

INSPECTION REPORT

Alameda Middle School
Amphill

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique Reference Number: 109680

Inspection Number: 184792

Headteacher: M.L. Meakin

Reporting inspector: Denis F Pittman

Date of inspection: 6th December 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 708034

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

Type of control: County

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Station Road
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Appropriate authority: Alameda Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. E.J. Sankey
[where appropriate]

Date of previous inspection: May 1995

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MAIN FINDINGS

What the school does well

- The introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies has improved achievement generally through Key Stage 2.
- Teaching across the school is good.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to their work, and this promotes their learning in many subjects.
- The provision for special education needs is good for the majority of pupils and these pupils make good progress overall.
- Standards in music are good - there are many examples of high level musical performance.
- Effective links with other schools ensures good continuity in pupils' education.

Where the school has weaknesses

- I. Higher attaining pupils are underachieving, particularly in science, French and art.
- II. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching and curriculum provision by the headteacher senior staff and governors.
- III. The school does not meet statutory requirements in the following areas: teaching information technology at Key Stage 3; the appraisal of staff; providing a daily Act of Collective Worship.

On balance the school has relatively more strengths than weaknesses and gives satisfactory value for money. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified during the inspection are to be addressed. The plan will be sent to all parents and guardians of pupils at the school.

How the school has improved since the last inspection

The school has made some progress in tackling the issues identified in the last inspection - but others remain unresolved. The quality of teaching is now a strength of the school, and is particularly good at Key Stage 2. Lesson planning has improved, specifically in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Development planning procedures for departments are more uniform, but plans lack sufficient detail as to how they are to be carried out and evaluated. A review of the curriculum at Key Stage 2 has been successfully undertaken to address the issues of literacy and numeracy. There is now better continuity for religious education. However, the rotation of lessons for art remains and these arrangements still have an adverse affect on pupils' progress. The provision for information technology has not been improved sufficiently. The school still does not comply with the statutory requirement for a daily act of Collective Worship. The quality of after school activities in sport has generally deteriorated. Achievement in English and mathematics has improved significantly- pupils are increasingly confident in the use of literacy and numeracy skills in other areas of the curriculum. Musical achievement continues to improve as have pupils' skills and competencies in design and technology.

There have been significant improvements in the quality of the accommodation, specifically in specialist areas such as science and design and technology. This enhanced provision now provides a high quality learning environment to develop pupils' skills and understanding. The role and responsibilities of curriculum co-ordinators have been clarified but they do not have precise enough job specifications to monitor accountability effectively.

The school has detailed and effective assessment systems to identify the abilities and potential of individual pupils. Some subject areas are beginning to use this data well to set targets for pupils. Given the recent changes in management, and the overall commitment of the staff, the school is satisfactorily placed to meet its objectives, and has the capacity to make the necessary improvements.

Standards in subjects

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

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

The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. The comparison above is made with other schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals.

Pupils get better results in English and mathematics than in science. Inspection evidence shows that attainment in English, mathematics, history, geography and music is above average at the end of Years 6 and 8. Pupils' attainment is in line with national averages for science, design and technology, physical education and French at both key stages. Pupils' attainment in art is below average at the end Key Stage 2, but improves to become in line with expectations by the end of Year 8. In information technology attainment is above the national average at Key Stage 2, but falls to below average at the end of Year 8. Pupils' attainment, in comparison with similar schools, is in line with the average for English and mathematics, but is below average for science.

Quality of teaching

	Overall quality	Most effective in:	Least effective in:
Years 5 – 6	Good	English, mathematics, information technology, music, religious education	
Years 7 – 8	Good	Design and technology, music and religious education	Information technology across the curriculum
English	Good		
Mathematics	Good		

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 98% of lessons seen; an improvement since the last inspection. In 60% of the lessons teaching is good or better, with a higher proportion at Key Stage 2. In 22% of lessons it is excellent or very good at Key Stage 2. There is small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in English and mathematics.

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

Other aspects of the school

Aspect	Comment
Behaviour	Good: pupils behave well in and around the school. There has been a low level of exclusion in recent years.
Attendance	Very good: well above the national average
Ethos*	Satisfactory: generally a positive climate around the school. High levels of pupil involvement with activities when given the opportunity. Relationships are usually supportive but strategies for dealing with bullying are sometimes ineffective.
Leadership and management	Satisfactory overall, but with some weaknesses. Headteacher shows high level of commitment but general communication is not open enough. Efficient administrative systems; monitoring and evaluation of policies are unsatisfactory. Governors supportive; insufficient direct monitoring of the
Curriculum	Satisfactory: a broad and balanced curriculum enhanced by very good extra-curricular opportunities for music, but poor provision in sport.
Pupils with special educational needs	Provision is good. Pupils make good progress in the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.
Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development	Satisfactory overall: the moral development of pupils is good.
Staffing, resources and accommodation	Satisfactory: staff expertise and experience are appropriate, insufficient subject specialists in art. Resources are generally adequate, but lacking in information technology. Accommodation improved, particularly for design and technology, but problems remain for the siting of computers.
Value for money	Satisfactory: effective use is made of limited resources.

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

The parents' views of the school

What most parents like about the school

- IV. Good standards are attained in music.
- V. Good links with the First schools enable their children to settle into the school quickly.
- VI. Higher attaining pupils are given challenging work in some subjects such as mathematics.
- VII. Children are well behaved.
- VIII. It is a happy place and children enjoy coming to school.

What some parents are not happy about

- IX. The lack of communication about what children
- X. Incidents of bullying are not acknowledged, or
- XI. Some parents found it hard to approach the encouraged to take an active part.
- XII. Homework is inconsistently set, and not checked
- XIII. Insufficient extra curricular provision in

Inspectors agree with many of the points raised by parents. Overall inspection evidence confirms the positive comments made by parents about performance in music and the good progress made by high attaining pupils in mathematics, although this was not found to be the case in other subjects. Children enjoy coming to school and feel good about the relationships formed there. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Although concerns were expressed at the parents meeting about the quality of the SEN provision, inspection evidence shows that most pupils with SEN are making good progress. However, parents have legitimate concerns about the need for open communication on SEN and other issues and to keep them better informed on their children's progress and well being. Some parents were also dissatisfied with the amount of homework set. Whilst the school has a clear policy on homework there are inconsistencies in the way this is put into practice in some classes. The number of reports for Years 5 and 6 has been increased so that there is an interim review on progress halfway through the year. There is an absence of a range of extra-curricular activities in sport. The school provides informative newsletters and good quality reports for pupils but bullying is not always adequately dealt with.

KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION

To further raise the standards of work, and the quality of learning, governors and senior managers should take the following action.

Improve standards of attainment by:

- XIV. identifying higher-attaining pupils who are under-achieving, establish clear targets, and introduce appropriate teaching strategies to raise their performance. (*Paragraphs: 13, 15, 29, 49, 58, 72, 112, 115, 151*)
- XV. introducing a mentoring programme, (*Paragraph: 58*)
- XVI. improving challenge and matching work to pupils' abilities, (*Paragraphs: 12, 29, 112, 113, 120, 145, 151, 152*)

Improve monitoring and evaluation by:

- XVII. ensuring that governors introduce effective processes for school evaluation, (*Paragraphs: 70, 73, 75*)
- XVIII. introducing a schedule of monitoring by the headteacher and senior management, (*Paragraphs: 18, 70, 71, 75*)
- XIX. ensuring that the work of departments and teaching is monitored by subject co-ordinators, (*Paragraphs: 72, 73, 100, 109, 117, 155*)
- XX. providing training for staff on monitoring and giving feedback. (*Paragraphs: 72, 85, 109, 155*)

Improve the provision for information technology by:

- XXI. providing planned schemes of work for Key Stage 3, (*Paragraphs: 37, 70, 144, 148*)
- XXII. providing the opportunity to teach the programme of study at Key Stage 3 either as separate lessons or through the rest of the curriculum, (*Paragraphs: 37, 116, 140*)
- XXIII. improving resources and teachers' subject knowledge, (*Paragraphs: 26, 45, 81, 85, 88, 105, 136*)
- XXIV. increasing the use of ICT in all subject areas. (*Paragraphs: 12, 44, 104, 149*)

In addition to the key issues above the following points should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- XXV. monitor and improve the quality of the provision and leadership of physical education; review the range of extra-curricular activities in sport, (*Paragraphs: 30, 40, 42, 72, 162, 168, 169*)
- XXVI. provide more open communication with staff and parents to improve strategies for dealing with bullying and concerns about issues such as special educational needs. (*Paragraphs: 18, 61, 64, 66, 69, 71*)
- XXVII. review the roles and responsibilities of heads of year to provide greater continuity in the pastoral care of pupils, (*Paragraph: 61*)
- XXVIII. re-establish appraisal procedures for teaching staff (*Paragraphs: 70, 78*)
- XXIX. restructure the equal opportunities policy and in particular improve the provision for multicultural education, (*Paragraphs: 41, 55, 56, 72*)
- XXX. evaluate the effectiveness of the rotation of lessons for design and technology and art; improve the provision for art at Key Stage 2, (*Paragraphs: 36, 38, 72, 75, 87, 89, 118, 121, 123*)
- XXXI. improve accommodation issues relating to general storage particularly for music and the siting of an IT suite, (*Paragraphs: 80, 149, 161*)
- XXXII. ensure that the provision for Collective Worship meets with statutory requirements. (*Paragraphs: 52, 56, 70, 75*)

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the school

1. Alameda is an above average sized, mixed county middle school catering for 497 pupils aged from 9 to 13, in 18 classes. It is situated in the Georgian market town of Ampthill. Although pupils are drawn from a variety of socio-economic conditions it is a predominately middle-class area. The school is oversubscribed. Most join from three contributory first schools, two in Ampthill and the other in Maulden.
2. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, at about 6%, is well below the national average – these numbers are in line with the figures of the last inspection. There are very few pupils who come from homes where English is not the first language.
3. Attainment on entry for most pupils is above the national average for children of this age. Tests on entry indicate that standards in mathematics, reading, writing and spelling are above average. Eighty-eight pupils are on the school's register for special education needs, mostly at the lower stages. This is below the national average. There are fifteen pupils with statements of special educational need. The main categories of need are specifically learning difficulties such as dyslexia and moderate learning difficulties.

The educational aims of the school are to:

- help pupils develop lively inquiring minds, the ability to question and argue rationally and apply themselves to task in physical skills,
- help pupils to acquire knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment in an ever-changing world,
- help pupils to use language and number effectively, to provide a safety net of support and guidance for any pupil whose learning is disadvantaged,
- instil respect for religious and moral values and tolerance for other races, religions and ways of life,
- instil in pupils respect for the environment,
- help pupils to appreciate human achievement and aspirations.

The school has identified specific targets for the core subjects of English and mathematics in the year 2000 – the proportion of pupils reaching level 4 to be 86% in English and 80% in mathematics.

· **Key indicators**

Attainment at Key Stage 2¹

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 1 for latest reporting year:	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	60	61	121

· National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	49	49	54
	Girls	55	48	52
	Total	104	97	106
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	86(75)	80(72)	87(77)
	National	73(65)	72(59)	83(69)

· Teacher Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Number of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	Boys	38	40	45
	Girls	50	43	44
	Total	88	83	89
Percentage at NC Level 4 or above	School	73(72)	69(66)	74(67)
	National	68(65)	69(65)	75(72)

· **Attendance**

Percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year:			%
	Authorised	School	4.5
	Absence	National comparative data	8.6
	Unauthorised	School	0
	Absence	National comparative data	1.1

· **Exclusions**

Number of exclusions of pupils (of statutory school age) during the previous year:		Number
	Fixed period	4
	Permanent	0

· **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:		%
	Very good or better	22
	Satisfactory or better	98
	Less than satisfactory	2

.....
1

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

PART A: ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Attainment and progress

1. Attainment, at the time of the last inspection was above the national average, and this has been maintained. Inspection evidence indicates that overall attainment is above the national expectation at Year 6, and is above the average expected for pupils at the end of Year 8 when they leave the school. In the 1999 national curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, the standards achieved were above the national average for English and mathematics and in line for science. The school's test results over the last three years have shown a consistent pattern of improvement. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls in these subjects. The schools' targets for literacy and numeracy have been well met and are well matched to pupils' abilities.
2. In national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, attainment in English at level 4 was well above average and at level 5 it was above national figures. In mathematics, attainment at level 4 was above average, but for the higher levels it was well above the national norm. In science, attainment at level 4 was above national averages but at level 5 was more in line with the national norm. The figures for 1999 show an improving trend of attainment in particular for boys' attainment in English. When compared to similar schools, the results for English and mathematics are in line with these schools but are below average for science. As a whole attainment at Key Stage 2 is average when compared to similar schools.
3. Pupils' overall attainment on entry to the school is above average. When they leave the school at the end of Year 8 pupils' levels of achievement have been sustained when compared to pupils of a similar age.
4. In English, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is above average. By the end of this key stage, the majority are fluent speakers, can listen attentively to the teacher and each other and are able to answer questions readily. Most pupils can read well and comprehension is good. The range of attainment in writing is wider although technical accuracy is generally sound. Attainment by the end of Year 8 is also above average for pupils of this age. They are able to undertake reading for research, and to write in a wide variety of forms. The higher attainers are able to adapt their style appropriately. Progress in Key Stage 2 is good and is always at least satisfactory in Key Stage 3. There are clear improvements in reading, handwriting, speaking and listening but pupils have limited experience of formal styles of writing. Discussion is of a high standard in all subjects, and teachers actively encourage and develop these skills in lessons. Good standards of reading help pupils to make progress in the other subjects.
5. In mathematics, attainment in lessons and in pupils' previous work is above the national average by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils use number correctly in practical situations, and can understand and use decimals and fractions. They accurately collect data and use it to construct graphs appropriately. The majority of pupils have learned to use mathematical language correctly. Attainment at the end of Year 8 is also above average. Most pupils have begun to generalise results, with higher attaining pupils solving simple algebraic equations. Progress at Key Stage 2 is good and sound at Key Stage 3. The reinforcement of number facts and application of numeracy skills helps promote confidence among pupils. They have developed relevant investigative techniques for interpreting problems, and show good skills in presenting their results.
6. In science, attainment is in line with expectations at both key stages. Pupils have an understanding of how to conduct fair experiments, and can collect and interpret data. They know about the effects of forces and why objects float and the differences between materials that have lived and not lived. By the end of Year 8 most pupils can plan, carry out and analyse their own investigations. The progress made by pupils of all levels of attainment, in both key stages, is satisfactory.

7. There have been continuous improvements in the standards attained in literacy and numeracy since the last inspection. Pupils have good opportunities for speaking and listening. Discussion is of a high standard in all subjects and teachers actively encourage and develop this skill in lessons. Good standards of reading help pupils to make good progress in history, geography and religious education. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are confident in the use of subject specific vocabulary in their written work.
8. Pupils have a good understanding of number concepts. This ability with number is reflected in their science work where they accurately perform numerical calculations. In geography pupils are able to organise data effectively and illustrate it in a range of statistical graphs such as bar and pie charts. Pupils measure accurately and use their graphical skills well in design and technology.
9. Attainment in information technology is above average at the end of Key Stage 2, but is below average at the end of Year 8. By the end of Year 6 pupils can switch on computers, select programs, retrieve previous work, save and print. Attainment in IT lessons is good compared with national figures. However, there is insufficient attention given to the development of IT competencies at Key Stage 3 in other subjects, and as a result, pupils make unsatisfactory progress in the development of their individual skills.
10. Attainment in history, geography, music and religious education is above national averages by the end of Key Stage 2. This level of performance continues to the end of Year 8. Overall, rates of progress are good in history, geography and religious education at Key Stage 2. Progress is satisfactory for all three subjects at Key Stage 3 but in music it is very good at both key stages. Attainment is in line with national expectations in design technology, modern foreign languages and physical education. At both key stages progress in these subjects is good apart from in foreign languages where it is in line with expectations. Attainment in art is below national expectations at Key Stage 2 but improves at Key Stage 3. Progress in the subject follows a similar pattern of improvement.
11. Pupils with special educational needs always make satisfactory progress. In lessons, where they receive support and where learning materials have been adapted to their need, they make good progress. Generally pupils with statements of special educational need and those who have IEP's make good progress over time. Pupils make very good progress in withdrawal lessons. Pupils with specific learning difficulties make better progress than pupils with behavioural problems.
12. Standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science have been sustained since the last inspection. There has been a general trend of improvement in the National Curriculum tests. The improvement in numeracy is particularly significant. In other subjects standards have been at least maintained apart from in art at Key Stage 2. Standards of attainment in information technology are not as good as previously at Key Stage 3.
15. **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**
13. Overall, pupils have positive attitudes to their work and behave well in lessons and at other times. Their personal development is hindered by the inconsistency of opportunities which are offered, for example in the range of extra-curricular work.
14. Pupils' attitudes to work at both key stages are very good. They show interest and are keen to develop their knowledge and skills. Most pupils show a commitment to learning. They enjoy their lessons. Pupils have well developed listening skills and are keen to be involved in class discussions. Homework is generally completed conscientiously. In history and geography pupils take pride in their work and respond well to intellectual challenge. Self-discipline is good, especially in music.
15. Behaviour in lessons and at other times in the school is good. Movement around the school is orderly and civilised. Pupils are polite and courteous. They are friendly and helpful and show respect for adults and

visitors to the school. There are too many incidents of bullying reported by children especially at Key Stage 3. There are inconsistencies in the manner in which staff handle these matters. Parents are rightly concerned that there are some bullying incidents, which are not adequately dealt with. For example, some pupils with special educational needs report name calling and bullying by peers; there are instances where they are not well accepted by other pupils.

16. No pupils have been permanently excluded but there has been the occasional incident of physical violence necessitating the suspension of a pupil for a few days.

17. Relationships in the school are generally good. Pupils show respect for their teachers and other staff in the school. They respond very well to opportunities for collaborative work. They demonstrate a willingness to share ideas and beliefs with sensitivity; this is evident in religious education and some personal, health and social education discussions. In physical education pupils show respect for others' strengths and weaknesses.

18. Personal development of pupils is satisfactory. Generally there are too few opportunities for pupils to take initiative and demonstrate responsibility. They make responsible choices of which musical instruments to play and treat them with care. Pupils support charities through their own efforts by running cake or bring-and-buy stalls. Year 8 pupils provide effective help in the library every day, taking it in turns to undertake a morning or afternoon shift. The lunchtime reading club, where older pupils help younger, less able readers, is an excellent example of how pupils are capable of mutual support and encouragement.

19. Good standards of behaviour and very good attitudes have been maintained since the last inspection. However, few strategies have been adopted to enable pupils to develop as members of a community.

22. **Attendance**

20. The levels of attendance for the school are very good in all year groups. The attendance rate is well above the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence is below the national average. Pupils arrive punctually at school and get to lessons on time.

21. Good standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED

24. **Teaching**

22. Teaching is a strength of the school. It was good in three out five lessons seen and very good in over one in five. Almost all lessons (98%) are satisfactory and only a small proportion of teaching has weaknesses. Teaching is broadly consistent in both key stages, although a higher proportion of very good teaching occurs at Key Stage 2. This is a reversal of the position from the previous inspection. The change is partly attributable to the effective introduction of the national strategies to improve literacy and numeracy.

23. A number of features contribute to the better teaching. Classroom control is very good and encouragement is used well to motivate pupils. Time in lessons is used well and pupils' learning usually proceeds at a brisk pace. Resources are effectively used to promote pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge, particularly in English, mathematics, religious education, music,

and design technology. However, in French there is a lack of confidence amongst some non-specialists. Teachers' knowledge and skill in aspects of information technology are widely variable, but are generally satisfactory. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in English, mathematics and personal development lessons is typified by inadequate planning to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities, and too much teacher direction. In these situations pupils do not sustain their interest and this leads to insufficient progress.

24. Teaching and non-teaching staff share expertise and support each other well. Classroom assistants and parent helpers make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning by working well with teachers. Teaching generally meets the needs of pupils in all subjects. In particular, the needs of pupils with special educational need (SEN) are well met through English lessons and in withdrawal groups. The awareness of SEN issues is satisfactory for most teachers. Staff are aware of the educational plans for pupils with special needs and some teachers have been involved in the setting of targets for these pupils. Currently there are only literacy and behaviour educational plans. There is some very good individual and small group teaching where pupils are appropriately challenged whilst encouraging and developing self-esteem. Support staff are effective; they know pupils well and understand when to be involved and when to stand back.

25. There is good planning through effective teaching schemes in most subjects. These successfully focus on covering work connected with literacy and numeracy, the National Curriculum requirements and religious education. The teaching programme for physical education is unsatisfactory and leads to limited learning opportunities. However, detailed planning is an effective feature of most lessons. Lesson plans generally provide a clear purpose and focus for pupils' activities such as in mathematics and English. In history these plans can become over prescriptive and give insufficient opportunities for pupils to learn independently. There is a lack of variety in learning materials in science lessons to accommodate different ranges of ability.
26. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance. In music they are set challenging tasks through a wide range of activities. For example in Year 8, pupils working on the opening to "Finlandia" produced high quality interpretations from graphic scores and sensitively dealt with musical texture and tone. Groups played these interpretations to high level of competence on a variety of instruments. There are high expectations of performance in English and religious education. However, in science and French, there is insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils.
27. Most teachers make effective use of a wide range of control and classroom management strategies. The positive relationships most staff have with pupils creates a good learning environment. Humour and a sense of fun is used to good effect by teachers in music and physical education to create a climate of trust. However, in some lessons for physical education and geography, there is insufficient range of activity to motivate and sustain pupils' interest.
28. The active involvement of pupils helps to sustain interest. For example, in a Year 7 art class the construction of coil pots in ceramics showed good skill levels and understanding of the material. Similarly in design technology pupils from the same year group showed a good understanding about shell and frame structures and used these ideas for designing a "white knuckle ride" for a marble. A good feature of some lessons is to use pupils to explain their ideas to the remainder of the class; this helps understanding and promotes confidence.
29. Most teachers provide challenging opportunities and use resources well. For example, in science pupils are able to suggest reasons why a boat made of dense material floats by thinking about the effect of forces on a large area. In information and communication technology at Key Stage 2 pupils were able to master a drawing program effectively, being able to create shapes and move them whilst changing colours and orientation. Pupils are encouraged to use the library facilities to support their own independent work. This is particularly effective in history, religious education, and music. In English pupils are given demanding texts to develop their competence in reading and understanding. Some teachers plan for a summary or review session at the end of the lesson. This practice is effective in mathematics.
30. The day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory in most subjects, but assessment procedures are insufficiently developed in science and physical education. Pupils' progress is effectively assessed in English, mathematics, history, and geography. The marking of pupils' work is mostly up to date, and written comments are given to promote pupils' learning. In general, written comments are constructive and help pupils improve the quality of their work. Verbal praise, which motivates and sustains pupils' interest, is used well. Homework, where it is regularly given, is well focussed, involves research and is improving standards. Sometimes, the schedule of homework is not adhered to by staff and this puts unnecessary pressure on pupils to complete set work.
31. The general standard of teaching has improved since the last inspection and there is now a greater emphasis on adding variety to teaching methods.
34. **The curriculum and assessment**
32. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, with a number of good features and some weaknesses. Since the previous inspection the teaching time of the school week has been increased to 25 hours. This is a little

longer than the recommended time for both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. The structure of the school day, with five one-hour lessons gives the school flexibility in planning the lessons for the national numeracy and literacy strategies; these lessons have been included successfully.

33. At Key Stage 2 there is sufficient time to teach the required subjects of English, mathematics and science, and a range of additional subjects that give pupils a wide experience of cultural and practical subjects. The inclusion of French from Year 5 gives additional breadth to the curriculum. Information technology is taught in separate lessons and is planned to cover the basic skills effectively. Pupils are given opportunities to develop creative skills in music. The time allowed for art has been increased since the previous inspection, but is still too low to adequately sustain pupils' progress in the subject.
34. At Key Stage 3 the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education. Most subjects have the requisite amount of time to teach them. A weakness exists in information technology, which is taught through other subjects rather than in separate lessons. There is no effective system for checking what each pupil has covered across the curriculum, so it is not possible to be sure that the full range of skills is covered. In some subjects, such as science, information technology is rarely used, so that the requirements of the National Curriculum are not fully met in these subjects. For example, pupils have no opportunity to use computers in science to collect data such as temperature changes in the course of an experiment.
35. In both key stages the practical subjects of design and technology and art are taught in blocks of time on a rotation. This leads to long gaps between blocks of art lessons for some pupils, and since the time allowed for art is so little, the gap may be nearly a year for some pupils. The inclusion of dance or drama in the rotation increases the problem by extending the cycle of lessons. At Key Stage 3 the arrangement is better because more time is allowed for art but each block is too short for pupils to complete long projects successfully.
36. There is an effective programme of personal and health education for all years. This deals appropriately with sensitive subjects such as bullying, sex education and the misuse of drugs. Religious education is taught throughout the school and meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when too little time was allowed for the teaching of religious education.
37. There are appropriate teaching schemes that fully cover the requirements for the National Curriculum programmes of study except for elements of information technology in science, music and mathematics. There is insufficient gymnastics in physical education.
38. The curriculum is accessible to all pupils. However, the policy for equality of opportunity is unsatisfactory. For example, there is too little emphasis on multicultural education, which is a weakness in many subjects. In addition, teachers are not reminded to encourage girls to take a full part in oral lessons. The curriculum provision is good for pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are taught effectively in mathematics and French sets, through in small withdrawal groups and with classroom support. Pupils appreciate the help they are given from support in classes and when they are withdrawn from lessons. Generally the annual statutory reviews and reviews of educational plans are appropriately carried out as required.
39. There are many musical activities, choirs and instrumental groups and these are of a high standard. However, other extra-curricular activities, particularly competitive sports, are a weakness. The number and range of sporting activities are lower than expected although there is an exception with a thriving karate club. There are fewer than expected clubs associated with subjects; this was commented on by parents. Pupils said they would like more opportunities to play in competitive team games such as hockey. Approximately ten per cent of pupils and four teachers are involved in extra-curricular sporting activities. In the first three months of the autumn term there were only two sporting fixtures.
40. The school's assessment and recording policy sets out principles briefly and clearly; departments are expected to produce their own more detailed policies in line with this guidance. The school policy also includes guidelines on marking for departments to follow.

41. Most subject departments follow the school assessment policy. Arrangements for assessment and recording are effective in most departments, except for information technology. There is regular formal assessment in English and mathematics and outcomes are carefully recorded; in the humanities subjects (geography, history and religious education) procedures are clear and well organised. In science record keeping is inconsistent; the recording of pupils work in information technology is inadequate and does not demonstrate that the required elements have been covered. The links with schools, who send their pupils to Alameda, are good. These contacts usefully inform the work of several departments, as for example, in French, history and physical education. This effective liaison also helps to ensure that pupils' attainment and progress can be better tracked as they transfer from lower to middle to upper school.
42. The comparison of standards in assessment is not uniformly well handled. In English there is regular reviews at Key Stage 2 to improve consistency of grading but as yet none in Key Stage 3. In information technology the standards applied are not well understood by most teachers. In design and technology assessment practice is improving so that teachers are now more aware of the criteria they should use.
43. The effective use of self-assessment by pupils is becoming more widespread. It helps them to reflect on and evaluate their own performance. This practice is developing quite well in information technology and is well established in English, in the assessment of speaking and listening.
44. Within subject departments there is some good use of the results of assessment to inform teachers' planning. In French and mathematics, for example, these are well used to place pupils in appropriate groups according to their ability. In English, analysis of the results of national tests, at the end of Key Stage 2, has led the department to place greater emphasis in its planning for the improvement of the quality of writing. In other departments, however, less has been done.
45. A significant and effective development has been the school's involvement in the formal testing of pupils' ability and potential in a nationally recognised scheme. Assessments are made at the beginning of Year 5 and again before the end of Year 8 in mathematics, reading and science. Pupils' attitudes towards their studies are also surveyed. At the end of this school year the first group of pupils will have been through the complete process. The results show progress in specific and relative terms. In the course of the programme the headteacher has assembled useful information to help identify the potential for achievement for groups and individuals. Some data has been effective in analysing boys' and girls' achievement and in identifying strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment in mathematics.
46. Subject departments now have access to detailed information on individual pupils and their attainment. Guidance is available to them on how to interpret the data. So far, however, they have made little use of it, except in mathematics, where it has been used to evaluate the progress of groups and individuals and to set targets for them.
47. In the last inspection report there was mention of the variability of practice in marking, despite the existence of a marking policy. This criticism is still valid since there are inconsistencies of marking in some subjects, as for example in mathematics. Significant progress has been made in developing a system for the analysis of pupils' results from when they join the school until the end of Year 8. The school is now very well placed to take the necessary next steps in making full use of the information that has been so carefully assembled.

50. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

48. The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Provision for moral development is good.
49. There is no planned provision for spiritual development. Pupils have an assembly two or three times each week although there is no plan or record of themes covered. Some assemblies contribute to spiritual development, especially through music, and some are based on moral and social issues. However, these assemblies rarely form acts of collective worship. Lessons sometimes contribute appropriately to spiritual development. In religious education, pupils are encouraged to reflect on the purpose of life and Year 5 pupils were asked to write their own creation stories. In geography the ethical issues of pollution are sensitively considered. Music is also well used to promote spiritual development but some subjects, such as art and science, provide too few planned opportunities for reflection.
50. Moral education is good. There is an effective code of conduct to which most pupils and teachers adhere. This is securely based on the principle of care and consideration for others. Pupils are taught what is right and wrong, particularly in physical education. Most, but not all, teachers and other adults in the school are good role models. Rewards and sanctions are effectively used and generally valued by pupils, although the house system used to monitor the award of merit points is not always understood. Ethical issues are discussed well in religious education lessons and through the personal, health and social education programme.
51. Social education is satisfactory. Pupils have opportunities to take responsibility through a system of library and class monitors. There are also some opportunities provided for pupils to develop their social skills through co-operative group work. Pupils' understanding of citizenship is insufficiently developed as there are few opportunities in sport and other subject areas for social interaction outside of normal lessons. At present the school is unable to provide residential experiences due to county guidelines on the ratio of staff needed to accompany pupils on such trips. Music provides many opportunities for pupils of different ages to work together and to perform for others both in and out of school.
52. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. There are good opportunities to explore the diversity of music from European and other cultures. In art pupils look critically at the work of different artists and studies include African art and Arabic motifs. History and English extend cultural learning appropriately through visits to theatres such as the Globe in London and the work of famous authors and poets. Authors are invited into school to improve pupils' understanding of society. In religious education pupils study other world religions to improve their multi-cultural understanding. However there are too few opportunities to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of the diversity and richness of other cultures through the rest of the curriculum.
53. Since the last inspection a PHSE programme has been appropriately introduced into the weekly timetable for all year groups. The school was unable to implement changes to provide a daily act of collective worship, and at this stage does not comply with statutory requirements. There has been some improvement in the provision of multi-cultural education but this is still insufficiently developed.

56. Support, guidance and pupils' welfare

54. The overall provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils is satisfactory.
55. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development are satisfactory. Great care is taken to obtain relevant data from their previous schools so that they settle quickly into middle school routines. Monitoring procedures provide year co-ordinators with a brief description of each pupil's abilities and achievements. Class teachers keep notes referring to any incidents which reflect progress of an individual's personal development. These, together with subject departments' records, enable

appropriate guidance to be given. Pupils are becoming productively involved in evaluating their own progress and setting targets for future learning, as for example, in English.

56. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are satisfactory. The programme for personal, health and social education is generally effective and includes discussion of the issues on bullying and drugs awareness.
57. Appropriate procedures are in place to monitor and promote good attendance. Registers are generally conscientiously completed. The school has adopted a firm line against the authorisation of holidays taken during term time. The school is in regular contact with the educational welfare officer to help with the attendance problems of a very few pupils.
58. Procedures to ensure pupils' well being, health and safety are not always satisfactory. Generally the procedures relating to the management of behaviour and dealing with bullying have not been reviewed regularly enough to ensure consistency between teachers. Staff are friendly and caring and usually have a good rapport with pupils. However, year co-ordinators do not remain with the same group of children and this does not always provide the security which some of the younger pupils need to ensure that all forms of bullying and harassment are eliminated. At the parents meeting many parents remarked that the "secondary school structure" of the year groups in the lower school was a daunting social prospect for the youngest children. Although the school does maintain some continuity for pupils with an individual member of staff teaching groups of subjects for Years 5 and 6. The use of form time in the mornings when year groups do not attend an assembly is inconsistent and is not used to best advantage. In the most productive sessions pupils are purposefully employed and form a cohesive social group. Minor medical emergencies are handled well. External agencies including the police and social services are appropriately used .
59. Pupils with special learning needs receive very good specialist and pastoral support from the special educational needs department. Pupils with behavioural difficulties (EBD) receive less secure specialist support. Specialist teachers, teaching assistants and form teachers support the social needs of these pupils well. There is a twice-weekly lunchtime reading club where older and younger pupils work co-operatively together to good effect. Pupils are appropriately assessed on entry to the school and those with special needs are closely monitored. The group record sheet is an efficient method of keeping track of pupils' progress.
60. Generally the school continues to provide appropriate support and guidance for its pupils. Since the last inspection the governors have agreed a policy for sex education and a weekly lesson of personal, health and social education has recently been introduced for all year groups.

63.

Partnership with parents and the community

61. Generally the school has developed satisfactory partnerships with parents and the community, which contribute to pupils' learning and personal development although there are weaknesses in some forms of communication.
62. The quality of information provided to parents is mostly satisfactory. The annual reports of their child's progress, which all parents receive, are satisfactory and are followed up with the offer to consult with subject teachers. Whilst these arrangements provide opportunities for parents to understand the skills attained in each subject they are too infrequent for many parents to adequately judge progress. Parents also receive details of events in school through regular newsletters. The governors' annual report and school prospectus provide the necessary information in compliance with the statutory requirements.
63. Parents of pupils with special educational needs have sufficient information through annual reviews and individual education plans. Most of the issues that parents have brought up in this area have been dealt with well but some have been exacerbated by a lack of open communication by the senior management.

64. Parental involvement in children's learning is satisfactory. Homework diaries enable some parents to communicate effectively with the school, and to understand what work their child should be doing. The use of the diaries is inconsistent across different classes. The school has appropriately introduced home-school agreements, which the majority of parents and pupils have signed as a formal acknowledgement of the existing partnership. An active parent teacher association makes a positive contribution to school resources through fund-raising events, such as the autumn and summer fairs. A small number of parents help regularly in school with reading and other lessons, especially at Key Stage 2. Parents are always willing to accompany pupils on school trips.
65. Satisfactory links have been established with the local community but there are few links with industry or commerce. Musical performances for local residents make a significant contribution in developing good relationships with the local community. In particular, pupils entertain senior citizens at harvest time by giving a tea party and providing entertainment and gifts of produce. There are strong and effective links with local schools, which enable the smooth transition between the different phases of education. There are some productive links with local sports clubs who enhance and use the school's facilities.
66. Since the last inspection there has been no expansion in links with industry and commerce to promote the quality of the curriculum provided, as was suggested by the last report. Most parents, however, continue to support the school through the extensive fund-raising of the parent-teacher association. However, there are broader issues, which emerged at the parents meeting and from the parents questionnaire, that indicate concerns which need to be addressed.

69.

THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL

69. Leadership and management

67. The school's aims and objectives give a clear purpose to its work. At senior management level there is clear evidence of careful planning and a strategic understanding of issues affecting the school, backed up by efficient administration. There is an ethos of promoting high standards and effective learning is taking place in many areas of the school. However, there is a lack of consistency in the implementation of some agreed policies. The governors are actively involved in promoting the interests of the school and are supportive of its work. They have appropriate committees, which enable them to be effectively involved in decision-making processes. The governors have established useful links with departments to inform them of work in specific subject areas although in practice this is insufficiently developed to guide them in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the school. However, the formal and informal contacts between a governor and the special education needs department have worked well in raising awareness amongst fellow governors of SEN issues. The governing body fulfils most of its statutory requirements apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship, staff appraisal and information technology at Key Stage 3.
68. The headteacher is committed to the school's development and works hard to achieve this objective. The clear policies and effective planning provide an appropriate context for the work of the school. However, there has been insufficient evaluation of the work of the school on day-to-day basis. There are appropriate committees for the staff to be engaged in participative decision making in curriculum and pastoral matters but sometimes there is a lack of commitment to specific objectives for example in the way the marking policy has been interpreted. Where there is a clear sense of purpose, staff work well together as, for example, in the successful implementation of the literacy strategy. In this context staff supported each other very effectively. Communication has not always been open enough to effectively develop the confidence of staff and parents.

69. The headteacher and new deputy are working well together to establish a common ethos. Systematic reviews of the work of departments on an annual basis and the action plans which emerge from these meetings is a strength and effectively help to achieve the school's aims. The quality of the teaching has improved since the last inspection and this has resulted in improved standards. Good support is given to subject co-ordinators and class teachers when they join the school. However, there are insufficient strategies for adequately challenging higher attaining pupils and promoting multi-cultural issues. The effect of the rotational arrangement for lessons in design and technology and art has not been adequately evaluated. Subject co-ordinators generally work effectively and are efficient administrators. However, the management of physical education is unsatisfactory. The subject lacks co-ordination and there isn't a clear plan for its development. In science there are weaknesses in the evaluation of the teaching plans. In general, all subject co-ordinators have insufficient time to monitor and evaluate the work of their departments on a day-to-day basis. Co-ordinators appropriately adopt a common planning format, proposing development strategies through an action plan for their subjects.
70. Long and medium term planning is of a satisfactory quality. The priorities for individual subjects are effectively incorporated into the school development plan. This efficiently identifies specific targets for improvement. Current targets are related to improving standards of literacy and numeracy and monitoring curriculum provision. The development plan appropriately identifies staff responsibilities and time-scales for the completion of tasks. However, there is insufficient detail for subject and whole-school planning to be evaluated adequately. This is a weakness of the system. There are insufficient regular reviews of these departmental plans to effectively monitor whether they are achieving their aims.
71. The headteacher and the governing body have set up an appropriate policy and approach to special educational need. The LEA monitors the provision for those pupils on the register of special educational need who receive funded support. The work of the department is not formally evaluated nor is the overall provision for special education needs. The co-ordinator (SENCO) feels well supported by the headteacher and the SEN governor. The administration of the department is efficient, well informed and ensures good provision, based on the Code of Practice, for pupils with special educational needs. The progress of pupils with special needs is also enhanced by the work of good learning support assistants. They have had training and specific guidance on their role. The SENCO provides good advice to staff. The governing body's Annual Report appropriately informs parents about the school's implementation of the special education needs policy and allocation of resources. Statutory requirements relating to the assessment of pupils are met. Support from outside agencies is well managed. The SENCO creates a supportive ethos where pupils feel valued and safe.
72. The governors and senior management team produced a relevant action plan following the last inspection although it lacked sufficient details as to how improvements were to be made. There is now a clearer link between the budget and school development plan and curriculum co-ordinators have more involvement in contributing to this overall plan. A successful review of the total teaching time has taken place, particularly with the introduction of the literacy and numeracy initiatives. Provision for religious education has improved but not so for art. The problem of underachievement for higher attainers in science has not been adequately addressed. Most departments do not cover the multi-cultural aspects of their programs of study. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship. However, there have been clear improvements in the quality of teaching and standards of literacy and numeracy have also improved.
73. The overall ethos of the school is satisfactory because teachers have appropriate expectations for pupils' attainment and attitudes to work. Parents at the meeting with the registered inspector, prior to the inspection, commented particularly strongly on the genuine concern and support of some staff. There is a willingness of parents to become more involved in the activities of the school, given an open approach from the school's management. Most staff are committed to support the objectives of the school through the curriculum provision and aspects of the extra-curricular work. The changes in the management team and evidence of successful initiatives such as the literacy strategy provide a sound basis for maintaining improvements.

76. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources

74. There is a good match between the number, qualifications and experience of teaching staff and the needs of the curriculum. The teaching staff reflects a good balance of age and years of service to the school. Subject specialists are mostly graduates. Specialists teach most Key Stage 3 lessons, and there is a degree of specialist teaching at Key Stage 2. This provision enables the curriculum to be taught effectively and has a positive effect of the quality of education provided. The help given by learning support assistants, in the classroom, makes a significant contribution to pupils' education. The support provided for the organisation of resources means that the best use is made of the teachers' time in lessons. However, the allocation of assistants' time between different classes needs to be reviewed, as technical help is required if computers prove unreliable and when large power equipment is in use.
75. There are good procedures for the induction as all newly qualified teachers. Those staff with experience, who are new to the school, have a nominated colleague from whom they can get help and advice. Arrangements for professional training are satisfactory and are effectively linked to the development plans for most departments. Teachers attend courses and share ideas well with colleagues when they return to school. This established practice helps teachers to plan for changes in methodology and ideas, for example in the literacy strategy. The formal system of appraisal has stopped and as such the school is in breach of statutory regulations.
76. The accommodation is suitable for the curriculum to be taught effectively. The buildings are clean and well maintained. A good range of displays enhances learning in most subjects. Facilities for both indoor and outdoor sports are good, although the sports hall is underused. Some teachers make effective use of the attractive setting of the school to promote learning, for example as a stimulus to ask questions about the wonders of nature in religious education.
77. Since the last inspection several specialist areas have been improved. Science laboratories, technology and art rooms have been added, but these were not fully operational at the time of the inspection. The space available for the teaching of some peripatetic music lessons remains unsatisfactory and noise insulation remains poor. Problems of storage are still evident in many classrooms, which affects teaching and learning in several areas of the curriculum.
78. Overall the resources available to the school are satisfactory. Although the school is about to update its computer system, there is currently a low ratio of computers to pupils compared with national averages. This has an adverse impact on attainment particularly in mathematics and in science where there is no data logging. The school is otherwise adequately resourced in all departments. There is good provision of books with the ratio of books per pupil being higher than national averages.
79. Departments have a minimal amount annually for 'running costs', which can be supplemented by a bid for development money. The system is effective for identifying priorities for development. The PTA collects money and this, together with monies gained from sponsored activities during the year, combines to allow the school to have a bigger budget for resources.
80. The library is well stocked and efficiently managed. There is a good range of books although more attention could be given to material on equal opportunities issues. The library is well used by pupils, particularly at lunchtime. A high number of books are borrowed and senior pupils are taught how to be librarians. All pupils take it in turns to take responsibility for the actual running of the library. They do this efficiently and effectively.

83. **The efficiency of the school**

81. Financial planning is competent and efficient. The school development plan is appropriately linked to budgetary decisions and financial commitments. The senior management team and the governors' financial committee work well together to produce an efficiently costed budget and monitor expenditure. The current deficit has arisen from above average supply costs and from deferred energy costs. The governors are prudently managing the budget to ensure appropriate savings to address the deficit. This situation places constraints on monies available for learning resources and the level of reserves. Overall staffing costs are relatively high which places further restrictions on the financial delegation to other areas of the budget. The funds available for departments are allocated on the basis of a 'running cost' and a development bid. These procedures are effective and give an equitable distribution of available funds. The overall budget for learning resources is low but departments are efficient in achieving the best use of their resources to promote effective learning. The school closely monitors the use of funding for pupils with special educational needs and ensures that it is used appropriately.
82. The overall budget for staff development is about average and provides appropriate opportunities for an effective programme of staff training to take place. Staff have received relevant training for the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies. However, there are teaching staff who lack confidence in the use of information technology. Generally, subject co-ordinators have not had sufficient training in how to monitor and evaluate the work of their departments. Support staff are used well in classrooms to promote the learning of pupils with special educational needs.
83. The overall use of resources is satisfactory. The deployment of a well-qualified staff is generally appropriate for curriculum needs but there are insufficient specialist staff in French and art. The expertise in French, which does exist in the school, is not used efficiently. The absence of technical support for art, information technology and design and technology is detrimental to effective teaching. Administrative staff are efficient and make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school. They make a significant commitment beyond their normal workload.
84. The timetable schedule is sound and generally promotes the school's aims and objectives. The provision for literacy and numeracy has led to the successful implementation of these initiatives. The curriculum arrangements for design and technology, art and drama are unsatisfactory. It has a particularly significant affect on the quality of the art provision and subsequently the achievements of pupils.
85. School expenditure on learning resources is below average. There are outdated textbooks for history and insufficient maps in geography; these situations adversely impact upon the quality of education for pupils. Information technology has been inadequately funded but the present budget has sought to address this problem with an allocation of £10,000 for hardware and software. However, the current position is that the provision for IT is below national averages. The book stock in the library is good and has sufficient variety to support independent work by pupils. The library area itself is efficiently organised and provides a stimulating learning environment. Subject co-ordinators are cost conscious and ensure the maximum benefit is derived from limited resources.
86. The accommodation is well used and promotes effective learning, for example, in the new design and technology area. In physical education resources are effectively used although the sports hall is sometimes underused. The recent improvements in art accommodation means that whole groups have more space to do their work although other areas used for art are inadequate. The design of the building has some inherent weaknesses such as the lack of hall space, which presents problems in bringing the whole school together for assembly.
87. Effective procedures ensure good financial control. The relatively few recommendations of the last audit report have been successfully implemented. All spending is sufficiently monitored and regular financial statements are available for senior staff and governors. Subject development plans are appropriately costed and relate well to the overall budgetary position of the school. The school monitors its expenditure

efficiently. The overall quality of financial control and efficiency has been maintained since the last inspection.

88. The school is improving standards of attainment and overall progress is as expected for most pupils although higher-attaining pupils are not always challenged adequately. The sound quality of education provided and the improved standards of teaching ensure that the school gives satisfactory value for money.

PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS91. **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**91. **English**

89. In 1999, the results of national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 were well above average for pupils reaching level 4 and above and above average for pupils reaching level 5 and above. These results are in line with those of pupils from similar schools. Between 1996 and 1999 results in these tests have risen steadily. In both 1998 and 1999 reading scores were better than those for writing. In consequence the department has adapted the curriculum at Key Stage 2 to give greater emphasis to improving pupils' skills in writing.
90. According to the evidence of inspection, at the end of Key Stage 2 pupils attain above and sometimes well above national expectations in the majority of cases. They are articulate speakers who can use ideas well and who respond confidently in class, often at length and in well-formed sentences, giving the reasons for their views. They are generally constructive listeners. Reading comprehension is good, as is recall of texts read in class; there is much lively and expressive reading aloud. In Year 6 pupils are beginning to recognise clearly how style differs in different written media. The range of attainment in writing is wider than in reading or oracy. Standards of technical accuracy are sound or better. There is fluent and well-expressed narrative, personal writing, poetry and dialogue, but some work, especially from boys, is flawed by errors in spelling and punctuation.
91. Progress in Key Stage 2 is generally good. Through their work in the lessons on literacy, pupils develop confidence in identifying features of language, for example, parts of speech, tenses, rhyme and rhythm; they are beginning to acquire the ability to read analytically. Over the two years the presentation and accuracy of writing improve and most pupils widen their vocabularies considerably. Where the process of drafting and re-drafting is carefully guided by teachers, progress is even more marked. Pupils of low attainment and those with special educational needs often make good progress in reading and spelling when they are supported in class or work in withdrawal groups.
92. By Year 8, when pupils leave this school, their attainment in English is above standards expected nationally for this age group. As speakers they deploy an often wide vocabulary well and take part in lively group discussion. They use books confidently and can read competently for research purposes. Most respond well to teachers' encouragement to read widely for pleasure and information. The lowest attaining pupils, however, experience difficulty with complex texts. As in Key Stage 2, girls write more fluently and correctly than boys. There are examples of lively and accomplished writing in, for example, playscripts, poetry and narrative.
93. Progress in Years 7 and 8 is always satisfactory and is often good; this is true also of pupils with special educational needs. The understanding of linguistic features continues to develop well. Writing becomes more mature and often more accurate. However, pupils have limited experience of more formal styles of writing so that in this respect their competence develops relatively slowly.
94. Attitudes to English are positive. In both key stages pupils are keen to contribute in class, confident that their teachers will listen to them. They are generally courteous and well behaved. The ability to work sensibly and collaboratively in groups, develops well. Pupils use dictionaries, thesauri and other reference materials well. In a few cases there is some restlessness and occasional lack of involvement. These are more evident when pupils have had to engage in the same activity for too long.

95. Virtually all teaching is satisfactory and just under half is good or very good. Though relatively few of those who teach English have specialist qualifications, knowledge and understanding of the subject are generally very secure. Teachers in Key Stage 2 have acquired a good grasp of the framework and content of the literacy strategy and deal with the linguistic aspects confidently and well. Planning is sound overall and particularly careful and detailed in Key Stage 2. Teachers' expectations are high and there are good examples of work well differentiated to meet the learning needs of individuals - an aspect, which was criticised in the last inspection report. Teachers use a variety of approaches, usually well, but activities are not always sufficiently varied within a single lesson to retain pupils' interest. Occasionally teachers fail to state the learning objectives at the start of a lesson and to summarise effectively at the end. Relationships in the classroom are friendly but businesslike: teachers create a positive atmosphere for learning. The majority monitor progress in lessons very well, intervening appropriately to guide pupils. Marking is often but not consistently helpful in showing pupils how to improve.
96. Curriculum planning has improved considerably since the last inspection: there are now clear planning guidelines for staff, and teaching of the National Curriculum is comprehensive, apart from the lack of regular, planned work in information technology. Assessment procedures, too, have improved: the new systems for record keeping and for the organisation of pupils' files, though not yet quite consistently used, are potentially very helpful, creating a good basis for the target setting for individuals which the department is beginning to introduce.
97. A significant recent achievement has been the successful implementation of the literacy strategy in Key Stage 2. Teachers of English have worked hard and productively to plan and deliver this work. The cohesiveness of the department has been enhanced by this team enterprise, under effective leadership. The headteacher's decision to allocate funds to the head of department's monitoring of the teaching of the literacy strategy has had beneficial effects. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching and curriculum at Key Stage 3.
98. The department has made good progress since the last inspection in raising attainment and in tackling the criticisms of organisation and planning in the department.

101. **Mathematics**

99. The attainment of pupils in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 is above average. The national curriculum test results at the end of the key stage were above average in 1999. In recent years there has been an improving trend in performance, with boys' achievement being marginally better than girls. The 1999 results were in line with those of pupils in similar schools. Teachers' assessments are effective being a little lower than test results. Pupils' attainment in lessons matches the standards achieved in tests. Standards of numeracy are good. Higher attaining pupils can deduce number sequences and can accurately perform calculations using decimals and fractions. Pupils are able to devise problem-solving strategies for practical activities. They are able to record this information accurately and correctly in a variety of statistical forms. All pupils have awareness of area and perimeter and are able to describe the properties of quadrilaterals. Most pupils are increasingly confident in the understanding of place value and application of numeracy skills to practical problems. There is no significant difference in attainment of boys and girls.
100. The overall attainment of pupils when they leave at the end of Year 8 is above average. The organisation of numerical data and its interpretation graphically is well understood. Pupils' competence with numbers continues to be a strength. Higher attaining pupils are able to generalise results and produce rules following the investigation of a practical problem, for example, the generation of an algebraic formula for the interior angles of a polygon. Lower attaining pupils are able to describe the properties of geometrical shapes although their technical skills of constructing triangles are not well developed. As at Key Stage 2 there is little difference in attainment of boys and girls.
101. At both key stages there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use computers to develop an

understanding of mathematical concepts and organise data.

102. Pupils' overall progress is satisfactory, being particularly good at Key Stage 2. Most pupils enter the school with above average attainment in numeracy. From the beginning of Year 5 they are effectively placed in groups based upon their prior attainment. In the early stages the carefully structured lessons place a correct emphasis on developing skills in numeracy and familiarity with numbers. The progress pupils make in this respect is good and maintained well. They make good progress in applying their number skills to practical problems involving data-collection and the interpretation of results. This confidence in numbers is well reflected in other areas of the curriculum, for example in science and in geography. In Year 7 and 8 pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in investigative work, statistical understanding and competence in basic algebraic skills. However, progress in the use and the application of information technology is inadequate.
103. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages. This progress is directly related to the effective arrangements for placing pupils in classes according to their attainment. Staff and learning resources are particularly well focused to support these pupils.
104. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics lessons are usually very good. They are interested in their work, concentrate well and listen attentively. Pupils are keen to be involved with class discussions, ask relevant questions and they enjoy sharing their ideas with the remainder of the class. They use resources sensibly and correctly to further their understanding of mathematics. All pupils are well behaved and work co-operatively in small groups when given the opportunity. At Key Stage 3 pupils show a high level of initiative, taking responsibility for their learning. Standards of presentation are good: pupils take a pride in completing their work.
105. The overall quality of teaching is good. There is more good teaching in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 3. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good and most lessons are planned to use time well. Most teachers have high expectations of pupils and give helpful support. The introduction of the numeracy strategy has provided a clear framework for lessons. These are usually planned so there is a good mixture of activities. In some lessons, more particularly at Key Stage 3, teachers do not set deadlines for pupils to complete tasks and this sometimes leads to pupils working too slowly. Teachers effectively use questions to help pupils understand the correct terminology and develop a mathematical vocabulary. Homework is set regularly but sometimes there are inconsistencies in the marking of work and insufficient detail to help pupils understand their difficulties better.
106. The subject is effectively managed. The teaching programmes are well planned to cover the requirements of the National Curriculum apart from the components for information technology. Practical work is successfully built into planning. The introduction of the numeracy strategy has been planned efficiently. Staff have been well supported through relevant training. The monitoring of pupils' attainment and the tracking of progress through the systematic use of assessment information, is good. Less effective has been the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and the sharing of good practice within the department.
107. Standards of attainment have been maintained since the last inspection and results have improved in line with those nationally. The progress pupils make at Key Stage 2 is better than it was then. These improvements are directly related to the effectiveness of teachers' planning and the good climate for learning which is created in lessons.

110. **Science**

108. The attainment of pupils in science at the end of Key Stage 2 is average. Test results at the end of the key stage were average in 1999 and have risen slightly over the past three years. These results were below those of pupils in similar schools. Teachers' assessment are a little lower than test results; this takes account of pupils' skills in science investigations which are sound but are not sufficiently developed. Pupils' attainment in lessons matches test results. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils can carry out investigations in which they make accurate observations and measurements. They know that results are only valid if the test has been fair. They are beginning to use models such as the theory of particles to explain such phenomena as solubility and most can explain, in terms of the forces acting on the objects,

why some float. Higher attainers are able to suggest reasons why, for example, a boat made of dense material floats, by thinking about the effect of forces on a large area. All pupils can distinguish between materials that have once lived, such as wood, and materials that have never lived such as metals. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.

109. The overall attainment of pupils when they leave at the end of Year 8 is average. By the end of Year 8, they have a sound knowledge of some of the basic ideas of biology, physics and chemistry. They can apply this knowledge to investigations and draw conclusions about their results. For example, almost all pupils can explain why their breathing rates increase when they take exercise, by relating exercise to the need for more oxygen. Higher attainers are usually given the same work as others and consequently do not reach levels of understanding significantly greater than others. As at Key Stage 2, there is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls. In both key stages, pupils' ability to use computers for measuring quantities such as changes in temperature is well below average, because this element is not taught at present. Most pupils can recall the law of magnetism and higher-attaining pupils have a sound grasp of the idea of balanced forces. They can distinguish between atoms and molecules. Higher attainers do not have significantly greater understanding of chemical reactions or the properties of elements than average attainers.
110. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in both key stages. Their understanding of scientific ideas develops steadily because the curriculum is reinforced effectively by investigations. In these studies pupils apply their increasing knowledge of the world around them. In Key Stage 2 pupils begin to use scientific methods, and make accurate measurements. For example, in Year 5 pupils investigating ways to keep a cup of coffee hot on a long journey progress from the idea of testing heat loss by feeling or sipping the drink to using a thermometer. Their ideas about how electrical circuits work develop from making simple observations to thinking about particles moving through wires and bulbs. In Key Stage 3, pupils use their knowledge that we take in oxygen from the air in breathing to explain why a candle does not burn long in exhaled air. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational need, at both key stages, make satisfactory progress, because in most lessons teachers' support them well with extra help. When these pupils have additional help from adults their progress is good. In a significant number of lessons, a small proportion of higher-attaining pupils make unsatisfactory progress because they are given the same work as the rest of the class. Many of the tasks and activities do not enable higher attainers to explore more advanced ideas or extend their understanding through research tasks. They often work too slowly.
111. Pupils' attitudes to science lessons are usually good and never less than satisfactory. This is due in part to teachers' ability to manage pupils well. In Key Stage 2, particularly, pupils are keen and always very eager to answer questions. In Key Stage 3, boys are more likely to offer ideas and suggestions. This was noticed during the previous inspection. In both key stages pupils work well in groups, sharing ideas and discussing results with enthusiasm. They listen well to teachers and each other and can usually speak out clearly when asked to contribute to class discussion. Most pupils persevere throughout the lesson, but there is some unfinished work in books, sometimes by higher attainers.
112. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and occasionally it is good or very good. There is more good teaching in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 3. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good, and most lessons are planned to use time well. Nearly all the teachers are qualified in science, and all have sufficient subject knowledge to teach effectively. In the best lessons teachers have clear objectives and occasionally they share these with pupils, but this practice is not used sufficiently. Nearly all lessons conclude with a helpful summary to help pupils think about what they have just learned. Lessons are usually planned so that there is a good mixture of varied activities. In some lessons teachers do not set deadlines for pupils to complete tasks and this leads to pupils working too slowly. This happens more in theory lessons than during practical activities. For example, pupils completing worksheets about fertilisation spent too long cutting out worksheets and chatting, and the lesson lost its impetus. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will behave well and sometimes demand high levels of thinking. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 2. In a Year 5 lesson, in which pupils tested the strength of different threads, the teacher asked pupils to measure the width of fine thread by measuring the width of several turns wound round a ruler. This required pupils to be dextrous, make fine measurements, and understand how to resolve the difficulty of measuring small quantities. In some Key Stage 3 lessons however, the expectations of higher attaining pupils is too low. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on the skeleton, simpler worksheets were used well to help slower pupils, but higher attainers covered the same work as the rest of the class and were not expected to do more.

113. The schemes of work are well planned to cover the required elements of the National Curriculum, apart from the information technology component, and practical work is successfully built into planning. There is insufficient use of assessment to identify higher attainers and provide work to help them reach a higher standard.
114. There are weaknesses in some aspects of leadership and organisation and too little improvement since the previous inspection. There is insufficient monitoring of teaching by the head of department or senior managers, and too little evaluation of teaching programmes. The lack of pace in some lessons was noted in the previous report; this still needs to be improved. Development planning has been introduced since the previous inspection, but the plan, which forms part of the whole school plan, does not have enough detail. The department still needs to plan carefully to use computers to collect and display measurements made during investigations.

117.

OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES

117. Art

115. At Key Stage 2, pupils spend too little time studying art and by the end of Year 6 attainment is below average. The timetable arrangements are for pupils to study art in a of block lessons and then move on to study either design and technology or drama. This arrangement effects standards of attainment as pupils find it difficult to remember or apply the skills or knowledge they acquire from one session to the next. Within these phases, though, pupils' knowledge improves rapidly, and they often attain standards in their projects, which show average levels of skill. For example, in the written work for Year 6 about light, and the meaning of this in Diwali festivals, and in the three dimensional lanterns they have made to accompany this work. By the end of their projects, standards are as expected for their ages. At the beginning of these rotations, skills have slipped back, and much of the surrealist Dali-style drawing seen in one Year 6 class is below average. In another Year 6 class, though, observation skills in drawing musical instruments, and distorting these surreally were average. Broadly, pupils have too little time in Key Stage 2 to develop the depth of understanding expected for their ages.
116. In Key Stage 3, attainment is better and pupils demonstrate an average range of standards for Year 8 by the time they leave the school. Some well-constructed coil pots in ceramics, for example, showed good skills and understanding of the material in Year 7. One Year 8 class attained an average range of drawing for a self-portrait project, some using their pencils to develop tone well. Another Year 8 class, though, engaged in a project looking at buildings were relying too heavily on rulers for their drawing. Their information technology skills, with a drawing program, demonstrated skills, which were only average. The written evaluations of pupils Van Gough work at the end of a project shows an average range of understanding.
117. Across the key stages progress is unsatisfactory. Pupils' levels of skill and understanding in art do not reflect their capabilities, and the progress they make is not commensurate with their potential. The present curriculum arrangement does not provide sufficient continuity and progression in their work. Pupils' skills, understanding and confidence in what they can do relapse before the next module, which may be more than a year away. Within the modules, however, and in lessons seen, pupils' confidence and skill develop rapidly, giving clear evidence that with a more continuous curriculum, their standards could be well above average for their ages. In some lessons, for example the portraiture lesson in Year 8 and the ceramics lesson in Year 7, progress is good.
118. The timetable arrangement has an effect on pupils' attitudes to art. After absences from the subject, most lack confidence, and are unsure of their ability to use their drawing skills effectively. With a good deal of encouragement and praise, this is overcome during each rotation, with subsequent improvement in pupils' confidence. By the end of the module they come, again, to enjoy art. Pupils are well behaved and responsible and try very hard in their work.

119. The quality of teaching is mostly good and always satisfactory. The school has no art specialists on its staff, but the main teacher has good experience of the subject. Other non-specialist teaching is variable. Each project is satisfactorily planned to cover the National Curriculum as well as possible, given the low time allocation. Theory and practice are well linked, with a variety of projects giving pupils a commendable range of experience. Teachers overcome the curriculum constraints as well as they can, spending a great deal of energy on encouraging, supporting and boosting their pupils' confidence. Teachers manage classes well and try to instil a sense of enjoyment and fun in pupils' learning.
120. The main criticisms in the last report related to the adverse effects of the rotational system. This issue has not been resolved, despite an increase in time given to the subject at Key Stage 3. Very recent improvements to art accommodation means that whole classes can comfortably now be taught in the art room. Some of the other accommodation used is unsatisfactory. Other minor criticisms have been solved, for example the range of practices within modules is now satisfactory. At the time of the last report, National Curriculum requirements were not met. At Key Stage, the school now fulfils its obligations.

123. **Design and Technology**

121. The attainment of pupils in design and technology at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with the national average. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils know how to use a variety of tools to measure, cut and shape materials to make useful and decorative items. They design and make items such as a container in textiles, a range of basic dishes in food, a piece of pottery and a carrier for fast food. Pupils know about man-made and natural materials and something of their origins. Basic designing is satisfactory. Pupils draw what they intend making and many add notes to explain how the results might be achieved. They understand that designing begins with a few first ideas, and some development of the best. Most pupils evaluate their results sensibly and can say where there are design faults and suggest improvements.
122. By the time they leave school at the end of Year 8, attainment is in line with the average for pupils of this age. Pupils know more about the design process and have developed sound skills in practical work. They have a good background of theory and practice samples before they embark upon designing for themselves. They know about, for instance, triangulation and forces in connection with structures, they examine artefacts to determine fitness for purpose, taste food before creating their own recipes and make printed examples on fabric prior to deciding final designs. Higher attaining pupils realise the value of research and produce well-drawn design sheets. Most pupils are unskilled in letter formation, but some use the computer to improve presentation.
123. Throughout the school most pupils make good progress in both aspects of design and technology. They enter school with below average skills of cutting and sticking and in using a range of raw materials. The scheme of work is designed so that pupils build up understanding of the tools and materials with which they work and then progress from making simple items to designing and making for themselves. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make better progress than average in practical lessons as they work in purpose-built rooms and all can work individually in a whole class. During the inspection, a group of pupils in Year 7 made very good progress in lessons about shell and frame structures and used this to influence their initial thinking about designing a "white knuckle ride" for a marble. Another group made good progress in understanding about people's eating habits at breakfast before creating a new breakfast cereal which they intend testing and marketing. Higher-attaining pupils generally do more research work and produce better quality written work than others, but attainment in skills is sound for pupils of all abilities. The lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported in lessons and make good progress, building confidence and self-esteem when they do practical work.

124. Pupils' response to design and technology is good. They appear to like their lessons and enjoy the prospect of having something worthwhile at the end. They prefer practical to theory lessons, but many pupils, particularly the average and higher-attainers, are attentive in theory sessions, especially when they are learning new things which challenge them and draw on their knowledge. Pupils rise to the demands of good teaching and are often surprised at the work they can do when persuaded to try harder. Pupils are well behaved in the practical areas and know about the safety rules. They settle down quickly, prepare their own work spaces and try hard. A few pupils help each other without being asked, showing compassion and friendship. During the inspection, pupils wrote out work for friends who had hand and arm injuries and others helped with practical work such as weighing out and sharing ingredients. Many pupils persevere, even when things go wrong and remain cheerful. The quality of teaching is good overall in both key stages. It is good or better in seven out of nine lessons, occasionally excellent and satisfactory in the rest. Specialist teachers know their subject and are good demonstrators of technique. They explain carefully and patiently to ensure pupils fully understand what they have to do. Planning is generally good as the tasks are set to keep pupils motivated, but at the same time, ensures they build up a good amount of knowledge and skills. Board work is particularly good in resistant materials lessons helping pupils to make sense of unfamiliar terms. Pupils are well challenged and encouraged to think for themselves especially in Key Stage 3. Discipline is firm, but pupils are treated equally and receive one to one help during sessions. Work is marked and graded for effort, but some of the work sheets are too simple. There is no time wasted in lessons and even practical food lessons of one hour with groups in Key Stage 2 finish on time. The support assistants are extremely valuable in this context as they keep the pupils working hard.

125. The curriculum satisfies requirements in that it is broad and well-balanced between theory and practical work and within a variety of materials. The time allocation is reasonable at Key Stage 2, but low at Key Stage 3. The four-year subject rotation system operates with too many elements within it, resulting in pupils experiencing a material area for little over half a term in any one year. Pupils often forget how to use tools, where things are located and what skills they learned in previous lessons, which affects progress at the start of a new module and cuts down the time allocation further. Until the start of the current term, assessment was weak as no records were kept and pupils were not given any indication of their levels of attainment. Current practice is developing along correct lines.

126. Issues raised in the last inspection report have been well addressed. There is now a new co-ordinator who gives good leadership and support to colleagues. The quality of teaching has improved. The scheme of work has been rewritten for resistant materials to ensure pupils' work is brought up to the required standard. Both the activities of designing and making show great improvements in the lessons observed. The curriculum arrangements, criticised in the last report, remain and create a fragmented approach to the subject, which slows pupils' progress. Assessment has improved, but the practices are not yet sufficiently refined and work on display lacks indications of grades to give other pupils an idea of what can be attained. The rooms have been redesigned and refitted, but were only handed over recently and are not yet fully operational for practical work with resistant materials. There is a small area fitted with computers. It is now possible to include more work linked to information technology. There are more and better tools, but the department still lacks a vacuum former to extend the work with plastics.

129. **Geography**

127. At the end of Key Stage 2 attainment is above national expectations. The pupils develop sound knowledge of the local environment and can make good use of the grid reference system for interpreting Ordnance Survey maps. This is particularly noticeable in Year 6 where pupils are able to deal with a six figure map grid reference to plot the position of churches in York. By the end of Year 8 pupils also achieve above the average expected for this age group and have appropriately extended the skills they acquired in Key Stage 2. Higher attaining pupils with good analytical skills can interpret a range of geographical data presented in different forms. For example, pupils in their study of Kenya, can research, evaluate and use statistical sources of human and physical geography to plan an "environmentally friendly" itinerary for a holiday in Kenya.

128. Progress is good in Key Stage 2 where pupils show a good range of skills and techniques, particularly those associated with the use of maps, diagrams, images and photographs. At Year 8 pupils' progress in lessons is often good and from a scrutiny of earlier work the progress being made is satisfactory. At Key Stage 3 pupils develop a sound knowledge of economic ideas. For example, pupils in Year 7 considered the issues about the siting of a superstore and its effect on a local community. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages.
129. The response of pupils is very good. They enjoy their lessons and are keen to offer their own ideas on the topics studied. Pupils are attentive and work conscientiously; they respond well to the challenge of lessons and show a pride in their work. However, the presentation of some pupils' work is unsatisfactory and needs to be improved.
130. Overall teaching is good and sometimes very good at both key stages. Teachers are committed and supportive, relate positively to pupils and generally manage them well. Teachers have good subject knowledge. In the best lessons, detailed planning is supported by a good range of teaching resources, which stimulates the interest of pupils. In these lessons, the pace is brisk and results in effective learning. However, some lessons need to be more diverse and ambitious, using a variety of teaching methods. Teaching and learning, are best where the teacher is less directive and more supportive of pupils' independent learning. Homework is set regularly, and usefully extends the work begun in lessons.
131. The curriculum is appropriate and meets statutory requirements. The department's assessment policy does not give sufficient attention to the marking of work to National Curriculum levels. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the study of environmental issues.
132. The department is led effectively and efficiently. Detailed policies are informative and give an appropriate direction to the work of the department. Non-specialist teachers are well supported. The work of the department is not monitored sufficiently well to give a clear picture of areas for development.
133. Accommodation is good and rooms have bright displays of pupils' work, which create a good learning atmosphere. There is a lack of resources to effectively support learning, for example, insufficient Ordnance Survey maps, atlases and globes. Although some good use is made of trips to local streams and rivers, there are few opportunities for residential activities. Information technology is not used sufficiently.

History

134. Attainment in history is above what is expected of pupils at this age by the end of Key Stage 2 and at Year 8 in Key Stage 3. Some higher attaining pupils are achieving standards above these levels. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are beginning to master a number of historical skills such as a sense of chronology and the reasons for change within societies. Higher attaining pupils are able to understand and apply the links between causation, motivation and consequence. For example, Year 6 pupils understand the causes and motives for the wars between Athens and Sparta and can relate, with graphic detail, the consequences of such wars in the lives of the people of those two city states. At Year 8, pupils' level of attainment is above average in all aspects of their work but particularly in their abilities and skills in analysing and evaluating evidence from a range of historical sources. For example, pupils can define and explain aspects of life in Ancient Rome from the study of the documentary evidence, provided by inscriptions, in Latin, on gravestones. They have a good knowledge of historical terms.
135. Progress in lessons is good at the end of both Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 8. A scrutiny of pupils work shows that over time, most pupils are making satisfactory progress. Pupils extend their skills, particularly, those relating to the evaluation, analysis, interpretation and presentation of historical evidence. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Higher attaining pupils make good progress when they are given the opportunity for detailed research. They learn from their ability to ask searching questions on the

topics discussed.

136. The response of pupils is very good. They have a positive attitude to learning. Pupils show application to and enjoyment of the subject. Most are attentive in class and work conscientiously throughout the lesson. They apply themselves to the activity and work well individually or in groups. They respond to intellectual challenge and engage well with the teachers and with their fellow pupils on group exercises. Behaviour is always good and pupils are prepared to listen and respect the views of others. They generally show pride in their work. Although some pupils' presentation skills could be improved.

137. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. Teachers are committed and supportive, relate positively to pupils and manage them well. The best lessons have clear aims, which are shared with pupils. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject, and for many whose own specialisms include history, their own deeper understanding of the subject makes a considerable impact upon their teaching which stimulates the pupils, and sets high expectations. In such lessons, the pace is brisk and workmanlike. Learning is often best where teachers encourage pupils to become more independent learners. Homework is set regularly, and is most meaningful when its tasks include not only the completion of classwork but also carrying out research in preparation for the next lesson.
138. The curriculum meets national curriculum requirements and is planned effectively to ensure that pupils build on their knowledge lesson by lesson. Assessment and marking procedures are generally satisfactory. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; for example, by the study of such issues as the treatment of young babies in Sparta.
139. The department is well led. An effective and informative set of policies and documents guide all aspects of its work. The head of department lacks the time to monitor the work in the subject adequately. Accommodation is good and rooms have bright displays of pupils' work, which is conducive to learning. There are insufficient textbooks and some are out of date. There are some visits to such places as Ashwell where pupils enjoy a Victorian Day. However, insufficient use is made of this type of activity to develop pupils' interests. History is a strong subject in the school and continues to make improvement since the last report.
142. **Information technology**
140. The attainment of pupils in information technology at the end of Key Stage 2 is above the national average. By the end of Year 6 pupils have mastered the method of switching on the computers, selecting programs, retrieving previous work, saving and printing. Only a few of the less confident pupils need help with the last two operations. Pupils' skills in using the computers vary, as many have their own equipment at home which is often dissimilar to the school's. Many of the skills, such as mouse control, click and double-click, select and move are transferable, and pupils use them well in lessons. Keyboard skills are sound, although a few pupils need persuading to use both hands at the keyboard. Most pupils can find the keys reasonably quickly and some of the higher-attaining pupils know how to use short cuts for operations such as deleting and recalling. Pupils are familiar with the programs for word processing, can insert pictures into their work and draw quite complex designs. Most pupils can create questionnaires by framing questions of different types, although some pupils in Year 6, especially the lower-attainers, found multiple choice questions a little difficult to manage. Only the higher attainers can use borders successfully, but many pupils can frame their scripts. By the end of the key stage, pupils know about databases and spreadsheets, can draw graphs and move screen robots. Most pupils know how to get information from a compact disc. They are relatively unskilled in moving actual robots, working with sensors or control equipment and as yet do not access the Internet at school.
141. The overall attainment of pupils when they leave school at the end of Year 8 is below average for pupils of this age group. During this key stage pupils have very few formal lessons in information technology and are expected to gain knowledge, understanding and skills through other subjects. Pupils have a module of art each year where they work on drawing programs, but the work is often set at a low level. There are a few lessons where computers are used to extend the learning in other subjects, for instance, occasionally in English and design and technology, but the printed results are below expectations for pupils of similar age. In mathematics, a packaging project shows good results for Year 8 pupils as they know about three-dimensional shapes. In general, pupils' competence in word processing is at the required level of attainment. Pupils are unfamiliar with higher order skilled work such as questioning a database, setting up a spreadsheet, programming a robot or measuring changes over time.

142. Most pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2. They build on to the skills they learned in their previous schools and the experience they have with their home computers. The broad scheme of work ensures pupils make progress with a range of programs for different operations. Work in books shows that pupils gain understanding of how the various programs work and what could be done to extend their basic knowledge. During the inspection, pupils in Year 5 were using a drawing program and quickly mastered how to create shapes, enlarge and move them, change colours and orientation when drawing a clown. Most results, especially those from the higher-attaining pupils, showed extremely good attention to facial expression and the use of all the tools on the tool bars. Most second and subsequent attempts showed good progress. When pupils work with partners, they make good gains in decision making and confidence to try out their ideas. The lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, make generally satisfactory progress in using drawing and graph programs, but often find working with words and number difficult. When they work with the classroom assistants or more skilled partners, they make satisfactory progress in skills, but not necessarily in understanding. Pupils in Key Stage 3 make unsatisfactory progress, owing to the lack of opportunity to use the equipment and the absence of suitable software to build onto the skills mastered in Key Stage 2.
143. Pupils' response to information technology is very good in Key Stage 2 as most pupils enjoy their lessons. They are keen to get to the keyboards and start working. They behave well in the computer room, know not to tamper with the machines or spoil others' work. They listen to the teacher and enjoy watching and joining in with demonstrations. Some of the more skilled and confident pupils help others, showing a mature attitude, even in Key Stage 2. They work well in pairs. Pupils discuss strategies, agree what to do and share the equipment fairly. From their first lessons in Year 5, they are responsible for their own work discs and saving their work, which aids their personal development. Pupils in Year 5 are very enthusiastic about their work on clowns and are proud to show what they have done. Year 6 show good perseverance with more demanding work for presentation as posters and cards. In Key Stage 3, pupils are less excited about their work, but show determination when producing scripts, even though many forget how to do the operations they experienced in the previous key stage.
144. The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 2. It is very good in one out of five lessons, good in two and satisfactory in the remainder. There is little teaching occurring at Key Stage 3. This is a weakness in curriculum provision. In general, teachers know enough about the subject and the programs to give pupils information and skills. Formal lessons are well-planned, with instruction, demonstration, time for pupils to do their work and short closing sessions for questions to ensure pupils have completed the tasks. Expectations are high for Years 5 and 6, but too low for the older pupils. Discipline is firm but fair and pupils are treated equally. Practical work is appraised orally and books are all marked appropriately. Some teachers are more diligent about commenting on work than others and the best practice is not yet shared between all those who teach the subject.
145. Overall leadership is satisfactory, but the role of co-ordinator is insufficiently defined, as the extent of her responsibility, especially in helping colleagues in class, is unclear. The curriculum is broad, although slightly imbalanced, mainly owing to the lack of equipment for monitoring and control and communicating beyond school. Statutory requirements are met for pupils in Key Stage 2, but not at Key Stage 3 as these pupils are not receiving their entitlement to information technology. Assessment is unsatisfactory as the work does not yet relate sufficiently well to the statements of attainment. A portfolio of assessed examples is being created, but does not yet contain a wide enough range for it to be a useful tool for non-specialist teachers to help them in grading individual pupils' work.
146. The school has not made a good enough response to the comments in the last inspection report. There is a new co-ordinator who is trying to raise the standards and profile of the subject. The development plan is good. A room has been created but as it is cramped. The use of information technology across the school remains weak, and there are still gaps in the curriculum. There are a few more computers, but the ratio of computers to children remains poor. The old equipment mentioned in the last inspection report has not been replaced. Assessment remains insufficiently developed and many teachers are still unsure about using the equipment.

Modern Foreign Languages (French)

147. Pupils start French in Key Stage 2, and are grouped in Year 7 on the basis of their attainment at the end of Year 6. At Key Stage 2, pupils show the expected range of attainment in French with developing basic speaking skills and improving pronunciation. The experience provides for many, especially for lower attaining pupils, a useful introduction to the statutory phase of learning the foreign language.
148. At Key Stage 3, attainment varies according to these setting arrangements. In higher sets, some pupils, particularly girls, are above average, but other pupils in these groups show attainment which is only average for their ages. By Year 8, pupils can write good dialogues using a range of vocabulary that they have recently studied. Some higher attaining pupils can speak competently, but these are in the minority. However, even in top sets, pupils' speaking skills are relatively weak, with few able to emulate good pronunciation. Listening skills in these groups, especially that by boys, is weak. They cannot understand native speakers well enough to answer the questions asked on a tape. For example, most had to listen to a comprehension exercise about making plans for an outing several times. Others in the class could understand well at the second or third time of hearing. Written responses to these questions though, were almost all in English. Overall girls attain better results than boys. In low sets in Key Stage 3, pupils' overall attainment is below average. Most can only use single words or very short phrases in French, and then with highly anglicised accents. As at the time of the last report, pupils do not use French freely, nor initiate its use, except in odd examples seen in Key Stage 2. Their pronunciation is only average with few able to generate good, sustained utterances using French sounds.
149. Pupils' experience at Key Stage 2 provides a familiarity with the language, especially its vocabulary, which enables some, lower attaining pupils, to make better progress at Key Stage 3. The setting arrangements at Key Stage 3 are designed to promote pupils' progress, enabling them to study at a more suitable pace for their attainment level. Progress overall in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. In some lessons, progress is good, where for example, pupils create and write their dialogues in Year 8. Pupils' speaking progresses less well, though, with few developing a good French accent. This is particularly noticeable in higher sets where progress in this aspect of the language is unsatisfactory.
150. Pupils generally work purposefully in lessons and on their tasks. They are well behaved and try to do what teachers require. They co-operate well in pairs, but too often lapse into English instead of using French. Although pupils are more confident when practising their speaking together, very few are confident to speak alone.
151. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Some teachers involved in teaching the subject are not subject specialists, and their knowledge of the subject is limited. Most teachers at Key Stage 2 use songs, games and other methods in the 30 minute lessons, which engage their pupils well and create enjoyment. The main weakness lies in Key Stage 3, where teachers use too much English in lessons, particularly as translation of what they say. This applies equally to French vocabulary used, and to classroom instructions. It particularly disadvantages the higher sets, as this methodology fails to challenge pupils sufficiently. Teachers expect that pupils will need translation, and too often resort to this rather than to other teaching strategies to enable their pupils to understand. Lessons are too long in Key Stage 3 as the pace often slows towards the end of the lesson. Pupils are unable to sustain learning, for the whole hour and a greater variety of strategies is needed to use this time more effectively. Several teachers have good French pronunciation themselves, and provide a good model for pupils to emulate when they try to use the target language. Others' provide a satisfactory example. The teaching of lower attaining pupils is often good.
152. Curriculum arrangements are unhelpful for the management of this department. Timetabling in particular has adverse effects on staffing. The head of department has far too little time teaching French with most of his teaching time devoted to other subjects. He has no time to monitor the quality of teaching in classes. Too many of the criticisms from the last report have not been resolved. The main residual issue is the lack of consistent use of French in classes. Improvement since the last report has been insufficient.

Music

153. Pupils' attainment in music is well above average at both key stages. Soon after they enter the school in Year 5, pupils can give their views about the music they hear, describing its characteristics and mood sensitively, as in a Year 5 lesson about "winter music" for example, using the "Sugar Plum Fairy" to focus their listening. Pupils in Year 5 can also create and interpret graphic scores, using these as a basis for group arrangements of their own compositions. By Year 6 pupils can make good written appraisals of what they hear. They can, for example, listen to the "Mother Goose" suite and interpret its mood and meaning well. In Year 6 lessons seen, pupils' pitch is good, with some able to identify intervals between two notes accurately. Almost all pupils in this mixed ability class could sing along with their fingering of notes on the C major scale as they played their keyboards, pitching their notes accurately. Their fingering was also developing well. By the end of Key Stage 2 singing and playing is good and overall attainment is often well above average.
154. Similarly at Key Stage 3 pupils attain very well in music, particularly in the performance elements which they most enjoy. In Year 7, pupils' understanding of musical vocabulary is good and their use of terms such as "ostinato" and "riff" is developing well. All can keep in time when they play instruments, and in lessons, pupils could make very good improvisations. By Year 8 many pupils can make sophisticated interpretations of the music they hear, describing its character well in both words and in their own musical interpretations. For example they were working on the opening to "Finlandia" and in their groups, produced some extremely high quality interpretations from graphic scores, sensitively dealing with musical texture and tone, volume and pitch. Groups competently played these interpretations on a variety of instruments, with pupils of all abilities contributing extremely well to the performances. By the time they leave the school, pupils' musical competence is well above average. For many pupils' attainment is further enhanced by very good standards of musical performances, singing, concerts and peripatetic instrumental work which occurs throughout all years.
155. Pupils' progress through the school is very good to produce these high standards. Their enjoyment of the subject is a key factor in their musical successes. Music has a high profile in the school, with both music lessons and the many extra-curricular musical activities.
156. Pupils look forward to their music lessons, demonstrating an enthusiasm for the subject, which makes them confident that they can achieve well. Pupils learn with enjoyment, working purposefully, in a very disciplined manner, which lends rigour to their learning. Co-operation in groups is excellent. They are extremely responsible when they play in groups. Concentration is good and pupils listen to and respect the performance of others in the group. Pupils are also very eager to play music outside the curriculum, as evidenced by the demand for individual instrumental lessons. The flourishing choirs and bands add a significant dimension to the cultural and social experience of pupils in the school, with high quality performances much appreciated by parents and others, and the performances of lower attaining pupils equally valued.
157. Teaching, in both key stages, is usually good and often very good; Teachers have good subject knowledge. Their enthusiasm for the subject is infectious, evoking interest and excitement from pupils. Teaching is often accompanied by much good humour built upon the very good relationships between pupils and staff. All lessons are characterised by high expectations of achievement but relevant to the attainment level of the individual pupil. They feel valued and respond well to this approach. The hard work of music teachers, school staff and outside specialist musicians alike, finds its reward in pupils' great enthusiasm and esteem for the subject and for their teachers. The pace of lessons is good, with a wide variety of activities to occupy and interest pupils throughout. The teachers' commitment to extra-curricular activities is commendable.
158. The style of reporting has been improved since the last inspection. Other criticisms such as the nature of the accommodation for music, especially storage of instruments and noise insulation remain the same. The department has been extremely well managed and this has sustained standards of performance.

Physical Education

159. The attainment of pupils in physical education at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with the national average. By the end of key stage pupils have basic ball-handling skills and an understanding of some of the rules of games. Higher attaining pupils can use some simple tactics in games. In gymnastics and dance standards are slightly lower. Body management and control while moving are sound but pupils' range of movements are rather limited. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
160. The overall attainment of pupils in Year 8 is in line with the national average. By Year 8 pupils have a good understanding of games, can apply some strategies in netball and rugby and perform basic skills well. Pupils can use appropriate technical language to describe what they do. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. At both key stages pupils' evaluating and planning skills are unsatisfactory, particularly in games.
161. Most pupils of differing attainment make good progress in Key Stage 2. Their knowledge of games increases steadily because pupils have positive attitudes to learning and teachers have good subject knowledge in games. Their skills in games develop through consistent practice. In a Year 6 rugby lesson, most pupils consolidated throwing and catching skills. Higher attaining pupils were able to pass and receive in the ball into a space. Pupils also played better as a team by the end of the lesson by supporting each other when in the attack. In dance and gymnastics pupils develop their ability to work collaboratively with each other but make less progress in developing their range of movements.
162. Most pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3. Their understanding of rules and how to apply strategies in games develops steadily through having opportunities to refine skills in practice sessions and then put them into the game. In a netball lesson pupils practised defending and shooting and then put this into a competitive game to good effect. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The teachers know pupils well and offer sensitive and well timed support. A pupil with a visual impairment is making good progress using adapted equipment when necessary.
163. Most pupils are enthusiastic about physical education and always come to lessons with appropriate clothing. They are good at sustaining their concentration without intervention from the teacher, working sensibly and with purpose. Pupils enjoy working together and show good collaborative skills. Pupils are respectful of others, property and equipment. When given the opportunity pupils enjoy taking responsibility. They always behave well.
164. Teaching in physical education is good in the majority of lessons. It is very good in a minority of lessons and satisfactory in one in five lessons. In the best lessons tasks and activities are explained clearly, feedback motivates, corrects difficulties, deepens understanding and enhances performance. Expectations are appropriate and pace is brisk. Management of behaviour is good and relationships are positive. Teachers have good subject knowledge in games. Where there are shortcomings in teaching, planning is superficial and the range of teaching strategies is limited.
165. The leadership of the department is unsatisfactory. There is no clear vision for physical education. Formal meetings for staff do not take place to enable discussions of procedure, policy, or the curriculum. The department does not have a shared understanding about what and how different teachers are working. The physical education curriculum lacks breadth and is overly weighted towards games at both key stages. There are few extra curricular activities including matches against other schools.
166. A significant deterioration in the quality of the physical education provision has taken since the previous inspection. The clear direction and support for and from staff is no longer apparent. School teams are not attaining the same level of performance and the range of extra-curricular activities has been markedly reduced.

Religious Education

167. Standards of attainment in lessons and in pupils' work are above the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus both by the end of Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 8. At Key Stage 2, pupils are acquiring a good understanding of the major features of Christianity and other world religions. They are also able to reflect effectively on key areas of religious belief, such as rituals and symbols. For example, pupils in Year 6 can describe the symbolism of light for Christians and Hindus during Christmas and Divali. At Key Stage 3, pupils develop their knowledge and understanding of world religions in depth, particularly in their ability to put their own interpretation on traditional ideas. For example, pupils in Year 8 took the traditional design of a church and turned it into not only a place of worship but also a building for the community.
168. Pupils' progress in lessons is good at both key stages and that made over time is in line with expectations.. Higher-attaining pupils are improving on their prior learning by showing a good understanding of concepts such as the appreciation of prayer as an act of devotion. Lower-attaining pupils are developing their understanding of the use of artefacts in religious ceremonies and customs. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall.
169. The response of pupils is very good. Pupils show application to and enjoyment of the subject. Attitudes to learning are positive and pupils show respect for each other and for their teachers. Pupils are conscientious and show commitment to learning. At Key Stage 3, in particular, they are keen to demonstrate an understanding of religious practices and are interested to learn about differing beliefs in a multi-faith society. Above all, a sense of enjoyment pervades religious education lessons and this adds to the productiveness of the learning experience for all pupils particularly when given opportunities for quiet reflection.
170. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject. In the best lessons, planning is augmented by the use of a range of teaching resources, which stimulate the pupils and set high expectations. In such lessons, the pace is brisk and purposeful. Teachers work hard and to good effect at creating a good learning atmosphere. Homework is set regularly, and aspects of research completed by pupils are improving the standards achieved in lessons. Lesson planning is thorough and there are excellent relationships between teachers and pupils based on mutual respect. Lessons are conducted with pace and vigour and there are high expectations which have a positive effect on pupils' motivation and progress.
171. The curriculum follows guidelines in the local Agreed Syllabus. The time allocated for teaching the subject is adequate. Planning is effective and enables teachers to build on pupils' previous knowledge systematically, lesson by lesson and year-on-year. Religious education makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the study of a range of beliefs and customs of the world's religions.
172. The department is led effectively and efficiently. The co-ordinator has produced an effective and informative set of policies and documents for all aspects of the department's work. Good support is given to non-specialist teachers, although there is insufficient time allocated to the monitoring of teaching and learning.
173. Accommodation is good and rooms have bright displays of pupils' work, which is conducive to learning. There are some good artefacts for the major religions studied but insufficient use is made of information technology. The department has effectively addressed the issues of the last inspection report and has made very good progress.

176.

PART C: INSPECTION DATA

176. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

177 The inspection team consisted of eight inspectors including a lay inspector. During the week 119 lessons, 16 registration sessions, key stage assemblies, and a range of extra curricular activities were inspected. Teachers were seen teaching several times. Planned discussions were held with pupils, teachers, other members of staff and governors. The inspectors looked at the written work of many pupils including a sample across the range of pupils' attainment for each year group. A large amount of documentation including teachers' planning provided by the school was analysed before and during the inspection. The registered inspector held a meeting attended by sixty-five parents shortly before the inspection, and analysed 138 responses to the questionnaire about their opinions distributed by the school. Inspectors spent a total of 31 inspector days in school, gathering first hand evidence. They spent 85 hours observing lessons, two hours talking formally to pupils, and 20 hours in evaluating pupils' work.

176. **DATA AND INDICATORS**

176. **Pupil data**

	Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)	Number of pupils with statements of SEN	Number of pupils on school's register of SEN	Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals
Y5 – Y8	497	15	88	30

176. **Teachers and classes**

176. **Qualified teachers (Y5 – Y8)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent):	22.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher:	22.1

176. **Education support staff (Y5 - Y8)**

Total number of education support staff:	12
Total aggregate hours worked each week:	184

176. **Financial data**

Financial year:	1998/99
	£
Total Income	790730
Total Expenditure	780697
Expenditure per pupil	1597
Balance brought forward from previous year	-18600
Balance carried forward to next year	-4473

176. **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 390

Number of questionnaires returned: 138

Responses (percentage of answers in each category):

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel the school encourages parents to play an active part in the life of the school	6	48	22	18	6
I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren)	13	56	14	11	6
The school handles complaints from parents well	7	37	39	7	10
The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught	10	41	25	22	2
The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress	6	46	21	20	7
The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons	18	49	21	10	2
I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home	9	53	12	19	7
The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren)	15	49	29	6	1
The school achieves high standards of good behaviour	10	59	24	5	2
My child(ren) like(s) school	17	64	14	4	1

176.

176.