

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

**Millway Middle School**  
Northampton

LEA area : Northampton

Unique Reference Number : 122086

Headteacher : Mr P Sentance

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Reporting inspector : Mrs B O'Brien  
13019

Dates of inspection : 21 - 25 June 1999

Under OFSTED contract number: 704986

Inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school : Middle deemed secondary

Type of control : County

Age range of pupils : 9 - 13

Gender of pupils : Mixed

School address : Millway  
Northampton  
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Appropriate authority : Governing Body

Name of chair of governors : Mrs J Wright

Date of previous inspection : May 1995

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

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## MAIN FINDINGS

### What the school does well

The climate for learning in the school is very strong and contributes to improving standards

The attitudes, behaviour and personal relationships of pupils are very good.

The school provides very good opportunities for the moral and social development of pupils.

There is strong leadership by the headteacher.

The school is very efficient in its financial control and administration, and provides good value for money.

Procedures for monitoring the progress and personal development of pupils are very effective.

The extra-curricular activities and Community Education Programme enrich the experience of pupils.\_\_\_\_

### Where the school has weaknesses

Overall, standards of attainment in French are unsatisfactory.

Standards of attainment in science at Key Stage 3 are below the national average.

Assessment information is not used consistently in all subjects to help in the planning of appropriate work for future lessons.

Statutory requirements for the teaching of information technology are not fully met.

The policy for monitoring and evaluation does not have a consistently sharp focus on improving teaching and raising standards.\_\_\_\_

**Millway Middle School is a good school with many good features. The school has more strengths than weaknesses. The governors' action plan will set out how the weaknesses identified are to be addressed. The plan will be sent to all parents or guardians of pupils at the school.**

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

The school has made good progress overall since the last inspection in 1995. The development of the management of learning policy, a comprehensive personal and social education programme, significant accommodation improvements and the development of the community education programme all contribute to the strong ethos for learning in the school. Very good progress has been made in long term planning through a comprehensive school development plan, year development plans, and subject development plans, all of which clearly indicate actions to be taken, time-scales, resource implications, criteria, and targets for success. However, there has been insufficient progress in relation to the systematic evaluation of the school's success. Satisfactory progress has been made overall in the sharing of best classroom practice, although effective processes are not yet consistently in place in all subjects. The structure of lessons is now more consistent and focussed. There has been good progress in the review of procedures for the assessment of pupils. The school has done much to improve its accommodation, in particular, the development of the courtyard area into specialist facilities for art, information technology and science. Satisfactory progress has been made in putting new structures in place for collective worship. However, these are not consistently implemented in a way which provides opportunities for personal reflection by individual pupils. Statutory requirements are still not met.

There is every indication that, with the systems and structures now in place, the school is well placed for further improvement.

## Standards in subjects

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

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

E\_\_English\_C\_D\_\_\_Mathematics\_B\_B\_\_\_Science\_D\_E\_\_\_

Over the last three years there has been an upward trend in the standards achieved in the Key Stage 2 national tests. In 1998 attainment overall was about average. Results were broadly in line with the national average in English, above average in mathematics, and below average in science. Overall, across all three subjects, pupil's performance in the tests was below average compared with similar schools. However, the pupils who are currently in Key Stage 2, are attaining standards which are, overall, above average in the three subjects.

By the age of 13 when they leave the school, pupils' attainment is about average in all subjects, apart from science. Some pupils achieve above the national expectation in aspects of English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, music and physical education. Standards in information technology are limited by the lack of opportunities for pupils to gain experience in all aspects required by the National Curriculum. Attainment in French is not high enough given that pupils start learning the language two years before the start of the secondary curriculum.

## Quality of teaching

**Overall quality** **Most effective in:** **Least effective in:** **Years 5-6** **Good** English, mathematics, science, art, history, physical education, religious education **French** **Years 7-8** **Good** English, geography, information technology, physical education **French** **English** **Good** **Years 5, 6 and 8** **Mathematics** **Good** **Years 5 and 8**

The quality of teaching overall is good, and has improved since the last inspection. Teaching was at least satisfactory in 92% of lessons, and in 19% of lessons the teaching was very good or better. Teachers use effective methods and classroom organisation. Relationships with pupils are very good and the majority of teachers set high expectations. Good attention is paid to the development of ideas. Teaching was less than satisfactory in 8% of lessons. Weaker teaching is characterised by a relative lack of structure and pace, insufficient challenge, unclear learning objectives, and work insufficiently matched to pupils' prior attainment and understanding.

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

## Other aspects of the school

**Aspect** **Comment** **Behaviour** **Very good** - is a strength of the school. **Attendance**

**Satisfactory**. Absence is broadly in line with the national average but the number of term time holidays is too high. **Ethos\*** **Very good** - a strength of the school. Pupils' attitudes to learning and relationships are very good. **Leadership and management**

**Good**. The school's aims are effectively reflected through the daily life of the school. Strong leadership by the headteacher provides a clear educational direction for the school. Monitoring and evaluation systems are not implemented consistently throughout the school. **Curriculum** **Good**. The curriculum of the school



is broad and well balanced and has a positive impact on the standards achieved. Current arrangements for information technology do not fully meet the statutory requirements. Very good extra-curricular opportunities. \_\_Pupils with special educational needs\_Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school. Effective provision is made for their teaching and individual support.\_\_Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development \_Very good provision for the moral and social development of pupils; arrangements for spiritual and cultural development are good, opportunities for personal reflection are limited.\_\_Staffing, resources and accommodation\_Satisfactory. The school has a sufficient number of teachers whose qualifications are generally appropriately matched to their teaching commitments. Accommodation has been significantly improved since the last inspection. All departments have sufficient resources to support the current curriculum. \_\_Value for money\_The school provides good value for money in terms of educational standards achieved and the quality of its provision in relation to the resources available for its work.\_\_

\* *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\_What some parents are not**

**happy about**\_\_they are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the school;

it is easy to approach the school;

the school explains clearly what is being taught;

they are kept well informed about their children's progress;

the school enables children to achieve a high standard of work;

it involves children in many activities outside of lessons;

the school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on children;

there is a high standard of behaviour.\_a small number of parents are not satisfied with the work that children are expected to do at home.

—  
The inspectors' judgements support the positive views expressed by parents. The school is welcoming and staff demonstrate a high level of commitment to the well-being of pupils. Inspectors found that pupils take full advantage of the wide range of opportunities that the school offers. Pupils have a positive attitude to their work and value the achievements of their peers. Homework is appropriately set, is well matched to the work in progress in the classroom, and it helps pupils to consolidate and extend ideas in the majority of instances.

### **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

To build on the school's strengths and to address some important weaknesses the governors, headteacher and staff should give attention to the following:

Raise standards of attainment in French, through: (paras 20, 34, 67, 73, 168, 172, 173)

pursuing staff training opportunities related to the National Curriculum,

- enhancing the subject knowledge of teachers,
- improving pupil assessment and marking procedures.

Fulfil the statutory requirements for information technology, through: (paras 23, 40, 71, 157, 164, 166)

ensuring that all pupils have access to appropriate experiences of data-logging and modelling.

Further develop the consistent use of assessment to inform teaching and learning, through; (paras 33, 36, 47, 97, 100, 108, 118, 119, 127, 130, 137, 144, 146, 152, 156, 162, 166, 172, 173, 188, 191, 195, 197)

effective implementation of the school policy on setting targets for individual pupils,

- using the analysis of assessment information to plan appropriate activities for the next unit of work,
- using the subject level descriptors to ensure a common understanding of what pupils know, understand and can do.

Improve the impact of monitoring and evaluation systems on the quality of teaching and the raising of standards, through: (paras 38, 68, 100, 111, 122, 146, 173, 190, 196, 197)

a more formalised and focused structure to the senior management team's system of links with middle managers in all areas of the curriculum,

- the introduction of systematic lesson observation within subject teams,
- the identification and sharing of those practices within the school that have a positive impact on improving standards of attainment.

In addition to the key issues, action to address the following weaknesses should be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

the relative underachievement of girls in the national tests in English and science; (paras 86, 113)

- the high number of term time holidays; (para 31)
- the limited opportunities for personal reflection; (paras 50, 54)
- the lack of support staff to manage information technology network maintenance; (para 166)
- the planned intention to address the inadequacy of resources and staff expertise for the teaching of information technology across the curriculum. (paras 81, 165)

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

Millway is a middle school for boys and girls aged 9 to 13 situated on the western side of Northampton. The school receives children from lower schools in and around Duston. There are currently 520 pupils on roll which is above average size. After four years the pupils progress in the main to Duston Upper School. Millway is an increasingly over-subscribed school.

The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average. Attainment of pupils in the current Key Stage 3 was below average on entry to Year 5. Over the past four years there has been an improvement in the attainment of pupils on entry. The attainment on entry of pupils in the current Year 5 is about average, but the school has pupils who cover the full range of ability. The school has 131 pupils at various stages of assessment on the register for special educational needs and this is below the national average. There are nine pupils with statements of special educational needs.

The school's aims emphasise the provision of a welcoming, caring, safe and purposeful environment. These aims stress the development of each child's individual talents, qualities and self-esteem; the achievement of high standards of learning and progress; self-disciplined attitudes and behaviour; promoting an ethos of community and broader learning; expectation and encouragement of respect and caring for others; the creation of a partnership between teachers, pupils, parents and governors working together to enable each child to achieve his or her greatest personal potential.

Current whole-school priorities set out in the school's development plan include continuing to: raise pupils' standards of endeavour and achievement through continuing to raise expectations and improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning

- improve the provision for the variety of pupils' individual differences, abilities and needs, particularly provision for the most able
- improve the use and application of assessment, recording and reporting, in assessing progress, informing planning and setting appropriate targets accordingly and

involving pupils and parents

- improve and evaluate the provision of essential resources to facilitate pupils' progress
- meet set targets for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2.

## Key Indicators

### Attainment at Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2\_Year\_Boys\_Girls\_Total\_\_for latest reporting year: \_1998\_63\_61\_124\_\_

**National Curriculum Test Results**\_English\_Mathematics\_Science\_\_Number of pupils\_Boys\_36\_48\_42\_\_at NC Level 4 or\_Girls\_41\_37\_32\_\_above\_Total\_77\_85\_74\_\_Percentage at NC\_School\_63\_69\_60\_\_Level 4 or above\_National\_65\_59\_69\_\_

**Teacher Assessments**\_English\_Mathematics\_Science\_\_Number of pupils\_Boys\_35\_49\_38\_\_at NC Level 4 or\_Girls\_44\_38\_33\_\_above\_Total\_79\_87\_71\_\_Percentage at NC\_School\_65\_70\_57\_\_Level 4 or above\_National\_65\_65\_72\_\_

### Attendance

Percentage of half days (sessions)\_\_\_%\_\_missed through absence for the latest\_Authorised\_School\_7\_\_complete reporting year :\_Absence\_National comparative data\_6.1\_\_Unauthorised\_School\_0.5\_\_Absence\_National comparative data\_0.4\_\_

### 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\_19.4\_\_Satisfactory or better\_92.2\_\_Less than satisfactory\_7.8\_\_

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

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

#### **Attainment and progress**

Attainment across the school as a whole is about average. Results in the 1998 **Key Stage 2 tests** for 11 year olds in English were a little above the national average, in mathematics were above, and were below average in science. Overall, across all three subjects, pupils' performance in the tests was below average compared with schools from similar backgrounds. There has been an upward trend in the standards achieved in all these subjects over the last three years and the school is on course to achieve its targets in English and mathematics, following a focus on development in these two subjects. The recent focus on science is now contributing to an improvement in standards. By the **end of Year 8** when pupils leave the school, attainment in English is just above average, in mathematics is average, and in science is a little below average.

Over the past four years there has been a steady improvement in the attainment of pupils on entry, and it is now about average. During their time in the school the overall progress that pupils make is satisfactory, with good progress being made at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science. The progress made in French throughout the school is unsatisfactory.

Pupils with **special educational needs** reach appropriate levels of attainment at both key stages. Their attainment is better when they are being supported by learning support assistants and when they are helped in class by subject teachers who focus on their specific needs. In the school as a whole, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, with very good progress evident at Key Stage 2 in mathematics.

In **English**, pupils' **speaking** skills are good. Pupils respond to oral situations with maturity, are eager to participate in classroom discussion and are very confident in individual situations with adults. Their **listening** skills are good. Pupils' progress in developing even higher standards in speaking and listening is hampered by the dominance of the teacher in some lessons and the lack of systematic opportunities to engage in a wider range of oral activities. An example of good practice was the excellent drama work seen in a Year 5 literacy lesson.

Standards in **reading** are satisfactory overall, and good amongst higher attaining pupils. Year 6 pupils are able to analyse poetry, identifying a range of language features and relating with enjoyment to the poet's intentions. At Key Stage 2 the literacy lessons are demonstrably improving skills through the guided reading sessions. Pupils make good progress in reading independently and widely. Year 8 pupils are reading Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' with understanding and enjoyment.

Standards in **writing** are satisfactory with good progress made as pupils move through the school. Key Stage 2 pupils are able to write in a range of genres and at varying levels of formality. Handwriting and presentation are good in exercise books. Year 8 pupils undertake some careful extended writing. However, higher attaining pupils are not as ambitious and sophisticated in their writing as they could be, because they have not been taught how to craft more complex sentences and improve the overall structure of their assignments.

Across the curriculum, there are good examples of imaginative writing in art, religious education and music. Subject vocabulary is well taught in design and technology, geography and history, where word boxes are used. Spellings are corrected in mathematics. Good group discussion takes place

in personal, health and social education lessons. However, many subjects do not do enough to develop **literacy** skills, for example much written work is in note form.

In **mathematics**, Key Stage 2 pupils are good at following routines, especially when performing calculations, and their use of language and mathematical terminology is particularly good for their age. The higher attaining pupils have a range of strategies for calculating and using known facts, number bonds and rounding methods. The mental calculation strategies of the majority are, however, less well developed, as is their recall of basic number facts. Pupils are able to investigate within mathematics; the higher attaining can set their own problems and apply their knowledge and understanding to new situations.

By the end of Year 8 most pupils are good at handling data and use a wide range of graphical methods. They can order and calculate with directed numbers and can find percentages and fractions of quantities. Many can substitute in simple formulae and can manipulate expressions. They are able to link shape work with the use of coordinates in all four quadrants. Average and lower attaining pupils do not attain as well as they could in Year 8 because they are given work which is too abstract for them and does not build on their level of understanding.

Across the curriculum there are some examples of appropriate use of **numeracy** skills. Many pupils use graphical methods to display data in Year 8 geography enquiries and, with guidance, they are able to locate places in an atlas using degrees of latitude. Year 6 pupils are learning successfully how to use the correct methods for measuring volume and temperature in science. However, overall, there are insufficient examples of numeracy in use in other subjects.

In **science**, Key Stage 2 pupils have a generally secure knowledge and understanding of much of the programme of study. Good examples were seen of pupils explaining the main stages of human digestion using the appropriate scientific vocabulary and carrying out a test for a starch and a fat following instructions. When given encouragement pupils can make extremely accurate and detailed observations. However, the depth of knowledge of the lower attaining pupils is patchy. Pupils do not achieve as well as they could in the national tests because they are not made aware of the big ideas and key facts required. Also, there are insufficient opportunities to use information technology and to undertake investigations.

By the end of Year 8, higher attaining pupils are able to use abstract ideas well at a high level to explain, for instance, that an electric current is a flow of electron particles. They are developing their understanding of the similarities and differences between plant and animal cells and can use a variety of separation techniques. However, many pupils are not able to apply their learning to new situations, for instance, they find difficulty in suggesting a good way of separating an unknown mixture. Pupils across the whole ability range show insufficient progress in planning and carrying out whole investigations, although some aspects of skill development are taught well.

### **The remaining subjects of the curriculum**

In the **remaining subjects of the curriculum**, pupils achieve in line with the national average by the time they leave school in all subjects, with some achieving above average in design and technology, geography, music and physical education. However, attainment in French is not high enough given that pupils start learning the language two years before they are required to do so by the National Curriculum. In information technology, pupils' attainment is limited by the lack of opportunities to develop their expertise in all aspects of the subject.



In **art**, pupils investigate and experiment with materials and ideas, use materials with confidence and choose media appropriate to their intentions. They are developing a critical awareness of other artists' work, a language to describe it and an appreciation of how it influences their own ideas. Pupils have a limited experience of three-dimensional work, information technology and printing.

In **design and technology**, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of how their work is to progress as shown in their 'step by step' plans. They use tools and machines with due regard to health and safety. Their presentation and practical skills are being developed and they can measure, cut and shape materials with increasing accuracy. Their skills in designing are not yet sufficiently developed. Design briefs are simple statements of what is to be made, a design specification is not always evident and design ideas are not fully developed.

In **French**, attainment is not high enough, especially in speaking the language. Some top set pupils can produce writing on birthday presents received which is of a higher standard, but this is not reflected in class work. Speaking, listening and reading skills are not well developed because of the emphasis on written exercises and worksheets. Key Stage 2 pupils have no bank of language to draw on and to reapply in new situations, and their pronunciation is poor. By the end of Year 8 pupils do not readily recall or recombine language they have learned in the past with new language. Some top set pupils achieve better by good use of the textbook.

In **geography**, the majority of pupils are able to offer explanations for geographical patterns and many are beginning to identify relevant geographical questions for themselves. Many pupils retain appropriate geographical terminology and apply it in new situations. The most able pupils demonstrate developing skills of analysis and the ability to evaluate evidence to reach appropriate conclusions in individual geographical enquiries, particularly the Swan Valley industry study.

In **history**, pupils can organise, with guidance, their explanations of events and changes, with some high quality understanding of causes, in work on the French Revolution. When writing such essays without help, they tend to describe or narrate rather than explain. They can compare the messages from different sources of evidence about situations, but their powers of critical analysis are insufficiently developed. The curriculum that they have experienced in the school has left them with insufficient knowledge of non-European peoples.

In **information technology**, Key Stage 2 pupils can enter data accurately into a pre-prepared database or spreadsheet, and search and sort data at simple levels. They can present their findings using word processing and simple desk-top publishing, drafting and re-drafting, importing images and presenting for a particular audience. Key Stage 3 pupils use information technology almost exclusively in the context of design and technology, which gives them a limited view of its power in everyday life, but within the set tasks they are able to use software to draw their designs, report on their actions and record their experiences. They have above average ability to select appropriate software for a limited range of purposes, and to discuss the advantages and limitations of the use of information technology in a range of circumstances. Where they attain below national expectation is in the design of data-base and spreadsheet solutions to particular problems, and in the areas that are not covered in the curriculum.

In **music**, pupils' singing is good. When composing music on the themes of 'Dance Macabre' or 'Space Rondo', pupils combine a range of interesting musical ideas and devices into structures. Pupils perform well and have a good understanding of the keyboard and chords. Listening and appraising skills are good for all pupils as they confidently talk about each other's music and

express and justify opinions about performances they hear. In the area of performing from notation attainment is occasionally below expectation for average and lower attaining pupils when playing from difficult music.

In **physical education**, the majority of pupils can use skills with increasing precision, such as in putting the shot. More able pupils demonstrate a high level of stroke work and a developing tactical play in tennis. Most pupils have a general understanding of the safety factors associated with a wide range of athletic events. Pupils are able to sustain energetic activity over appropriate periods of time. Many pupils represent the school in a large number of teams, and several pupils have achieved county, district and regional honours in a wide range of sports.

In **religious education**, pupils can describe some key beliefs and practices of the Christian faith. Year 6 pupils are beginning to explain the meanings conveyed by religious stories. By Year 8, pupils demonstrate increasing sophistication in their use of religious vocabulary and are able to appreciate how religious ideas are commonly expressed in symbolism and ritual.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

Attitudes, behaviour and relationships in the school have improved since the last inspection and are very good, making a positive contribution to standards of achievement, the quality of learning and the quality of life at the school. Pupils' attitudes to work are very good; they are eager to learn and keen to attend school. They work well together, and share equipment and resources well and demonstrate that they are well motivated, interested and responsive in class. They listen well and sustain concentration. Pupils contribute to discussions, generate ideas, share resources and are capable of independent work. They take a pride in their work.

Pupils' behaviour is very good and is a strength of the school. Pupils demonstrate respect for adults and other pupils' interests and opinions. There is clear mutual respect between staff and pupils and respect for personal belongings and the school environment. The school is an orderly community, and pupils understand and uphold school rules and conventions. There is no manifestation of bullying and discussions with pupils confirm this.

The relationships between pupils and teachers and with each other are very good and these have a positive impact on their attitude to work and to the standards achieved. Pupils are happy to talk about their work and quality of relationships with staff and each other.

Pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils act as registration monitors, reception monitors, and librarians. Year 8 pupils assist at parents' evenings, open days, with the sports coaching of younger pupils, and the organisation of sporting activities. The School Council was established this academic year with two representatives from each year group. This is a pilot scheme at present and has been very well received by the school community. Pupils expressed very positive views about this. There is a high participation rate for extra-curricular activities. Pupils set their own targets for personal and academic development at the start of each year, which are monitored by staff and parents. However, opportunities were missed during some lessons for pupils to develop ideas and self-expression. Pupils respond very well when given the opportunity to manage their own affairs.

### **Attendance**

Attendance continues to remain only satisfactory with absence being broadly in line with national averages. Pupils are punctual to school and in class. However, the level of absence due to term time holidays is too high.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

Overall, the quality of teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. In 92% of all the lessons seen the teaching was satisfactory or better with 62% of the teaching good or better. Examples of very good and excellent teaching were seen in English, mathematics, science, art, geography, history, information technology, religious education, physical education and personal, health and social education.

Where the teaching was good or better, common features were seen. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is good and lessons are well planned and linked to National Curriculum requirements. Learning objectives are systematically presented to pupils at the start of lessons and there is an effective review at the end which consolidates learning points and evaluates the work done. Teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils and use incisive questioning to draw out pupils' ideas and level of understanding. Good attention is paid to the development of ideas. Very good examples of this were seen in English, geography and physical education. In the best lessons pupils were provided with good opportunities for independent learning with teachers making well-judged interventions. Assessment information was used effectively to plan future lessons and to help pupils set targets for improvement. However, the use of assessment to improve teaching and learning is not consistent across the school.

Teaching was less than satisfactory in 8% of the lessons observed. The unsatisfactory teaching is characterised by a relative lack of structure and pace, insufficient challenge, unclear learning objectives, and work insufficiently matched to pupils' prior attainment and understanding. Teachers have insufficient subject knowledge in a small number of lessons in mathematics, science, French and history. The recently introduced literacy hour is well taught.

The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is generally good. In addition, learning support assistants focus well on the learning needs of these pupils, including those with statements of special educational need. They are effective in their work and have a positive impact on standards achieved by pupils.

Pupils' work is, on the whole, regularly marked. Some good examples of marking were seen in English and geography. The day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory as opportunities to enable pupils to set specific targets for improvement are not consistently provided across all subjects. Assessment information is not used effectively to plan teaching, and pupils are unclear as to what they can do to achieve higher standards

In the best practice observed, teachers make good use of opportunities to set homework as an integral part of the lessons, both as extension activities and in preparation for the following lessons. Good examples were found in English, art, geography, and religious education, where homework is well matched to the work in progress in the classroom, and helps pupils to consolidate and extend ideas. This confirms the positive views expressed by parents who also praised teachers for providing homework on occasion that actively encouraged the involvement of parents.

The school has introduced procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching that have the potential to be very effective. These now need to be systematically implemented across all departments to ensure consistency, to identify strengths and professional development needs and to measure effectively the impact of teaching strategies in raising standards.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

The curriculum is generally good in quality and has a positive impact on pupils' standards of attainment. The school provides a broad and well-balanced curriculum at both key stages with all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education being taught to all pupils. Current arrangements for the information technology curriculum do not fully meet statutory requirements. Since the last inspection the amount of teaching time has been increased by approximately three hours making the current length of the taught week just above average.

Since the last inspection there has been a conscious decision to focus on English, mathematics and science in order to raise the standards of attainment in these subjects. This policy has paid dividends. At Key Stage 2, substantially more time has been allocated this year to English in response to the National Literacy Strategy. This is working very well and has led to an increase in pace in lessons and contributed to a clearer focus to teaching and learning. The strategy is having an impact on literacy skills across other areas of the curriculum but this process is not yet systematically approached as a whole-school policy. The numeracy initiative has been partially implemented and the National Numeracy Framework is planned to be in place from September. The time allocation for science has been sustained and some positive changes have been made to the curriculum. However, there is still a need to strengthen experimental and investigative science. The information technology curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to work independently but does not cover the National Curriculum requirement to study modelling or data logging. Most information technology is in the context of design and technology at both key stages and there are insufficient opportunities for the subject to enhance learning across the curriculum. Provision for religious education is secure and under review in line with the locally Agreed Syllabus.

All the foundation subjects are taught at both key stages. Less curriculum time has been allocated this year to history, geography and design and technology at Key Stage 2 and these subjects have been amended to follow a reduced programme of work in line with national guidance. At Key Stage 2 the use of classrooms, rather than specialist areas, for design and technology limits the range of projects which can be undertaken. There are also insufficient opportunities for food activities. At Key Stage 3 there is an absence of work on systems and control, particularly mechanisms. French is now taught in all years, one year earlier than at the time of the last inspection. The geography curriculum is very good and provides challenging opportunities for the development of geographical skills, including high quality geographical enquiry skills at Key Stage 3. The history curriculum places too little emphasis on the development of historical knowledge, understanding and process, although this is now being addressed. The pupils have no experience of a non-European culture in history at Key Stage 3 and there are insufficient opportunities for historical research. Curriculum provision for art is satisfactory with good attention paid to observational drawing but three-dimensional work is underrepresented.

The curriculum policy sets a good tone and there is a clear imperative to improve schemes of work in all subjects. Particular attention is focused on identifying clear objectives for lessons, setting work which has high expectations for pupils' standards of attainment and using a range of learning strategies. There are good schemes of work in mathematics, science, geography, art and physical

education and for writing in English.

Good provision is made for the development of all pupils' personal, health and social education (PHSE). The programme is well planned and is taught by all staff. Effective arrangements for health and sex education are in place and the teaching of personal issues are complemented by scientific background in other lessons. Good attention is paid to issues such as drugs education and personal safety. Appropriate elements of careers education are not currently included in the PHSE programme. The school has made very good progress in developing the PHSE curriculum since the last inspection and many relevant activities are provided.

All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. There is a flexible approach to the grouping of pupils which works very well. Setting is used in English and mathematics in all years and in science and French at Key Stage 3; teaching is in mixed ability classes elsewhere. Liaison with local lower and upper schools is good and improving, with a strong programme of shared curriculum meetings, sharing of good practice and the transfer of appropriate information.

The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The withdrawal of pupils from mainstream lessons is kept to a minimum. Teachers have full access to the pupils' reading and spelling ages but have insufficient access to their individual education plans. The support given by the learning support assistants is a particular strength, with their teaching programmes well documented and taught. In-class support is also good and well time-tabled, ensuring appropriate opportunities for pupils within mainstream classes. However, there is no highly developed policy and practice for meeting the needs of the most able pupils other than through extra-curricular provision.

There is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities. Participation rates in sport, where the major team games of football, rugby, hockey, netball and cricket are available, and music, where there are eighteen different activities, are particularly high. During the inspection week the school choir was rehearsing "Was that a Tear" and demonstrated their abilities to sing in three-part harmonies to a very high standard. Residential experiences are also offered to pupils in Years 6, 7 and 8. Termly mathematics and science workshops are held as part of the provision by subject departments. There is an annual day trip to France for Year 8 but no French exchange to assist with pupils' personal or language development. The higher than average provision of extra-curricular activities is effectively complemented by a community education programme which gives pupils opportunities during the evenings, weekends and holiday periods. This includes Northampton Town football in the community, the Duston Music and Drama Centre, the Northampton Trampoline Club, a gymnastic club and the Millwheelers Club which provides activities such as chess, pottery and tennis.

The systems for assessment, recording and reporting are now good and have improved considerably since the last inspection. The school has a clear and improving picture of pupils' attainment on entry, and in other years, which is being used to identify areas of curriculum weakness and to set targets for school improvement. The information which is being provided from the feeder schools is improving and the school now has internal information on pupils' levels of attainment in nearly all subjects in all years. In the best practice objectives for each lesson are shared with pupils. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress and leads to good learning. Very clear targets for individual pupils are written in their books to aid future learning. These are then consolidated as a record at the backs of pupils' exercise books. However, this excellent practice is not yet consistently in use throughout the school. Current practice is, for example, more effective in music than in history or mathematics. Assessment data is not used effectively to improve the

curriculum or planning for future lessons.

All pupils have a personal achievement record for personal and social activities and interests, together with targets relating to attainment and behaviour. These are completed well and pupils can speak confidently about their progress. These are also used to give parents further information at effective termly consultation meetings. Annual reports are provided to parents in line with statutory requirements.

The assessment arrangements for the pupils with special educational needs are good. Pupils' individual needs are carefully analysed and their individual education plans contain well thought out targets although there is little evidence that the pupils know their targets well. Annual reviews are carried out thoroughly and involve parents constructively in reviewing progress.

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

Opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral and social education are good. There have been improvements in provision since the last inspection. The values and aims of the school promote opportunities for pupils to express their thoughts, ideas and beliefs. The high quality of relationships within the school ensures that this is largely achieved. There are some good opportunities for pupils' spiritual development but these are insufficient. The display of pupils' work around the school includes examples of personal expressions of feelings and values through poetry and art. The curriculum in religious education encourages the development of personal responses to situations although there are missed opportunities in other parts of the curriculum. Limited but effective opportunities for personal reflection in tutor groups illustrate effective ways of encouraging pupils to reflect on their own values and gain insights into the beliefs of others. No systematic plan has been formed to create a framework for these spiritual experiences and not all subject areas make a sufficient contribution.

The provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Appropriate opportunities for the development of moral attitudes are well documented in the school values and promoted in the examples of adult role models. Pupils have a recognition of right and wrong reflected in the high standards of behaviour observed both in the classroom and around the school. The code of conduct contributes to the shaping of pupils' development in this area. The personal, health and social education programme (PHSE), which is strong, uses effective strategies to engage pupils in consideration of moral issues.

The provision for pupils' social development is very good. The school has done much to provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities. These include a School Council, reception duties, librarians, and opportunities for older pupils to assist with sports activities for lower school visitors and to help with events for parents. Pupils are encouraged to relate positively to each other through a full programme of sports and music activities, residential visits, and annual dramatic productions. The community education programme provides excellent opportunities for pupils, together with members of the wider local community, to develop relationships and contribute to their own personal development. In these ways pupils participate fully in the community and develop an understanding of citizenship.

Opportunities for pupils' cultural development are good. The arts and music activities provide good opportunities for the development of pupils' appreciation of British culture. Within the school there has been some recognition of the importance of preparing pupils for life in a culturally diverse society. The religious education syllabus considers important features of major world

faiths, and is being developed to reflect a more appropriate balance of these activities. A successful recent bid for funds to support the achievement of ethnic minority groups will assist plans to improve staff awareness of opportunities for multicultural education. There is some evidence in the display of pupils' work of ideas drawn from different cultures and a multicultural dimension is visible in the curriculum of music, history, art, technology and religious education. These developments in the multicultural dimensions of the curriculum suggest that the school is well placed to systematically extend similar experiences into additional subject areas.

The school has improved its provision for an act of collective worship through a structure of assemblies, supported by a theme for the week. In addition, form tutors use the theme during tutor periods. This combination of opportunities creates a structure with the potential to fulfil the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. However, opportunities for personal reflection or for personal response are not consistently provided across all tutor groups. In the best examples observed a genuine sense of silent, personal reflection was achieved. This good practice needs to be shared and extended to tutor groups throughout the school.

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

The procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress and personal development are very good and have improved since the last inspection. Detailed records are maintained of pupils' effort and National Curriculum levels of attainment and annual reports to parents are clear and informative. Of particular note are the records for every pupil of all meetings held between staff and parents. The procedures for monitoring and recording the progress of pupils with special educational needs are good.

The school has developed a very good policy for the positive management of learning which makes a significant contribution to the standards attained. This includes a code of conduct, rewards and sanctions. This is seen by the whole school community to have a very positive impact upon behaviour, attitudes, standards of achievement, the quality of learning, and the quality of life in the school. Behaviour is very good and a strength of the school. The current procedures are very good, and are supported by the whole school community. Behaviour management is very effective and built upon trust between pupils and staff; those who do transgress recognise that they have betrayed that trust and are concerned with making amends. This is supported by an effective and appropriate system of rewards and sanctions. Bullying and gender harassment are virtually non-existent; any cases which do occur are dealt with swiftly and sensitively. Parents are appreciative of the way the school manages pupil behaviour.

The school's procedures for monitoring attendance including that of pupils with special educational needs are effective. The headteacher's half-termly newsletters, the school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents all clearly state the school's expectations. However, the school needs to take more positive action to promote and improve attendance and should actively seek to persuade parents that absence during term-time may not be to their children's best advantage.

Child protection practices are good and understood and supported by all members of the school community. However, the school does not presently have a written statement of its child protection practice. The newly appointed designated teacher for child protection is addressing this. The school makes good use of county agencies for support and guidance and as a means of enhancing the curriculum where appropriate. In particular, the school derives great benefit from the dedication and professionalism of the school nurse and the education welfare officer, both of whom play a very full and active part in the life of the school. The police liaison officer also makes a major

contribution through the provision of health and safety, road safety and drug awareness programmes.

The school very effectively promotes the health, safety and well-being of its pupils. Termly health and safety inspections are carried out with reports being submitted to the governing body. A policy of continuous monitoring is effected. Pupils are confident that they may confide their problems to staff whom they find very responsive and supportive. Pupil and staff relationships were observed to be of a very high order.

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

The school enjoys good partnerships with parents and the community. The quality of information provided for parents by the school is good. The headteacher's newsletters are helpful and informative. Annual reports are appropriate and comprise subject statements on each child's academic and personal performance and an effort grading for each subject. These reports are referenced to National Curriculum levels of attainment and contain details of attendance. Parents are satisfied that termly reports in conjunction with termly parents' evenings provide good information on their children's progress. The school operates an open door policy to allow parental access to staff at all times, and parents appreciate the prompt and supportive way in which the school handles problems. The homework diary is considered to be a very good medium for reinforcing links between the school and parents. Parents of children with special educational needs are encouraged to take part in their children's annual reviews and have every opportunity to discuss progress and problems with staff.

Parents' involvement with their children's learning is good. Parents assist with hearing reading in school, visits and sporting events and are very supportive of sports, music and drama performances. Support for the Parents Association is very strong. It raises significant sums of money each year that is expended on learning resources.

Parents feel welcome in school and governors and staff encourage them to play a full and active part in school life.

Links with local industry are primarily with British Timken who, through the Nene Foundation, provided funding for the recent conversion of the quadrangle to additional art, information technology and science facilities.

The school is extremely active in the provision of community education. It is the home of the Duston Music Centre and the Millwheelers Club. A wide range of community activities, often involving pupils, takes place throughout the year. These include 'Information Technology for All' courses, school governors' training, trampolining classes, tennis facilities, gymnastics, netball, and courses in association with Northampton College. The Millwheelers Club provides half-term and holiday activities ranging from football to pottery. The school is to be commended on the success of these initiatives and the contribution they make to the Duston community. These activities are self-funding and make a small but worthwhile contribution for the provision of additional learning resources.

The school involves itself in voluntary services to the community. Charitable fund-raising plays a prominent part in school life. Charities supported include Macmillan Nurses and Poppy Day; other charities are targeted by pupils and funds raised through non-uniform days, for example. The proceeds of the Christmas concert are donated to a cancer hospital for children and the Marie



Curie Foundation; sponsored activities include a swim in aid of the British Heart Foundation, and walks in aid of Guide Dogs for the Blind.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

The school has a clear statement of aims that are reflected through the daily life of the school. Parents are very supportive of this view and pupils feel a sense of belonging to the school community. Strong leadership by the headteacher provides a clear educational direction. There is a commitment to the improvement of quality and standards in the school which is having a positive impact. A systematic structure for policy documents has been introduced since the last inspection. These policies now need to be more consistently implemented in all areas of the school in order to raise standards of achievement further.

The governing body, through its committee structure, is carrying out its strategic role effectively, and is a strength for supporting future school development. The contributions by governors in support of the headteacher and staff are well informed by a good understanding of the school, through a pattern of communication and visits, and of their role in ensuring the quality of education within it. The governing body is well placed to monitor the progress made by the school in achieving its aim to improve standards.

The school has acted upon the issue raised at the last inspection to improve long-term planning and systematic evaluation of the school's work. There is a comprehensive school development plan, as well as year development plans and subject development plans, all of which clearly indicate actions to be taken, time-scales, resource implications, criteria and targets for success. The roles and responsibilities within the management structure have been clarified since the last inspection with systems for policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation in place. However, these policies are not consistently implemented across all departments. The system of links between the senior management team and middle managers is insufficiently focussed and formalised. There is now a need to more fully implement monitoring and evaluation procedures, at all levels of management in all areas, to ensure consistency of practice with a sharp focus on improving teaching and raising standards.

The very positive ethos reflects the school's commitment to improvement, and this is a strong feature of the school. Good relationships are fostered and all pupils are encouraged to behave well, play an active part in the school, take on responsibilities, and take full advantage of any opportunities that the school offers.

The policy for special educational needs is clear, concise and up to date. It is reviewed by the governing body and the work in this area is monitored carefully by the governor responsible for special educational needs. The governing body carries out its statutory duties diligently and shows a helpful interest in all aspects of special educational needs. Good attention is paid to the Code of Practice.

The school meets statutory requirements well, with two exceptions. The daily act of collective worship is not fully implemented, and the school does not currently fully comply with statutory requirements in information technology in relation to data logging and modelling.

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

There are sufficient teaching staff for the number of pupils in the school. The experience and qualifications

of staff adequately match the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is a good mix of staff trained in the primary, middle and secondary phases.

Most subject co-ordinators have relevant specialist qualifications. The majority of staff work across many subject areas. This does not have a negative effect on standards in religious education, geography and art where staff have appropriate levels of subject knowledge. However, some teachers of mathematics, science, history, and French lack sufficient subject expertise and this has a negative effect on standards attained in a minority of lessons.

The school is well served by its non-teaching staff. They are suitably deployed, are active in the administration and maintenance of the school and make a valuable contribution in support of the delivery of the curriculum. Support staff for pupils with special educational needs provide effective support for individuals and also operate flexibly to provide some support to others in class.

Staff development is linked to the school and subject development plans except in French. At the time of the last report the appraisal system had lost impetus. This has been rectified and the appraisal cycle is now fully operational and includes the appraisal of non-teaching staff. The process is outlined within a useful policy. The school provides a good and comprehensive support programme for newly qualified teachers. An induction programme for new staff is in development. All staff have clear and appropriate job descriptions.

Accommodation is generally fit for the purpose. The school has done much to improve its accommodation since the last inspection. In particular the development of the courtyard area into specialist facilities for art, information technology and science has enhanced these subjects and has brought about the removal of two of the original five mobile classrooms. However, the food technology room and the information technology room are small in relation to the size of some classes for which they are time-tabled.

The poor facilities offered by the mobile classrooms was highlighted in the previous report and, although the building programme has enabled the school to remove two of them, the remaining three are no more than adequate and are not conducive to effective teaching and learning. They lack facilities, so classes have to move into the main building to access computers, video and television. In the summer the doors have to be left open for ventilation resulting in distraction from traffic noise. They leak, some of the wooden steps are warped and torn carpets in places are a health and safety risk.

Rooms are light and, apart from the new science and art rooms, well ventilated. They are well furnished and provide an environment conducive to learning. Teaching rooms and corridors are enhanced by high quality of displays which celebrate pupil achievement. Management of the site is very good and the buildings and grounds are maintained in very good order. The school is clean and is kept free of any signs of litter or graffiti.

The multi-purpose gym is well looked after and appropriately used. There is a lack of accommodation for physical education staff and pupils' changing rooms are too small for large classes. Outside, the hard surface areas and grassed areas are good and well maintained and provide the school and the local community with a valuable resource.

All departments have sufficient resources to deliver the curriculum. Religious education and history will require additional resources to support their current curriculum review. Art has sufficient

consumable stock but does not have the range and amount of art reproductions and artefacts to support fully the knowledge and understanding aspect of the curriculum. There has been an improvement in the range and number of books for English since the last report.

Pupils have access to computers outside the information technology lessons, however they are not used sufficiently in other subjects to support information technology across the curriculum.

Administrative support in the library is very good. There is organised access during lessons and the library is available at other times during the day for private study and research. There is a good range of fiction and non-fiction books in the library and the stock is supplemented by the Schools Library Service.

## **The efficiency of the school**

The financial resources available to the school are well managed and contribute effectively to the standards achieved in the school. The quality of strategic planning has been improved since the last inspection and the school development plan is now more effectively costed. An increase in the budget this year has resulted in an appropriate expansion in staffing levels, an increase in the resources budget and an additional allocation for staff development activities. The budget provided to support work for pupils with special educational needs is carefully managed, particularly through the provision of learning support assistants. The governors have a good knowledge of the work of the school and are becoming increasingly effective in supporting staff in their management roles. The provision of budgets to subject departments is closely related to the priorities of the school development plan.

Procedures for financial control and monitoring are very good. A recent auditor's report confirms that systems are controlled to a high standard. The recommendations from this report are being implemented. Regular financial monitoring information is provided for the chair of the governors' finance committee, and reported to the termly meeting of the governing body which ensures an appropriate match between projected and actual expenditure. Good use is made of the staffing, accommodation and resources available to the school. The school operates with a very small contingency fund during a period when improvements to the accommodation are being financed. Whilst the school has benefited from effective use of its resources this approach is not recommended as a long-term strategy.

The school's planning process ensures a strong relationship between the educational priorities of the school and the construction of the annual budget plan. Budget monitoring is secure and systems are in place to ensure cost effectiveness in purchases. Progress has been made since the last inspection in the effective allocation of the budget through needs analysis. The school provides good value for money in terms of the educational standards achieved and the quality of its provision in relation to the resources available for its work.

## **PART B: CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

### **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

#### **English**

Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 8 attainment is just above the national average. Standards overall have improved since the last inspection. Attainment in the Key Stage 2 national tests is in line with national expectations across the ability range. Girls' attainment, however, falls just below average. This is out of line with current national trends. Teacher assessment at Key Stage 2 puts pupil attainment well below the average for similar schools, but evidence reveals that these assessments under-estimate pupils' achievements.

At Key Stage 2 pupils' speaking skills are satisfactory. They respond to oral situations with maturity and demonstrate their ability to use standard English. They are eager to participate in classroom discussion and engage confidently on an individual basis with adults. Listening skills are good. The speaking and listening observed was predominantly teacher-led. More systematic approaches to teaching speaking and listening skills could extend the range of activity required to provide the full requirements of the National Curriculum and to develop existing good practice, for example some excellent drama was seen in a Year 5 literacy lesson.

Pupils take a pride in their written work. Handwriting and presentation are good in exercise books and there are excellent displays in corridors and classrooms. Pupils are required to write in a range of genres and at varying levels of formality and it is evident that they enjoy their work. However, there are insufficient opportunities at this key stage for extended writing which is crafted and redrafted to produce a polished final version. Much of the work which takes place in class is short: notes, one sentence answers or single paragraphs.

Many other subjects play some part in helping to develop literacy skills. There are good examples of imaginative writing in art, religious education and music; subject vocabulary is well taught in design and technology and history, where there is the use of "word boxes" and in mathematics correction of spellings was seen. There is good group discussion in personal and social education. However, many subjects do not do enough to develop reading skills; for example, reading round the class is not enough to ensure understanding of texts, and much written work is brief or in note form. There is not a co-ordinated and formalised whole-school policy for developing literacy across the curriculum, based on the best current practice.

At the end of Year 8 pupils' attainment is slightly above the national average. Attainment in speaking and listening is good. As with Key Stage 2, there are insufficient systematic opportunities provided to promote a wider range of oral activities. Some group discussion was seen in Years 7 and 8 but it lacked appropriate challenge. In individual conversations, however, pupils are very confident. For example, they are able to speak with authority and enthusiasm about their private reading.

Scores for reading tests reveal that significant progress has been made in this element of the subject, and attainment in reading is average overall, and good amongst higher attaining pupils. Pupils keep a record of their private reading in their Key Stage 3 folders and in Year 8 are reading Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet" with some enjoyment.

Written work is at least satisfactory and scrutiny of Year 8 folders reveals some careful extended writing.

The most able pupils would benefit from further advice on how to become more ambitious and sophisticated writers, such as how to craft more complex sentences and improve the overall structure of their assignments. There is evidence of the existence of the drafting process and, where it is seen, gains are being made. Accuracy levels are satisfactory across the ability range and pupils understand the need to produce neat, attractively presented work.

At the end of Key Stage 2 the rate of pupils' progress is accelerating and evidence points to slightly above average attainment in reading and writing. Literacy lessons encourage close reading of texts and in a number of lessons seen Year 6 pupils were engaged in the analysis of poetry. They were able to identify a range of language features and relate with enjoyment to the poet's intentions. Book boxes held in classrooms provide pupils with appropriate reading material and a range of guided reading activities ensures that progress is made with independent reading. The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs is at least satisfactory across the age range

The quality of pupils' response is very good across the age and ability range and attitudes to learning are a major strength in the subject. Pupils arrive at lessons eager to learn and are co-operative and enthusiastic about their work. Relationships are good and the atmosphere in lessons is supportive. Concentration levels are high, especially when pupils are interested in the topic, such as poetry in Year 6. Pupils are willing to persevere when tasks are more difficult. This commitment is further harnessed by the department through the development of systematic pupil self-evaluation.

The quality of teaching is good with over two-thirds of lessons being judged good or better. Much has been accomplished by teaching staff in the preparation and delivery of literacy lessons. There is evidence of hard work and departmental co-operation in the organisation of schemes of work and lesson planning. Weekly review sessions have brought a cohesion of purpose into the classrooms especially with Key Stage 3 literacy lessons. In the majority of lessons there is good pace and sharp focus, and there is evidence that teaching by non-specialist staff has improved since the last inspection.

The impact of teaching on pupils' achievement is good. Only one lesson was judged to be less than satisfactory. This was because the group discussion task was not sufficiently well prepared by pupils in advance and they did not have a clear understanding of the oral skills involved. In all lessons judged good or better there were explicit learning targets and in the one lesson judged excellent pupils were given clear responsibility for their own learning. In general, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunities for independent learning.

Marking is satisfactory, with much evidence of supportive comment and encouragement. Marking could be more focused to identify more precisely on an individual pupil's next steps in learning, targeting, for example, ways in which each pupil could be more ambitious in choices of vocabulary and sentence structures. Homework is appropriately set, helps pupils to consolidate and extend ideas and makes a positive contribution to standards of achievement

The management of the department is very good. Very good progress has been made in establishing schemes of work for literacy and there is judicious management of the budget and resources. Evidence points to more collaboration taking place within the department through well-designed, and often creative, schemes of work. At present there is insufficient focus in schemes of work on multicultural texts, but a poetry module is currently being prepared. The development plan reveals a clear-sighted vision of the needs of the department. The department's development plan acknowledges the need for a wider range of fiction for classroom book boxes, although they already contain a suitable range of material. Teachers are also planning to ensure that the pace

and purpose achieved in Key Stage 2 literacy lessons continues into Key Stage 3. The development plan identifies the need to extend the use of information technology into the English schemes of work.

The accommodation is very good and classrooms, with their excellent displays, provide rich learning environments for all pupils. This is a happy department which is making significant improvements to the attainment of pupils. Since the last inspection a spelling policy has been implemented; drama has found a place in the curriculum; new methods of recording assessment are being used and resources have been significantly improved.

The quality of education represents an improvement on the standard indicated in the previous OFSTED report. In order to improve the quality of provision attention should be given to the following. A more coherent and systematic speaking and listening policy should be implemented which will extend the range of pupils' experiences and highlight the skills required by this element of the subject. More opportunities are needed for sustained writing, especially at Key Stage 2, placing increased emphasis on the stages of planning and drafting. Procedures for assessing pupils' written work should be more precisely identified. There should be clear advice offered on the higher level skills of structure, sentencing and vocabulary as well as the identification of technical errors

## **Mathematics**

Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of year 8 attainment is in line with the national average, although some pupils are attaining well above the national expectations. The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good, especially at Key Stage 2.

The Key Stage 2 national test results have improved year on year from being below the national average in 1996 to above in 1998. When the results are compared to similar schools they are above average. In 1996, boys, even though they were below the national average, were achieving higher grades than girls. Both are now achieving similar levels. Pupils are good at following routines, especially when performing calculations, and have a good understanding of data handling. Their use of language and mathematical terminology is particularly good for their age. The most able pupils have a range of strategies for calculating; they use known facts, number bonds and rounding methods. The mental calculation strategies of the majority of pupils are less well developed, as is their recall of basic number facts.

Pupils in both key stages are able to investigate within mathematics. The more able can set their own problems and apply their knowledge and understanding to new situations. They are able to search for patterns and can make generalisations based on their observations. When working with shape and space pupils can recognise properties of regular and irregular shapes and have a basic understanding of transformations.

At the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment is in line with national averages and most pupils are working at appropriate levels. A few pupils are working well above the national averages. Much of the work covered in Year 8 is challenging to many of the middle and lower ability pupils. Weaknesses occur when pupils do not have a conceptual understanding of the topics and have been given a set of routines to follow which for many pupils tend to be far too abstract. Most pupils are good at handling data and use a wide range of graphical methods. In number they can order and calculate with directed numbers, find percentages and fractions of quantities. Many can substitute in



simple formulae and manipulate expressions. They are able to link shape work with the use of co-ordinates in all four quadrants.

The progress of pupils is good at Key Stage 2. This is a result of well-planned progression and teaching which is more focused. At Key Stage 3 progress is at least satisfactory. Progress is better when pupils are clear about the mathematics they are learning and when tasks are pitched at a level commensurate with their ability. Lower attaining groups still make significant progress especially at Key Stage 2. Pupils usually work at a good pace during lessons and consolidate their work through homework, particularly in Year 8. Pupils with special educational needs are identified but staff do not always take account of their individual needs in their teaching. The learning support assistants are effective in their work but there is not always sufficient advance planning.

The quality of pupils' response is generally good. Pupils concentrate fully during explanations and sustain their interest throughout the lessons even when the teaching is unstimulating. They give good, clear oral answers using correct mathematical terminology. The older pupils tend to give superficial answers, in some cases before they have thought through the answer. All pupils show a positive attitude towards the subject, listening attentively to explanations from teachers and from their peers.

The quality of teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory. The majority of lessons observed were good. Teachers' planning is generally good and follows the scheme of work, with clear learning objectives. Some of the objectives are too broad and task-orientated. The lesson objectives are shared with the pupils. Most lessons have a discernible structure, all starting with a mental session and having a plenary session, used as a way of confirming the learning that has taken place. There is a calm working atmosphere in classrooms and teachers value the pupils' contributions. Techniques which involve and engage pupils, such as questioning, are reasonably well developed at Key Stage 2, but less so at Key Stage 3. There is good use of correct mathematical language by most of the staff especially when giving explanations which are always clear and concise.

The quality of teaching has a direct effect on pupils' responses although most already have a positive attitude to learning. Pace is often maintained by a lesson structure or by interventions which keep the pupils on task and continually thinking about their work. Some teachers have few strategies for developing concepts. They tend to rely on single methods for working out answers. Little modelling of ideas and procedures was seen. Teachers require good presentation in books, but sometimes too much emphasis on specific setting out hinders progress and understanding. Marking is generally carried out well, with targets identified, but these do not always indicate the next stage of learning. They are too often vague and concerned with layout and completion of tasks. Pupils are not always clear about their targets and many do not write them into the sheet at the back of the book. Occasionally lack of appropriate subject knowledge by the teacher leads to poor learning, as does the inappropriate pace of some lessons. This can be too slow giving pupils too much time and freedom or too fast not giving pupils sufficient time to respond and consolidate understanding.

The quality of subject management is good. The department is well led. Staff are enthusiastic and supportive. There is a well-written scheme of work which will need to be amended to take account of the National Numeracy Strategy. There are adequate resources but there is insufficient use of practical materials, especially by teachers when modelling the mathematics pupils are learning. There is some very good mathematics display in the classrooms and around the school, giving the subject a high profile.

Since the last inspection standards have continued to improve and emphasis has been placed on developing teaching styles especially at Key Stage 2. There has been a systematic analysis of test results which has been used to focus learning. A number of monitoring procedures have been organised but many of these are still in their infancy and need to be further developed.

In order to improve the quality of provision, the focus for teaching at Key Stage 3 needs to be on conceptual development rather than on learning techniques, with further identification of learning objectives which are shared with pupils. A continuation of the programme of numeracy lessons and activities, giving a clear structure of mental calculating strategies and of number facts, should be taken into Key Stage 3. Further development is required of teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy. The department should continue to develop the use of language and terminology more fully, and should incorporate information technology into the teaching and learning.

## **Science**

Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 8 standards of attainment are a little below the national average. Standards of attainment have been very low but are now improving. The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory at both key stages and their standards of attainment are commensurate with their abilities.

In the Key Stage 2 national tests over the last three years, pupils' attainment was well below the national average and well below the average for similar schools. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was in line with national averages indicating that the higher attaining pupils are performing satisfactorily. The girls are underachieving in the Key Stage 2 national tests. Over the past three years the results of the boys at age 11 have been below average but improving and they are now much closer to national expectations. The results of the girls have been much weaker, below average and over the same period have shown continued decline. Their progress is approximately sixth months behind what it should be.

At the end of Key Stage 2 the attainment of the current pupils is above average and the gap between the attainment of the boys and the girls has been narrowed. This shows an improvement on last year's standards at Key Stage 2. The pupils have a generally secure knowledge and understanding of much of the programme of study. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to use information technology, and the development of whole investigations, whilst good in Year 5, is unsatisfactorily developed. Good examples were seen of pupils explaining the main stages of human digestion using the appropriate scientific vocabulary and carrying out the test for a starch and a fat following instructions. When given encouragement they can make extremely accurate and detailed observations, as for example in a Year 6 lesson where they observed and recorded the many changes which occurred when a mixture of water, jelly, oil and other unknown substances, "A Witches Brew", was heated. However, the depth of knowledge of the lower attaining pupils is patchy and all pupils need to be more aware of the big ideas and the key facts they require to do well in the national tests.

At the end of Year 8 the current pupils' standards of attainment are a little below average but show some improvement from the end of Key Stage 2 where their results were well below average. The boys have continued to make better progress than the girls and the lower attaining pupils have made up more ground than the higher attaining pupils. The pupils on the special needs register continue to make satisfactory progress up to the end of Year 8. The higher attaining pupils are able to use

abstract ideas well at a high level to explain for instance that an electric current is a flow of electron particles. They are developing their understanding of the similarities and differences between plant and animal cells and can use a variety of separation techniques. However, many pupils are not able to apply their learning to new situations, for instance, they find difficulty in suggesting a good way of separating an unknown mixture. Pupils across the whole ability range show insufficient progress in planning and carrying out whole investigations, although some aspects of skill development are taught well.

The pupils are well behaved in most science lessons and when involved in practical work pay due attention to health and safety. Where the teaching is stimulating they respond extremely well and show the ability to think creatively, work independently and show evidence of having enquiring minds. However, in many lessons pupils' learning is restricted by the narrow confines of the over-directed activities which are set by most teachers. The pupils' workbooks indicate that too little attention is paid to the social and moral aspects of science.

The overall quality of teaching is similar to that reported at the last inspection. Most teaching observed was satisfactory or good in quality but approximately one fifth was unsatisfactory. Occasionally it was excellent. Overall, the teaching has a positive impact on standards of attainment with a minority of outstanding teaching bringing the very best out of the pupils.

The best lessons are characterised by excellent subject knowledge and a highly developed individual teaching style, drawing upon innovative learning approaches which stimulate and challenge the pupils. This mostly works very well, but the impact on pupils' standards of attainment would be even better if there was greater clarity about the key teaching points, if the National Curriculum level descriptors were used to give more focus to improving the pupils' attainment to the next planned stage, and if more time was taken to test whether the pupils had succeeded in meeting the lesson objectives. A Year 5 lesson on diets, for example, which was structurally satisfactory, did not encourage the pupils to make predictions or draw out from them what they already knew and understood about the topic. Weaker teaching was unsuccessful because of uncertain subject knowledge, unsatisfactory classroom organisation and management, or poor questioning which failed to involve many of the girls. Homework is set regularly by all teachers.

Teachers follow the provided schemes of work but daily lesson plans do not provide work which is well matched to the needs of individual pupils. There is an effective system for assessing pupils' levels of attainment in knowledge and understanding but no equally robust strategy for assessing attainment and progress in experimental and investigative science. Information about the National Curriculum levels attained by individuals is available at the end of every year. This is very useful and starting to be used to inform curriculum planning.

The department is satisfactorily led and a number of important improvements have been implemented during the past year. There is good accommodation and whilst the subject is appropriately resourced there is a need for more suitable texts and secondary sources at both key stages, particularly Key Stage 2. Health and safety documentation needs to be brought up to date and a health and safety audit would be beneficial. There is no science club but a joint Saturday morning workshop with mathematics is planned for the near future. The curriculum meets statutory requirements but there is insufficient emphasis on experimental and investigative science, which does not increase sufficiently in levels of challenge through the key stages. The use of information technology is unsatisfactory and some aspects of the programme of study are taught at the wrong time. Target setting is used by most teachers on a regular basis but sometimes the targets are ill defined and not closely related to pinpointing exactly what the pupil needs to do to improve.

Standards of attainment have declined since the last inspection but satisfactory steps have been taken to restore this situation. The organisation of resources and the liaison with the upper school have improved, an extra science laboratory is available and there has been some recent improvement in the national tests results. More attention needs to be paid to ensuring that all teachers provide interesting, open-ended tasks well matched to all pupils and that feedback is obtained to check what the pupils have learnt in the lesson.

In order to further improve pupils' standards of attainment the department needs to collectively raise the quality of teaching, improve the balance of the curriculum, monitor the progress of pupils more carefully, ensure adequate provision for information technology, and strengthen the pupils' use of scientific language.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

### **Art**

Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 8 attainment is in line with national expectations for pupils of this age. The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is in line with the level expected for this age group. Pupils are producing some closely observed drawings. They are beginning to model form using tones and have an understanding of perspective, for example, in their drawings of landscape. They have knowledge of the works of artists from different periods, for example, portraits of the Tudor period and the landscapes of the Impressionists. They use their knowledge of the techniques used by artists effectively, to develop their work.

At the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment is in line with the national average. Pupils are applying their knowledge to more demanding tasks. The majority of pupils are able to build upon the knowledge and skills acquired at Key Stage 2. They investigate and experiment with materials and ideas, use materials with confidence and choose media appropriate to their intentions. They are developing a critical awareness of other artists' work, a language to describe it and an appreciation of how it influences their own ideas. Pupils have a limited experience of 3D, information technology and printing at both key stages and would benefit from consistent provision to ensure the development of skills. From the evidence of previous work, pupils develop a range of skills and techniques and have gained a good understanding of the properties of a variety of materials. All pupils make satisfactory to good progress in lessons at both key stages.

The quality of pupils' response is good. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils show interest in their work. They support each other and act responsibly in organising themselves and their resources.

The quality of teaching, overall, is satisfactory with some examples of good teaching at both key stages. The best practice offers explicit learning objectives to pupils. However this seldom leads to pupils setting targets to evaluate the progress they are making. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and a range of teaching methods is employed that match the needs of all pupils. Lesson planning is satisfactorily linked to the detailed scheme of work. Teachers are encouraging while making a critical analysis of pupils' work. Homework supports class work when appropriate. There is an inconsistent approach to marking in sketchbooks. Resources are well used and pupils are encouraged to bring in their own resources, as a result of research.

The quality of subject management is good overall. The well-considered scheme of work ensures that the National Curriculum is covered and that there is a strong link between investigating and making, and knowledge and understanding. The topics within the scheme ensure coverage and continuity of learning over the four years in drawing and painting and the links between other artists' work and pupils' work.

Staff are supported through regular meetings where the effectiveness of past topics and the requirements of future topics are discussed. Non-specialist teachers receive practical help through workshop demonstrations led by the head of department. Assessment procedures are in place but they need to be applied more consistently to the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupil evaluations do not allow for target-setting within lessons. Displays of current and recent work enhance the art room and are a prominent feature in the rest of the school. There are appropriate art materials for making art works, but only a limited range of artists' reproductions for critical analysis. Accommodation and storage are adequate.

The quality of education represents a similar standard to that indicated in the previous OFSTED report. In order to improve the quality of provision teachers should ensure that there are clear procedures linking assessment to the requirements of the National Curriculum. Pupils should be encouraged to take a more active role in evaluating their work, by teachers sharing learning objectives with them, so that evaluation is based on clearly defined targets linked to learning outcomes. A more consistent approach is required to marking sketchbooks in order to provide effective feedback to pupils about their work. Further development of the curriculum should include increased provision of information technology, 3D work and printing for pupils in all years.

### **Design and Technology**

Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 8, attainment is in line with national expectations with a few pupils attaining above average levels. The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is at the level expected for this age group. From scrutiny of work and lesson observations, there is evidence that pupils are developing a routine of presenting and communicating their ideas on paper. They are beginning to generate more ideas but need to annotate their designs so that evaluations can be made to help clarify the final design.

At the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations with a minority achieving higher levels. Observations show that the quality of presentation has progressed, but the design process is still not yet sufficiently developed. Design briefs are simple statements of what is to be made, a design specification is not always evident and design ideas are not fully developed. In practical work, skills are being developed and pupils can measure, cut and shape materials with increasing accuracy. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of how their work is to progress as shown in their 'step by step' plans. They use tools and machines with due regard to health and safety.

Progress is satisfactory in both key stages, but slightly better at Key Stage 3. At Key Stage 2, the use of classrooms, rather than specialist areas hinders the progression of skills but this must be balanced against the good teaching taking place within these classrooms. Over the four year programme there is a clear progression in the quality and scope of work. Pupils gain confidence in the work carried out and transfer knowledge learned in previous projects to their current project.

The response of the pupils is good. They are well behaved and polite in discussions and questioning, showing enthusiasm for their work and they particularly enjoy practical sessions. The positive nature of the response results in pupils being on task throughout the lesson.

The quality of teaching is good. The teachers work well in an area that is not their specialism. All staff show an enthusiasm for their work. This good teaching, spread across both key stages, is having a positive effect on the motivation of the pupils.

The quality of subject management is, in general, good, with some aspects that are satisfactory. Much work goes on to ensure that the large team of teachers involved are prepared and resourced to be able to teach the subject effectively. Assessments are monitored and moderated to ensure consistency. The method of recording assessment needs to be developed further to include information to help identify individual targets for pupils to improve their work.

The schemes of work contain some gaps resulting in some of the areas of the programme of study not being fully covered. There is a lack of food activities particularly in Year 5, and in Key Stage 3 there is a lack of 'systems and control', particularly mechanisms. Some of the areas of electronics are taught under the heading of information technology

The quality of education represents a similar picture to that indicated in the last OFSTED report. In order to improve the quality of the provision, attention should be given to the following actions. Upon the publication of the new National Curriculum Order, schemes of work should be revised with more accurate mapping to identify gaps which could be covered by alternative projects. System and control opportunities should be provided as a discrete area of the curriculum. The methods used to produce a design folder should be reviewed to become more individual to each pupil.

## **Geography**

Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 8 attainment is a little above national expectations. The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs is good. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment is a little below the normal level expected for this age group. The majority of pupils have developed appropriate skills in map reading and photographic interpretation. They are beginning to recognise the processes of human and physical geography which shape the landscape. The majority of pupils understand how these processes influence the character of places, as in Year 5 lessons on Sedbergh. Many pupils use correct geographical terminology, such as urban and rural, in written and verbal responses.

At the end of Year 8 pupils' attainment is a little above the national average. The majority of pupils are able to offer explanations for geographical patterns and many are beginning to identify relevant geographical questions for themselves. Year 8 pupils, for example, demonstrate a satisfactory understanding of the changes taking place in the Spanish tourist industry and the factors which affect holiday choices. The best examples of individual geographical enquiries, particularly the Swan Valley industry study, demonstrate developing skills of analysis and the ability to evaluate evidence to reach appropriate conclusions.

The rate of progress for the majority of pupils is greater at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 2. Many pupils retain appropriate geographical terminology and apply it in new situations. They demonstrate an increasing ability to compare locations on the basis of their geographical features, illustrated by

Year 6 work comparing Kenyan cities with those in the United Kingdom. Good use is made of atlases in a number of contexts. At Key Stage 3 the quality of teachers' questioning skills provides a level of challenge which ensures good progress for pupils of all abilities. The use of individual enquiries in Year 8 enables the most able pupils to demonstrate their individual progress through the application of skills progressively developed through the key stages.

The quality of pupils' response is generally very good although clearly dependent upon the quality of teaching. There are particular strengths in pupils' relationships with teachers and in their ability to work collaboratively. Many pupils show considerable enjoyment in their work and sustain concentration even when the work is challenging. In the best lessons there is a high quality of discussion and an eagerness to respond orally. The small amount of inattention and off-task behaviour occurs when lessons are poorly paced and pupils are unclear about what is expected of them.

The quality of teaching varies from unsatisfactory to excellent with the majority of lessons good or very good. Teaching is generally more effective at Key Stage 3 with a predominance of well paced lessons in which teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement. Schemes of work and planning for individual lessons are generally very good with a clear identification of intended learning outcomes. In the best practice lesson objectives are systematically presented to pupils and key elements of learning are thoroughly introduced through appropriate activities. The best teaching has a very positive impact on pupils' motivation and standards of attainment. A good balance is struck between structured lessons based on stimulating resources, and opportunities for individual research and investigations. The enquiries undertaken at Key Stage 3 are a strength of the subject as they encourage appropriate approaches to learning and provide an opportunity for pupils to reinforce their understanding and skills. Homework is often set to consolidate and extend learning although there are occasions when homework tasks are insufficiently planned and have little impact on pupils' progress. The use of identified pieces of work, marking these to agreed criteria and relating the marks to National Curriculum levels, is a very good strategy for assessment. The marking of pupils' work is less consistent and does not always follow the best practice of identifying targets for subject improvement.

The management of the subject is very good. Schemes of work make satisfactory connections between learning objectives, resources and appropriate activities. The suggested activities provide challenging opportunities for active learning with an appropriate emphasis on transferable geographical skills, knowledge of places and understanding of themes. Subject teachers are provided with excellent support, particularly in the form of teaching resources and strategies for assessment. Meetings between staff provide good opportunities for the discussion of successful teaching strategies and the development of courses. Fieldwork opportunities are being effectively planned into the curriculum providing essential experiences to encourage comparisons and contrasts with local environments. Visits and visitors are appropriately integrated to provide real-life examples of geographical concepts. The quality of display of pupils' work makes an important contribution to the status accorded to the subject by pupils.

The quality of education in the subject represents progress in the standards attained since the last inspection. Significant developments have occurred in the range of learning opportunities provided, the introduction of individual enquiries and the implementation of a structure for assessment. In order to improve the quality of provision, the most urgent task now facing the department is to secure consistency in the quality of teaching offered to all pupils. Strategies for team teaching, lesson observation, team moderation of assessed work and extensive sharing of good practice have the potential to replicate excellence throughout the department.

## History

Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school, and by the time they reach Year 8 attainment is in line with national expectation. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory.

At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment is in line with national expectation. Pupils by the end of Year 6 have good recall of the events, people and circumstances that they have studied. They can write accurate description and narrative, for example, of the character of Charles I. The most able pupils seen studying Tudor crime and punishment can understand the influence of people's circumstances on their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour.

At the end of Year 8, attainment is still in line with national expectation. With guidance, pupils can organise their explanations of events and changes, with some high quality understanding of causes in work on the French Revolution. When writing such essays without help they tend to describe or narrate rather than explain. They can compare the messages from different sources of evidence about situations, but their powers of critical analysis are insufficiently developed. The curriculum that they have experienced in the school has left them with insufficient knowledge of non-European peoples.

Throughout the school, pupils' research skills are poorly developed as they do not have sufficient contextual knowledge to be able to plan effectively, they do not know how to plan research or use a range of sources, and they value presentation above quality of decisions.

Pupils at both key stages, but especially at Key Stage 3, report that they enjoy most history lessons. They present their work well, take part in class discussion, and listen closely to teacher explanations. Pupils co-operate when working in pairs or groups. They are willing to explore issues further, both by asking questions in class and also by independent research. At Key Stage 2, however, there is a high proportion of incomplete work in exercise books.

The quality of teaching is very varied at Key Stage 2, with some very good and some very poor teaching seen, but at Key Stage 3 teaching is always at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Very good teaching is characterised by good pace, interesting subject matter and good opportunities for discussion. In such lessons, teachers' expectations are high. The least good teaching occurs in each year when pupils are asked to research independently without being taught the necessary processes or criteria for selection of information, and with insufficient materials to enable powers of selection to be developed. Pupils in all lessons are made aware of the objective for the lesson, and in good lessons are shown how this fits into the overall pattern of learning. In poor lessons, however, the objective is not explained clearly, and in some instances the teacher's understanding of historical processes is insufficient. Pupils' books are always marked with comments that encourage good effort and presentation, but targets rarely enable the development of pupils' historical understanding.

The department's administration is well managed, with schemes of work in place supported by relevant resources. All resources are organised well and accessible to all. Assessment is carried out consistently, linked to the National Curriculum, and pupils' levels of attainment are passed on to the next phase. The co-ordinator works closely with heads of year to ensure coverage and to advise on lesson planning.



The history curriculum is in need of review, as it is still following the pattern of the old National Curriculum. Some amendments made to accommodate loss of time at Key Stage 2 are illogical, as the pupils are still studying units that have not been part of the curriculum since 1995, for example the Stuarts, and Exploration and Encounters. Amendments are in place for next year, including provision for a non-European study at Key Stage 3. The scheme of work gives insufficient attention to progression in historical understanding and processes, with no clear view for teachers in any year group of the standard at which a task should be approached. The various research projects do not address sufficiently the issues involved in teaching historical research or organisation of ideas, and therefore result in well presented precis of the research of one or two authors. Information technology is insufficiently used to enhance historical thinking.

The quality of education provided represents an improvement on that since the last inspection, in that the resources available have been enhanced and the revision of the curriculum has begun. There are now sufficient good opportunities for pupils to express their views orally.

In order to improve the quality of the provision attention should be given to the following developments. Curriculum planning should be clearly linked to the consistent development of historical knowledge, understanding and skills throughout both key stages, especially in the development of pupils' historical research skills. Objectives and targets should be made clear to pupils and written in terms of historical knowledge, understanding and process. The department should consider ways in which information technology can be used to develop pupils' skills of research and historical thinking.

### **Information and communication technology**

Pupils make satisfactory progress in those areas of information technology (IT) covered, as they move through the school and by the time they reach Year 8 attainment in these areas is in line with expected levels. The overall progress made by pupils with special educational needs is in line with expectation. Boys and girls progress equally well. Pupils in Years 6 and 7, however, are following the same work this year, with both year groups performing at almost identical levels. There is no measurable progress in pupils' capacity to explore patterns and relationships in computer modelling, or to sense variables using data-loggers, as these aspects are not yet integrated into the curriculum.

At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment is in line with expectation in those areas of the National Curriculum that are covered. Year 6 pupils can enter data accurately into a pre-prepared database or spreadsheet, and search and sort data at simple levels. They can present their findings using word-processing and simple desktop publishing, drafting and redrafting, importing images and presenting for a particular audience.

At the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment is still in line with national expectation in the areas in which they have experience. They use IT almost exclusively in the context of design and technology, which gives them a limited view of its power in everyday life, but within the set tasks they are able to use software to draw their designs, report on their actions and record their experiences. They have above average ability to select appropriate software for a limited range of purposes, and to discuss the advantages and limitations of the use of IT in a range of circumstances. Where they attain below national expectation is in the design of database and spreadsheet solutions to particular problems, and in the areas that are not covered in the curriculum.

The quality of pupils' response is good. Pupils enjoy IT lessons, and respond well to most of the activities.

Almost all of them can make independent decisions without immediate recourse to the teacher. They are willing to experiment rather than seek help. They work in co-operation with each other and value the contributions of their partners. At lunchtime and at home after school a high proportion of pupils continue the work started. Where they are working less hard, they are having to work without supervision in areas away from the classroom.

The quality of teaching in lessons observed, at both key stages, was always at least satisfactory, and sometimes good or very good. Where teaching is good, the teacher has a good command of the subject. A culture has been created in which pupils can work independently. Complex lessons, in which a range of activities are taking place, are well managed. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good, and discipline is effective in promoting high standards. Where teaching is less good, teachers, especially non-specialists, have insecure knowledge of the topic, with the result that the pupils' understanding is faulty. The organisation of some lessons means that some pupils have to be left unsupervised with potentially dangerous equipment. At both key stages, pupils are too often given tasks that require them to copy directly rather than to make their own decisions.

The quality of subject management is very good in some respects, and unsatisfactory in others. Where management is very good, teachers are given clear guidelines on the curriculum and are supported in their delivery. The head of department is aware of the needs of individuals and meets them where possible. Assessment is well managed, with provision for pupil self-assessment, target-setting, well-organised record-keeping and satisfactory liaison with schools in other phases to receive and pass on information about pupil attainment. Assessments are not, however, a valid reflection of pupils' attainment in the many areas where they have been too closely directed in a task to be able to claim independent capability.

The IT co-ordinator ensures that the room is open every lunchtime so that pupils can continue their work or pursue their own interests. He works well in co-operation with the librarian to enable pupils to carry out computer-based research. Work done by pupils at home is valued and celebrated.

The curriculum in IT does not meet statutory requirements, although the time allocation meets national expectation. There is as yet no entitlement to data-logging or modelling for all pupils. IT is taught in the real context of design and technology, which has the advantage of giving it relevance in the eyes of the pupils, but their perception of the utility of IT is narrowed by the scarcity of IT opportunities across other areas of the curriculum. There is limited use of database in history, and in other subjects pupils make effective use of IT only on a voluntary basis. IT curriculum time is spent teaching pure technology, for example making packaging or soldering electrical connections, when pupils could be enlarging their experience of IT in other curriculum areas.

The present provision of equipment is sufficient for some use of IT across the curriculum, with clusters of computers for three year-groups, but these are very underused because of lack of expertise among teachers. Training has been provided in response to teachers' requests, and there are plans for training of all staff.

The quality of education has not changed since the last inspection, and the department has not responded to the development of the National Curriculum in IT. The school has improved the level and quality of equipment, although it is currently still below national average, and is currently acquiring a new suite of computers to enable whole-class teaching using IT. There is still no technical support, with network maintenance placing a very heavy burden on the time of the head of department. In order to improve the quality of provision, the department should ensure that all

teachers have sufficient IT capability to enable the subject to become a natural part of the curriculum; plan schemes of work that reflect the whole of the National Curriculum for IT and widen the range of contexts in which it is taught; and ensure that assessments reflect the ability of pupils to use IT independently.

### **Modern foreign languages (French)**

Pupils make insufficient progress in French as they move through the school and by the end of Year 8 attainment is only average. The progress made by pupils with special needs is difficult to assess since teachers do not specifically plan for them in lessons. Given the Year 5 start, attainment in Year 8 is not high enough, especially in speaking French. Some top set pupils can produce writing on birthday presents received which is of a higher standard, but this is not reflected in class work.

At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment is below average when set against the scheme of work which emphasises speaking and listening. Pupils show a marked lack of these skills because they spend time instead on worksheets practising copying and matching skills. They enjoy working through games and a Year 5 class participated enthusiastically in a brief game moving around the classroom, but this did not require them to produce any language. They have no bank of simple language to draw on and learn to reapply in new situations and their pronunciation is poor. There were no Year 6 classes available during the inspection but similar features were evident in their exercise books and worksheets.

At the end of Year 8 attainment is in line with the national average, although some top set pupils achieve better by good use of the textbook. Speaking, listening and reading skills are not well developed because of the emphasis on written exercises and worksheets. Progress is variable and pupils do not readily recall or recombine language they have learned in the past with new language. There is much reference back to exercise books, worksheets, textbook or dictionary.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good. They are keen to learn and to use French but the type of learning activities and tasks they are given do not always allow them to demonstrate the best they can do. A Year 7 class responded very well to learning via a game and doing a survey on sports. When work is uninteresting or pace tails off in a lesson, some pupils are distracted and go off task, but generally they maintain their efforts to the end.

The quality of teaching varies from satisfactory to poor, with most just about satisfactory. Insufficient grasp of the National Curriculum programme of study is at the heart of this. Lessons are very textbook or worksheet focussed with an over-sharp emphasis on attainment levels which lacks understanding of how to use them to drive up standards. Teachers do not use French enough themselves or challenge pupils to use it to extend their proficiency. Listening and reading are not promoted enough, along with development of pupils' strategies for memorising language. Insufficient pieces of longer writing in exercise books means that constructive advice cannot be given to individual pupils on how to improve. A French language assistant is employed for a generous amount of time but not used to advantage in developing pupils' spoken skills or promoting the culture of French-speaking countries. The current style of teaching has an adverse effect on pupils' progress and attainment.

The new co-ordinator for French is keen but lacks a firm grip on key issues such as the under-performance of boys, the progress of pupils with special needs, the value of information technology, and how to fit in the key skills. Assessment records do not allow an individual pupil's progress to be

tracked or classes to be compared so that opportunities are lost to use information to improve learning.

Some improvements have been made on the standard indicated in the previous report. A scheme of work has been produced, more continuity exists from Year 6 through to Year 8 and Year 8 standards are better. Objectives in lessons are now made clear at the start and sometimes checked at the end. In order to improve the quality of provision the department needs to pursue staff training opportunities on the National Curriculum and to enhance subject knowledge. Further consideration needs to be given to how a Key Stage 2 start can be used to the benefit of standards in Key Stage 3. Assessment and marking procedures should be improved and attention given to the requirements of pupils with special needs.

## **Music**

Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 8 standards of attainment are above the national average in most aspects of the subject. The overall attainment and progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, are good, particularly for pupils with musical ability.

At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. However, singing is good with accurate pitch, a sense of musical phrasing and great enthusiasm. There are many opportunities to sing a wide range of material from African songs to two-part songs such as 'I Like the Flowers' which are all sung well. Pupils' composition work at this key stage is in line with expectations but is occasionally good such as when developing the theme of 'Music from around the World' using appropriate timbres, styles and musical ideas from different countries and cultures. Their ability to use musical notation and to express ideas and opinions about music is also in line with expectations.

At the end of Year 8 pupils' attainment overall is above national average in most aspects of the subject. Singing is good and when composing music on the themes of 'Dance Macabre' or 'Space Rondo' they combine a range of interesting musical ideas and devices into structures. Pupils perform well and have a good understanding of the keyboard and chords. Listening and appraising skills are good for all pupils as they confidently talk about each other's music and express and justify opinions about performances they hear. In the area of performing from notation, attainment is occasionally below expectation for average and lower attaining pupils when playing from difficult music.

Progress for pupils in Key Stage 2 is appropriate, and in singing it is particularly good. At Key Stage 3 it is good over time for all pupils, particularly the more musically able, primarily because of access to extra peripatetic tuition and the Duston Music Centre.

Response to music lessons is always good. Pupils approach singing and composition activities enthusiastically and are always on task. They work extremely well in pairs and groups, particularly when working in other parts of the school. Behaviour and relationships are always good and there is great respect for the instruments.

The overall quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and in Key Stage 3 it is occasionally good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and musical talent. Strengths in teaching are characterised by the sharing of specific objectives at the start of the lesson, good overall lesson structures and summing up at the end. Standards of discipline are good and resources are organised well.

Activities are appropriate and fully engage the pupils. Teaching is less effective when explanations are too lengthy or pupils are required to play difficult music as part of activities in lessons.

The quality of subject management is good and assessment procedures are satisfactory. The school heavily subsidises peripatetic tuition for 13% of pupils and the quality of this teaching is always good and occasionally very good. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities that are of good quality and numerous performance opportunities to parents and the wider community. The choir in particular is excellent and very well supported. The school is the base for the Duston Music Centre and 100 pupils attend the Saturday morning activities. This is an excellent partnership with the community and the LEA music service.

The quality of education is similar to the standard indicated in the previous report. Insufficient progress has been made in the development of information technology although this has been an area identified for development for some time. However, a new area has been allocated in close proximity to the music room.

In order to improve the quality of the provision attention should be given to revision of the Key Stage 2 curriculum, particularly to ensure that the maximum amount of time is spent on musical activity, and to develop the use of information technology.

### **Physical Education**

Pupils overall make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 8 attainment is in line with the national average. The progress that pupils with special educational needs make is good. A wide range of ability is evident in pupils across both key stages, with a good number of pupils gaining representative honours at county and national level.

At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is at the average level expected of pupils of this age. However, through lesson observations, examples of small groups of pupils who were above average in the development of tennis skills in Year 6 were seen. The majority of pupils have a general understanding of the safety factors associated with a wide range of athletic events. Pupils are able to sustain energetic activity over appropriate periods of time.

At the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment is about average overall. The majority of pupils show that they can use skills with increasing precision, such as in putting the shot. Higher ability pupils in Year 7 demonstrate a high level of stroke work and a developing tactical play in tennis.

The overall progress that pupils make throughout the school is satisfactory. Notably, pupils with special educational needs make good progress, are well integrated into lessons, and are given good opportunities to succeed in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

Pupils respond very well to opportunities provided for them in physical education. The majority of pupils have a positive attitude to learning. They listen carefully, respond positively to questions and are eager to do well. Relationships between pupils are good, and they have shown that they can work well both independently and collaboratively when given the opportunity. A very good example of this was seen in a Year 5 cricket lesson. Pupils concentrated hard on their bowling action when working alone, then were supportive and helpful to each other when working together. Pupils engage in a high

level of physical activity and generally put a good amount of effort into their work.

The quality of teaching in the department overall is good with lessons observed ranging from satisfactory to very good. This quality has a positive impact on the standards that the pupils achieve. The teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They set high expectations, with challenging tasks and activities for all pupils. Effective, targeted support and intervention are key strengths that were evident in the majority of lessons observed. A wide range of strategies is used to ensure that the needs of all pupils are met and that the objectives of lessons are achieved. Examples of very good questioning, used to reinforce points and clarify pupils' understanding of the work, were seen in athletics, cricket and tennis lessons. However, the provision of opportunities for pupils to observe, evaluate and provide feedback on the performance of others is sometimes missed. Teachers have very high standards of discipline. Their relationship with pupils is very good, and the enthusiasm of the teachers provides a high level of motivation for the pupils.

The physical education curriculum is broad and balanced with a wide variety of activities for pupils. Extra-curricular activities are a strong feature of the department. They are of high quality and are popular with the pupils, and the support provided by non-specialist staff in these activities is commendable. Many pupils represent the school in a large number of teams, and several pupils have achieved county, district and regional honours in a wide range of sports, including trampolining, athletics, cross-country, tennis and table tennis. The department has a wide range of links with outside bodies, including Northampton Town Football Club, Northamptonshire Trampolining Club and Northampton Tennis Club. Additional opportunities are presented to the pupils as a result of the department's link with the high quality community education programme. Strong links with the lower schools in developing schemes of work, for example, enable appropriate continuity and progression for pupils. Assessment is an integral element of much of the work in physical education, and the department has developed assessment procedures since the last inspection through the use of pupil profiles

The head of department provides good leadership through the provision of comprehensive schemes of work, the subject development plan and the effective and efficient management of resources. Monitoring is carried out through observation of lesson plans, discussion at departmental meetings and observation of staff when time is available. However, more structured and formalised procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the work of the department would now be beneficial. The department is adequately resourced and equipment is well cared for, although the storage area is too small for the needs. Changing accommodation for pupils is generally insufficient, and staff accommodation is particularly inadequate.

The quality of education represents an improvement in the standard indicated at the last inspection. In order to improve the quality of provision, the department should continue to develop its assessment procedures to ensure that the information collected is used by teachers in their planning and to help students set achievable targets for improvement; and enhance the provision of opportunities for pupils to analyse, evaluate and provide feedback in relation to their own and others' performance.

## **Religious Education**

Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of Year 8 attainment is in line with the national average. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment is broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils can describe some key beliefs and practices of the Christian faith. Year 6 pupils, for example, were able to explain the symbolism of significant features of the local church following a recent visit. They are beginning to explain the meanings conveyed by religious stories. At the end of Year 8 attainment remains in line with the national average. Pupils demonstrate increasing sophistication in their use of religious vocabulary and are able to appreciate how religious ideas are commonly expressed in symbolism and ritual, illustrated by their ability to describe the significance of light and water as religious symbols.

The progress of pupils is satisfactory at both key stages. The rate of progress of different teaching groups is closely related to the quality of teaching experienced. Progress is most evident in the ability of pupils to make connections between beliefs and actions, and in their understanding of the similarities and differences in religious practices. In a Year 5 lesson on the parable of the lost son, pupils generated a wide range of ideas about the religious and moral meanings behind the story. Year 8 pupils recognise differences in ideas about death and after-life from a variety of religious traditions. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress across the key stages.

The quality of pupils' response is always at least satisfactory with examples of good and very good learning taking place. When inspired by very good teaching pupils show enthusiasm and sustained interest in their work. The nature of tasks set and the pace of lessons have the most significant impact on the quality of response from pupils. They demonstrate the ability to collaborate effectively at both key stages and to generate imaginative and sensitive responses to issues. In the best practice pupils demonstrate mature attitudes to complex ideas and are prepared to listen effectively to the views of others. Year 8 pupils, for example, developed a thoughtful range of responses to their own experiences of death, recognising how family belief systems influence human reactions. The quality of pupils' written and oral responses was less effective in lessons where they were not clear about the purposes of the tasks being undertaken.

The quality of teaching at both key stages is mostly satisfactory or good with examples of excellence, and promotes appropriate standards of attainment. In the best practice lessons are characterised by high quality planning, excellent pace and structure, stimulating resources, and activities which capture the imagination of pupils. Abstract ideas are illuminated in imaginative ways. A link between parables and familiar fables in a Year 5 lesson produced excellent understanding of how stories are used to convey meaning. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' achievements and provide positive encouragement and praise. Visits and visitors are appropriately integrated into the range of activities, providing concrete case studies to illustrate complex concepts. Whilst teaching is always at least satisfactory there are occasions when the teacher's voice dominates and lessons are not sufficiently broken down into varied activities. The marking of pupils' work acknowledges correct answers and encourages pupils to persevere. The setting of targets for improvement is less consistently applied. The development of standard assessment tasks is a welcome development which will enable progress to be effectively monitored against agreed criteria. One good example was observed of homework set for a Year 7 group which consolidated and extended work on symbolism in Islamic patterns.

The subject team is supported by effective leadership. An appropriate plan for subject development has been drawn up by the recently appointed head of department. Whilst it is difficult to ensure consistency of preparation, teaching and professional development across such a large team of

teachers, effective meetings contribute to the sharing of good practice.

The quality of education provided represents satisfactory progress since the last inspection. In order to improve the quality of provision, attention should be given to the planned developments in the structure of the scheme of work in the light of the local Agreed Syllabus. Similarly, planned improvements in lesson planning documentation and criteria for assessment are to be welcomed. Strategies for team teaching and lesson observation are required to enable the development and wider dissemination of good practice. Additional and up-dated resources will be required to support the planned expansion and adaptation of units of work. Consideration should also be given to the size of the subject team and strategies for the effective professional development of teachers in the light of these planned developments.



**PART C: INSPECTION DATA**

**SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The school was inspected by a team of ten inspectors and a lay inspector over a period of five days, to a total of 32 inspector days. Inspectors spent 140 hours observing lessons, sampling pupils' work and interviewing pupils. Altogether 107 lessons or parts of lessons were seen. Some pupils read to inspectors, others talked informally about their work and school life. Lunchtimes, breaktimes, assemblies, registration, extra-curricular activities, arrivals and departures were observed.

Discussions, both formal and informal were held with governors, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior management team, subject co-ordinators, teachers, non-teaching staff, visiting professionals and parents. All the school's available curricular and organisational documentation was read. A meeting to hear parents' views of the school was held. Responses to 105 parental questionnaires were analysed. During a preliminary visit to the school a meeting was held with staff.

## **DATA AND INDICATORS**

### **Pupil data**

\_Number of pupils on roll (full-time equivalent)\_Number of pupils with statements of SEN\_Number of pupils on school's register of SEN\_Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals\_\_Y5 - Y8\_520\_9\_131\_45\_\_

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers (Y5 - Y8)**

Total number of qualified teachers (full-time equivalent) \_25.48\_\_Number of pupils per qualified teacher\_20.41\_\_

#### **Education support staff (Y5 - Y8)**

Total number of education support staff\_11\_\_Total aggregate hours worked each week\_209.5\_\_  
Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes:\_80.8\_\_  
Average teaching group size:\_Key Stage 2 \_27\_\_Key Stage 3\_23\_\_

## **Financial data**

Financial year: \_1998 – 99\_\_

\_£\_\_Total Income\_891290\_\_Total Expenditure\_891290\_\_Expenditure per pupil\_1710\_\_Balance  
brought forward from previous year\_0\_\_Balance carried forward to next year\_0\_\_

## **PARENTAL SURVEY**

Number of questionnaires sent out: 520 Number of questionnaires returned: 105

### **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 24 69 6 1 0 I would find it easy to approach the school with questions or problems to do with my child(ren) 43 53 2 1 1 The school handles complaints from parents well 23 60 15 2 0 The school gives me a clear understanding of what is taught 27 64 3 6 0 The school keeps me well informed about my child(ren)'s progress 44 49 2 4 1 The school enables my child(ren) to achieve a good standard of work 43 55 2 0 0 The school encourages children to get involved in more than just their daily lessons 44 50 5 1 0 I am satisfied with the work that my child(ren) is/are expected to do at home 31 53 7 7 2 The school's values and attitudes have a positive effect on my child(ren) 36 57 5 2 0 The school achieves high standards of good behaviour 30 62 7 1 0 My child(ren) like(s) school 41 49 7 3 0