

INSPECTION REPORT

FIVE OAKS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Caddington, Luton

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109664

Headteacher: Mr Michael Evans-Jones

Reporting inspector: Denis Pittman
16976

Dates of inspection: 7th - 10th February 2000

Inspection number: 184711
Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed Secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Five Oaks
Caddington
Near Luton
Bedfordshire

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Keith Beeston

Date of previous inspection: 6th March 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
D Pittman	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
N L Shelley	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values, personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
A Quinn	Team inspector	Mathematics Science	
R Bailless	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	How well is the school led and managed?
M Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical Education English as an additional language	Special educational needs
L Bappa	Team inspector	History Religious education	
L Kauffman	Team inspector	Art Design and technology	
A Marfleet	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
B M Loydell	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Geography	
A Johnstone	Team inspector	Music	

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The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Five Oaks is a smaller than average sized Middle School of 293 pupils, aged 9 to 13. The school primarily serves Caddington and the surrounding villages and approximately one-third of the school roll now comes outside of the catchment area. The overall attainment of pupils upon entry to the school, at age 9, is below average. The school has identified sixty-five pupils as having special educational needs including a higher proportion than average having specific learning or behavioural difficulties. There is a small number of pupils who have English as an additional language; in addition there are ten children from travelling families. Thirty-seven pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Five Oaks is effective in providing a suitable education for pupils from a range of backgrounds and abilities. Test and examination results are below average but pupils' progress is evident in most subjects as they move through the school. The school is improving in a number of areas particularly in the quality of its teaching. Staff generally create a caring and supportive climate for learning which is having a positive impact upon standards. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good overall in many subjects.
- There is an effective system for pupils to be involved in setting their own targets for raising achievement.
- The support and care of staff which enables pupils to grow in confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to opportunities offered by the school; these are reflected in their good involvement in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities.
- Performance skills in music are good.
- The introduction of the National Literacy initiative.

What could be improved

- Attainment, which is below average, particularly in mathematics at both key stages and science at Key Stage 3.
- Opportunities to teach information technology through different topics and subjects are often missed.
- The quality of reports to inform parents about attainment and progress.
- The co-ordination and teaching of numeracy skills.
- Providing a better focus for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements of the curriculum and more opportunities for spiritual development.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress overall since the previous inspection. Teaching has significantly improved in most subjects – there are examples of good teaching in both key stages. Attainment in English, design and technology, art, geography and music has risen. Achievement in mathematics at both key stages has not been improved sufficiently. Attainment in science and history at Key Stage 3 is below average. The provision for French has improved.

The literacy policy across the school is helping to raise standards but competence in spelling is still low. The effective strategy for target setting, coupled with more consistent assessment, is helping to raise pupils' expectations of themselves. School development planning is better and provides an appropriate focus for the school's work. However, shorter-term priorities need to be more precisely identified and action planning more carefully detailed. Review and evaluation procedures introduced by the governors and the senior management are improving the quality of work in the school.

Some issues from the previous inspection still need to be addressed although some progress has been made. Information technology is inadequately resourced and is used insufficiently across the curriculum. The management and co-ordination of the mathematics department has deteriorated. There continue to be inconsistencies in the setting and marking of homework. The lack of continuity in staffing and absence of subject specialists, for example, in mathematics have adversely affected standards.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	C	D	C	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
mathematics	C	D	E	E	
science	C	D	D	E	

The general standards of attainment of pupils in English and mathematics are below average on entry to the school – spelling and competence in numeracy are particularly weak. Overall results in the 1999 national tests for 11-year-olds, in English, mathematics and science are also below average. However, attainment in English is more in line with national averages. Achievement in mathematics is well below average, which is a continuation of a trend in falling performance against the national picture for the last three years. Attainment in science is below average although in lessons there are signs of better performance at Key Stage 2. The attainment of pupils at the higher levels of the National Curriculum tests is significantly low for mathematics and science but is broadly similar to expectations for English. The improving trend in the school's average points score for all three subjects is broadly in line with the national trend. The school failed to meet its targets in 1999 for the core subjects, although there was some improvement in performance from the previous year.

The overall standards of attainment for the core subjects, in comparison with similar schools, are well below average. The improving standards, as shown in lessons, which have occurred because of the improved teaching are as yet not reflected in test results.

In lessons, standards of attainment in English, art, design and technology, information technology, music and physical education are in line with national expectations at both key stages. Attainment in geography improves through the successive key stages. In science, history and religious education achievement at Key Stage 2 is in line with expectations but is below average at Key Stage 3. Whilst attainment is below average in French, attitudes towards the subject have improved and pupils make satisfactory progress. Attainment in mathematics is below average at both key stages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are generally positive. They enjoy many of their lessons, showing a good involvement in the various activities provided. Good relationships exist between pupils and staff.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is mostly good. Pupils work together well and usually try hard. A minority of pupils in Year 8 can be disruptive. Bullying is rare.
Personal development and relationships	Good – pupils are encouraged to take responsibility, for example, through the school council and community service. Pupils show respect for others.
Attendance	Satisfactory – there are few instances of unexplained absences.

There is good involvement of pupils in the school council – this effectively promotes a commitment to common goals and the confidence to take responsibility for decisions. There are good working relationships in most parts of the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 9 - 11 years	aged 11-13 years
Lessons seen overall	good	good

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

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 92% of lessons. It was very good in 11% of lessons and unsatisfactory in 8%. Teachers' good subject knowledge and effective planning provide good opportunities for pupils to learn. Teaching is good in English, design and technology, art, geography, French and music. The teaching of information technology in designated lessons is good but there is insufficient emphasis on IT-related topics in other subjects. Teaching of mathematics, science and history has unsatisfactory features such as ineffective planning and assessment procedures. The quality of marking is still variable in some subjects.

Standards of literacy are improving from a low base on entry – lack of competence in spelling is still a weakness although reading standards are improving. Numeracy skills are low and are insufficiently developed in other subjects. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs including those with specific learning difficulties is satisfactory. Pupils develop good skills in music, physical education, art and design and technology.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall provision is satisfactory. There is a good range of subjects with a particular strength in the extensive opportunities for extra-curricular activities. There is limited access to IT across the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory. There is sound progress through both key stages and careful monitoring. There is improved quality of learning support. There is satisfactory provision for the small number of pupils whose first language is not English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including SMSCD	Overall provision is satisfactory but opportunities for spiritual development are not adequately planned for. There is good provision for social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Support and guidance are good. Relationships are constructive and caring. Periodic reviews are increasingly helpful in setting targets for pupils.

The curriculum meets statutory requirements although there is insufficient use of IT in many subjects. The provision for teaching literacy is satisfactory but there is no comparable strategy for developing numeracy skills. The participation rates in clubs and activities are good. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum including the provision for French. The statutory requirements for pupils with special educational needs are met and pupils are well integrated into lessons. There are good and constructive links with feeder schools to maintain the continuity of pupils' learning.

Pupils are provided with good opportunities to develop self-confidence and self-esteem through community service, a school council and house activities. There are insufficient opportunities within subjects for spiritual development through reflection on pupils' own or other people's lives and beliefs.

Pupils feel safe and confident which has a positive impact on their enthusiasm, personal development and improving standards in most subjects. The school has an appropriate health and safety policy. The procedures for rewards and sanctions are effective in promoting good behaviour.

The procedures for recording and monitoring pupils' progress are good and continue to improve. Annual reports to parents give a satisfactory overview of general performance but lack sufficient detail about attainment relative to national levels and what pupils can do and understand. Generally links with parents are satisfactory but they are not as strong and supportive as at the time of the previous inspection.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher provides efficient leadership and senior management work effectively as a team. There is a good level of commitment to school objectives by most subject co-ordinators.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors take a keen and informed interest in the school's work. They take a full part in forward planning and fulfil most of their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There is effective evaluation of teaching through direct observations and reviews of the overall quality of work in subject areas.
The strategic use of resources	Overall provision for resources is satisfactory but inadequate for information technology. Lack of stability and continuity in staffing has impacted upon standards. The school achieves satisfactory value for money in the way it uses its resources.

Management structures are effective in specifying staff responsibilities. Overall planning is comprehensive and sets an appropriate context for the school's work. Monitoring procedures are having an impact on raising standards of teaching. Policy statements have not been reviewed systematically enough to give a clear educational direction in some areas. Communication and a sense of partnership with parents need to be improved.

Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through their committee structure, presentations from staff and training programmes. The governor link with subject areas is not strong. The governing body does not have its full complement of members and as such does not satisfy statutory requirements.

Most subject areas are efficiently co-ordinated and Heads of Year are effectively involved in monitoring the academic progress of pupils. The co-ordination of subjects by part-time staff causes inevitable pressure on being able to monitor work adequately.

The provision for accommodation is satisfactory and allows most areas of the curriculum to be taught effectively. The provision for IT and music is unsatisfactory. There are health and safety issues that need to be addressed in the areas of food technology and science.

Resources are generally sufficient to satisfy curriculum requirements. Most pupils have access to a textbook but often on a shared basis. The library contains a satisfactory range of material. The range and level of resources for IT, science and design and technology are unsatisfactory. The school applies the principles of best value to its financial decisions.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards of work in English, music and physical education • The quality of teaching • Children like school • The teachers are helpful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress their children are making and information about it • The variability in the amount of homework set • Behaviour in some lessons • Working relationship with the school and its management. • Range of extra-curricular activities • Lack of continuity in staffing

Inspectors agree with the positive comments of the parents. Reports to parents do not give a clear indication about attainment and lack detail on National Curriculum levels. Progress is evident in most subjects but is not sufficient in mathematics and IT across the curriculum. There is variability in the amount of homework given by some teachers. The behaviour of most pupils is good but there is a disruptive minority in Year 8. The management of the school needs to re-establish a working relationship with parents. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities which pupils actively support. The continuity of teaching has been interrupted by the need to employ new or temporary staff; the reasons have been outside the school's control.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The school takes pupils from the full range of ability but in general standards of attainment are below national expectations on entry. This is evident from pupils' test results in English and mathematics at the end of Year 4 when they leave their first schools. Standards in spelling and competence in number work are particularly weak.
2. Overall results in the 1999 National Curriculum tests for 11-year-olds, in English, mathematics and science are also below average. However attainment in English is more in line with national averages and these standards are reflected in work seen in lessons. Achievement in mathematics is well below average, which is a continuation of a trend in falling performance against the national picture for the last three years. Attainment in science is below average although in lessons there are signs of better performance at Key Stage 2. The attainment of pupils at the higher levels of these tests is significantly low for mathematics and science but is broadly similar to expectations for English. The improving trend in the school's average points score for all three subjects is broadly in line with the national picture. The attainment of boys and girls in the tests was similar for English and science but was significantly different in mathematics with the girls' performance being well below that of the boys. Over the last four years the achievement of boys in the core subjects has been close to the national average but the girls' achievement has been below. This pattern of attainment is against the national trend.
3. The overall standards of attainment for the core subjects, in comparison with similar schools, are well below average.
4. The school set itself challenging targets for the 1999 cohort of pupils. Although it failed to meet these targets in all three subjects, the school had made satisfactory progress towards meeting them given the attainment levels on entry. There was some overall improvement in attainment from that of the previous year.

Standards seen during the inspection

5. The standards seen in most subjects during the inspection are better than the test results. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations, at both key stages, in English, art, design and technology, information technology, music and physical education. Attainment in geography improves through the successive key stages to be in line with expectations by the end of Year 8. In science, history and religious education achievement at Key Stage 2 is in line with expectations but is below average at Key Stage 3. Whilst attainment is below average in French, attitudes towards the subject have improved and pupils make satisfactory progress. The standards seen in mathematics reflect the test results and are below expectations at both key stages.
6. In English, there is a wide ability range, which can be seen in pupils' written work and is evident when pupils are heard reading aloud. Most pupils have good speaking and listening skills and are adept in the use of dictionaries. Although a few pupils are unclear about how to tackle written tasks, most have a good understanding of the texts they are studying. Many pupils, however, are weak at spelling. This was a

concern expressed in the previous inspection report, and remains an area for improvement. Generally, however, pupils are making good progress in the development of their English skills.

7. Pupils do not enter the school with high standards of literacy. Fewer pupils, on average, have reached National Curriculum level 3 in reading and spelling than in other schools in the county or nationally, and fewer boys have done so in writing. Progress is made in that the numbers reaching level 4 and above at the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with national averages. This progress has been facilitated by the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. Insufficient attention is paid to correcting spelling errors in lessons other than English; for example, in a mathematics lesson using computers, numerous spelling errors on screen went unchallenged. Spelling errors in pupils' science books are often uncorrected, even when they are in key scientific vocabulary. Key words are effectively displayed on walls for some subjects, but not all. Badly written or badly presented work is too frequently seen in several areas of the curriculum. There are, however, good opportunities for pupils to read, both silently and aloud, and if more pupils can be persuaded to make use of the enhanced library facilities, progress in reading will continue to be made.
8. In mathematics, attainment in lessons is below average. There is a lack of confidence with number and computational skills at both key stages. At Key Stage 2, higher attaining pupils can multiply and divide simple and mixed fractions and calculate percentages. Lower attainers show a much narrower range of skills. They can add, subtract and multiply whole numbers, some up to three-digits, but division is less secure for many, relying on simple sharing strategies. Pupils find difficulty in translating a practical problem into its correct mathematical form. The understanding of geometrical and spatial ideas is better. Although some improvement in the development of number and algebraic skills is evident between the key stages, it is not sufficient to bring it up to expected standards.
9. Skills in basic numeracy across the school are also below national expectations. The National Numeracy Strategy is not properly in place and, as a consequence, the benefits of a structured programme of mental calculations in enhancing mathematical skills are not being realised. There is some contribution from art in developing spatial awareness and the reinforcement of measurement ideas in design and technology. In information technology lessons pupils can use computer programmes to calculate area and volume. However, a comprehensive policy on how to improve numeracy in all pupils has yet to be fully implemented.
10. In science lessons attainment is in line with the national expectations at Key Stage 2 but below them at Key Stage 3. Pupils show a good understanding of the nature of forces and the applications and effects they might have. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have studied photosynthesis and transpiration, both high level concepts for this age. The range of work in experimental science is too limited in Key Stage 2 but it is better at Key Stage 3. In most lessons there is no significant difference in the achievement girls and boys – it is more evident in examination results.
11. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress in most subjects. Pupils learn well in many lessons and make good progress in English, art, and information technology. In art, there is good development of pupils' observational skills and artistic vocabulary. In design and technology and geography, effective progress is made through the key stages. In design and technology pupils develop skills in planning research, producing working drawings and making their designs. Similarly in geography there is more

enquiry-based work through the extension of fieldwork. Progress is satisfactory and as expected in music, science and physical education. In French progress is more limited but improving. Progress is unsatisfactory in mathematics and history.

12. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in most lessons. There is a policy on how subjects should support pupils identified as having specific learning difficulties. This has led to a structured provision in some subjects, and appropriate opportunities for developmental work are given. Generally pupils with statements of educational need and those who have individual education plans make satisfactory progress over time. There are a few pupils for whom English is an additional language and there are children from travellers' families. Appropriate support is provided to enable them to integrate quickly and achieve some success in their subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good and contribute positively to standards of attainment and the quality of learning. These standards have been sustained since the previous inspection.
14. Pupils have positive attitudes toward school. They enjoy their learning experiences and like and respect their teachers. There is a high level of involvement in the various activities of the school.
15. Attendance is satisfactory with few instances of unexplained absence and almost all pupils arrive on time for the start of school.
16. Behaviour in lessons is mostly good or very good especially when teaching and activities are challenging. Pupils apply themselves conscientiously and work together co-operatively and supportively and use the learning time well. In a minority of lessons, especially when teaching and activities lack interest and challenge or where the management of pupils is inappropriate, pupils fail to exercise self-discipline and sometimes interrupt the concentration of others. This disruptive behaviour is predominately centred on the actions of a minority of boys in Year 8.
17. Behaviour outside the classroom is usually good. Pupils' conduct is mostly orderly and they are courteous and polite towards adults. Instances of bullying are rare and the number of exclusions is low.
18. Pupils' personal development is good. They learn through a range of responsibilities such as classroom tasks, the school council, community service and charity support, to take responsibility for themselves and others. In some group activities, through personal and social education and by the intervention of teachers, pupils develop satisfactory awareness of and respect for the views, values and beliefs of others and the impact on others of what they do. Pupils have some opportunities to use their initiative within their work and socially for example in community service when offering assistance and hospitality to senior citizens.
19. Pupils who have special needs show interest in their work and they are keen to learn. Very good relationships exist between support staff and pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Teaching is satisfactory or better in 92% of

lessons and in 60% of them it is good or very good.

21. Teaching has improved markedly since the last inspection. Staff training has focused effectively on raising standards of teaching and learning. There is evidence of good quality teaching in most subjects. In the very few lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is mainly due to inadequate methods for controlling behaviour, insufficient challenge and lack of subject expertise on the part of supply staff. These were features of some lessons in mathematics, physical education and information technology. On balance however, the high proportion of good and sound teaching makes a positive contribution to pupils' progress and attainment.
22. At both Key Stages 2 and 3, teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects, and they share their interests with pupils. For example, in a Year 5 art lesson on the work of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the teacher's enthusiasm and effective illustrations led pupils to enrich their own use of paint and pastels. In science, questions are well directed to extend pupils' understanding. Teachers' specialist expertise in geography promotes effective learning of basic research skills on the problems of urban growth. However, the lack of sufficient subject expertise in mathematics has had an adverse effect in developing pupils' interest and enthusiasm for the subject.
23. At Key Stage 3 teachers use their specialist knowledge to provide a broad range of contexts to help pupils use and consolidate their previous learning. In design and technology, for example, pupils were encouraged to use their knowledge of circuitry to install a simple motor on a model they had produced. Pupils are beginning to become independent learners; for example, in a Year 5 history lesson on railways in the 19th century, pupils showed informed ideas of their impact on the lives of people.
24. In general, teachers have appropriate expectations of achievement for pupils. In the better lessons, aims and objectives are clearly explained and pupils are set targets. This leads to efficient use of time, in which the lesson moves at an appropriate pace to sustain pupils' interest and keep them on task. In a Year 6 English lesson based on anthology texts, the teacher's effective organisation of group work and differentiated tasks enhanced the pupils' understanding of writing styles. In science, pupils are expected to write their own notes rather than simply copy from the textbook. In a minority of lessons, the limited range of activities leads to insufficient challenge for pupils. For example, in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, progress was slow due to the inefficient use of time being spent on reviewing a mental arithmetic test for the whole of the period.
25. Since the last inspection, subject departments and individual teachers have continued to improve the quality of documentation. Most departments have well conceived schemes of work, which are used effectively to plan lessons. However, the documentation for mathematics and history is seriously inadequate and does not provide sufficient guidance for the work in the subject area. Overall, teachers' planning is mostly good at both key stages.

26. Teaching methods and organisational strategies are good. For example, in geography the integration of skills, places and themes in all learning activities helps to provide a consistent structure for pupils' learning. In most lessons, teaching methods effectively address the different ways in which pupils learn; this is a particular feature of English and art lessons although in science there is an insufficient range of activities to challenge the higher attaining pupils. Teachers share good practice both within and across departments such as with the development of the Literacy initiative. These improved strategies serve to capture the interest, stimulate enthusiasm and increase the motivation of pupils. Most teachers effectively use revision, repetition and review to promote pupils' learning. The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy is generally satisfactory but is less consistent in numeracy because of the absence of a specific policy.
27. The good relationships between teachers and pupils promote effective learning. Teachers are keen to encourage pupils and raise self-esteem. In design and technology praise and encouragement are used well to establish confidence in the development of their skills. This type of encouragement is a feature of music and French lessons where confidence is again an important factor. Generally teachers value pupils' ideas, and establish an atmosphere in which pupils feel comfortable to volunteer ideas and ask, as well as answer, questions. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teachers who have appropriate awareness of their specific requirements.
28. Teachers mostly use time and resources well, although there is an absence of regular use of information technology in many subjects. The pace of work in lessons is generally appropriate, and sustains pupils' interest. For example, in music, the teacher changes the pace of the lesson well to maintain attention and create momentum. Teaching materials, such as written parts for those pupils who bring their own instruments, effectively promote individual interest.
29. Teachers usually assess pupils' work well. In geography, for example, pupils use self-assessments to help think about their own learning, and set targets for improvement. Work is regularly marked, and pupils are given helpful advice as to how they might improve. There is some further good practice in assessment in art and English. However, there are inconsistencies: the marking of work in mathematics and music lacks detail and is generally unsatisfactory. The work in information technology across the curriculum is inadequately assessed and monitored and does not give a clear analysis of pupils' progress. Although systems for assessment within departments are usually effective, pupils do not have a clear picture of how successfully they are developing their understanding and knowledge.
30. Homework is planned and increases pupils' ability to work independently. However, it is not consistently set and is not used effectively in history, religious education and French.
31. Teaching by the special needs support team is very good. Teachers show high levels of expertise and patience, and they vary the activities well, which maintains pupils' interest. Within their own targets, pupils who have special needs learn well. Reinforcement is the key to their learning and teachers are fully aware of this. Pupils have varied programmes of study which enable them to consolidate the skills they need.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO

PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

32. The curriculum is broad and balanced throughout the school, with a good range of subjects being taught. The expressive arts are particularly valued. Drama is taught as well as all the National Curriculum subjects and religious education, and French is taught in Years 5 and 6, as well as at Key Stage 3. All pupils in the school take French: there are currently no disapplications. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects, although there is no provision for teaching control in information and communication technology or in design and technology. The programmes of study in these subjects are covered by this aspect being taught in Year 9 through a co-operative arrangement with the upper schools.
33. Information and communication technology is taught discretely and as part of a cross-curricular pattern, but the provision is not generous, and in some subjects there is infrequent access to the designated room. The lack of computers in other classrooms means that pupils do not have many opportunities to develop their skills in this area.
34. There is a policy document for language across the curriculum, but the policy is at an early stage in its implementation. Provision for teaching literacy skills has been enhanced through the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy in Years 5 and 6. However, the extra time needed for the literacy hour means that less time is available for the teaching of French, geography and history at Key Stage 2, although some aspects of history are being taught through the study of non-fiction texts in the literacy hour. As yet, there is no specific strategy for numeracy in place and the lack of co-ordination on this issue has not given sufficient impetus to raising pupils' competence in number work.
35. There is satisfactory provision for personal, social and health education, and sex education is provided in accordance with statutory requirements. Good use is made of tutorial times for academic and personal guidance. Pupils have benefited from the visit of a life skills education bus to the school, and from other contributions from the wider community. There are constructive links with first schools and upper schools to ensure continuity of curricular provision and the avoidance of duplication.
36. Pupils benefit from a rich provision of extra-curricular activities. These include visits to theatres and museums, ice-skating trips, and charity events. Seventy per cent of pupils belong to at least one school club; the adjacent youth club building is available to Year 8 pupils at lunch times, for games and for socialising. After school activities are limited by transport restraints, although most games fixtures and performances in drama and music take place then. Over 100 current pupils have been involved in concerts. About 70 pupils have instrumental music lessons. There is also a homework club.
37. Fieldwork is provided for in geography, for each year group. Amongst trips abroad, there has been a residential visit to France.
38. Satisfactory provision is made for pupils with special educational needs and for children from travelling families. Some pupils are withdrawn from lessons for special support, but many receive support in lessons. All pupils who have special needs have full access to the whole curriculum. Withdrawals for extra help are varied as much as possible so that pupils do not miss work from the same subjects or lessons too often.
39. The school makes satisfactory provision overall for the spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development of its pupils. Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory, for moral and cultural development satisfactory and for social development good. Although the school has a brief policy statement on spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, there is little significant whole-school monitoring or reviewing of these areas of pupils' development. In consequence these issues are not systematically threaded through all subjects of the curriculum nor made explicit and reflected in all departmental planning and practice.

40. Opportunities for spiritual development are supported in the context of subjects such as English, geography and religious education. However, opportunities for spiritual development across the school are not fully developed and this leads to inconsistencies and missed opportunities to engage pupils in reflection of their own and other people's lives and beliefs. There is not a high level of awareness of the contribution that every subject can make to the spiritual development of pupils. The various assemblies deal with a wide range of topical issues and moral themes and often allow pupils to reflect on their own and other's experiences. Assembly themes are planned and co-ordinated. Pupils attend two assemblies a week and on other days time is allocated for registration periods so that pupils can be provided with a thought for the day in their tutor rooms. However, the thought for the day does not always allow time for productive reflection or worship. As at the time of the last inspection report, the school is not fully meeting the statutory requirement with regard to the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.
41. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. The school has a caring ethos that is based on mutual respect. It is expected that pupils will behave well, care for others and have a clear sense of right and wrong. The importance of shared values and morals in contemporary society are stressed in personal and social education. The work covered in religious education makes a positive contribution to the provision for moral development. Staff are good role models and promote principles which distinguish right from wrong. Assemblies and form tutor time focus on a range of moral and social issues.
42. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to develop self-confidence and self-esteem. These opportunities include serving on the school council, taking part in community service or Activities Week and participating in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils are encouraged to help each other in many subjects. They are given good opportunities to relate positively to one another and to teachers and visitors in the school. Some aspects of the personal and social education programme also develop pupils' awareness of social issues, such as bullying, parental responsibility or shoplifting, thus enhancing their all- round development.
43. The provision made for pupils to appreciate their own culture is sound and there is a range of curriculum opportunities to develop a knowledge and understanding of other cultures. In religious education, for example, pupils have the opportunity to talk with visiting speakers representing a range of different faith backgrounds. In music, pupils listen to a range of musical traditions from across the world. A current theme of weekly assemblies is looking at different countries along the Meridian Line, including Ghana, Spain and Burkina Faso. However, there is not as yet a consistent understanding of the contribution that every subject can make to the cultural development of pupils in the school.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school is a safe and caring environment where pupils can flourish. The staff are aware of the needs of all members of the school community in particular those pupils who are more vulnerable because of their special education needs. There is a wide range of outside agencies, such as the education welfare officer, who contribute to supporting the school systems. The school has an effective health and safety policy and procedures are regularly monitored. Pupils feel safe and confident which impacts positively on their enthusiasm, personal development and improving academic standards in most subjects. At breaks and lunchtime the school and play areas are monitored by duty teachers to ensure behaviour is safe and appropriate. The school's rewards and sanctions systems promote good behaviour and there were no reported incidents of bullying in the pupils' experience. Child protection arrangements comply with the procedures agreed locally and the headteacher is the named officer.
45. Assessment procedures are good and have improved since the last inspection. In-service training has focused on this issue and has brought greater consistency across the school especially in the area of pupil self-assessment. This process has been effective in making pupils more aware of how they can improve their standard of work. Teachers review pupils' strengths and weaknesses with them every half term and agree further targets for improvement. This provides pupils with a clear focus and the process effectively promotes progress. There is a process for identifying underachievers and for action to be taken to support them. Marking of pupils' work, however, is still variable but is used productively in some subject areas to encourage pupils and suggest areas for improvement. Teachers plan to the National Curriculum requirements, and in the majority of cases have synthesised the school's marking policy, with National Curriculum levels, but the school has not informed pupils and parents of the content of the levels of attainment in all subjects.
46. Pupils with special educational needs have individual education plans that are effectively monitored and assessed by teachers through the review system that identifies targets for improvement.
47. The procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' personal development are satisfactory. Sensible behaviour, good manners and respect for each other, permeate the school, preparing pupils for life as well as the academic curriculum. The school's personal and social education programme covers all aspects and challenges which pupils may experience in their everyday lives, helping them to weigh up information before they make decisions. Teaching of this programme is inconsistent, missing opportunities for pupils' personal development. Pupils show their sense of responsibility and initiative through activities such as the School Council. In addition pupils also take action themselves as seen in the 'blue card' reward earned by two pupils who organised a *Blue Peter* sale to raise money for charity; others provide a service to elderly people in the community and many carry out classroom tasks.
48. The school's arrangements for pupils' health, safety and general welfare are satisfactory. There are concerns about equipment in some departments and some areas of the school but they have been identified by the school's procedures, temporarily rendered non-hazardous, and the appropriate authority has been notified with requests for permanent remedies. The school effectively uses the services of all relevant specialist educational, health and safety agencies. Safe practices are observed in and out of school and first aid cover and medical facilities are adequate.
49. Attendance is closely monitored, encouraged and recognised and effective procedures are in place which secure the co-operation of almost all parents.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. The school's links with parents are satisfactory. Parents are well informed about the general life and work of the school by a range of reports and newsletters. Curricular information about what is to be taught is published annually. Well-attended parents meetings provide formal opportunities for consultation and the school is approachable daily for information or discussion. The pupils' annual school reports comply with requirements and provide mainly graded indicators against a range of criteria but give little description of pupils' achievements. The absence of attainment information related to National Curriculum levels and expectations for age and ability leave parent readers in some doubt about the standards a pupil has achieved and the progress made. Targets for improvement are, however, included. The homework diary is a source of information for parents as well as a means of brief two-way communication with teachers which some parents make good use of. As pupils grow older the commitment by some parents to check and sign the diaries diminishes.
51. The school has recently set up a Home School Agreement, which most parents have signed. The intention is to show how the partnership between home and school can help pupils to celebrate their strengths and identify improvements in the areas they find difficult. Every other year the school audits parents' views about the school. The school publishes a summary of their views and since the most recent survey has sought, with some success, to make improvements relevant to the concerns expressed.
52. Several parents give valuable support by assisting regularly in the classroom and with some activities. Almost all parents co-operate well regarding attendance. A few parents remove pupils from school during term time for the purpose of family holidays which interrupts the continuity of learning for the pupils concerned. Support by parents for pupils' public performances are reported to have substantially declined over recent years and the parents association has ceased operating due to insufficient support. The school intends to introduce a *Friends of School Association* to replace it. The responses to the inspection questionnaire indicated that the present arrangements for communication with and promotion of involvement by parents have only limited effect. A majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire have positive views of the school but a substantial minority expressed a range of concerns. The school is mindful of this situation and is actively seeking solutions to these concerns.
53. The liaison with parents by the special needs department is very good. Parents are contacted frequently and a record is kept of all such contacts. The findings of the inspection agree with the great majority of parents who express a high level of satisfaction with the support given to pupils.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. The headteacher provides efficient leadership with a good understanding of how the school should develop. The aims of the school provide a clear focus for its work. The headteacher has established effective management structures for promoting the school's activities. However, some policy statements have not been reviewed sufficiently systematically to ensure that they give adequate guidelines for staff, for example in the development of spiritual and moral issues. The senior management team and governors work well together in promoting common objectives. The lack of continuity in staffing has placed management pressures upon the senior management team and staff. This has impacted upon staff morale. Nevertheless, there is still a commitment to improvement and sustaining positive working relationships amongst most staff.
55. Most subject co-ordinators are effective and respond well to the responsibilities delegated to them. However the co-ordination of mathematics and history is unsatisfactory, and does not meet the good standards reflected elsewhere in the school. In this relatively small school, many staff carry dual responsibilities, and mostly this works well. The allocation of a part-time member of staff to the role of co-ordinator for both information technology and religious education means that neither subject is monitored and developed as well as it might be. Heads of year co-ordinate the work of their colleagues efficiently, and deal well with the transition into and from the school. They are increasingly involved with the monitoring of pupils' academic progress and generally this is well done. The follow-up procedures are helping to raise the standards of individual pupils. Many staff make a positive contribution to the extra-curricular work of the school.
56. The governors make a valued and supportive commitment to the life of the school. They work hard to sustain the status of the school in its local community. Formal meetings and a committee structure keep them well informed about the school's work; they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The governing body has been fully involved with reviewing the work in subject areas through a "rolling programme" of feedback sessions at their termly meetings. This programme has given them an effective overview of developments such as the introduction of the literacy initiative, and progress in information technology. The links of individual governors with subject areas is less well developed. The governors meet most of their statutory requirements, although the governing body does not have a full complement of members.
57. Financial monitoring is good. The chair of governors has an effective and central role in the formation of the draft budget. The school makes good use of the grants allocated to it for the delivery of IT and the provision of special educational needs. Within the constraints of a tight financial budget, the closer links with the priorities identified in the school development plan ensure an efficient use of resources.
58. There have been significant improvements in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance in specific areas. Teaching is now well monitored by the senior staff. The schedule of observation and reviews has had a positive effect in raising standards of teaching. The challenge for the school is to involve subject co-ordinators in this process of evaluation in a more systematic way. Most subjects are making good progress in the development of their teaching and learning styles. Effective teaching procedures are increasingly being shared between subjects. Good teamwork is a significant feature of some departments, as for example in English,

physical education and design and technology.

59. The school's development plan is a detailed document, clearly mapping out a broad range of issues and staff responsibilities to effect change. There needs to be a more focused approach to identifying specific priorities in the short term. Governors and key staff are appropriately involved in the production of the development plan. Planning by subjects is generally good with a clear indication of objectives and what resources are needed. The exceptions to this good practice are in mathematics and history.
60. The management and organisation of the provision for special educational needs is good. The governing body is appropriately involved through a designated member in the monitoring of the special educational needs department. Regular reports are produced and parents are kept informed about the special needs policy, its practice and effectiveness, through the Governors' Annual Report. The special needs provision is seen as part of a continuum that is the responsibility of the whole school. The department is well led, with the co-ordinator giving a clear lead on training. The deployment of staff is well managed and relevant files and documents are of a good quality.
61. The leadership of the school has responded well to the issues raised in the previous report. The most obvious improvement has been in the quality of teaching. There is more challenge in lessons, supported by the introduction of target setting. The implementation of the literacy initiative has been effective in raising pupils' skills and confidence. The quality of education has improved generally, particularly in French, but the provision in mathematics has deteriorated. Greater opportunities have been provided for pupils to participate in school life, such as through the house system, the school council and an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. The practice of monitoring and review is now part of the normal cycle of school work. The school has shown sound evidence that it has a satisfactory capacity and efficient management procedures in place to sustain and improve its standards still further.
62. The school applies the principles of best value to its financial decisions. The bursar is effective and efficient and financial control is good. Given the improvements in the quality of teaching, and the overall quality of education provided, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

63. In the last two years the school has experienced a significant range of staffing difficulties because of a number of long-term staff absences through illness or injury. The consequence of this has been the need to employ a greater number of supply teachers, and requiring some staff to teach a number of subjects in which they are not fully qualified. This situation has had an adverse affect on the continuity of pupils' learning and progress. The staffing provision is good in French, music, and English. In a small number of French lessons, in spite of satisfactory teaching, pupils' oral work is limited by the teacher's own lack of confidence. There are staffing constraints in mathematics because some teachers are not qualified in the subject and this impedes pupils' attainment and learning. Insufficient technician time in science gives staff less time to prepare lessons. Support for the school library is limited to ten hours. This reduces the amount of guidance pupils can be given in using the library for independent learning and their access to it except for class library periods.
64. The support for the professional development of staff is satisfactory – teachers are

regularly observed by the headteacher and given verbal or written feedback. On the basis of this feedback targets are set for further professional training. There is adequate clerical and administrative support and a satisfactory range of skills to maintain the efficient day-to-day operation of the school. Newly qualified teachers are usually appropriately supported with weekly lesson planning meetings with mentors and opportunities for lesson observation, although procedures are not fully documented and there is inconsistency in the amount of support they receive.

65. There has been some progress since the last inspection in improving the number of learning support staff and towards establishing a clearer link between staff development activities and the school development plan. However, the variable match of qualifications to the requirements of the curriculum still remains.
66. The overall quality of the school accommodation is satisfactory and allows most areas of the curriculum to be taught effectively, although there is a range of strengths and weaknesses in certain subjects. Most accommodation is well decorated, clean and in satisfactory repair. There is little evidence of vandalism or graffiti although the central quadrangle area of the school is unattractive, provides poor shelter from the rain and there is litter in the ponds.
67. Specialist or partially suited accommodation is available for most subjects. Many rooms have attractive display and, for example, in French, carpeting provides good acoustics for pupils' listening and speaking. Outdoor facilities for sports and games are good and provide a spacious environment to the rear of the school. The school hall provides a good gym for PE, but is inadequate in wet weather to provide the range of activities required by the National Curriculum. The science laboratory provides good accommodation and has been recently refurbished although not all classes can have access to it.
68. There are some weaknesses in other areas. In food technology and science there are health and safety issues in relation to cookers, storage of flammables and extraction and ventilation. In geography, mathematics and science a significant number of lessons are taught in non-specialist rooms. In music and information technology accommodation continues to be unsatisfactory. The lack of a briefing area for IT makes it difficult to teach the whole class simultaneously. Seating and benching do not match the age range of some classes – they are too high, for example, for many pupils in Years 5 and 6. In design and technology accommodation limits the size of groups and does not provide the flexibility to meet the new requirements of the National Curriculum.
69. Overall provision of resources in the school is satisfactory although additional costs to provide cover for staff absence have significantly reduced the potential budget available to provide books, materials and equipment. Most pupils have access to a textbook but often on a shared basis. In French, resources fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and provide a range of materials to meet the different levels of ability in classes. In music, resources are satisfactory but the lack of instruments from different cultures limits pupils' awareness of music from other countries. The level of resourcing in science and design and technology is unsatisfactory and has an adverse affect on the quality of learning. There are inadequate computer programs to help individual pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their spelling and literacy.
70. The school library has been relocated. It contains a satisfactory range of books to meet the age and interest range of pupils when supplemented by materials borrowed

from other sources. Its effectiveness as a resource for independent learning is reduced by its use as a classroom base. There is satisfactory provision of computers in the library, with access to the Internet and email facilities, but in most subjects little use is made of IT. Generally the resources for information technology are unsatisfactory. Although there is a range of appropriate CD-ROM and group based programmes for general use there are too few computers and a lack of large screen monitors available to pupils. The sharing of equipment restricts the amount of work covered and the rate at which pupils progress.

71. Good use is made of resources beyond the school. There is a regular planned programme of visits related to pupils' ages and curriculum requirements, to theatres and other places of interest in the local area. Geography fieldwork takes place in the vicinity and on residential visits to North Wales. Local sports centres and outdoor pursuits centres are used to extend the range of pupils' activities in physical education. In history and French a good range of visits are made to contextualise pupils' learning and to give them first hand experience.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

72. In order to raise standards the school should:

Improve standards of attainment generally but in particular mathematics by:

- Improving the quality of management in mathematics.
- Ensuring that appropriate schemes of work are in place.
- Using assessment data to identify pupils who are underachieving.
- Achieving greater consistency in teaching by more effective monitoring.
- Using the marking of work constructively to identify areas for improvement.

(Refer to paras 2, 5, 8, 11, 25, 29, 55, 59, 61, 80, 84, 85, 87)

Improve the cross-curricular teaching of IT by:

- Ensuring that staff have relevant training.
- Identifying the subject contributions to IT skills.
- Devising assessment guidelines for checking pupils' progress.
- Monitoring and evaluating the work in subject areas.

(Refer to paras 21, 28, 29, 32, 70, 101, 109, 116, 129, 130, 142)

Improve the quality of reporting to parents on progress and attainment by:

- Reviewing the quality of assessment and recording information in subjects.
- Giving a clear focus as to what pupils can do and understand, and where appropriate, relate attainment to national benchmarks.

(Refer to paras 29, 45, 50, 93, 120, 123, 142)

Improve the development of numeracy skills by:

- Identifying the subject contributions to numeracy.
- Establish a whole school numeracy policy in line with the national initiatives.
- Support staff with appropriate training.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching of numeracy.

(Refer to paras 9, 26, 34, 117)

Improve the opportunities for spiritual development, and provide a better focus for spiritual, social, moral and cultural education (SMSC) through the curriculum by:

- Giving clearer guidelines on the policy statement as to what SMSC opportunities can be developed.
- Ensuring that each subject identifies in its documentation how it will address the development of SMSC issues.
- Monitor the implementation of the action statements within subjects.
(Refer to paras 39, 40, 43)

Other issues for consideration

- Improve the communication with, and encourage involvement of parents.
(Refer to paras 51, 52)
- Ensure greater consistency in the setting of homework.
(Refer to paras 30, 154)
- Improve the match of staff expertise to curriculum requirements particularly in mathematics.
(Refer to paras 22, 63, 65, 86, 156)
- Improve the schemes of work for history and provide appropriate support for non-specialists.
(Refer to paras 25, 55, 59, 122)
- Address the resource and accommodation inadequacies for information technology and design and technology.
(Refer to paras 33, 68, 69, 101, 109, 110, 131, 142, 145)
- Act on the health and safety issues in food technology and science.
(Refer to paras 48, 68, 94, 110)
- Provide more opportunity for co-ordinators to monitor work and teaching in their subject area.
(Refer to paras 55, 132)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	11	49	32	8	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	1999 – 2000	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	293	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	37	N/A

Special educational needs	1999 – 2000	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13	N/A
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	65	N/A

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	6.0

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.5
National comparative data	0.4

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	45	43	88

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	28	29	35
	Girls	32	20	29
	Total	60	49	64
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (53)	60 (47)	74 (60)
	National	70 (64)	69 (58)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	28	32	25
	Girls	33	28	20
	Total	61	60	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (57)	69 (48)	52 (41)
	National	68 (64)	69 (64)	75 (70)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	4
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	229
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	4	1
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	4	
Other minority ethnic groups	1	

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 - Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	8.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	45

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.1
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	28
Key Stage 3	28
Key Stage 4	N/A

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	574655
Total expenditure	569656
Expenditure per pupil	2087
Balance brought forward from previous year	-3055
Balance carried forward to next year	1944

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	290
Number of questionnaires returned	61

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	49	11	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	28	49	17	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	52	20	5	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	7	46	38	6	3
The teaching is good.	16	57	12	0	15
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	10	51	28	8	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	38	46	13	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	34	49	10	0	7
The school works closely with parents.	20	46	21	8	5
The school is well led and managed.	16	49	16	12	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	43	16	7	11
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	23	43	16	7	11

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

73. Standards in English are in line with national averages, as shown by results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 and by work completed up to the end of Year 8, when pupils leave the school. The number of pupils attaining National Curriculum level 4 or above in the English tests in 1999 was close to the national average. Although the numbers reaching the higher levels in these tests vary from year to year, over the past four years the attainment levels from pupils at this school match exactly the national averages. Boys' attainment is slightly higher and girls' slightly lower than nationally. Attainment in comparison with similar schools is below average. Tests taken before entry indicate that pupils joining the school are, on average, below the county and national levels. The attainment reached by the end of Key Stage 2 therefore represents clear progress during pupils' first two years in the school.
74. Attainment in lessons, at Key Stage 2, is in line with national averages. The standard of work seen confirms the good rate of progress made in the first two years at the school. There is a wide ability range in the school, which can be seen in pupils' written work and heard when they are reading aloud. Most pupils have good speaking and listening skills: a Year 8 class, for instance, were seen discussing their class reader and making intelligent inferences about how the story might develop. They are skilled in the use of dictionaries, for example, a Year 5 class were seen enthusiastically looking up words during a literacy lesson. Although a few pupils are unclear about how to tackle written tasks, most have a good understanding of texts they are studying and are clear about spelling rules. Many pupils, however, are weak at spelling. This was noted as a concern in the previous inspection report, and it remains an area for improvement. Overall, by the end of Year 8, attainment levels are at least in line with national standards.
75. Good teaching contributes to the progress pupils make in English. Teachers have the necessary knowledge and understanding to teach the basic skills, particularly in the literacy hours, which operate in Years 5 and 6. Teachers manage their pupils well and plan their lessons carefully. Most of the pupils are taught in mixed ability classes, but this in no way hinders progress. Tasks are matched to the ability of pupils so, whether working individually or in groups, they can learn effectively. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, and will ask them to repeat a task if they feel it can be done better. They employ a good range of teaching methods, including directed reading, drama and paired or group work. They are particularly skilled at whole class teaching, and ask appropriate questions which both point up key issues for pupils to consider and help the teacher to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. The impact of this on pupil learning is evident. Pupils can be seen engaging with texts or repeating a mime activity in drama to improve their performance. They concentrate on their work, and have a sound understanding of what they are achieving. All pupils have a list of National Curriculum level descriptors in their exercise books, and regularly complete self-evaluation sheets based on these. Teachers mark work regularly and thoroughly.
76. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress, because of the

differentiated tasks they are given to do and through working in appropriate groups for reading and discussion work. They receive much help in class from learning support staff. A directed reading lesson was seen in which two groups were led by support staff and another by the class teacher, enabling all pupils to read appropriate texts and engage in discussion in a constructive way about what they had been reading.

77. Positive pupil attitudes also contribute to progress. Pupils work well in groups or in pairs, and contribute well in whole class situations, whether in volunteering ideas orally or in coming out to write on the board. Rare incidents of silliness are soon dealt with by the teacher, and occasionally by peer pressure. Most pupils show interest in the work they are doing and apply themselves well to their tasks.
78. The daily literacy hour is an effective feature of Key Stage 2 lessons; it enables rules of spelling and grammar to be drawn out from actual texts, amongst other things. But the stringent requirements of the National Literacy Strategy have restricted the time available in this key stage for other aspects of National Curriculum English, such as drama, library work and extended writing. There is a greater curriculum variety in Years 7 and 8: pupils are able, for instance, to study media forms and investigate the history of the language. There is also more opportunity for using information technology, particularly in Year 7, although provision for IT in English is weak overall.
79. The department is well led by the subject co-ordinator, and good provision is made for the professional development of the subject teachers, most of whom are not English specialists. Development planning is good, and schemes of work are detailed enough for a new teacher to teach the English syllabus in the required way. Progress has been made since the last inspection, although priorities have changed because of the National Literacy Strategy.

MATHEMATICS

80. Levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 8 are below average. In the National Curriculum tests, in 1999, at the end of Key Stage 2 the percentages of pupils reaching level 4 or above and level 5 or above were well below the national averages. This attainment is below that achieved in both English and science within the school. When these results are compared with those of similar schools, the results are well below the average. Last year boys significantly outperformed the girls. Since 1997 there has been an overall decline in attainment in National Curriculum tests in comparison with all schools but there was a slight rise in the average points gained between 1998 and 1999. Between entry to the school in 1997 and the National Curriculum tests in 1999 attainment levels have fallen. Attainment levels since the last inspection have fallen at Key Stage 2 but remained broadly the same at Key Stage 3. The cohort sizes are small and variations in individual performances can have significant effects on attainment data.
81. Pupils at both key stages show a wide variation in basic computational skills and confidence with number. Higher attaining pupils at Key Stage 2 can do calculations with decimal fractions up to four decimal places. They can multiply and divide simple and mixed fractions and calculate percentages. Lower attainers show a much narrower range of skills. They can add, subtract and multiply whole numbers, some up to three-digits, but division is less secure for many, relying on simple sharing strategies. A Year 6 class found basic subtractions and multiplication difficult and was not confident in recognising simple equivalent fractions. Insufficient use is made of the immediate application of computational skills learnt, in order to secure

understanding and confidence. The understanding of geometrical ideas is better, for example, a lower attaining set in Year 5 could describe the properties of solid shapes in terms of faces, edges and vertices. In Year 6 pupils show a good awareness of angles through the accuracy of their estimating and measuring over a wide range of examples.

82. At Key Stage 3, Year 7 pupils develop their understanding of shapes and space through the analysis of figures using a computer programme. Skills in number work improve between the key stages but remain below national standards. Some pupils in Year 8 are still finding difficulty with basic addition and subtraction problems. Higher attaining pupils show a good understanding of algebraic technique in factorising and simultaneous equations. In Year 7 pupils can convert problems into mathematical statements and some can apply a formula to calculate areas of different shapes. Pupils with special educational needs are making appropriate progress.
83. Attitudes in class are largely satisfactory and sometimes good. However, there are occasions at Key Stage 3, particularly in Year 8, when attitudes are unsatisfactory: pupils are too noisy and inattentive and do not respond readily enough to the teacher. Pupils are mostly compliant but are not given enough opportunity to show initiative. Their effort, concentration and interest are not sufficiently enthused by some lack lustre teaching.
84. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory but there are some unsatisfactory features predominately at Key Stage 3. Teachers show individual strengths in lesson planning, with clear learning objectives. In these lessons teachers convey enthusiasm, challenge pupils and make timely interventions to support them. However, this is not a sufficiently consistent feature. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are good at Key Stage 2 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3. The teaching of basic skills is mostly sound but there is insufficient provision made for their application and consolidation. Lesson plans are not evidently drawn from a scheme of work and are sometimes lacking in essential details, such as timings for each phase, which adversely affects the pace of some lessons and leaves the teacher without adequate time to summarise key points. A clear link between learning objectives and how they are to be assessed within the context of a topic is not usually made. Marking is confined largely to ticking answers, some done by pupils, with little reference to attainment levels reached in relation to the National Curriculum.
85. Leadership and management in the subject are poor. Co-ordination of the department has been adversely affected over the past two years by extended absences of successive co-ordinators. There is no long-term development plan to raise standards. The absence of a recent scheme of work hampers lesson planning and creates a lack of continuity between the key stages, where different schemes are in use. The integration of information technology into mathematics teaching is limited; pupils' skills are not developed well enough. There is insufficient use made of assessment data for both monitoring pupils' progress and curriculum planning. The correlation between teachers' assessments and the National Curriculum test scores at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 was poor. Number work predominates the mathematics curriculum at the expense of other attainment targets, such as handling data and investigative work. The National Numeracy Strategy has not been fully implemented.

86. There are eight teachers teaching mathematics, some of whom teach just one class, and not all have a qualification in mathematics, including the current co-ordinator. Two supply staff were covering absences during the inspection week. The support strategies did not cope adequately with the lack of subject expertise and the quality of work produced by pupils was low.
87. Overall, there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 2 have fallen from being in line with national standards to below. At Key Stage 3 standards remain below national levels. The quality of learning continues to be generally sound but there are instances of unsatisfactory learning at both key stages. The presentation of work has improved. The standard of teaching has remained satisfactory overall but there continue to be shortcomings in planning, pupil management and assessment. The lack of a coherent staffing structure and the current difficulties exacerbate these. Schemes of work and assessment procedures remain undeveloped. There is a shortage of suitable textbooks at Key Stage 3 and more practical equipment across both key stages. The absence of a fully costed departmental development plan is compounding the unsatisfactory provision for mathematics.

SCIENCE

88. Standards of attainment at Key Stage 2 are in line with national expectations but are below them at Key Stage 3. The number of pupils reaching level 4 and above, in the 1999 National Curriculum tests, is just below the national average but at the higher levels it is well below average. These results are better than those in mathematics within the school but below those achieved in English. In comparison with similar schools these results are well below average. There has been a decline in attainment in the tests since 1996 but it was particularly sharp last year. This was due, in large part, to a significant drop in the performance of girls in comparison with the boys, although girls in Key Stage 3 show no less commitment, motivation or interest in their written work or in lessons.
89. A small sample of lessons was observed in Key Stage 2 but the extensive and thorough coverage of the curriculum in most pupils' written work show attainment to be in line with the national average. There is little distinction in the work covered between pupils of differing attainment levels but the detail and depth varies. Pupils write their own notes rather than simply copying from given sources. Pupils show a good understanding of the nature of forces and the applications and effects they might have and applied some of their findings in an investigation into parachutes. Pupils in Year 5 have studied photosynthesis and transpiration, both high level concepts for this age. High attaining pupils in Year 6 used basic kinetic theory very effectively to explain solution, saturation and evaporation. They also show a satisfactory understanding of electric circuits but lower attainers find some difficulty in interpreting these. The wide range of end-of-topic tests covered in Year 5 and into Year 6 show the majority of pupils reaching expected standards. The range of work in genuinely investigative science is too limited and attainment in this area is below average. A profile of skills in this attainment target needs to be built up from a wide range of practical activities rather than just set pieces.

90. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is below average. Higher attaining pupils show a good understanding of the links between amplitude and loudness and frequency and pitch in their study of sound and have made a detailed study of the structures of the ear. They have been introduced to word equations and formulae to represent neutralisation reactions. In returning to topics covered in Key Stage 2, such as electricity and magnetism, pupils at this level show a better understanding of the basic principles and cover more complex work. They successfully investigated the relationship between the number of coil turns in an electro-magnet and the strength of the magnet. The coverage of the same topics at all attainment levels is over-ambitious at times and creates some difficulties for average and lower attainers. It is more common to find unfinished work and evidence of misunderstanding at these levels. Attainment in investigative science is progressing well and is broadly in line with national standards. The use of CASE (Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education) material has assisted this improvement.
91. Attitudes to learning are at least satisfactory and often good. Teachers usually establish a good rapport with their classes. Pupils are very largely co-operative and follow instructions but show an over-dependence on teachers. Most pupils acquire or consolidate practical skills and knowledge within the context of a lesson or topic. However, when asked to recall and explain earlier work it is apparent that some uncertainties and misconceptions have developed. Pupils generally work hard and produce satisfactory written work. In a Year 7 class good progress was made during an investigation into input and outcome variables through a well-structured and well-planned lesson. Objectives and procedures were clearly stated at the outset, the pace was controlled, teacher support was appropriate and time was left to summarise key findings. Concentration is generally good but is lost when an activity, practical or written, goes on too long and the momentum of the lesson is lost. In a Year 5 lesson a shortage of equipment led to groups of six working together. As a result a number of pupils were left on the fringe of the activities and began to lose interest. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress.
92. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but good at Key Stage 3. The teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject are good and are used effectively in teaching basic skills. The teaching methods used provide a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to advance their learning and make progress. Well-organised and properly resourced practical lessons seen in Year 7 enabled pupils to make good progress. Illustrations and explanations are usually clear and accompanied by a lively enthusiasm and interest from the teacher. The use of questioning at the beginning of a lesson is generally effective in focusing a class' attention on the main points of a lesson and in reviewing the pupils' recall and understanding of previous work. Whilst the key learning objectives are usually set, the planning of lessons includes too few opportunities for pupils of high attainment to extend their knowledge and understanding. There is little evidence of differentiated materials being used.
93. The homework set is largely relevant and extends pupils' understanding. A review of the schemes of work would enable cross-curricular references such as literacy and numeracy to be better incorporated more effectively into lesson planning. The use of information technology also needs to be more clearly integrated into the schemes. Marking is thorough and provides guidelines for improvement. The use of letter grades in exercise books and percentages does not inform pupils adequately enough of their performance against national levels. Effective use of assessment data held on spreadsheets is currently being made but more analysis of trends and profiles is needed. The correlation between the teachers' assessments and the test results in

the National Curriculum at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 was weak. It showed a significant underestimation of pupils' attainment levels.

94. Since the last inspection, standards have remained broadly in line with national averages at Key Stage 2 but fewer pupils are reaching the higher attainment levels. At Key Stage 3 there has been a fall in standards to below average. The quality of both teaching and learning remain satisfactory. The subject area continues to be well managed but the schemes of work and development planning now require review. Reference to shortages of equipment was made in the last report. This continues to be the case and is having an adverse effect on the teaching of some topics. Additional time for the technician would improve the management of the essential practical aspects of the curriculum. The storage of inflammable liquids is unsatisfactory and should be improved as soon as possible.

ART

95. Attainment in art at Key Stage 2 is in line with the expectations of the National Curriculum. Pupils build on their experience from the first school and have a wide range of materials to work in including textiles in Year 5. In Years 7 and 8 pupils make a good start to their Key Stage 3 experience developing their creative imagination and practical skills through the investigation of other artists' work and their own practical experiences. This brings their work in line with National Curriculum expectations in Year 8.
96. In Key Stage 2 pupils produce good observational drawings based on nature and the world around them and they make steady progress. They enrich their finished products by using a range of effective techniques and improve their drawing and painting. In Year 5 pupils study Charles Rennie Mackintosh and use his style of simplification of natural and architectural shapes to enrich their own use of paint and pastels. The wide range of artefacts and information provided by the teachers enables pupils to see how the artist's work has influenced designers of everyday items like mugs and photograph frames. Pupils use a range of simple exercises to practise and experiment with media such as pastels, and they find out how these materials can be used to affect texture and colour. Pupils were very proud when their work was used as an exemplar and shown to the rest of the class. Good questioning and discussion prompted by the teacher enables pupils to see where they might improve their work.
97. In Years 7 and 8 pupils make good progress in the development of their artistic skills. They use appropriate art, craft and design vocabulary to extend their learning, for example they are aware of the terminology to describe the influences of artists such as Henri Rousseau. Pupils used his richly coloured, meticulously detailed representation of lush jungles and wild beasts to inspire their own work which was displayed to advantage in the art room to motivate other pupils. Throughout the key stage pupils use a widening range of tools, techniques and materials to develop their awareness of pattern, texture, colour and light. They compare the way styles of artistic representation are different and as a result are more analytical about their own work. The class exercise to attempt four observational drawings in one session through a range of group work had a positive impact on most pupils' learning. They made good use of their sketchbooks for techniques and their viewing window to focus in on a specific part of their still life drawing. Both techniques enhanced the pastel outcomes and pupils were able to discuss how their work was improving.
98. Pupils with special educational needs find success in art. Their results are good and

used in classroom display alongside more able pupils. The concentration of lower attaining pupils is limited and the best results are seen where learning support assistants work with small groups of pupils ensuring they understand the new processes, enabling the teacher to maintain an overview of all pupils.

99. Pupils enjoy their artwork and are very proud of the final pieces that often go on display. Personal development is strong as honest evaluation from the teachers encourages pupils to solve problems that arise in their own work. Behaviour is generally good with the exception of the immature behaviour of some Year 8 boys who impeded the work of others by their desire to be the centre of attention.
100. The quality of teaching in art is good and better. Planning makes the widest use of the National Curriculum orders and the teachers' enthusiasm is infectious. They build on pupils' past experience and through effective feedback and assessment pupils go from strength to strength. Pupil management is good, for example when some Year 7 pupils delayed the lesson because of their immaturity the situation was quickly dealt with, making disruption minimal. Non specialist and supply teachers make good use of the co-ordinator's planning and lessons are consistent. Relationships in class are very good; teacher questioning probes pupils' understanding and they are able to learn from their mistakes. Teachers' personal skills are good and help to set the standard expected.
101. The previous report highlighted the improvement needed in accommodation. The art room is a purpose built space with specialist facilities like the kiln that enables ceramics to be taught. Unfortunately the single sink in the art room impedes work in printing and makes organisation at the end of a painting lesson difficult; the teachers deal with this problem by using a range of well-planned group work. The environment is well organised and the richness of display has a positive impact on pupils' work. Display includes the textiles and artefacts that come from other cultures so widening pupils' experience of different traditions. The department is constrained by the lack of a computer facility, which would provide the opportunity to assist with developing repeat patterns and computer generated images; this is holding back the development of art technology.
102. A specialist part-time teacher manages the department. Art is part of the design and technology group of subjects in order to cope with the constraints on time and allow the teaching of the literacy and numeracy strategy. The art room is a shared facility with science, mathematics and religious education during the first part of the week. Much effective work in literacy and numeracy occurs in art especially the opportunity to research and discuss practical work. The department has a series of clear succinct policies and schemes of work that ensure teaching by supply teachers has consistency and therefore benefits pupils' progress

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

103. Attainment in Key Stage 2 is in line with expectations of the National Curriculum. By the time pupils reach Year 8 they have had experience of two aspects of design and technology and can design and make products that meet a specific need. Pupils show improving ability to plan research and design working drawings and design ideas that promote good practical results. By the end of Year 8 pupils' attainment continues to be in line with expectations. In Year 8 pupils produce a final design and make a project to take onto their next school to help in their end of key stage assessment.
104. During Key Stage 2 pupils can brainstorm ideas and record suggestions to improve their designs. Many label their designs effectively to show how they have solved

design problems. This labelling is one of the strategies the department uses to develop literacy skills. Since the reduction of time for design and technology in Years 5 and 6 it is the application of literacy skills that is suffering. Pupils can think about the right tools and equipment to use for a task, as well as sequence an effective order of work. This was clear in the production of a key fob where pupils were able to personalise their design to make the key fob unique.

105. In Years 7 and 8 pupils strengthen their designing capabilities by developing their research skills. These projects are often homework and pupils use a range of methods to research from magazines, newspapers, encyclopaedias, the Internet and personal experience. This activity helps them to take on the views of others and enjoy the discussion about the constraints of the task as seen in pizza production: 'Flow plans' were used effectively to produce a traditional pizza base. Pupils went on to develop their own specialised pizzas such as the exotic 'Paradise pizza'. They can effectively modify and develop their ideas as work progresses and produce step by step plans of production.
106. The quality of teaching in design and technology is good and often better. Progress across the two key stages is good because of the detailed planning within the department to make full use of the design and make process. Basic skills are taught well and encourage pupils to acquire and practise new skills and understanding. Teacher planning and expectations are made clear through good demonstrations and an awareness of time and safety constraints that enhances pupils' success. Teaching methods challenge thinking; teachers build on pupils' previous experiences which gives pupils confidence to improve. Interest, concentration, perseverance and independence are demanded through purposeful tasks that have meaning. For example in Year 7 pupils constructed prototype models of vehicles before completing their final designs that ranged from a new millennium Post Office van to long sleek limousines. The desire to make the model move inspired pupils to use their electronics knowledge from science to construct a simple circuit with a motor to make their vehicle move.
107. Teachers' effective use of praise and encouragement helps pupils of lower ability to produce good quality outcomes. Many lower attaining pupils gain their greatest success in design and technology where they make good learning gains through the concrete experience of making. Teachers' assessment is good and makes an impact on learning because of the introduction of self-assessment. Self-assessment ensures pupils use the criteria for a good product when they evaluate their work at the end of the module in order to suggest future improvements. The design and technology co-ordinator keeps a record of both effort and attainment grades which will follow pupils to the upper school. Teaching has improved since the previous report, for example, the lack of challenge and expectation has clearly been addressed through the use of effective assessment. The homework set is appropriate but often not following the homework schedule because of the position of the technology lessons at the end of the week
108. Pupils' attitude to design and technology is good. They enjoy both designing and making and can see the value in trialling designs. Self-assessment and evaluation are helping pupils to identify where they gain the best results and why, so they may continue to use those skills. Personal organisation is taught in design and technology that goes on to have an impact in other subject areas. There is little need to impose discipline in lessons, as most pupils show a mature responsibility.
109. The department is well managed. It consists of two enthusiastic specialists who are keen to promote the subject as a specialism that offers a curriculum link to many

areas. For example numeracy skills are taught through the emphasis on accuracy in measuring ingredients and cutting lists. Pupils are given purposeful writing targets, enriched by practical experience and links to history and science through project work. The department lacks the opportunity and training to make full use of computers within technology and this restricts the teaching of computer control. However, this has been negotiated to be taught in Year 9 in the upper school.

110. Generally equipment in the whole department is starting to have a negative impact on learning, as the tools are often very old or inappropriate for the age of the pupils. The accommodation is not used to full capacity and, although specialist in design and layout, has many problematic health and safety features. These have been identified in a county report and the planned refurbishment requires urgent implementation.

GEOGRAPHY

111. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is below the national average. At the end of Year 8 attainment is in line with national expectations.
112. Pupils' work in Year 5 shows low levels of knowledge and understanding. Lower attaining pupils also have poor presentation skills, difficulties with spelling and the use of capital letters. Higher attaining pupils achieved good standards of work in their study of Egypt and the Nile with some very good map drawing. Good attainment was seen in a Year 6 lesson on settlement; for example, the benefits and problems of urban growth were well understood, using Luton as a local illustration. The work of some pupils remains unfinished, but handwriting and map drawing have improved over time.
113. Attainment in lessons at Key Stage 3 is in line with national expectations. In Year 8 a homework project on volcanoes stimulated a lot of interest and resulted in good standards of work. Lower attaining pupils draw well but problems with literacy and numeracy hold back their development. In addition their knowledge and understanding of geographical themes and places is weak, such as in work on the Mediterranean climate. Many pupils in Year 7 produced very good work, for example on the extended case study of an Italian town or in their work on migration in Kenya.
114. Teaching is satisfactory or better, with four out of seven lessons being good and one very good. The co-ordinator has excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject. A strength of teaching is the use of recap and review sessions at the beginning and end of lessons, when verbal questions lead pupils' thinking to link cause and effect of physical and human processes. Most pupils know geographical terms well, and can define them correctly with explanation. The integration of skills, places and themes in all teaching and learning activities is effective. On-going assessment in lessons is very good. Teachers circulate amongst pupils to help and explain concepts further. The marking of pupils' work is effective in helping them to know how to improve. A weakness in assessment is the absence of rigorous criteria and insufficient use of National Curriculum level descriptors in feedback to pupils and reporting to parents. Self-assessment and target-setting are beginning to be developed; this will enable pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning.

115. Attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good, with minor exceptions seen in Year 8. Most pupils are keen to learn, enjoy the subject, and concentrate throughout the lessons. Listening skills are good, pupils appreciate each other's contributions, and work well together. Relationships with teachers are very good, and mutual respect is evident.
116. Since the last inspection the teacher planning has improved along with more detailed schemes of work. There is a better match of work to pupils' prior attainment, but it continues to need further development; for example, there is insufficient challenge for high attaining pupils. Marking has become more informative and promotes pupils' learning. The use of fieldwork has increased, with an element for each year group and there is more enquiry-based learning. The limited use of information technology in geography has adversely affected pupils' progress in this area.
117. Leadership and management are good, with a clear written policy statement, and good planning of learning objectives. Although three non-specialists teach four lessons in Key Stage 2, the co-ordinator monitors their work well, giving guidance on content and teaching strategies. There is a good-sized main room, and resources are well organised, but now need to be up-dated. The National Literacy strategy has helped to improve the pupils' writing skills, but there are no links with mathematics or work related to numeracy.

HISTORY

118. In lessons and from the work seen, most pupils aged 11 achieve standards that are close to national expectations. Pupils make accurate use of terms concerned with the passing of time and demonstrate appropriate factual knowledge and understanding of historical periods studied, evident, for example, in their descriptions about life in Victorian Britain. The majority of pupils know that we find out about history through a variety of source materials and can find answers to questions about the past which go beyond simple observation of the evidence. Pupils in Year 5, for example, make informed judgements about how different groups of people would have reacted to the coming of the railway in the nineteenth century.
119. By the end of Year 8, most pupils' standards of attainment are below national expectations. Pupils have knowledge and understanding of an appropriate range of historical fact, situations and characters. They know that we find out about history through using a range of source material and that this must be used with care. Many pupils find it difficult to interpret historical evidence and to communicate their findings in extended pieces of writing.
120. All teaching seen was at least satisfactory, with half being good or very good. The quality of teaching has a positive impact on both pupils' attitudes and the extent of their learning. Lessons are carefully planned with clear short-term objectives. Resources and display of historical artefacts are well used to make lessons accessible to pupils. Tasks and activities are effectively planned to meet the needs of pupils at varying levels of attainment. For example, pupils studying Victorian Britain in Year 5 were enabled to develop their skills in making use of historical evidence through the careful use of questioning and encouragement. This meant that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, made good progress and showed growing confidence in their ability to handle historical sources. Insufficient use is made of the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in order to clarify what they need to do to improve.

121. Pupils' attitudes to learning are generally positive in both key stages. Most pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, show a real interest and enjoyment in their work. However, occasionally a number of pupils display weak listening skills, which result in wasted time and a slower rate of progress for the whole class. Pupils relate well to each other when working in groups and respond well to opportunities to work independently. The majority of pupils, of all levels of attainment, take care with the presentation of their work.
122. The co-ordination of history has been unsatisfactory. Schemes of work are inadequate with little structure and no indication of how key historical skills are to be taught. This means that non-specialist teachers have an insufficient understanding of how to ensure that pupils make progress in the development of these skills. Marking in exercise books is insufficiently subject specific or diagnostic. The co-ordination of the subject has been taken over by the deputy headteacher who is setting clear priorities for development. There is now a shared commitment to raising standards and better understanding of how this might be achieved.
123. There has been some progress since the last inspection. However, the department still needs to review its use of written feedback to pupils so that they know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve their work.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

124. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and at Year 8 is in line with national expectations. For a minority of pupils, who have access to similar computer software at home, their attainment is above national figures.
125. The school has strong links with the feeder schools and there is regular sharing of computer equipment. This ensures that when the pupils join the school in Year 5 they are familiar and confident with the computer suite. Pupils can create text and use simple clip art to illustrate their work. Pupils are confident to work on the keyboard with greater speed and accuracy because of the introduction of the 'typing tutor' into their course.
126. Across both key stages pupils have good regular and additional access to computers which builds their familiarity with the equipment. Pupils are encouraged to experiment which gives them confidence in problem solving. They rapidly gain knowledge and understanding about logging on and off as well as making effective use of the tool bar icons to help to modify their work by checking spelling, altering fonts and moving between programmes. Pupils use information technology (IT) in a variety of contexts. For example in religious education illustrations of the symbols of the Sikh religion were discussed in class and then recorded on a draw package with additional text added. Pupils can use IT to organise, reorganise and analyse information as seen in Year 6 where pupils worked on calculations of area and perimeter so reviewing their mathematics skills. Pupils can communicate in a variety of ways and can see the need to convert some information to make it more accessible, for example displayed in graphical form. In science pupils use older IT equipment to measure and log data from experiments.

127. Pupils with special needs generally make good progress. They see their work on screen looking neat and accurate which builds up their self-esteem. A minority of pupils cannot cope with the independence of computer use and need the individual help of a learning support assistant. It is rare to have special needs support in IT lessons.
128. In Key Stage 3 pupils have good opportunities to explore the effect of changes and model the changes by using formula within the spreadsheet application. The introduction of the Internet allows pupils to use it to research and edit information from a range of sources. Pupils are unable to clarify their exact portfolio of skills because of the lack of a “can-do” checklist, which they can add to at home or at school. Computer control and the monitoring of external events, often seen in design and technology, have been negotiated to be dealt with by the upper school.
129. The quality of teaching in the department is satisfactory to good with a minority of unsatisfactory teaching. The co-ordinator and a number of teachers on the staff are confident with the use of computers. This knowledge has a positive impact on pupils’ progress. There are however teachers on the staff who have received little personalised training to support the skills they need to gain confidence to teach IT. These teachers also find access to the IT room difficult. This year a government grant is available for training but the staff skill audit is not up to date to facilitate individuals’ needs. Teacher support in IT lessons is good but the department has a lack of equipment to enable hands-on computer use for all pupils. Every lesson pupils have to share equipment which minimises the time they have with the computer, although sharing and discussion develops their learning. A minority of pupils take little active part in the lesson and miss the opportunity to progress.
130. The use of computers in other subjects is developing but generally it is insufficient to promote pupils’ skills. In some lessons good planning and the use of challenging questions make an effective contribution to learning and pupils’ understanding of the value of computers as learning tools. Discipline is generally good and followed up. In lessons where time targets are used there is a swift pace and efficient learning but this approach is inconsistent. Assessment is in place but not monitored across the curriculum. There is no exemplar file to help teachers moderate levels of attainment in IT and although levels are used in planning, pupils and parents have limited knowledge of what constitutes a specific level and therefore parents cannot help their child to progress.
131. The IT management role is promoted well by the work of the co-ordinator but the lack of a trained technician impedes use of computers and therefore learning. Teachers will not use the room in some instances because when computers crash they lose confidence to use computers as a teaching tool. Although there have been positive changes in the arrangements for IT with the introduction of the IT suite and the library facility, the ratio of computers to pupils is below the national average and printing facilities are also difficult, therefore hindering efficient learning.
132. The co-ordinator has mostly positive support from the senior management team and governors but has had no time to take up training on co-ordination. The lack of opportunity to train impacts negatively on whole school planning. Accommodation is a further difficulty for efficient whole class teaching. The lack of a briefing area means pupils are taught at their keyboards, which distracts their concentration. In addition the lack of a large screen monitor also impinges on learning, because demonstrations are hard to set up to benefit the whole class when huddled around a single screen.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

133. Overall attainment by the end of Year 6 is below expectations. However, given the time allocation and the frequency of their lessons most pupils make good progress in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Similarly by the end of Year 8 pupils' attainment is a little below the national expectation but good progress has been sustained.
134. In Years 5 and 6 pupils listen well and show a good understanding of their teachers' instructions. These are given in French, spoken at a good pace. Pupils are confident in listening to cassettes and picking out key details. In a lesson about homes and houses, most listen to statements about which rooms members of a family are in, and accurately locate where they are, using well prepared written guidance supplied by the teacher. In speaking they carry out short dialogues of three or four questions and answers on well known topics, again within a carefully structured framework, with confidence and almost exclusively in French. Well thought out, differentiated activities for lower attainers – matching pictures to words, for example, -allow them to achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Attainment in writing is less good across the range of ability and there are inaccuracies in simple spelling, gender and agreements of adjectives. Few pupils can use a range of verbs or structures without support or prompting from the teacher.
135. By the end of Year 8 pupils describe the weather represented on flashcards with confidence, and say where they and other people live in short sentences, with two or three details. In reading, they match short texts to pictures but they continue to need written support and guidance from the teacher and the pronunciation of average and lower attainers is often anglicised.
136. Most pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. All, including pupils with special educational needs, extend their range of vocabulary, their knowledge of a wider range of topics, and their ability to understand spoken French.
137. Most teaching observed in lessons is good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers speak French for a good proportion of their lessons and, through paired work dialogues and class surveys, give their pupils regular opportunities to use French in questions and answers. Pupils usually learn well. Their attention is focused by the use of a range of equipment and resources, the visual presentation of new vocabulary, usually on the overhead projector and by attractive resources that are all ready to use and rapidly distributed. Pupils' learning is also well supported by good relationships with their teachers and individual pupils are given positive praise and support. Their progress is monitored and the different activities provided for lower attainers mean that they also progress well. Behaviour and pupils' attitudes are good, with many enjoying their French and volunteering answers.
138. In a few lessons there are some weaknesses. Time which could be better spent on practising language skills is sometimes used to draw, label or copy text or pictures. This occupies the time available but does not challenge pupils and their attitudes become passive rather than enthusiastic.
139. The teaching of French is very well managed. There is an excellent understanding of the principles of good practice. Planning is very clear and guidance well prepared. There has been a significant improvement in this area of the curriculum since the last inspection.

MUSIC

140. In Key Stage 2 standards of achievement are overall satisfactory, but a significant number of pupils achieve standards in performing which are above those expected from pupils of a similar age and ability. In Key Stage 3 pupils in Year 8 attain in line with national expectations. No lessons were observed in Year 8 due to timetable arrangements. However, inspection of lesson plans, analysis of work and discussions with pupils confirm this judgement.
141. Pupils in both key stages experience a range of musical activities. They develop good vocal and instrumental skills, which enable them to become confident as performers. Pupils in Year 5 looked at the shape of some well-known melodies as part of a unit of work on pitch. They satisfactorily identified notes that moved by step, notes that moved by leaps or those that were repeated. They created their own short ideas to represent different melodic shapes and played these successfully to each other. In Year 6, pupils understood the difference in sound between thick and thin musical textures. They sang and played *Frère Jacques*, first as a single melody and then in many parts as a round. They were able to identify the difference in texture when all the parts were sounding together. In Key Stage 3 pupils develop secure performing skills, use and understand simple notation and listen to music as a stimulus for their own compositions. Pupils in Year 7 demonstrated a good sense of rhythm, the ability to read notation and an awareness of other instrumental parts when playing the melody of *Ode To Joy*, by Beethoven. Year 8 pupils spoke about the music of Holst and Coates that they had listened to. They were able to explain how they had composed their own music to illustrate a similar theme which related to war.
142. Teaching in both key stages is good. Secure subject knowledge, good class management and detailed planning result in the quality of pupils' learning being good. Tasks are provided which enable all pupils to make good progress and suitable parts are written for those pupils who bring their own instruments to lessons. Good attention is given to teaching musical vocabulary. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils gained skills in playing different parts, in using basic chords and in rehearsing together as a member of an ensemble. The teaching of music technology is in place, but progress is being hindered by out-of-date computers. There is some inconsistency in the marking of pupils' written work. Marking often lacks detailed comments to enable pupils to judge their own progress. Pupils with special educational needs, the more musically able and travellers make good progress in lessons. Classroom assistants provide good support to individual pupils.
143. There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities and these involve over 100 pupils. The chamber choir performs at Milton Keynes shopping centre at Christmas and pupils take part in the Torchlight procession in Dunstable. There are other concerts both in and out of school; for example, a production of *Guys and Dolls*. The Musician of the Year award effectively celebrates individual achievement. These varied opportunities develop pupils' musical skills and make them more confident when performing in front of an audience. Parents provide valuable support in enabling these activities to take place. Over 70 pupils attend instrumental lessons and they achieve success in examinations. The inspection confirms the views of parents that pupils' performing skills are good.

144. Pupils have good attitudes towards the subject. They enjoy lessons and always take an active part. They are well behaved and work both co-operatively and collaboratively, when required. They are responsive to extra-curricular activities.
145. The subject co-ordinator provides effective leadership. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and pupils are often involved in their own self-assessment. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. This was highlighted as a weakness in the previous inspection report. Although the music room has been moved since then, the classroom has to be shared with other subjects. The small hall is also used, but the sound from music lessons often disturbs other classes. The resources are satisfactory overall but out-of-date computers limit learning opportunities.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

146. At both Key Stage 2 and the end of Year 8 most pupils can perform at or beyond expected levels in physical education. Good skills are evident in gymnastics and dance where many pupils across the ability range, control their body weight and show awareness of the need for body tension. At Key Stage 2, in dance lessons, pupils work very well in groups to produce extended compositions. At Key Stage 3 girls have good passing and catching skills in netball and many perform above expected levels. Boys are developing good basic skills in basketball.
147. Pupils improve their skills when teaching is flexible enough to allow them to plan and evaluate their work. When given the opportunity pupils respond with original ideas and show imagination and flair; for example in some dance and gymnastics lessons pupils' work reflects this approach. Many pupils perform weight-bearing movements such as cartwheels and handstands, These skills are effectively incorporated with rolls and balances into a composed sequence of movements. A particularly good example of dance was seen at Key Stage 2 which, besides including pupils' original ideas, was noticeable for its tension and quality. Where teaching is too teacher-dominated or where objectives are not clear, learning and progress are adversely affected. All classes are mixed and pupils of all abilities, boys and girls, work well together. Pupils with special educational needs and travellers are well integrated into lessons.
148. Since the last report there have been improvements in gymnastics and dance with a better range of movements and improved control shown by pupils. In gymnastics many pupils attend a lunchtime extra-curricular provision which helps to raise standards. Whilst pupils with special educational needs make progress in physical education, there is still a need for closer attention to their subject targets of attainment. Outside playing courts, which were in poor condition at the time of the last report, have been completely repaired and are now in very good condition.
149. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. Some teaching has good features where objectives are shared with pupils at the beginnings of lessons and there is an air of purpose and good pace. When lessons are well prepared progression is clear. Pupils use imagination to plan and prepare their work; good examples of this are to be seen in some dance lessons. When, occasionally, class control is poor pupils become restless, attention wanders and motivation is lowered. The games lessons with full sides were inappropriate; they resulted in too much inactivity and too little contact with the game by many of the pupils, particularly the less able.
150. Behaviour and attitudes to physical education are on the whole good and occasionally

very good. There is a high degree of interest in the subject and a great deal of satisfaction and enjoyment is gained. Few pupils do not participate in the lessons. When teachers require pupils to collaborate they do so easily and effectively and show consideration for one another.

151. A strong feature of physical education is the thriving extra-curricular programme provided, particularly at lunchtimes. These activities are well attended by large numbers of pupils. Several pupils have achieved good standards in inter-school competitions in games, athletics and cross-country running. A few pupils have reached county levels.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

152. In lessons and in work seen most pupils, aged 11, achieve standards that are close to the expectations of the Bedfordshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education. Pupils demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the different religions they study and what is distinctive to each. Pupils in Year 6 know and understand the symbols and artefacts associated with, for example, the start of the Sikh day. They are beginning to use subject specific vocabulary appropriately and are developing an understanding of key religious questions, such as "What is God like?" or "Why do we spoil the natural world?" Pupils with special educational needs work well to their level of ability.
153. Inspection evidence shows that, by the end of Year 8, attainment is below average in relation to that expected by the locally Agreed Syllabus. Many pupils are able to provide a picture of the different religions they study, although their knowledge and understanding lack depth. Pupils in Year 7, for example, understand some of the similarities between religions but are not sure of why these are significant. Although pupils are gaining a growing understanding of ethical issues and their impact on religious beliefs, skills in empathy and reflection and in presenting an argument to the class are below average. Pupils of differing attainment often lack the confidence to use specialist religious language accurately and systematically, particularly in discussion. There are no significant differences between boys and girls.
154. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are generally sound. Curriculum planning is satisfactory with pupils being provided with a range of tasks and activities suited to all levels of attainment. Lessons are well prepared and the enthusiasm with which topics are taught largely succeeds in motivating and challenging pupils. The use of artefacts, visiting speakers and information technology enables pupils to develop positive attitudes towards religious education and helps them to learn. Pupils in Year 6, for example, gained knowledge and understanding of the Sikh religion through using computer programmes in the information technology room. Teachers do not use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and carry it forward. Teachers generally work hard to establish clear expectations of how to behave and most pupils respond by being attentive and co-operating sensibly. A small minority of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3, are easily distracted and unwilling to listen to contributions from the class. This has a negative impact on the development of pupils' skills in reflection and empathy. Insufficient use is made of homework to develop and carry forward classroom learning.
155. Pupils' attitudes towards religious education are largely satisfactory. However, a significant minority of pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3, demonstrate weak listening

skills, particularly when they are engaged in classroom discussion. Pupils relate well to each other when working in groups and generally take good care with the presentation of their work. Pupils' behaviour is normally satisfactory.

156. The acting teacher in charge of religious education is a non-specialist who also co-ordinates information technology. He is currently on a part-time contract. Although day-to day management of the subject is satisfactory, there is little time to develop the department or take its work forward. Schemes of work are good and follow the locally agreed syllabus. Statutory requirements to provide religious education for all pupils are met. Good use is made of religious artefacts and visiting speakers to stimulate and enrich pupils' understanding. Assessment needs to more clearly identify individual pupils' strengths and weaknesses and set targets for improvement. The department would benefit from the opportunity to observe or receive training from specialist teachers in order to focus lessons more effectively on the two attainment targets in religious education. The time allocation for the subject is satisfactory. Religious education makes a positive contribution towards pupils' spiritual and moral development.