematics has taken place and there is no evidence at present to suggest teachers' expertise is inadequate. Obsolescent calculators have been replaced but classroom computers remain largely unused due to lack of maintenance and insufficient quality software. Accommodation has been improved by the removal of temporary accommodation and by the teaching of all mathematics lessons in classrooms. Improvement since the last inspection and the capacity for further improvement are both good.

84. **Science**

82. At the end of Key Stage 2 attainment is good. In 1998 the number of pupils reaching level 4 and above in the National Curriculum testing was in line with the national average; however at level 5 and above it was below average. In 1998, girls' attainment was better than that of boys, but this fluctuates from year to year. The attainment of pupils is broadly in line with that of pupils in similar schools. Provisional results for National Curriculum tests in 1999 show improvement in the number of pupils achieving level 4 and above and a very marked improvement for the number achieving level 5 and above. The targets set by the school were exceeded. This was achieved, in part, by targeting revision at borderline candidates.

83. In lessons, and in pupils' work, standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are above the national expectation. They can explain how a substance changes from a solid to a liquid and, in the case of higher-attaining pupils, can describe the energy changes involved. Pupils gain knowledge of a wide range of science topics and develop the skills needed to investigate scientific ideas methodically. Pupils are able to read and understand basic scientific vocabulary and have good writing skills. They are also provided with opportunities to use number skills in a scientific context. In Year 8, pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. These pupils design an experiment to compare the energy released when different foods are burnt, and the higher-attaining pupils begin to analyse and evaluate their work. All pupils understand the idea of fair testing, but some lower-attaining pupils need help to gain meaningful results.

84. Progress is good overall. On entry to the school, attainment is just above average. Pupils enter the school with good core skills of reading and writing and are consequently able to understand the ideas put to them in science lessons. Year 5 pupils bring a fund of knowledge of simple science from their previous schools, on which teachers are able to build. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, can use a key to identify the leaves that they had collected. Year 6 pupils can design and carry out experiments to separate mixtures of soluble and insoluble substances. A visit to a pond provided Year 7 pupils with opportunities to compare habitats and investigate the interactions between organisms. This work is enhanced in school by use of computer modelling programs. In Year 8 pupils have developed very good investigative skills and have knowledge of a wide range of topics, but understanding is sometimes superficial; progress reaches satisfactory levels only. Throughout the school, pupils gain knowledge of aspects of chemistry, physics and biology at the same rate. In both key stages pupils with special educational needs are helped by teachers and use materials specially designed to ensure progress at the same rate as others in the group

85. Pupils' attitude to science is very good throughout the school. They show interest in their work, often

offering to complete assignments in their own time. Pupils are always attentive, well behaved and courteous. Pupils always work safely and sensibly in practical classes and collaborate well. They support each other when problems arise. As pupils move through the school they improve their learning skills; the oldest pupils in the school are encouraged to reflect on their ideas and take responsibility for their own learning through individual research projects.

86. The quality of teaching generally is good. It is better in Key Stage 2 than in Years 7 and 8. This is due, in part, to better planning in Key Stage 2 lessons. In Year 6, pupils with special needs are taught in a small group, which enables teachers to set work which more closely matches their needs. Teachers explain their ideas clearly and often illustrate them imaginatively using their wide knowledge and understanding. Most lessons are well planned and have a clear purpose, although some lessons in Years 7 and 8, using the investigative approach, lack pace because time is spent on clarifying the procedures to be used by pupils in groups of different attainment. Teachers have extended the variety of teaching strategies used since the last report and are exploring the use of computers to enhance their teaching still further. In most lessons more challenging activities are provided for higher-attaining pupils. Question and answer sessions, designed to recapitulate previous ideas, are used effectively, but opportunities to provide for pupils to extend oral skills and reflect on their ideas by the use of open questions are less evident. Teachers give additional help and encouragement to pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to make satisfactory progress. Homework is used to extend ideas introduced in class. It is marked in sufficient detail to enable pupils to understand how to improve their standards.
87. The department is well led and effectively managed, ensuring the large teaching team takes a consistent approach. Schemes of work are designed in conjunction with other linked schools to ensure good cross-phase continuity. However, there are minor concerns over continuity between Key Stage 2 and 3. There is some unnecessary repetition of level 4 work previously covered in Key Stage 2. However, the requirements of the National Curriculum are met fully. The provision of technical support is unsatisfactory and results in teachers spending time preparing equipment and materials for practical lessons and for those lessons involving the use of computers. This has an adverse effect on pupils learning. Access to laboratories for a double lesson enables all Key Stage 3 pupils to develop good practical skills. A good range of long and short term assessment techniques is effectively used to monitor pupil progress and inform curriculum planning.
88. Standards of attainment have improved since the last report because new schemes of work which identify learning outcomes more clearly have been developed and a wider range of teaching strategies, including investigative science projects, has been introduced. All health and safety issues from the last report have been dealt with satisfactorily.

91. **COURSES**

OTHER SUBJECTS OR

91. **Art**
89. By the end of the Key Stage 2, and in Years 7 and 8, attainment is in line with that expected of pupils of similar ages nationally. Year 5 pupils, including those with special educational needs, have an appropriate foundation in the development of skills, use of materials and techniques. For example, a significant number of pupils are able to mix colours with confidence and have a clear understanding of the effects of colour mixing, including how to develop a range of tints and tones. The standard of painting, while slightly more varied across classes as pupils progress through the school, is overall satisfactory. Many pupils know the work of several artists, and those in Year 8 have successfully studied the work of Picasso and the Egyptians to support their work on portraits. They have an appropriate understanding of how to use and represent elements of line, proportion, texture, colour and tone, typical of the artists in their own work. These skills are suitably practised in sketchbooks before being applied to the set task. There are no significant differences in the levels of attainment reached by boys or girls.
90. Pupils' progress across both key stages is satisfactory. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady and consistent progress in the development of skills and techniques. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils were building upon prior experiences by using and mixing warm colours when painting a bonfire. In

this case the higher-attaining pupils made good progress in expressing their thoughts, ideas and feelings imaginatively. The close observational work by some Year 8 pupils on the inside of fruits demonstrated a good eye for detail and colour. The progress made in three-dimensional work is good. For example, the work linked to an English project on Shakespeare characters has provided the opportunity for pupils to create and depict the facial features of the characters and then work practically and imaginatively to use clay. Most pupils take pride in their work and are well motivated. They collaborate well. Pupils enjoy art lessons. Overall, behaviour during lessons is good. Pupils show positive attitudes towards the subject.

91. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Staff have a secure understanding, clear lesson objectives and well-prepared resources. In most cases suitable guidance and instructions on the use of tools and techniques are given, which enable pupils to explore and experiment effectively, as was the case in the Year 7 work on perspective. The work set allows for pupils to design, select their own materials and apply techniques that have previously been taught. Lessons are well managed. However, on occasions pupils are not always clearly engaged in the set task. This is due, in part, to the lack of pace and rigour within some sessions. Within the art department there is a clear sense of purpose, direction, and commitment to improving attainment and equal access to the art curriculum.
92. The majority of the issues raised in the previous inspection have been appropriately addressed. There is a clear scheme of work, planning is clearly focused on learning objectives, and time given to the curriculum is satisfactory; statutory requirements are met. Pupils' progress in the use of technological aids for the teaching of the subject remains unsatisfactory. In addition, the use of agreed assessment procedures in order to support planning and raise pupils' awareness of areas which might challenge or motivate them to reach higher levels of attainment, are not sufficiently developed. All staff are fully committed to raising educational standards. The enthusiastic leadership of the head of department and the effective involvement by other staff, place the department in a good position for bringing about continued improvement.
95. **Design and Technology**
93. Attainment in design and technology at the end of Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 8 is in line with the national expectations. At Key Stage 2, all pupils are able to carry out research and generate interesting ideas that they are then able to develop. They work in clay, wood, food and fabric. Pupils have a basic understanding of how to design and plan their work through to making the final product. In Year 6 graphics work, pupils use repeat patterns from multi-cultural materials as an information source and produce a three colour lino print on to paper and fabric successfully. Higher-attaining pupils can make more complex patterns. Pupils are confident in using equipment to measure, mark out, cut, shape and finish wood, food, fabric and clay. Pupils' written work and comments in Year 5 indicate that they have a developing understanding of food safety and hygiene. Higher-attaining pupils can develop a clear idea of what has to be done with the minimum of adult help, propose a logical sequence of actions and modify their work as it progresses to include their own ideas. This could be seen in the individual designs on cassette racks in Year 6 using wood and the ceramic tiles and pots produced in Year 5. Pupils with special educational needs find parts of the design process difficult but are able to attain the same standards as their peers. As in the previous inspection at Key Stage 2, pupils' making skills are better developed than their abilities to investigate, plan, design and evaluate the task and the product. At Year 8 pupils use their developing designing and practical skills to tackle longer and more complex assignments. In the mini-enterprise business theme in food, pupils generate a number of ideas and investigate their chosen products using market research survey techniques. After analysing the results of their own individually constructed questionnaires, pupils produce creative finished products of their own choice. The 'Foreign Travel' and 'Food for Sale' themes reflect a good level of research and making skills. Pupils answer questions very competently, although technical language is not widely used. Pupils can evaluate their work orally. Higher-attaining pupils, in particular, do this well and are aware of what needs to be done to improve their work. This was evident in the Year 8 lessons with pupils making a 'Steady Hand Game' using a sensor. Overall, pupils' evaluation of their own or others' designs in order to develop planning skills is under-emphasised in some classes, as it was at the last inspection. There are no significant differences in the levels of attainment reached by boys and girls at both key stages.
94. Progress at Key Stage 2 and in Years 7 and 8 is good. Overall, by visiting the different material areas and

the use of the theme approach, pupils increasingly build on their skills of designing and making. This is due to the opportunities and encouragement presented by teachers for pupils to practise varied making skills. Pupils' graphical skills develop slowly over the key stages. Progress in the use and application of information technology over the key stages is hindered by lack of suitable resources. Higher-attaining pupils respond satisfactorily to the theme approach, although a number of them do not achieve their potential. Some classes have a higher proportion of lower-attaining boys than others. These boys begin the Key Stage 2 course with limited preparation for research and investigation tasks, making slow progress over the key stages. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

95. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good at both key stages. This is an improvement on that reported at the previous inspection where at Key Stage 2 the quality of learning was sometimes variable. Pupils respond very well in lessons. They show interest in their work and actively participate in teacher-led question and answer sessions. Concentration is good throughout the lesson. Behaviour is very good. Relationships are good and mutually supportive. Collaborative work is very successful when groups of pupils work on chosen topics. Individual working is good in the practical sessions, particularly in Year 5. When given opportunities to take responsibility, pupils respond willingly. Special educational needs pupils show commitment to learning in class and undertake the same tasks as other pupils. This was particularly noticeable in the Year 8 class undertaking a printing theme, where pupils' attitudes to learning, combined with the teachers' support, ensured an atmosphere of concentration and appreciation throughout the lesson.
96. Teaching is always satisfactory, usually good and sometimes very good. Specialist teachers' knowledge is never less than satisfactory and usually good. The content is well-taught, usually with clear demonstration techniques, for example when teaching vegetable preparation and health and safety. Time is well used in lessons which are appropriately planned and structured to allow for teacher efficiency and pupil activity. Teachers assess and record pupils' work satisfactorily at Key Stage 2. However, the use of assessment is less effective in Years 7 and 8 because work is not set and marked consistently, in accordance with the school's assessment policy. Homework is not well used in the department. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils. In lessons, verbal praise for positive contributions is given to pupils and this is an important contributory factor in pupils making good progress and improving attainment. A friendly working atmosphere is created in all lessons, and teachers ensure pupils understand and apply new knowledge effectively. Storage of pupils' work is well organised. The preparation of resources for learning is sometimes limited because of insufficient non-teaching technical support. Information technology is under-developed within the department. The management and leadership of the department are satisfactory. However the quality of teaching is not monitored to help further improvements and assessments are not used systematically to assist curriculum planning. The requirements of the National Curriculum are being met.
97. Since the previous inspection there has been some increase in the technological experiences available to pupils. There remains, however, an under-emphasis on pupils' evaluation of their own or others' designs. The quality of teaching has improved.

Drama

98. Levels of attainment match national expectations for age in both key stages. Most pupils listen attentively when tasks are explained. They work well together in groups when, for example, planning performances in the style of Agatha Christie in Year 8, or discussing the features of an ideal society in Year 6. A minority of pupils have good levels of skill in movement, gesture, facial expression and effective use of the voice. Most have difficulty in translating their ideas into effective action and, in all classes observed, some were inhibited by self-consciousness. In Year 8, some pupils are skilled in evaluating the effectiveness of their work and are quick to identify the means of further improvement. The majority are heavily dependent upon the guidance of teachers and unable to accept invitations to make their own decisions.
99. In all years, pupils demonstrate good levels of interest and respond well to appropriate challenge. They sustain concentration and work purposefully within time limits when these are imposed. A minority lack self-discipline, and their inattentiveness sometimes reduces the effectiveness of teaching and the pace of learning.

100. The quality of teaching is never less than sound. It is based upon wide experience and good personal skills. Most lessons are well-structured to provide practice in each of the skills of planning, performance and evaluation. Insufficient opportunities for performance were offered to a Year 6 class.
101. Schemes of work identify clear aims and indicate the range of skills to be taught. They do not indicate the stages at which skills will be introduced nor how they are to be developed. Assessment and recording procedures are insufficiently linked to pupils' abilities to plan, perform and evaluate to inform teaching and to record progress. Almost a quarter of pupils take part in the two public performances each year. Pupils value these experiences which support their personal development and growth in confidence.
104. **Geography**
102. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 is above national expectations. By the end of Year 8 it is well above national expectations. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.
103. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils develop an improved understanding of co-ordinates in order to locate places and features. Pupils show a good knowledge of the factors determining the origin of settlements. Higher-attaining pupils realise the need to compromise on site factors to get the best value. All pupils know and understand that some words have Anglo-Saxon roots and others have Viking origins. Higher-attaining pupils know which have Viking and which have Anglo-Saxon place names, for example, bourne and beck, and consider patterns of distribution of Anglo-Saxon and Viking names. Pupils understand rural push and the urban pull related to present day living in towns and cities. Pupils make effective use of pie and bar graphs as well as information technology in order to enhance presentation of work.
104. Pupils in Year 5 arrive with appropriate levels of geographical skills and understanding. They build upon their knowledge of simple plans and maps. They accurately use four-figure grid references and draw a simple route map to school. The urban theme is continued in Year 7 as pupils understand about supply and demand of goods. Higher-attaining pupils understand some factors that contribute to the cost of urban land, for example, good access by rail, by road and metro with a good range of car parks. Higher-attaining pupils have a good technical vocabulary. In Year 8, pupils know the requirements for factory development and they begin to observe, record and analyse geographical data and consolidate through their fieldwork.
105. A variety of teaching strategies, very good relationships, evaluative skills and geographical knowledge, ensures pupils make very good progress through Key Stage 2 and in Years 7 and 8. In Years 5 and 6, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, continue to make very good progress as they move through the key stage. In Years 7 and 8, geographical work builds upon foundations laid in Key Stage 2 as pupils develop skills, understanding and geographical ideas. Application of geographical skills is evident as pupils begin to use their skills and knowledge learned in the classroom in analysing their fieldwork. Very effective support from both the teacher and classroom assistant, when present, enables all pupils to make very good progress. The skills of higher-attaining pupils are well challenged through observation and enquiry as they apply geographical knowledge and understanding, for example, the location of a factory in South Wales. Pupils develop inquiring minds collecting both geographical and human data.
106. Pupils' attitudes and response to work are very good at both key stages. Most pupils show mature attitudes and enjoy their lessons. There are high expectations for both work and behaviour. Behaviour is generally very good and at times excellent. Pupils contribute well to question and answer sessions. They enjoy the subject especially when they are involved in practical situations, for example, fieldwork or analysing data. Attention is focused and well sustained throughout lessons. Many express their ideas clearly; however, there are instances where pupils, who are at the early stages of learning English, have difficulty with some tasks. Most pupils take care with and show a pride in the presentation of their work. They organise their work effectively, and the majority work well both with a partner and independently. Relationships with staff are excellent, and this, linked to pupils' very positive attitudes, contributes to the very good progress they make.

107. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good in both key stages and it has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers show very good knowledge, understanding and application of their subject. Teachers know their pupils very well and have very high expectations of both their behaviour and work, for example, when studying urban land use in Key Stage 2, challenging questions make pupils analyse patterns of human behaviour. However, in a minority of occasions in Key Stage 2, lower expectations constrain the very good progress. Where teaching standards are very good, pupils are encouraged to ask and answer geographical questions in some detail. Planning is good. All teachers effectively plan lessons. This ensures progression and curriculum continuity across both key stages. Teaching methods are good. Management of pupils is very good, and staff make good use of resources. Good use is made of homework. It is regularly set and marked. Appropriate tasks are set to support and enhance work covered in lessons. Evaluation and assessment are a particular strength. Very good evaluations with feedback enable pupils to make very good progress.
108. Geography is well led and managed. The head of department has a clear view of the educational direction the subject should take. Policy documents are thorough and the departmental action plan is realistic and consistent with the school's aims. There is a detailed analysis of pupil performance. The curriculum and assessment procedure are both good, well developed and meet National Curriculum requirements. There is insufficient systematic monitoring of classroom teaching. At present, the use of information technology is under-developed and this restricts pupils' progress in using inquiry skills. Geography contributes to the appreciation of cultural diversity and the richness of other cultures, for example, when studying Bangladesh. The department makes sound contributions to both literacy and numeracy, and assessment tests in Years 6 and 8 combine both elements effectively. Fieldwork and direct observation form an integral part of the curriculum. There are adequate resources to support the teaching of geography. Since the last inspection the recommendations have been addressed.
111. **History**
109. Pupils' attainments by the end of Key Stage 2 are above the level expected nationally. Pupils demonstrate a secure sense of chronology and are becoming confident in their use of dates and terms relating to the passing of time. Pupils in Year 5, for example, can draw a family tree with three generations and are familiar with terms such as 'generation'. They are able to use sources of historical evidence to find out about the past and by the end of Year 6 they are practised at using source material to answer questions. Pupils in Year 6, for example, answered a question on how do we know the Romans were here with a list of objects they left behind. By the end of Year 8, pupils have a good understanding of the issues surrounding historical evidence. They use historical knowledge to describe important developments and changes within the period they are studying. Attainment in understanding and evaluating differing historical interpretations of people and events is above average. Pupils understand how to conduct their own enquiries competently, writing fluently and at length. There is little evidence of variation in attainment between boys and girls.
110. Through Key Stage 2, pupils of all levels of attainment strengthen their grasp of factual knowledge and understanding of the main events, peoples and changes studied. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress, developing their research skills and using information purposefully, for example, when learning about Roman Britain or when researching Saxon place names in Year 6. In Years 7 and 8 pupils increase their confidence in analysing sources of historical evidence. They quickly improve their confidence in expressing their understanding orally and in writing. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, helped by appropriate work and a positive classroom ethos. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in writing fluently and at length on historical issues. Pupils throughout the age range take opportunities for independent work seriously and produce projects of high quality. They take impressive care with the presentation of their work, evident, for example, in the Year 8 cross-curricular projects on aspects of Shakespeare's life and times. They are always well behaved and work well together in small groups. Classroom relationships are positive.
111. History is well taught in both key stages. There is no evidence of any unsatisfactory teaching and in two-thirds of lessons seen it was of good quality. Teachers employ a broad range of methods and resources which engage pupils to the full extent of their competence, as well as exercising their imagination. A class

in Year 7, for example, listened to medieval music whilst learning about the Crusades; similarly, in Year 8, at the end of a unit on the American Plains Indians, pupils examine the film 'Dances with Wolves' as a source of historical evidence in a museum exhibition. In these classes, as in most others, pupils were given a clear idea of teachers' high expectations for the quality of their work. Learning activities have good pace, and both pace and challenge have improved since the last inspection. Teachers have an enthusiasm for their subject which communicates itself to pupils and enables lessons to move forward effectively. Teachers work well together as a cohesive team. The department is well managed and provides pupils with a rich diet of historical experience. History makes a valuable contribution to the promotion of literacy skills. As a result, pupils make rapid advances in the quality of their writing and the range of language they use in history.

112. Lessons observed had pace, and pupils were challenged unlike the previous inspection when it was judged lessons had insufficient teacher intervention and focus. Staff expertise and confidence in the subject matter are now satisfactory. Resources for use in the department have been expanded. However, information technology remains under-used as a method of aid teaching and learning.

115.

Information Technology

113. Overall, attainment in information technology at the end of Key Stage 2 and the end of Year 8 is in line with the national expectations for similar-aged pupils. In topics taught in timetabled lessons, at Key Stage 2 and in Years 7 and 8, the attainment of some pupils is above the level expected nationally. This is similar to that found at the last inspection. At the end of Key Stage 2, from low levels of information technology skill on entry, pupils became competent at accessing software, including those for word processing and graphics. They are competent in basic operations, such as using a keyboard and mouse. They use the drawing facility of the Claris Works software to create quality presentations which are displayed in the classroom and used in projects. Work is saved and retrieved, as appropriate, and text is enhanced with illustrations that have either been created or transferred from other sources. This use of information technology to help pupils generate and communicate ideas is seen in the production of a newspaper in Year 6. During the lunch-time, pupils attending a computer club have the confidence to explore unfamiliar software. In Year 8, pupils are familiar with, and competent in using, a wider range of computer software. They readily select the most appropriate for their task. In a mathematics lesson, Year 7 pupils apply and advance their knowledge and skills of spreadsheets and create bar graphs. Pupils show good word processing skills which, for many pupils, have been practised and used on their home computers as well as those in the school. In timetabled information technology lessons pupils use simulation modeling software to explore different aspects of imaginary situations. This helps them understand the effect of different predictions and decisions. Working co-operatively helps pupils understand further the consequences of these choices by discussion. Pupils in Year 8 use software to produce questionnaires to generate their own data and then display the analysis of this data in differing types of charts. Their knowledge and skill in communicating information and modelling are satisfactory. Individual teacher support enables pupils with special educational needs to work satisfactorily through similar tasks to reach satisfactory levels of attainment. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
114. Progress in Key Stage 2, and in Years 7 and 8 is good because the scheme of work is used successfully in planning, resources are good and teaching is effective. However, systematic and regular monitoring of pupils' progress does not take place to identify pupils' weaknesses and strengths, to assist their progress and improve attainment. In Years 7 and 8, overall progress is satisfactory. Some pupils make good progress because they have access to computers and appropriate software; others are without these facilities. Pupils in year 5 use successfully a program to produce two-dimensional shapes. Later in the year they produce spreadsheets and create different graphical representations. In Year 6, Claris Works software is used to create a newspaper front page including columns. Pupils at Key Stage 3 progress by opening and managing more than one software application at a time. The progress of pupils with special educational needs in Key Stage 2 and Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory because of teacher support in reinforcing work with various icons and menus that they may have forgotten. Pupils steadily widen their experience and develop their ability to combine applications of computing to address their particular task or assignment. A few higher-attaining pupils are constrained, from developing ideas and skills further, by large group sizes and limited access to computers in classrooms.
115. In addition to being taught how to use computers, pupils are required to develop the use of this capability within the subjects of the curriculum. This use of information technology is under-developed and remains much as at the time of the last inspection. Information technology work is planned in some subjects but implementation is inconsistent. The lack of availability of subject resources in subject areas and access to the computer room are all limiting factors in further development of the use of information technology as a tool for learning in other subjects. A few teachers do not, as yet, have sufficient expertise in information technology to assist pupils in improving their attainment.
116. At both key stages pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Pupils are well motivated to learn and show high levels of concentration. Behaviour in lessons and during the lunch-time computer club is good. Pupils work confidently with software. While classes are quite large, pupils are supportive of each other and good working relationships exist with the teachers.
117. The quality of teaching in timetabled lessons is good at both key stages. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. Lessons are generally well-planned and structured with a suitable balance of time for

instruction and for pupils to work independently. Extended work is planned and encouraged. The support given to individual pupils by the teacher helps them to develop confidence in the use of information technology skills. Homework is not well-used as a preparation for classwork. Pupils' work of a high quality is displayed in and near the specialist room and is used as exemplars.

118. Monitoring of the quality of teaching is at a formative stage. The head of the department combines management of the subject with work in other departments in the school. Pupils make good use of the computer club each lunchtime, although this facility is inadequate for the number of pupils needing access. The ratio of computers to pupils is below the national average.
119. Since the previous inspection the school has re-furnished and equipped a new computer room with up-to-date hardware and software. Because of the unsatisfactory use of information technology in other subjects and no assessment policy with which to monitor pupils' attainment and progress, the school is not meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum.

122.

Modern Foreign Languages

120. In French and Italian pupils attain standards above those expected nationally. Although the National Curriculum requires a modern language to be taught from Year 7, the school makes provision for all pupils to learn French from Year 6. Year 6 pupils have the opportunity to learn Italian in lessons outside the normal school timetable. In French lessons, Year 6 pupils show that they can use numbers up to thirty and that they have acquired a good knowledge of classroom vocabulary. Most are beginning to use the words in context. They are developing good pronunciation and good listening, reading and writing skills. Pupils learning Italian in Year 6 are also becoming competent in manipulating numbers and are able to express them as dates. Most Year 8 pupils are able to talk about their daily routine and the higher attainers write at length when describing people or houses. They show good understanding of grammatical rules and syntax. Most pupils have the confidence to express themselves orally and with accurate pronunciation. The teachers' routine use of French for instructions and simpler explanations has the effect of sharpening pupils' listening skills. Lower-attaining pupils in Key Stage 3 are able to extract relevant information from a recorded text.
121. Pupils in both key stages make good progress in language learning. The brisk pace of the lessons contributes to this, as does the routine use of French and Italian in lessons and the wide variety of strategies used by teachers to re-inforce, consolidate and teach vocabulary and structures. Pupils make very good progress in their speaking and listening skills. Pupils with special needs also progress well in French. A strength of the subject is the support and encouragement given to pupils with special needs in Year 8. As a result of this they are confident speakers within their attainment levels and are developing good listening skills and the ability to write accurately.
122. Pupils' response to modern languages is very good. In both key stages they are highly motivated and very keen to participate in oral work. Among pupils of all attainment levels there is a great eagerness to learn and this results in a mature approach to the tasks set. Pupils respond to encouragement to work independently. They work productively both alone and in collaboration with others. For example, through frequent pair work sessions they enhance their oral skills. Behaviour in lessons is usually excellent. Pupils show a high degree of respect for the teachers and for each other.
123. The quality of teaching is generally very good. Teachers plan lessons well. They have high expectations of their pupils, especially in oral work when they try very hard to get pupils to speak and improve their pronunciation. They set appropriately challenging tasks for the more competent linguists so that they speak and write at length; they are painstaking in persuading the lowest attainers to speak and write accurately. Lessons generally contain a variety of activities. For example, teachers use question and answer sessions to very good effect while class repetition, paired oral work, round the class questioning, listening tests and reading and writing exercises may be used in the same lesson. This planning ensures that pupils' motivation is sustained and contributes strongly to their good progress. Teachers manage their classes very well and set very high standards of behaviour by example. Teachers make good use of homework to support learning.

124. The subject curriculum is broad and balanced and satisfies the requirements of the National Curriculum. It is enhanced by the teaching of French to all pupils in Year 6 and the recent introduction of Italian as an extra-curricular option, also in Year 6. Pupils have the opportunity to visit France on a skiing holiday in Year 7 and on a French/history tour to Normandy in Year 8. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment are good, and teachers use this information to plan further work. The subject has strong leadership. There is clear vision for the development of the subject in the light of the receiving high school's status as a languages college. There is a clear commitment to high achievement. A detailed scheme of work is in place and planning provides for continuity between year groups, key stages and between schools. There are sufficient appropriately qualified teachers to ensure that the subject is taught effectively and accommodation is satisfactory. The supply of resources available to teachers, including audio-visual aids, is adequate. There are some computers available for modern languages use but the use of information technology to support learning is currently limited to word processing.
125. Issues remaining from the last inspection have been addressed, and there has been an improvement in the already good standard of teaching. The subject makes better provision for higher attaining pupils by setting appropriately challenging work and by the introduction of Italian as an additional language. The assessment of pupils' attainment is used more effectively in planning work.
128. **Music**
126. The overall attainment by the end of Key Stage 2, and in Years 7 and 8, is in line with that expected of pupils of similar ages. Staffing difficulties have, until recently, led to some discontinuity in leading and this has affected the attainment of most pupils. Very good teaching is now enabling pupils to make good progress and, overall, attainment levels are rising. Pupils demonstrate a range of skills that interrelate; including performing, composing, and listening. They have a sound grasp of composition, showing an awareness of the basic elements such as pitch, rhythm, texture and style. Pupils are developing an understanding of musical vocabulary and are beginning to use and apply in the appropriate context, for example, when composing. They know about forms in music such as raga, ostinati and modes and can recognise the differences between a major and minor scale. Strengths of the school are the high number of pupils who have the opportunity to play a musical instrument and their excellent participation in extra-curricular activities. In these cases they have been taught how to sit, hold the instrument correctly and, for example, use a bow, when playing or plucking the strings in order to get quality sound control. They have a very good understanding of conventional notation, which enables them to attain levels in keeping with their competence when working either individually, on class compositions or when performing in ensemble groups. Individual pupils understand the values of notes and rests, time signatures and key signatures alongside the dynamics needed in order to be able to play the piece musically. Advice is readily accepted in order to reflect and then improve upon their performance. As a result the standards reached by these pupils are well above that expected nationally of pupils of similar ages. There are no significant differences in the levels of attainment reached by boys or girls in music.
127. Pupils make good progress at both key stages in lessons. A significant minority of higher-attaining pupils make very good progress. Those pupils with special educational needs are well supported by both peers and adults, and work is properly matched to their attainment. Their progress, in for example singing, composition and individual playing is due, in part, to the high quality teaching of the basic musical skills and techniques. Learning is consolidated appropriately and built upon over the course of time. Pupils are given good opportunities to listen to a wide variety of music in both assemblies and in class music lessons. They listen attentively. However, there are missed opportunities to increase pupil's levels of understanding of the character of the piece and who wrote it.
128. Attitudes to learning are good and there is an enthusiastic approach to all practical work. Pupils in most classes are able to take responsibility for their own learning, They work collaboratively and harmoniously on any set task, share views, and readily accept suggestions for improvement from both peers and adults. They are well behaved and settle to work quickly to ensure that no time is wasted. Presentation of work is good.

129. The overall quality of teaching is very good, or excellent. Staff have a good knowledge of what they teach and show a good understanding of the key elements of the National Curriculum and instrumental playing. The teaching is purposeful, with clear objectives. They communicate high expectations for attainment by offering progressively challenging and interesting activities which pupils tackle confidently and enthusiastically. Lessons are planned, well prepared and organised. Clear explanations, skills questioning and demonstration by the teachers, for example, in singing and composition, ensure that the pupils know how to either improve pitch and accuracy or structure of a piece. The pace and rigour in all lessons ensures that no time is wasted. Relationships with pupils are good. There is a clear sense of purpose, direction, and commitment to improving standards and equal access to the music curriculum.
130. The majority of the issues raised in the previous inspection have been appropriately addressed. There is a clear scheme of work, planning is clearly focused on learning objectives, and time given to the music curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils' progress in the use of music technology remains unsatisfactory. In addition the use of the agreed assessment procedures in order to support planning and raise pupils' awareness remains. Everyone connected with the department has the willingness and motivation to continue to progress.
133. **Physical Education**
131. Standards of attainment are good at the end of Key Stage 2 and in Key Stage 3. High standards of performance are illustrated by the successes of teams and individuals at local, district and county levels in athletics, cross- country running, cricket, football and rugby. In lessons at both key stages, pupils demonstrate good levels of fitness, agility and physical co-ordination. At Key Stage 2, pupils have good understanding of the elementary techniques of the games they play and demonstrate good ball-handling skills. In floor work in gymnastics, they are able to plan and perform simple sequences whilst working within restricted areas. They are increasingly able to use appropriate technical language when describing features of performance. At Key Stage 3, pupils recognise that attention to detail when practising leads to improved skills in performance. In football, they are able to explain why a strategy succeeds or fails and to suggest means of improvement. They have good close passing skills and are learning the principles of effective defence. In a Year 8 dance class, pupils were confident in devising, rehearsing and performing increasingly complex sequences and modifying them to improve fluency. They are developing good levels of skill in mirroring and synchronisation.
132. Pupils listen attentively to explanations and instructions and observe demonstrations closely so that progress is good in the development of technical skills. Lower attaining pupils work hard and want to improve their levels of skill, secure in the knowledge that they are being assessed as individuals rather than compared with others. All pupils are well-motivated and keen to learn. They have good relationships with teachers and each other, which support progress. Although many are strongly competitive, pupils have a strong sense of fair play and good safety awareness.
133. The quality of teaching is good, sometimes very good, and never less than satisfactory. Teachers have good levels of personal skill and consistently high expectations of pupils' effort, behaviour and attainment. They link lessons to previous and future work and end them with summaries which offer praise when earned and also remind pupils of the key learning points. Lessons are well-constructed to provide opportunities for planning, performance and evaluation. Teachers have good understanding of individuals and are equally supportive of all of them. Achievement of their aims for lessons is sometimes frustrated by the late arrival of pupils who have been detained elsewhere.
134. Since the previous inspection, schemes of work have been modified to provide pupils with a better balance of games and other activities. Earlier this year, because of the range of opportunities and the high numbers of pupils participating outside lessons, the school received a national Sportsmark award. Pupils now have sufficient opportunities to evaluate their own work and that of others. Standards of attainment have been raised to match the potential of all pupils. Causes for concern about safety have been removed. Improved procedures for assessing and recording pupils' attainment have been introduced, but do not differentiate between attainment in the skills of planning, performance and evaluation.

137. **Religious Education**

135. In lessons and in work seen, the attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 is above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the different religions they study and what is distinctive to each. In Year 5, for example, they are aware of a few of the ninety-nine names of God in Islam and are beginning to find their way around the Bible. Many use theological terms such as pilgrimage or ultimate question to describe religious events or issues. Pupils with special educational needs achieve their potential. Inspection evidence shows that, by the end of Year 8, attainment is good in relation to that expected by the locally agreed syllabus. Many pupils are able to provide a coherent picture of the different religions they study and they can provide an informed and considered response to religious and moral issues. Boys and girls achieve comparable standards.
136. Progress for the majority of pupils in Key Stage 2 is good. They are beginning to become familiar with biblical and other sources of religious inspiration and starting to think seriously about deeper spiritual issues such as the origins of the world. Pupils in Year 5, for example, produce work of high quality on what amazes them about the world in which they live. They gain an understanding and respect for the beliefs and views of others. Progress for pupils in Years 7 and 8 is good. Pupils gain a growing understanding of ethical issues and their impact on religious beliefs. Pupils in Year 8, for example, conduct surveys on why people read the Bible and send these to a wide range of celebrities and famous people, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Prime Minister and Khris Akabusi. They demonstrate increasing confidence in the use of technical language. Attention to the full range of attainment means that pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all aspects of their work. Pupils' written work indicates very good progress, and religious education makes a valuable contribution to the development of literacy skills.
137. Pupils' attitudes to religious education are very positive in both key stages. They take considerable pride in written work which is normally neat and well presented. They contribute effectively to lessons by listening attentively, by reading aloud, answering questions and contributing ideas. They show respect for other people's feelings, values and beliefs and are always well behaved. Classroom relationships are very positive.
138. Teaching is mainly good and very good. The majority of lessons are good or very good. Teachers have high expectations, and lessons are well planned to challenge and motivate pupils. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils although sometimes they need to be more carefully explained. There are many opportunities for pupils to become actively involved in their learning by, for example, handling religious artefacts or by engaging in activities which enable pupils to reflect and contemplate. Group work is very effective, with every pupil having a specific task to fulfil. The range of tasks used helps pupils to develop a good conceptual framework and an understanding of religion. Regular tests help to consolidate knowledge and understanding and have a positive impact on pupils' progress. Marking is conscientious but there is scope to make more subject specific comments on pupils' work so that they know what they have done well and where they need to direct further effort. In some lessons, teachers need to ask a wider range of questions in order to reinforce pupils' understanding. Statutory requirements for religious education are met. This is a well led department with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Departmental documentation provides effective support for non-specialist teachers and includes reference to equal opportunities which was referred to in the previous report. The school needs to ensure that there is some stability in staffing arrangements so that the department is enabled to maintain its high standards.

141.

DATA

141.

141.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

SUMMARY OF

139. The inspection was carried out by a team of 9 inspectors, including a lay inspector, who visited the school for a total of 30 days. A total of 107 hours was spent observing classes, sampling pupils' work and talking with pupils.
140. Prior to the inspection, the registered inspector met members of the governing body, attended a staff meeting and held a meeting to which all parents and guardians were invited, which was attended by 29 parents. During the inspection, the team observed 107 lessons in whole or in part, and attended assemblies, tutor periods and registrations. All teachers were observed teaching, on average, on four occasions. Some extra-curricular activities were observed. The work of a selection of pupils, chosen from each year group, was examined and pupils were interviewed about their school work, their opinions and their interests. During the week of the inspection, informal discussions were held with a number of visitors and non-teaching staff. Interviews took place with the chairman, vice-chairman and members of the governing body, the headteacher, staff with management responsibilities and others with connections and interest in the work of the school.
141. The inspectors examined school documentation during, and prior to, the inspection. Amongst this were: the minutes the governing body meetings; the school prospectus and development plan; the staff handbook; and headteacher's report to the governing body. Curriculum documentation and school policy statements were also examined. School registers of attendance, financial records and other administrative documentation were scrutinised. The previous inspection report and governors' action plan were read and the contents of these were used as base-lines for making judgements about school improvement. Responses to the parents' questionnaires were analysed and the results, including comments made at a meeting held for parents and in written responses, were examined by the inspectors.

145. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

145. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y5 – Y8	502	4	90	47

145. **Teachers and classes**

145. **Qualified teachers (Y5 – Y8)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	23.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	21.6

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

Total number of education support staff:	3
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	57.5
Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:	83.8
Average teaching group size:	KS2 25.9 KS3 25.3

145. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/9
	£
Total Income	830764
Total Expenditure	810562
Expenditure per pupil	1615
Balance brought forward from previous year	36922
Balance carried forward to next year	57124

145. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 430
 Number of questionnaires returned: 280

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	25	63	10	2	0
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	38	53	5	4	0
The school handles complaints from parents well	20	46	29	4	1
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	26	55	15	4	0
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	29	55	12	4	0
The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work	41	51	6	2	0
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	32	55	11	2	0
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	26	55	11	7	1
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	37	54	8	0	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	39	54	6	1	0
My child(ren) like(s) school	43	46	8	3	0

145.

Other issues raised by parents

Written responses were received from 21 parents and 29 parents attended an evening arranged for them to discuss and raise issues. Written and verbal comments largely supported parents' and guardians' views recorded in the analysis of the questionnaire. At the meeting parents raised the issue of grouping pupils to allow them to achieve at the level of their attainment; they supported the school's effective promotion of good attitudes, behaviour and values to which their children responded well; and the speed with which school notices and helps pupils who are struggling academically or who are having personal and social problems. The quantity and quality of homework, in particular the use of projects, were raised although parents recognised that the school had recently made efforts to meet their wishes. Issues relating to knowing work in advance to help their children, reporting children's progress to parents and staff were also raised. Other issues raised by parents and guardians were addressed by individual inspectors in the course of their work and, if significant, commented on within the report.

145.

Summary of responses

Parents generally agreed that the school provides a friendly and stimulating environment where their children are happy. They appreciate the leadership given by the headteacher and the high standards of teaching and expectations of the pupils. They recognised the comments of adults working in the school. Whilst most parents welcomed the use of homework as an extension to school work, a few had reservations on the quantity set, in particular project work which appeared not to be co-ordinated. Others, wished that the school would give them a clear indication of what is to be taught each term so that they could help their children in their learning.