

INSPECTION REPORT

GILBERT INGLEFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Leighton Buzzard

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109667

Headteacher: Mr Kerin Jones

Reporting inspector: Mrs Marianne Ellender-Gelé
2348

Dates of inspection: 20 – 24 March 2000

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle Deemed Secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 - 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Vandyke Road
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Iain McGregor

Date of previous inspection: 7 November 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Marianne Ellender-Gelé	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Brian Halling	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Christopher Richards	Team inspector	Religious Education	Equal Opportunities
David Bray	Team inspector	Music	How well are pupils taught?
Philip Garnham	Team inspector	Science	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
Graham Matthews	Team inspector		Special Educational Needs
Malcolm Brice	Team inspector	English, Literacy	
Michael Lovett	Team inspector	Mathematics, Numeracy	
Julie Copas	Team inspector	Art	
Jonathan Banks	Team inspector	French	English as an additional language
Barry Lewis	Team inspector	Design and Technology Information Technology	
John Stout	Team inspector	Geography	
Keith Smalley	Team inspector	History	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Gilbert Inglefield Middle School is a larger than average mixed school, for pupils of all abilities aged 9 to 13. There are 555 pupils on roll, 274 boys and 281 girls, which is just below the school's capacity of 560 pupils. Gilbert Inglefield is one of four middle schools in Leighton Buzzard and serves the eastern side of the town. In the last school year, ten pupils joined the school after the usual time for admission and 18 pupils left before the end of Year 8. Pupil mobility, at 5%, is low. Pupils enter Year 5 with broadly average levels of attainment in mathematics and science, but below average attainment in English, with weaknesses in spelling and reading. Over the last three years, attainment of successive intakes has shown fairly similar characteristics. The school has 88 pupils (15.8%) on the register of special educational needs, a proportion below the national average. Of these, eleven pupils have substantial weaknesses for which they receive additional support. Only three pupils have English as an additional language and thirteen pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils come from homes that represent the full range of social backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (11.5%) is below the national average of 16.2%. The number of boys and girls is balanced, although there are slightly more boys in Year 6 and more girls in Year 7.

Gilbert Inglefield was last inspected in November 1994. Since then, the characteristics of the school have remained broadly the same, although numbers on roll have increased slightly and some staff changes have taken place. Well-managed adjustments to responsibilities within the school have been made. Two heads of department have only been in post since last September.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school, where pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. Through good teaching, very good pastoral care and effective leadership, teachers and other staff create a positive climate for learning. Pupils are given the necessary support to succeed. Progress is particularly rapid in Years 5 and 6. This is maintained in Years 7 and 8, and by the time they leave school, at age 13, pupils demonstrate high achievements in a wide range of subjects. Pupils with special educational needs make rapid progress. Personal development is a particular strength. Learning and organisational skills are developed well. The school is effective and provides good value for money arising from the high quality of management systems, the good use of available resources and accommodation, and the clear educational direction provided by the headteacher and his senior team.

What the school does well

- Relationships between all members of the school community are very good. Pupils show high levels of respect for their peers and for their teachers. Adults value each pupil equally. Moral and social development of pupils is a strength.
- Pastoral care is very good. Heads of year and form teachers provide excellent support and monitor pupils' welfare and wellbeing effectively. The contact book is a particularly good feature, because it is used very well by parents, teachers and pupils to support academic and personal development.
- The headteacher and his senior team provide very good leadership. They are supported by a very committed, informed and well led governing body. The determination to sustain high quality provision and standards is supported by staff and

the ethos of success for all is very strong.

- Learning is good, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Pupils achieve well. The 1999 results in national tests, in English and science, were well above average. In mathematics, standards of current pupils, at Key Stage 2, are above average. Attainment of current pupils, at age 13, is above average in English and science. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are at least in line with levels normally seen in all subjects of the National Curriculum.
- The quality of teaching is good. It is particularly effective in Year 5. Teachers have high levels of knowledge and understanding of their subjects. They know how to bring interest and enjoyment into lessons; this leads to good outcomes.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. The accuracy of their spelling, reading and writing improves rapidly and provision for them is organised well.
- Pupils like school and want to attend. Attendance figures are above average. Many pupils are involved in extra-curricular activities. The high levels of pupil participation, supported by much teacher commitment, contribute positively to standards achieved.
- Assessment procedures are very good. The collection and analysis of assessment information are thorough and are used well by teachers to plan the next stage of learning. Pupils know how and what to do to improve.
- The school has implemented the literacy and numeracy strategies well. Teachers manage the new initiatives effectively and work well as a team. The rapid progress made in basic skills, particularly in reading, spelling and writing, helps pupils achieve better standards across the range of subjects that they study.
- Systems to support and sustain good quality of education are very good. Administration and communication procedures are very effective. There is good liaison with parents, supported by effective use of the contact book. Detailed planning documents, such as the teacher planner, lead to high levels of consistency across all aspects of the school's work.

What could be improved

- Not all subject co-ordinators evaluate with sufficient precision whether agreed strategies and resources have had the desired impact on standards and achievements. Priorities for improving their subject are not always clearly identified in the subject plan.
- Standards in religious education are below those normally seen. There are weaknesses in geography, where more able pupils underachieve. The weaknesses in these two subjects are due to inadequate curriculum planning and shortcomings in the quality of teaching.

Strengths outweigh areas for further development. The school has already identified the need to develop the role of subject co-ordinators. The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Progress since the last inspection, which took place towards the end of 1994, has been good. The headteacher and the senior team addressed all the key issues with energy. They took positive actions, set up good systems and were able to deal with areas of relative weakness very effectively. The quality of teaching and its impact on learning are now good, leading to improved standards at both key stages. Assessment is now effective and used well to review aspects of teaching and learning and to meet pupils' needs. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and, for those who are more able, is now good,

although in geography more able pupils are not challenged enough. The monitoring of standards, by the senior management team, is now very good. Further work on this is needed to ensure that those teachers with responsibilities for subjects undertake monitoring of the same quality, in order to support improvement across the school. The effectiveness of the school's response, the good rate of improvement, the positive attitudes of pupils to their learning and the commitment of staff provide a very good platform for future developments.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on results in national tests.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	C	C	A	A	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Maths	C	C	C	C	
Science	C	B	A	A	

Over the last years, results have been in line with the national averages. In 1999 they were well above average in English and science. Considering that levels on entry are slightly below average in English, results represent a notable achievement. Boys did well in the 1999 tests in English. Science results of the last three years show a very positive trend, with well above average results for boys and girls. Although in line with national figures, mathematics results are not as strong. However, the standards of pupils now in Year 6 are above those normally seen. There are no national tests at the end of Year 8, but results obtained by Gilbert Inglefield pupils in the Year 9 tests, taken in the upper school, indicate that they do well. In other subjects, achievement is strong in history at Key Stage 3 and information technology. In geography and in religious education, pupils underachieve. Over time, trends in results have improved in line with the national rate of improvement. The school has met its targets for results in English and mathematics and, in the light of successes in 1999, targets for forthcoming years are reviewed in order to sustain an appropriate level of challenge.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show high levels of interest in lessons. They also show respect for the views of their peers and of their teachers.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Exclusions are very rare. The school is an orderly place. Pupils display high levels of maturity and understand the impact of their actions on others.

Personal development and relationships	Very good. The quality of relationships between all members of the school community is high. Involvement in extra-curricular activities is very good. Pupils are willing to take responsibility.
Attendance	Very good. Figures are above average. Pupils are punctual to lessons. Levels of unauthorised absence are low.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 9-11 years	Aged 12-13 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is good. In 93% of lessons observed, teaching was at least satisfactory, of which nearly two thirds were good and one quarter was very good or excellent. No poor lessons were seen and only 7% had shortcomings. Teaching is a strength in Year 5. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good, because expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. Particular strengths were observed in the teaching of numeracy and literacy at Key Stage 2. In history and information technology teaching is strong, because it enabled pupils to reach good levels of understanding. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all other subjects, except in religious education where lack of subject knowledge and limitations in subject planning lead to underachievement and slow progress in learning. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Many effective strategies are used which enable rapid progress in reading, spelling and writing, with teachers ensuring equal participation of all pupils. Teaching of more able pupils is good, except in geography where there is insufficient challenge. Almost all teachers exploit fully the potential of extension work and of marking to help pupils improve. The quality of the teaching ensures good progress from Year 5 to Year 8. The impact of good teaching is particularly noticeable at Key Stage 2, where pupils improve their capabilities in the creative, aesthetic and academic areas of their work. They use literacy and number skills well, organise their work with care and are prepared effectively for the higher demands of Key Stage 3 work. They continue to learn well in the last two years at the school.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Broad and relevant. Provision for numeracy and literacy is planned well. There is insufficient time allocation for art and design technology, and for music in Year 5. There is too little time for personal, health and social education (PSHE) at Key Stage 2.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good provision. Pupils have full access to a broad and relevant curriculum, including extra-curricular activities. Very good support is provided in lessons and when pupils are withdrawn for extra support.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral development is good and for social development it is very good, leading to a well developed sense of fairness, and of right and wrong. The programme of PSHE, in Years 7 and 8, is a particular strength. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a strength of the school. Pastoral care is very good. Procedures promote good behaviour, respect and tolerance of others. Support for personal welfare and guidance is very good. The use of assessment to set targets and inform the next stage of learning is very effective.

The school works well with parents. They are kept informed of necessary changes made to the curriculum and all legal requirements are met. The school is aware of the need to improve curriculum balance, particularly at Key Stage 2.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Clear educational direction is provided. The headteacher and his senior team have a strong and positive approach to developments, focused on high levels of achievement for all pupils. Communication systems, the role of heads of year and the monitoring of the school's work by senior managers are particular strengths. At subject level, there are weaknesses in the clarity of priorities and the evaluation of the impact of strategies on standards and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. All requirements are met. Governors are aware of the strengths of the school and know where improvements are needed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very accurate and secure to ensure future growth. Senior managers use data well, and evaluate all aspects of school life. The impact of policies and decisions has been positive in many aspects of the school's work.
The strategic use of resources	Good overall. Accommodation is very good. Available staffing and resources for learning are used effectively, but there is a lack of subject knowledge in religious education. The number of up-to-date books in the library is insufficient and, in a few subjects, textbooks are outdated. Access to information technology (IT), for use across subjects, is limited at present, but a second IT room is almost ready for use. A range of different spending options is applied to secure best value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Twelve parents attended the pre-inspection meeting. 190 questionnaires (34% of all pupils) were received, fourteen with extra comments.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils like school.• Pastoral care is a strength.• Pupils make good progress and teaching is good.• Provision for pupils with special needs is good.• Behaviour is good.• Extra-curricular provision is very good.• The headteacher, his senior team and teachers are very approachable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homework is not always evenly spread throughout the week, and at times too little is set.• Parents do not always feel well informed about how their child is getting on.

Several parents wrote about the high quality of the dance club. Parents were also pleased about the sensitive preparation for Year 6 tests. A few parents said that able children were not sufficiently challenged, particularly with homework. Inspectors agree with the positive comments of parents. The school has a good homework policy. Senior managers and teachers are keen to extend learning through homework tasks, but this is not yet consistently done across all subjects, years and groups. Reports have been improved since the last inspection, and are now satisfactory. The school provides many opportunities for parents to know about their child's progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Attainment on entry into Year 5 is broadly average, although slightly below in English. The 1999 National Curriculum assessments, at the end of Key Stage 2, show a significant improvement in results. Over the last few years, results in English, mathematics and science have been consistently in line with the national averages. In 1999, they improved to well above the national figures in English and science. They remained in line with the national average in mathematics. When compared with similar schools, results are well above average in English and science, and in line in mathematics.
- 2 Considering that pupils enter the school with levels on entry that are slightly below average in English, results represent a notable achievement in this subject. Boys did well in the 1999 English tests. For boys and girls, results are particularly good at the higher levels (Levels 5 and above) as they are twice the national figure (40% at the school against a national figure of 19%). Science results over the last three years show the same positive trend, with above average results for boys and girls. Results at the higher levels (Levels 5 and above) are also twice the national figure (52% at the school against a national figure of 23%). Although in line with national figures and following the national trend of improvement, mathematics results are not as strong.

Progress towards the school's targets

- 3 Progress made towards the statutory targets is good. In Autumn 1998, targets were set, for 1999 results, at a realistic and cautious level and were agreed with the Local Education Authority. In the light of the very positive results, the headteacher and senior managers are aware of the need to review targets for forthcoming years, in order to sustain an appropriate level of challenge. The English targets for 2000 and 2001, at 72% and 78% of pupils reaching levels 4 and above, have already been exceeded. This is also the case in mathematics. Heads of subject often set modest and cautious targets, but the process is used very effectively by the headteacher and senior managers to support whole school improvement.

Standards and achievements of current pupils

- 4 In **English**, attainment of current pupils is well above levels normally seen at age 11. Learning skills are developed well, with pupils showing accurate recall of previous work. This leads to good achievements in writing, in oral expression and in use of thinking skills. In reading, standards are sound overall, although pupils are not always able to use inference. At Key Stage 2, the progress of all pupils, including those who have special educational needs, is very good. In Years 7 and 8, pupils continue to make good progress, leading to above average standards at age 13. Presentation of work is done with great care; extended writing is good, showing use of a good range of vocabulary. Particular strengths lie in the rate of progress of pupils who have learning difficulties and of those who are more able. The achievement of boys is equal to that of girls.

- 5 In **mathematics**, current pupils achieve above expected levels at age 11, and their work is better than previous test results show, through the good teaching and good implementation of the numeracy strategy. Pupils achieve well up to their potential, and high attainers do very well. They are quick and accurate with mental arithmetic and can apply it well, for example to currency conversion and distance/time graphs. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have average levels of knowledge achieve well. Standards, at age 13, match levels expected and pupils achieve their potential. Work is accurate and concepts such as probability, negative numbers, angles and bearings, are used well to solve problems. Less able pupils achieve creditable outcomes in basic calculations, although some still have difficulty with fractions and with converting a problem written in words into the correct calculation.
- 6 In **science**, attainment at age 11 is above levels expected at that age. Scientific knowledge is good and pupils understand key scientific concepts. Practical skills are developed well, although some pupils lack confidence to test their ideas out fully. At age 13, standards are above expected levels. Pupils can explain scientific concepts in more depth, with an appropriate level of accuracy, and they begin to predict outcomes correctly. Pupils make good progress, leading to high results in tests. The subject makes a sound contribution to literacy and numeracy skills.
- 7 Pupils enter the school with **literacy skills** which are just below average, particularly the basic skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Current pupils make good progress at Key Stage 2 and achieve well through the good teaching and the very effective planning of the literacy hour. **Speaking, reading and listening** skills are developed well. By the end of Year 6, standards in **writing** are above those normally seen. Progress in Key Stage 3 is good, leading to above average standards, when pupils transfer to the next stage of their education. Pupils display good use of literacy skills across many subjects of the curriculum, for example in note taking, extended writing and oral expression of ideas. Standards in the presentation of work are high. **Numeracy skills** are sound. However, pupils do not have enough experience of applying their mathematical skills to investigations and unfamiliar problems across subjects. There are examples of good application in the use of number in English, geography, history, information technology and science.
- 8 At age 11, standards are well above those normally seen in information technology. They match those normally seen in art, design and technology, French, geography, history, physical education and music. They are below expected levels in religious education. Pupils achieve well and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed at Key Stage 3. Main strengths are in the improved quality of presentation of the work, the better spelling and improved clarity in oral expression.
- 9 At age 13, standards are above expected levels in history and information technology. In all other subjects, except religious education where they are low, standards are in line with those normally seen. Pupils make at least steady progress and achieve well by the end of Key Stage 3. Particular strengths are the ability of pupils to memorise and recall previously taught material, their ability to explain views clearly and in more depth, their precise use of technical vocabulary and more creative response to problems. In all years, competence in **information technology** (IT) is below what is expected because pupils have limited opportunities to use IT across subjects. However, good examples exist in English, science, history and design and technology. In English, pupils use drawing software to create a mythical creature and integrate it into a literary story and, in history, pupils produce a

newsletter highlighting historical events. The school is aware of the need to improve access, and the new IT room is almost ready for use.

- 10 In all subjects, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Their achievements are particularly noteworthy in the rapid improvement of their reading skills and the accuracy of their spelling. This is because their needs are met well through individual educational plans (IEPs) and the good support provided by specialist staff. Progress against targets identified in the IEPs is good. Across the full range of subjects, teachers ensure equal participation and the quality of the support promotes good progress in knowledge and understanding. Particular strengths in the quality of learning and achievements of pupils who have special educational needs are found in art, English, history and information technology.
- 11 There is no significant variation between the progress of boys and girls. However, there are weaknesses in French where boys and more able pupils underachieve. In geography, higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged, leading to lower than expected levels achieved for a significant number of pupils. In all years, the reasons for low standards in religious education are weak planning and lack of teachers' subject knowledge. There is no variation in the standards and achievements of pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, or those who have English as an additional language.
- 12 The great majority of parents believe that the school aims for high standards for all and enables their child to make good progress in a wide range of subjects. Inspectors confirm the view of parents, except for higher attainers in French and geography and for all pupils in religious education, where standards are weaker.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

Attitudes

- 13 Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good. They are happy coming to school and display a positive approach to their work in the classroom. Most pupils are diligent, responsive, and eager to contribute to discussions and practical work. They participate well in clubs, sports and a wide range of other extra-curricular activities, even when this involves attending outside normal school hours. Pupils are keen to take part in fund raising for charities, particularly when addressing the special needs of fellow pupils or the needs of the local community. They appreciate and respect the facilities of the school, which is evident from the absence of graffiti and damage. Pupils with special educational needs have a very positive attitude to their work, which reflects the effective nature of the support they receive. Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire or attended the pre-inspection meeting indicated that their children like school.

Behaviour

- 14 The standard of pupils' behaviour, both in and out of the classroom, is consistently good. They move around the school in an orderly manner and show due consideration for their fellow pupils, teachers and visitors. Pupils understand the school's expectations about their behaviour and deem them to be fair. They respond well to the award system, which acknowledges positive behaviour. A particularly good feature is the involvement of Year 8 pupils in the monitoring of

behaviour at lunchtime. This practice encourages self-discipline, provides an opportunity for Year 8 pupils to take responsibility and to be good role models for the rest of the school. The inspection found almost no evidence of bullying and no incidents of oppressive behaviour attributable to race or gender. During the last school year three boys were suspended for repeated aggressive behaviour, but no pupils were permanently excluded from school. Almost all parents believe that behaviour is good and attributable to the positive efforts of the school. Inspection findings confirm these views.

Personal development and relationships

- 15 The high quality of pupils' personal development and their relationships with others constitute a major strength of the school. They work co-operatively in the classroom, in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. For example, during the inspection, pupils were frequently observed helping each other in IT lessons, and a year 5 mathematics class worked very effectively as a team to complete a numeracy task against the clock. Teachers understand the needs of individual pupils, which fosters positive relationships that directly benefit the quality of their learning. Pupils are prepared well to exchange views and reflect on the views of others in personal discussions, form time and assemblies. They recognise the need to evaluate their own opinions about right and wrong. Pupils are willing to assume responsibility when offered, although opportunities are limited and there is no formal consultative process. The great majority of parents responding to the questionnaire believe that the school is helping their children to become increasingly mature and able to cope with the demands of future studies and of the social skills needed in the upper school.

Attendance

- 16 Attendance is very good. An above average level of attendance (94.3%) was achieved during the last school year and unauthorised absence was very low. Punctuality is generally good, and where pupils are late it is often attributable to transport problems. The school works hard with pupils and their parents to promote good attendance and punctuality, and enlists the help of the Educational Welfare Officer to address the rare occurrences of repeated, unexplained absence. Good procedures are in place to record and monitor attendance and to respond to any recurring issues.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 17 Teaching is good and has improved substantially since the last inspection, when one fifth of lessons were unsatisfactory and this was a weakness. Now, teaching is at least satisfactory in 93% of lessons observed. In just over half, the quality of teaching is at least good and the pace of students' learning is faster than normally seen. Almost one quarter of lessons is very good or excellent.
- 18 Teaching is good in both key stages. It is most effective in Year 5, where 68% of lessons observed were good, and of these one third were very good or excellent. This is a particular strength. There are examples of effective teaching in most subject areas. In 7% of lessons, teaching is unsatisfactory because of one or more shortcomings leading to insufficient progress for pupils against their potential. This represents nine lessons overall and six of these were in religious education. No

teaching was judged to be poor. Learning was good in over half of lessons observed and very good or excellent in almost a quarter. The quality of pupil's learning matches closely the teaching observed, and was better at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 3.

- 19 Good teaching was observed in most subjects, and was particularly effective in a high proportion of lessons in English, mathematics, science, information technology, history and personal, social and health education. Teaching was sound in all other National Curriculum subjects, with some good features in art, French, physical education, and music at Key Stage 2.
- 20 In lessons where teaching is of good or very good quality pupils learn quickly, are challenged effectively and make rapid progress. This occurs when teachers:
- have good knowledge and understanding of their subject and plan lessons to cover effectively the relevant National Curriculum programmes of study. This is the case in many subject areas, and leads to pupils acquiring new knowledge and skills rapidly, and demonstrating consistently high levels of effort. For example, in physical education Year 5 pupils improved their volleyball skills efficiently, thanks to the teacher's knowledge and guidance on correct and acceptable techniques for set shots;
 - plan effectively, setting challenging objectives that are understood by pupils and inspire them. Such planning is good in information technology, science, history and English. For example, in a Year 5 history lesson, pupils were taught about the Greek-Persian war and were then asked to find out further information from a good source. The level of this activity was pitched well to provide sufficient challenge for all the pupils in the class. The good impact on learning was evident in the higher levels of historical understanding achieved by the end of the lesson. This inspiring teaching led to many pupils showing interest in their work;
 - use methods which enable pupils to learn effectively. Pupils, in Years 5 and 6, are taught literacy and numeracy well using nationally planned strategies. The use and implementation of these initiatives is very effective, because it leads to rapid progress in understanding of language, spelling and use of number. This positive impact is also noticeable in the quality of lesson planning in other subjects and years, for example in the consistent use of plenary sessions, to confirm what has been learnt, at the end of lessons;
 - manage pupils well to make full use of learning time, and insist on high standards of behaviour. Nearly all lessons have high standards of behaviour and in no lessons is behaviour poor. As a result, pupils learn well, use lesson time to the full and are productive. This is particularly the case in art, where the restricted amount of time available is used very well, enabling pupils to reach sound standards;
 - use group activities and resources well. For example, in French, teachers used mime, songs and well-timed pair work to support pupils' use of the language. In PSHE, the excellent use of a board game engaged Year 8 pupils in intense group discussion on the sensitive issue of drug misuse. In a Year 6 music lesson on 'rondo', pupils were encouraged to work quickly and efficiently on their pieces before returning to perform them to the rest of the class;

- assess and mark pupils' work thoroughly. Practice is particularly effective in English, maths and history. In a Year 5 design and technology lesson, pupils were asked to create a boat hull which would travel quickly through water. At the end of the lesson the teacher carried out a quick and effective review in order to see what pupils had understood and who would need further help or extension. Pupils know how they can improve. For example, in a Year 8 science lesson, pupils were increasingly able to draw their own conclusions from their observations, because the teacher provided effective feedback and tested out what pupils knew, before moving on to the next stage.
- 21 In the very small number of unsatisfactory lessons, learning was too slow. This was the case in a high proportion of lessons in religious education. This is because teachers are working outside their specialism and lack sufficient understanding of the level of work that is appropriate for the age of the pupils. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on Judaism pupils became familiar with the story of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but the symbolism of the story was not sufficiently emphasised and consequently pupils under-achieved.
- 22 There are weaknesses in a few otherwise sound lessons which need addressing, considering the fact that pupils are willing and able to learn. Lesson planning does not always extend pupils to their full potential. This is the case in geography, design and technology, French and physical education. Use of feedback is sometimes lacking and pupils are not clear about how to improve their work. These shortcomings are noted in religious education and French. The management of behaviour is not always assured in science. Marking is sometimes cursory.
- 23 On balance, the use of homework is sound, and most effective in English, mathematics and history. There is potential for better use of homework to extend learning and improve progress further across the full range of subjects. Parents believe, and inspectors agree, that some work is too easy for more able pupils. Work set is not always integrated in lesson planning and not used sufficiently to consolidate learning objectives.
- 24 The teaching of literacy is very good in Years 5 and 6, and good in Years 7 and 8. Teachers have a good knowledge of the literacy strategy and use the national framework well. Whole class work is managed efficiently, with good use of question and answer sessions, ensuring the involvement of all pupils. During sentence work, teachers reinforce key aspects, such as spelling, grammar and punctuation. Teachers are effective in eliciting responses from pupils. The choice of texts for guided reading is appropriate and reading strategies are made explicit. During group work, activities fulfil learning objectives and resources support pupils well, with teacher and learning support assistants providing well targeted individual help as required. Plenary sessions are of suitable length and used for genuine reflection on learning, often leading to the next session. This good practice is particularly reflected in the teaching of English at Key Stage 3.

- 25 Teachers' full and enthusiastic implementation of the numeracy strategy at Key Stage 2 to date has resulted in high attainment in number work. Developments in the teaching of numeracy at Key Stage 2 are led well. Detailed medium and short term teaching plans are in use and all mathematics teachers have been well briefed, resulting in high standards being achieved. The use of material from which teachers design their lessons leads to copious, interactive teaching which gives pupils substantial opportunities to learn in each lesson. Engagement of the whole class in a number-related activity at the start, usually conducted at a lively speed, is followed by teaching of a new piece of mathematics, some individual, pair or group work, and is rounded off by a summary session. This gives each lesson high potential for being a valuable learning experience. It results in a remarkably high level of concentration by pupils throughout the hour-long lessons, during which they apply themselves and want to succeed.
- 26 The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers know which stage of the Code of Practice pupils are on and know their learning needs well. In many subjects, teachers plan carefully to provide a variety of materials and resources. However, in a few subjects, such planning is lacking and the school is not sharing sufficiently the good practice which exists in English, mathematics, design and technology, information technology, history and art. Many teachers provide key words related to their particular subject but this is not consistent across all areas. Teachers and learning support assistants work well as a team. They are effective in supporting pupils to think and learn for themselves and not to rely on others to do the work. Learning programmes to improve pupils' reading, spelling and handwriting, taught in small groups by learning support assistants, are used very well. Homework is set in classes and in groups when pupils are withdrawn. It takes into account what pupils with special educational needs can realistically achieve and is set at an appropriate level. It reinforces and extends their learning.
- 27 The teaching of more able pupils is good. There are shortcomings in French, geography and religious education owing to lack of challenge and poor match of activities to high levels of pupils' prior attainment. However, good practice exists in many areas. For example, in mathematics, pupils in higher sets are given appropriate work which they find challenging and which increases the rate of their learning. The school's decision to appoint a member of staff to co-ordinate provision for the needs of more able pupils has borne fruit. Successful professional development opportunities have had a positive impact and the co-ordinator is keen to develop this work further. At present, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching by the co-ordinator and the existing good practice is not yet secure across all subjects of the curriculum. The teaching of more able pupils was an issue in the last inspection, and has been addressed well. The impact on learning and progress is evidenced by the larger than average percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels (levels 5 and above) in the 1999 Key Stage 2 national tests.
- 28 The quality of teaching has been given a high priority within the school. This has enabled good improvements to be made since the last inspection.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

- 29 The school is committed to providing equality of access for all to a broad and balanced curriculum. Statements of what the school sets out to achieve are clear. Parents approve of the wide range of opportunities provided at the school, and are kept well informed about the content of the curriculum. All statutory requirements are met.
- 30 In Key Stages 2 and 3, the school provides a broad range of experience, which includes the teaching of French before the statutory age of 11. The allocation of time to art, design and technology, and music in Year 5 is limited. In all years, pupils have one lesson each week of IT, but use of IT skills across subjects is not realised. Consequently, some elements of programmes of study, such as control and sensing, are not sufficiently provided for. Pupils are eager to attend the IT club at lunchtime, and access is managed well, but is restricted due to the high levels of demand.
- 31 Good provision is made for pupils with special educational needs, with a clear focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils for whom specific provision is made receive a good quality curriculum. Withdrawal lessons have a very specific purpose and are effective in helping pupils to improve their basic skills which they use in other subjects. All pupils have full access to the curriculum. The school is aware of groups in need of particular help. The school has addressed successfully the curriculum needs of boys and of more able pupils. The rate of progress for these particular groups is now good, leading to higher achievement.
- 32 Provision and planning for the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies are good. The school is developing a whole school approach to the teaching of literacy, leading to improved skills. These are most securely applied within English and through the work of the special needs team. Literacy is advanced well in these areas. Many of the other areas of the curriculum, particularly French, geography and science, support the development of literacy skills through the reinforcement of grammatical accuracy, technical vocabulary and the use of key words. Mathematics teachers have a good knowledge of the national numeracy framework and implement its requirements fully, aligning the curriculum in Key Stage 3 to ensure curriculum progression. In mathematics, numeracy skills are developed well, but within other subjects of the curriculum these are not planned for explicitly. There is some good provision in science, history and information technology.
- 33 Provision for personal, social and health education is limited in Key Stage 2 owing to lack of time. However, form tutors grasp every possible opportunity in form time to provide for pupils' personal development. Assemblies are also used to reinforce with younger pupils issues such as relationships, acceptable behaviour and social skills. The school is aware of the need to provide sufficient time for a specific programme, to ensure good progress in the understanding of a wider range of sensitive issues, such as health awareness, citizenship and welfare issues. This aspect of the Key Stage 2 curriculum has been identified as a priority in the school development plan. In Key Stage 3, a coherent programme is taught well by a team of teachers, mostly confident with and knowledgeable of the subject matter. The quality of the programme is monitored effectively by the PSHE co-ordinator. All relevant issues, such as drug misuse, sex education, citizenship, relationships and respect for

others, are covered well. Specific projects support work-related learning well, for example the Economic and Industrial Understanding day sponsored by the local sand quarry, and the design technology challenge sponsored by Eastern Electricity.

- 34 The extensive programme of extra-curricular activities is very good. A wide range of sessions takes place at lunchtimes, after school and at weekends. Sporting activities are offered to boys and girls from all year groups. These cover individual and team games such as football and netball. Dance is a particularly popular activity, praised by parents. A particular strength of the dance club is its principle of inclusion of all pupils. Drama productions, the art club, and music ensembles contribute positively to pupils' moral, social and personal development. There is good take-up by pupils for activities and the school monitors attendance. Parents praise extra-curricular provision and are pleased with the level of support provided by teachers who give much of their time to plan, organise and supervise these events.
- 35 The school maintains good curriculum links with the local lower and upper schools for pastoral and academic purposes. Parents express positive views about the quality of links and induction procedures, which help their children to continue and progress in their learning and avoid repetition of curriculum content in the upper school. The school does its best to ensure a smooth transition into the next phase of learning. The school maintains positive links with the local community, for example through its work with specialist agencies, sponsored social and fund raising events and an art exhibition in the town's library. These contribute effectively to pupils' social development.
- 36 Provision for pupils' **moral development** is good. Expectations of good behaviour are understood by pupils. The system of sanctions and rewards is considered to be fair by pupils and parents. Pupils show a good sense of right and wrong. Lessons such as physical education, science and history provide good opportunities for pupils to engage in discussion about moral issues and they respond well to these. An excellent example was observed during the inspection week, when the powerful medium of dance was used very effectively to demonstrate contrasts between those who have possessions and those who do not. The impact on pupils' understanding was forceful. Teachers provide good role models. Many aspects of school life embody its aspiration to promote students' **social development**. The school provides a very good framework for this aspect of personal development. This is evident in the formal curriculum and informally in the daily life of the school. Lessons promote collaborative working of groups and the development of positive and tolerant attitudes towards others. The personal and social development programme, in Years 7 and 8, is particularly effective. Outside lessons, the willingness of pupils to be involved, to take part in social and recreational activities and to take responsibility typify the social ethos to the school. Provision for **cultural and spiritual development** is satisfactory. Assemblies provide good opportunities for quiet reflection and for considering beliefs and values. Few subjects make an explicit contribution to spiritual development, although in science pupils were observed being enthused by chemical reactions, and in religious education pupils were asked to reflect on questions of life, death, meaning and value. The school meets the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Opportunities for cultural development exist through extra-curricular activities, visits and residential trips. Wider cultural understanding is extended in French, geography, history and religious education. In PSHE, consideration is given to prejudices, equality and anti-racism. The school's links with a school in Africa contribute to pupils' understanding

of differences amongst world cultures. Pupils have somewhat limited direct experience of the range of cultural backgrounds and the richness of other cultures which surround them, particularly those represented in nearby towns.

- 37 Governors and senior managers have responded well to issues raised in the last report particularly in increasing learning time, changing the length of lessons and making better provision for the teaching of IT skills.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 38 The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and welfare, and the provision of well planned academic and pastoral support is a strength of the school. Heads of year are very instrumental in the high quality of this aspect of school provision. Form teachers use effective monitoring procedures, leading to improved achievements.

Welfare

- 39 There are good procedures in place to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils, including those embracing behaviour, bullying, racism and security. Child protection procedures meet statutory requirements, and all staff know the designated teacher. All office staff have been trained in first aid, and they maintain appropriate records of all accidents and other incidents. There are comprehensive and effective measures for easing the induction of pupils from the lower schools into Year 5 and the transition of Year 8 pupils to the upper schools. Site security is good. Telephones have been installed in each building to facilitate the operation of emergency procedures.

Academic assessment

- 40 The school has very good procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress. The senior teacher provides very good assessment information to support teachers in the use of assessment to raise standards. The analysis of pupils' attainment on entry to Year 5 is very thorough. Levels of achievement in individual subjects are carefully recorded throughout the school, and the results are used to inform the improvement of standards for individuals, classes and groups. For example, the recognition of different levels of achievement by boys and girls led to successful measures to redress an imbalance. Pupil assessment also highlighted the need to support able pupils. The appointment of a teacher to co-ordinate this work is very effective. Very good links exist with partner schools to ensure continuity of help for pupils with special educational needs. The progress of these pupils is carefully monitored throughout their time in the school, and additional support is sought from outside agencies as required to meet identified learning difficulties. Academic assessment is good in English, mathematics, science, information technology, history and design and technology. It is sound in French, art, music and physical education, but unsatisfactory in geography and religious education. Teacher assessment is monitored by the senior management team, and moderated within departments, to ensure common interpretation across all subjects and year groups. In some areas, teacher assessment is too cautious and does not reflect with sufficient accuracy what pupils are capable of achieving. Each subject area has targets to raise standards based on previous assessment information, and these are used effectively

to guide subject planning. Assessment was an issue in the last inspection. This is no longer the case and very good progress has been made in procedures, with positive impact on outcomes.

Guidance

- 41 The school is successful in using assessment to inform pupils of their progress and to set targets for improving achievement. Younger pupils are aware of their levels of achievement in the main academic subjects, and many have a clear understanding of what they should seek to accomplish next. Pupils in Year 8 make less use of their targets and do not use them sufficiently to reflect on their work. Individual targets for each half term are recorded in pupils' contact books, ensuring that both pupils and their parents are aware of their short term objectives. This practice is effective, although some parents would welcome clarification about timing, particularly concerning the targets set at the end of the academic year. Targets set for pupils with special educational needs are appropriate and help them progress. Very good links exist with partner schools and needs are identified at an early stage, thus leading to well planned provision. Different learning assistants may work with the same pupil in any one day, and there is no formal system for them to exchange information about the pupils that they support. The targets set in the individual educational plans are reviewed regularly and are used well to monitor performance, improve confidence and raise self-esteem.

Support for personal development

- 42 Pastoral care is handled well by the school. Pupils receive individual caring attention from their form teachers, who are very effective in recognising and dealing with pupils' personal problems. The heads of each year group provide good professional support for addressing the needs of their pupils and identifying considered approaches to common problems. All teachers are charged with promoting good behaviour, and the comprehensive policy provides pupils with clear guidance on key issues like bullying, racism and other oppressive behaviour. Good attendance and punctuality are successfully promoted, and parents respond well to newsletters encouraging their co-operation. The contact book is used well and provides an effective medium to record personal achievement and inform parents of progress. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have formal lessons in personal, social and health education, which promote well their understanding of issues such as family values, sex education, equality of opportunities and drug misuse. For older pupils, opportunities to contribute to the running of the school exist, but are limited. Provision for younger pupils to address personal, social and health education issues are made in assemblies and form time, but these opportunities are too brief.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 43 Parents responding to the questionnaire were very positive about the school. Almost all believed that their children make good progress, considered the teaching was good and felt comfortable about approaching the school to discuss difficulties. A small minority felt they were not adequately informed about their children's progress.

- 44 The school has good links with parents. The contact book is a popular and effective means of two-way communication, and parents appreciate the prompt responses they receive from teachers to their questions and suggestions. Form teachers use the contact books to record individual pupils' achievements, thereby providing parents with a continuous view of their child's progress as well as a record of homework set and personal development targets. Teachers are available for consultation before and after school. The school consults parents on key issues, exemplified by a recent questionnaire sent to Year 5 parents about induction procedures and the use of the contact book.
- 45 There are two comprehensive parents' consultation evenings each year, organised on an appointment basis, which almost all parents feel are worthwhile attending. There is a high level of attendance by parents of pupils with special educational needs at annual review meetings. The annual reports to parents have been improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. They include information about the National Curriculum, but there is still a lack of specific information about pupils' progress. Newsletters provide a regular flow of relevant information to parents, and the school website provides an excellent source of facts and pictures about many aspects of school life.
- 46 Parental interest and involvement have a positive impact on the performance of the school. All parents sign the home-school agreement and fulfil their obligations about attendance, homework, punctuality, communication and parents' evenings, which engenders positive attitudes in their children. A few parents provide regular help in the classroom, mainly in Year 5. There is an active parent-teacher association which organises events and provides significant financial assistance to the school. The school has been successful in fostering a beneficial partnership with parents.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 47 Over the last few years the school's main priorities have been to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of all pupils, to improve further the quality of teaching and to raise the achievement of all pupils. The school aims to fulfil pupils' individual potential, to raise awareness of moral values, to develop capacity for enjoyment and help pupils become active citizens. Partnership with parents, with local schools and with the community is central to the school's work. The main priorities of the whole school development plan are to:
- monitor and improve performance further,
 - continue to develop effective assessment and reporting procedures,
 - develop the use of information and communication technology,
 - and strengthen the role of subject leaders.
- 48 These aims are promoted well and the priorities are appropriate. Parents believe that the school is led well and that the climate for learning is very positive. Inspection findings confirm these views.
- 49 The clear educational direction provided by the headteacher is a strength of the school. The seven key issues identified in the last inspection have all been addressed, with progress being particularly effective in five of these. The quality of teaching has improved, the use of assessment to help pupils progress and provision for pupils with special educational needs are now strengths of the school, planning

to meet the needs of more able pupils is now good, and the monitoring of the curriculum and of standards by senior managers is very good. The prescribed programmes of study in information technology are now covered well, and reports to parents have been improved to satisfactory standards.

- 50 The headteacher is supported very effectively by a committed and experienced senior team, and by very good heads of year. The areas for improvement identified in the whole school development plan are appropriate, but are not often reflected in subject departmental plans and these are weak, because they are not used sufficiently as a management tool and are rarely focused on outcomes for pupils. Senior managers do much of the monitoring, with some direct involvement of subject specialists. The evaluation and implementation of specific actions, following the monitoring, have not yet had sufficient impact in all subjects. Systems, such as the excellent use of the teacher planner and regular subject reviews, are very effective in monitoring and reviewing the school's work. The implementation of the numeracy and literacy strategies has been well managed. Senior managers and teachers are committed to ensuring that each pupil has an equal chance to achieve. Progress towards meeting quantitative targets is reviewed, and the school takes the necessary action to raise the level of challenge further, in the light of its evaluation of successes. The positive impact of leadership is best evidenced by the well above average test results, the very good ethos for learning and the very good level of personal development of pupils.
- 51 Governors work closely with the senior team and are very aware of the strengths of the school and where it could improve. The governing body's relationship with staff is very good. There are named governors for special educational needs, literacy, numeracy, ICT and homework. Governors are increasingly involved in decision making, and their contribution to the strategic direction of the school is developing. They responded very well to issues raised in the last inspection. All the prescribed responsibilities of the governing body are now met in full. Performance targets for the headteacher have been set, as required by law. Plans for appraisal and the management of staff performance are being reviewed, in the light of new regulations to be introduced in September 2000. Whilst pupils are provided with a good quality of education in information technology as a National Curriculum subject, there is, at present, insufficient access to information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- 52 The senior management team and governors provide effective control and administration of the school's budget. Financial planning is appropriately linked to the development planning cycle; however individual priorities in departmental plans are not sufficiently costed. The finance sub-committee monitors and ratifies expenditure well, with a range of different spending options being considered in order to secure best value for money. Governors are rigorous in requiring justification when significant spending is necessary. The latest audit gave praise to the school's secure financial systems and minor procedural issues have been dealt with. Daily financial administration is very good.
- 53 Over the last few years, the strategic review of whole school accommodation, fabric, display and furniture has enhanced the learning environment. Improvements particularly worthy of mention are: the general high quality of the accommodation, the very good use of pupils' work to help pupils learn, such as the excellent literacy board in Year 5, the better changing rooms for physical education, the Year 6 and music blocks. The only weakness is the suitability of accommodation for some of

the French teaching. Available resources are used well, but there are shortages of textbooks in mathematics at Key Stage 3, French, geography, and resources for pupils with special educational needs across subjects of the curriculum. Tuned instruments are needed in music. An IT room is planned but, at present, access to information technology is limited. In the library, although the number of books per pupil is in line with the average figure, the stock requires updating. Overall, the quality of the accommodation, the absence of litter and graffiti, the good use of equipment and materials by teachers and pupils make a positive contribution to teaching and learning.

- 54 Staffing is matched well to the needs of the curriculum, except in religious education. Access to and impact of professional development is good, for example almost all staff now use effective strategies to cater for the needs of the more able pupils. The induction and support provided for newly qualified teachers are very good. All teachers are monitored annually and discuss the effectiveness of teaching styles with senior managers. The additional teaching hours, for pupils who have special educational needs, are used very well. Ancillary and learning support staff make a very effective contribution to the quality of provision and to pupils' achievements.
- 55 Considering the good quality of teaching, the very good progress in the personal and social development of pupils, and the above average attainment in two of the three core subjects, the school gives good value for money. The school has the capacity to maintain its good results and continue its improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 56 In order to improve further the quality of education and raise standards, the headteacher, senior team, staff and governors should:
1. Develop the role of subject leaders by
 - improving leadership and evaluation skills in all subjects,
 - monitoring the impact of decisions on learning and standards,
 - improving the departmental development plan, so that it supports whole school priorities.Refer to paragraph 50, 74, 81, 87, 94, 101, 123, 130, 138 and 143.
 2. Raise standards in geography and in religious education by
 - improving lesson planning and the quality of teaching to meet the needs of all pupils,
 - challenging higher attaining pupils, for example through enquiry and investigation,
 - improving schemes of work and the balance of the curriculum,
 - using assessment purposefully to inform the next stage of learning.Refer to paragraphs 96 to 102 and 140 to 143.

The first issue is already identified as an area for improvement in the whole school curriculum priorities.

To aid further improvements, the headteacher, governors and subject leaders

should also consider the following subsidiary issues:

- improving the satisfactory teaching to good, and addressing the cause of the small proportion of weak teaching (paragraphs 21 to 23),
- improving the allocation of time to a few subjects, as listed in this report (paragraphs 30 and 33),
- improving the quality and range of resources in the library, and in subjects as specified in the report (paragraph 53),
- making better and wider use of IT across the curriculum (paragraphs 9 and 53),
- raising standards even further by making more effective use of homework (paragraph 23).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	130
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	65

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5%	19%	32%	37%	7%	0%	0%

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	555	N/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	64	N/a

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11	N/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	88	N/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	18

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.7
National comparative data	6.0

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	65	80	145

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	50	49	60
	Girls	67	56	68
	Total	117	105	128
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (63))	72 (54)	88 (71)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	46	50	49
	Girls	63	58	54
	Total	109	108	103
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75 (70)	74 (69)	71 (84)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	3
Indian	2
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	542
Any other minority ethnic group	7

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	3	0
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	25.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	151.5

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80%
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	27.29
Key Stage 3	27.00

Financial information

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	981600
Total expenditure	959600
Expenditure per pupil	1729
Balance brought forward from previous year	25000
Balance carried forward to next year	47000

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	555
Number of questionnaires returned	190

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	34	61	4	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	47	50	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	58	5	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	64	12	2	1
The teaching is good.	37	58	3	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	53	14	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	53	39	5	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	36	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	32	55	9	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	51	45	2	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	55	3	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	47	9	2	8

Other issues raised by parents

Most parents are very supportive of the school and list in particular the strengths of pastoral care, the dedication of staff, the high quality of the dance club, the reinforcement of tolerance and the promotion of positive social and moral values. A very small number of parents expressed concerns over the lack of challenge in some subjects and the uneven spread of homework throughout the week.

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

ENGLISH

- 57 Through a combination of good teaching and good attitudes to learning, pupils make good progress in Years 5 and 6, leading to results well above the national average in tests at age 11. Results are particularly impressive at levels 5 and above, with the percentage of pupils reaching these levels, at 40%, being slightly more than double the national figure of 19%.
- 58 Pupils currently enter the school with levels of attainment which are a little below average, with some having weaknesses in reading and writing. In their first two years at the school, pupils, including those with special educational needs, make very good progress through the effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, the good teaching of literacy skills and the quality of teaching in English lessons. By the end of Year 6, pupils are prepared very well to succeed at Key Stage 3. In Years 7 and 8, they continue to meet the challenge of work of increasing difficulty, such as response to literature, including poetry. Pupils make good progress, so that when they leave the school at age 13, attainment is above levels normally seen. Feedback from the nearby upper school indicates that pupils subsequently attain well in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9.
- 59 Standards across the different aspects of English differ only a little. Levels in speaking and listening are a little above those in reading, where levels of understanding, especially when requiring inference, are not always secure. In writing, levels start a little below the other two areas because of inaccuracies at the beginning of Year 5, but during Years 5 and 6 the very good progress leads to writing skills which are above levels of accuracy normally found by the end of the key stage. In Years 7 and 8, good progress is made through the development of good quality, extended writing with a wider range of vocabulary and expression and much care taken over standards of presentation. A positive feature of this work is the compilation of anthologies of poetry written by pupils in Year 8. Boys and girls perform above expected levels for their age. A strength of the work in English is the way lower attaining pupils are helped through good support and the encouragement provided through the use of the booster groups and facilities such as the "red room". There are no significant variations in attainment by pupils of different ethnicity.
- 60 Standards in **Literacy** are above those normally seen. Several subjects make a positive contribution to the development of literacy skills, particularly in spelling, speaking and listening. Pupils listen attentively, speak with confidence and, often, a growing maturity, for example in science, history and personal and social education. They respond willingly and well to questions, with good recall of facts. Contributions to discussion are usually of appropriate clarity or volume and pupils work well in groups, for example in art. Reading skills are average and not all pupils fully extract meaning from the text if some "reading between the lines" is required. Many are able to state and form their own opinions and feelings, especially in geography and history, where pupils show an ability to make a personal response to their reading. Pupils who have special educational needs read well and their confidence improves rapidly. Reading aloud is often good, as in English or history. Writing skills are developed well, with levels of accuracy in spelling improving well as pupils move through the school, particularly for those who have special educational needs. Pupils are usually able to write in a variety of styles for different

audiences, with many capable of good, extended writing in Years 7 and 8. They are also capable of writing in poetical forms as opportunities arise, such as in the creation of poetry anthologies in Year 8. The presentational quality of much work is high.

- 61 Throughout the school, pupils show interest in their work and most commit themselves to do well and generally volunteer answers readily. Their learning skills are good and they often show accurate recall from previous lessons, such as in knowing about figures of speech in Year 6 and about rhyme scheme patterns, for example in work on “The Pied Piper” in a Year 7 lesson. They have the confidence to share ideas, opinions and feelings, for example when responding to work on “Flour Babies” in Year 7. Pupils often receive a sense of reward and enjoyment, as when working on characters in a booster group in Year 6 and on an interview and biography in Year 8. They work together very conscientiously, in guided reading sessions in Year 6, behaving very well and sustaining concentration. When opportunities are offered for pupils to develop responsibility for their learning, they respond well, for example in improvisation work or when pupils provide feedback to others to improve their work. Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with their teachers.
- 62 Teaching has a positive impact on learning and on progress. All lessons were good at Key Stage 3, and almost all at Key Stage 2. Overall, half of the teaching was good, and a third was very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and their expectations of pupils are high. Lesson planning, both in the departmental schemes of work and in teachers’ individual lessons, is good, indicating a relevant sequence of tasks, good pace and an appropriate use of time. Planning for the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy is very good. The one hour lesson is used effectively, the best lessons being where vigorous presentation by the teacher is followed by challenging activities, leading to very good progress in the development of skills and understanding. The level of challenge in the teaching helps high attaining pupils to maintain good progress and reach high standards. Teachers always explain clearly tasks to be achieved, and occasionally include criteria for success, as in the literacy hour in Years 5 and 6. Pupils are managed well and feedback from teachers in class rewards pupils for their efforts and encourages them to respond to questions. In the best lessons, efforts are made to draw out responses from all. Answers are well received, but always challenged for possible improvement. Different materials are used effectively to help all pupils to succeed. In the very few, less successful lessons, either the teacher does not manage the class well, or work lacks the high degree of challenge normally found in the other lessons. Pupils’ writing is marked regularly. In some cases helpful written comments of quality are made, giving pupils advice about how to improve their work. Occasionally targets to be achieved in the next pieces of work are written, but this area needs development to ensure greater consistency of use by all teachers. Appropriate homework is set and the use of the contact book is effective. Assessment of pupils’ work is organised appropriately and internal moderation ensures good agreement on standards.
- 63 Subject leadership is good, with particular strengths in the successful introduction of the Literacy Strategy and the many worthwhile improvements since the last inspection. The curriculum is now planned well, with a good range of well-organised materials used to cover all aspects of the subject. Provision for the improvement of reading is good, through guided reading, reading records and reviews, and opportunities for quiet reading in form time. The range of types of

reading, which includes poetry being both read and written, is appropriate. Very good guidance is provided to pupils, through lists of points displayed in classrooms, indicating to pupils what they need to do to improve their levels in English. Worthwhile aspects of drama techniques sometimes feature in lessons, such as improvisation and role play, including teacher in role, and some playscripts are both read and written. Greater provision for study of drama texts is made in the summer terms in Years 7 and 8 and, for some pupils, through a yearly school performance, such as "Oliver" in 1999. Opportunities to use drama texts and activities with all pupils are sometimes missed, although the restrictions imposed by the accommodation are acknowledged. The department provides some opportunities for pupils to practise their information technology skills, in word-processing and varied aspects of desk-top publishing, for drafting, redrafting and presentation of work. Access to computers is still restricted but is about to be improved, through provision of a second IT room. English makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and its overall contribution to the personal development of the pupils is very good. Resources are adequate and accommodation overall is sound. The proposed accommodation for drama mentioned in the last inspection report is still to be achieved. The environment in the classrooms is generally very neat and encouraging, with some good display that features pupils' work, or helps their understanding; an excellent example of this is the high quality literacy board in a Year 5 classroom.

- 64 Since the last inspection, standards in English have risen dramatically. They are now well above expected levels in Key Stage 2 and above those normally seen in Years 7 and 8. The quality of teaching is now good, with the deficiencies in the levels of challenge having been remedied. Skills of listening and speaking have been improved and the range of reading has been increased. In writing, there has been an improvement in the responsibility pupils take for their learning, including drafting, redrafting and care for accuracy. Much of the extended writing of older pupils is now of good quality, with high standards of presentation maintained. The department continues to be well organised and good developments have been made, such as in the successful preparation for the literacy hour and the use of materials to suit the abilities of all pupils. Progress since the last inspection has been very good and all the major recommendations of the last report have been successfully addressed.
- 65 To maintain the very good progress and to improve further, the department should:
- improve the overall balance of activities across the different genres of English,
 - use written comments in marking more consistently, so that the advice given helps all pupils equally,
 - evaluate the impact of the Literacy Strategy, with consideration given to the number of activities tackled by pupils in the literacy hour and English lessons,
 - and further extend the use of information technology.

MATHEMATICS

- 66 Mathematics teaching has improved since the last inspection. High ability pupils' work is better; they are now achieving well up to their potential. Although test results remain similar to the national average, attainment of present pupils is above. Teachers' full and enthusiastic implementation of the Numeracy Strategy at Key Stage 2 to date has resulted in high attainment in number work.
- 67 Standards of work, in Years 5 and 6, are above average, and better than previous national test results show. The 1999 test results were in line with the national figure, showing improvement in line with the national trend, but much less improvement than the school achieved in English and science. Currently, nearly all pupils achieve well in relation to their potential. In the higher sets, pupils are quick and accurate with mental arithmetic and can apply it to currency conversion, distance/time graphs, multiplication of fractions, negative numbers and areas of curved shapes. This is high achievement for age 11. In middle sets, pupils have a good command of numerical work, and use this effectively in other areas of mathematics. In a lesson on weighing, a class estimated the weights of everyday objects by assessing them in their hands, then checking the actual weights on scales, choosing scales with the right weighing range, and reading accurately scales with differing intermediate markings, such as 10g, 20g, 50g. In lower sets, pupils are steadily improving their number work, and are mostly confident and accurate in the whole-class oral sessions, but they do less well in their written work. These pupils can usually manage basic calculations, such as finding the difference between a given number and 100, and making tally charts to handle data, but have difficulty with fractions, and with converting a problem written in words into the correct calculation.
- 68 Work in Years 7 and 8 is in line with what is expected at this age. Nearly all pupils achieve well in relation to their potential. Feedback from the upper school shows that at the end of Year 9 in 1999, the 1998 leavers from this middle school attained average results in the national tests in mathematics. Towards the end of Year 8, the most able pupils are reaching high standards. They can make graphs of linear algebraic functions, calculate square roots by successive approximation, and understand probability tree diagrams for working out the chance of combinations of events occurring. Attainment in the middle sets is average and sometimes above. Pupils can work out linear formulae to represent problems given in words, and understand how negative numbers work when measuring rise and fall of temperature. They have done accurate work on angles and bearings, and probability using fractions including combined events. In the lower sets, work is below average but represents appropriate achievement. In topics such as angles and probability, these pupils do well, achieving the average level for this age. Their number work is below average; for example, several still have difficulty multiplying or dividing a three digit number by a single digit number accurately, and when talking about probability several are not able to give appropriate examples of something that is 'certain' to happen or is 'impossible'.
- 69 In both key stages, pupils do not have enough experience of applying their mathematical skill to investigations of unfamiliar problems. Their achievement in this aspect is an area for improvement, and is recognised in the department's development plan. Some Year 8 pupils did well with an investigation into the

properties of 'hollow squares', discovered general rules for the problem, and followed emerging lines of further enquiry. There is little evidence of this type of work in other years.

- 70 Standards in **numeracy** at age 11 and 13 are in line with levels expected for that age. Pupils make some use of operations and calculations. However, they do not have enough experience of applying their skills to investigations in mathematics, or of solving unfamiliar problems in other subjects. There are, however, some good examples, where other departments reinforce pupils' numeracy skills, in geography, history, information technology and science, where data is collected and presented graphically, and some basic measurements, graphs and calculations are required. Pupils were able to demonstrate their ability with subtraction in English, by working out correctly the age at which an author died by subtracting his date of birth from his date of death.
- 71 Teaching and learning are very good at Key Stage 2 and sound at Key Stage 3. In Years 5 and 6, a third of lessons were very good or excellent, a further third were good, and there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Although teachers are not mathematics specialists, they have considerable experience and understanding of the subject at this level, and have a high level of general teaching skill. Adoption of the National Numeracy Strategy has provided a very effective model on which teachers design their lessons, and this leads to copious interactive teaching which gives pupils substantial opportunities to learn in each lesson. Engagement of the whole class in a number-related activity at the start, usually conducted at a lively speed, followed by teaching of a new piece of mathematics, some individual, pair or group work, rounded off by a summary session, gave each lesson high potential for being a valuable learning experience. It resulted in a remarkably high level of concentration by pupils, throughout the hour-long lessons, during which they applied themselves and wanted to succeed. One teacher generated excellent concentration and motivation in her middle ability Year 5 class by using a multiplication game based on the 5, 6 and 7 times tables. Each pupil had a card with an answer on one side and another question on the other. One pupil would call out a question and the one with the correct answer on their card called it out and set the next question. This continued until all cards had been used. It made everyone concentrate and participate, because each pupil's card held the one and only answer for one question. Enthusiasm was enhanced further by the class being timed to see if they could 'beat the record'. The pupils' high attainment was amply demonstrated by the class correctly completing all 26 cards in an average of 3 seconds per card. An excellent lesson on weighing was enhanced by the way the number work at the beginning, on counting up and down in 5s, 10s, 20s, 50s, applied perfectly to the way pupils read the weighing scales and calculated the differences between their estimates and the actual weights of the objects. The impact of the very good teaching is that pupils look forward to and enjoy learning mathematics, a high proportion achieve well up to their potential, and current attainment is above average.
- 72 There is some very good teaching at Key Stage 3, but most lessons are sound and there are very occasional unsatisfactory lessons. The best teaching and learning is with the top sets, which results in high attainment for these pupils. Teachers of these sets have a very good command of their subject, which enables them to recognise the potential of the pupils, so they teach appropriately challenging mathematics topics at a good pace. They judge the progress of learning astutely and know when they can take a topic further, so their lessons make very good use

of time. One teacher rapidly introduced complex arrangements of triangles, where pupils had to find unknown angles using their recently gained knowledge of the angle sum of a triangle and the rule for angles on a straight line. This gave a useful numeracy spin off because it required agility in calculating sums and differences up to 180 and 360. The sound lessons in the middle and lower sets are taught by non-specialists whose knowledge of the subject is adequate for the planned teaching points. Although learning is sound, on several occasions teachers in these classes did not take the opportunity to improve the lesson by making further teaching points which arose from pupils' incorrect answers. In these classes, there are strengths in the pupils' positive attitudes to mathematics; the neat presentation of work in exercise books shows that pupils value their work. A good feature is that teachers give work of varied difficulty to different pupils according to their level of understanding. In the occasional unsatisfactory lesson, pupils were seen to be willing and keen to learn more. Although the teacher worked from the prescribed course booklet on drawing flowcharts for procedures such as following a food recipe, these did not provide enough pace, depth or mathematical content to meet the learning potential of the class.

- 73 Teaching and learning for pupils with special needs is sound in all years. These pupils are taught in lower sets with fewer pupils per class, and classroom support assistants assist the teacher well. Teachers plan suitable work and usually present it effectively. On occasion, the teacher slightly misjudges the pupils' capacity to follow procedures in their heads, when building up the ideas through intermediate steps would have been more effective. For example, practising multiplication by working out on paper the cost of several items, given a price list of the cost of each item, was too much for some Year 5 pupils because an intermediate stage was missing, such as playing shopkeeper and shopper in pairs and doing the activity practically. Pupils enjoy and make good progress with number work, which is given appropriately high emphasis. Learning is restricted by some of these pupils' very short concentration span and by their lack of confidence when working individually. This contrasts sharply with their enjoyment and greater success in the whole-class number work at the start of lessons.
- 74 Leadership of mathematics is in transition. The newly appointed co-ordinator is on maternity leave and temporary cover from another experienced teacher has been fragmented by illness. This is holding up progress in improving the department at Key Stage 3, exemplified by an insufficiently well thought out or incisive development plan, differing assessment and recording systems by teachers and a lack of monitoring and evaluation across the key stage. On the other hand, mathematics and numeracy at Key Stage 2 are led well. Detailed medium and short term teaching plans are in use and all Key Stage 2 mathematics teachers have been well briefed, resulting in the high standards achieved. Teaching materials for pupils in Years 5 and 6 are sufficient and effective. Most of the booklets for Key Stage 3 do not provide enough pace and challenge. The school has made a start on purchasing more appropriate books for pupils in Years 7 and 8, but does not have enough to use them to best effect. Progress since the last inspection has been good, with most issues addressed well. Insufficient use of computers in mathematics teaching was raised as an issue, and this remains the case.

- 75 To improve standards further, the department should:
- raise the quality of teaching at Key Stage 3 from 'sound' to 'good',
 - improve the management of the subject at Key Stage 3,
 - build in a programme for teaching pupils how to investigate and explore in mathematics,
 - and use IT more frequently to enhance pupils' skills and understanding of mathematics.

SCIENCE

- 76 Pupils receive a good science education and most make good progress. They achieve above average levels of attainment and good levels of scientific knowledge, skills and understanding. In Key Stage 2 national tests in 1999, the proportion of pupils reaching levels 4 and above was above the national average, and for levels 5 and above it was well above the national figure for similar schools. At age 13, pupils' attainment remains above what is expected at that age.
- 77 Pupils enter the school with average attainment in science. By age 11, attainment of current pupils is above that normally seen. Pupils' scientific knowledge is good and understanding of key scientific concepts is clear. Practical skills are well developed, although some pupils lack confidence to test out their ideas fully. They can describe fair tests and most carry them out. Higher attaining pupils are challenged to use new and existing knowledge and test more complex ideas, for example pupils in Year 5 working on balancing forces. At age 13, achievement is above expectation for age. Pupils can explain key scientific concepts, such as the visible light spectrum and the dispersion of light through a prism. They can begin to predict with some accuracy outcomes from investigations using their knowledge of scientific principles. For some higher attaining pupils, progress is slowed when they are not sufficiently clear about what they are expected to learn to reach higher standards. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- 78 The subject contributes soundly to literacy and numeracy skills. Sound use is made of key words, reinforced through rigorous marking. Pupils use numbers and basic operations well, although opportunities to use data and explain patterns are less evident. Occasionally pupils use and apply information technology to collect data and produce graphs of their results and are beginning to build web sites of animal groups for example, but this is not a regular feature of pupils' work.
- 79 Teaching and learning are good, with some very good features at Key Stage 2. Although most teachers are not science specialists in Key Stage 2, they have a good understanding of key scientific concepts and experience of the subject at an appropriate level. They use their knowledge and experience well to set clear and challenging objectives for lessons, as well as individual targets for pupils, which are matched well to their needs and capability. Pupils are expected to succeed and make swift progress. For example, in an effective Year 5 lesson, pupils carried out an investigation comparing the force requirements in different situations, and discussed the implications in relation to a fair test. The teacher had good knowledge of the subject and of the investigative process which was explained clearly to pupils. In depth questioning tested pupils' knowledge and understanding. Well practised procedures and clear exposition consolidated pupils' understanding of key scientific concepts. Good progress was therefore ensured. The impact of

very good science teaching is that pupils enjoy the subject, look forward to lessons and make very good progress, achieving well in relation to their potential, with above average results in tests at age 11. There is some good teaching in Key Stage 3, which results in high standards for pupils. In these lessons teachers have a good command of the subject. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, clear objectives were set for the class and these were then rigorously tested at the end of the lesson to check that pupils had understood. This effective summary consolidated the learning. Progress was judged accurately by the teacher, with pupils moving on to the next stage at an appropriate pace. In this lesson, pupils consolidated their understanding of the visible spectrum quickly. In some lessons, progress is too slow because planning lacks precision and does not link clearly to work that pupils have completed previously. Pupils do not always know how to improve, because insufficient explanation is given on how to reach the targets set in the lesson. On a very few occasions in Key Stage 3, learning is hindered by ineffective classroom control, resulting in higher than normal noise levels which affect pupils' concentration. Marking of books is consistent, often with comments that clearly diagnose strengths and weaknesses and offer pupils helpful guidance on how to improve their work.

- 80 Pupils make considerable effort to concentrate, use their knowledge and understanding, ask questions and complete tasks. They are on the whole good learners. They can use texts, worksheets and supplementary resources, including IT to investigate topics, for example in a metals project and in research on Sir Isaac Newton.
- 81 There is a sense of purpose and direction in the subject's work, informed by monitoring of teaching and the effective support provided by the co-ordinator of science to non-specialist teachers. This support improves approaches to, and the variety of, investigations carried out by pupils throughout the school. Standardisation of teacher assessment has some inconsistencies, and plans are in place to improve this through the introduction of assessed portfolios of pupils' work. Assessment and attainment data are now routinely collated and analysed, providing a rich source of information to gauge the progress of the department and pupils. However, the data are not yet used consistently and effectively to inform pupils' progress fully, to set targets, to evaluate teaching and to prioritise actions in the subject development plan. Health and safety procedures are sound, but the outcomes of rigorous risk assessments are not always evident in teachers' planning. Accommodation is used effectively with some very good displays giving a sense of care and value for the subject. One laboratory is in need of some refurbishment.
- 82 The subject is supported by a technician who makes a significant contribution to pupils' practical experience. Resources are adequate but the department lacks a wide range of diverse, rich and varied specialist resources, colourful texts or visual aids to develop pupils' learning skills. Information technology to enhance pupils' learning of science has still to become a regular feature of pupils' work. Since the last inspection attainment and standards have improved considerably. To improve these further and sustain the good rate of progress, the department should:
- help pupils understand their achievement and progress more fully and explain how they can improve further,

- continue to develop pupils' independent learning and thinking skills to research, analyse data and solve problems, for example by using information technology skills more widely,
- and improve pupils' investigative skills in Key Stage 3, especially higher attainers' use and application of knowledge when testing ideas.

ART

- 83 In art, pupils benefit from a rich curriculum experience, they work enthusiastically and standards have improved. In each year, pupils' achievements match what is typically expected. They learn how to use a variety of materials and techniques and enjoy exploring and making activities. Older groups are able to recognise significant features of artists' work and, with support, can make links to their own designs and compositions. Pupils make good progress within each unit of work. However, the breaks between each timetabled block of art result in a larger than average proportion of pupils remaining at average levels of attainment, and fewer reaching higher standards. Pupils with special educational needs participate fully in art, and boys and girls achieve equally well.
- 84 A varied programme within each year provides interest and challenge. It is extended further through working with textiles, as part of design and technology, and by the use of sketchbooks in each age group. Pupils show confidence and develop competent basic skills in working with clay, creating a collage and making models. In a Year 6 lesson pupils used a wide assortment of materials to build a model of a bird; knowledge of shape and form was applied from observation and unusual combinations were chosen, with inventive ways found to achieve a sound construction and good representation. Pupils also draw and paint, both as a means of recording information and ideas, and as a creative activity. These two skills remain under-developed, however, because there is insufficient opportunity made for pupils to refine them. Pupils' understanding of the vocabulary of the subject is limited. They are used to evaluating their work, but rely on prompting and guidance from their teachers.
- 85 Pupils enjoy art. Their concentration is good, they keep up a strong pace of work and maintain high standards of behaviour. They work exceptionally well together in groups or in pairs and accept responsibility willingly for cleaning and clearing away. They play a full part in preserving an efficient, well-organised and attractive environment.
- 86 Teaching in art is enthusiastic, well prepared and is consistently sound. Teachers set high expectations for themselves in organising and managing lessons efficiently and this ensures that the restricted amount of time available is used productively. Lessons start well, introductions are clear and techniques are demonstrated confidently. Questioning and feedback are used constructively to clarify practical points, to encourage correct behaviour and to lead pupils into thinking about the ways that they are working. The teaching leads to good learning. For example in a Year 8 lesson a comparison of the work of Munch and Lucian Freud drew on pupils' perceptions of the strong emotions these artists convey through facial expression and the selection of colour. This initial session enabled pupils to draft interesting and individual interpretations in their own, sketched portrait. There is sometimes a tendency for pupils to be expected to take in too much at the start of the lesson. Objectives often focus more on the activities contained in the lesson than on what is

to be learned.

- 87 Leadership of the subject is strong. There is a clear, long-term view and an interest and commitment by the whole team to improvement. The subject is enriched by visits to galleries, links with other schools in the area and an annual exhibition in the town. Professional guidance is provided through detailed, practical planning of schemes of work and through direct support in the classroom. Time allocation to the subject is too low. There have been sound developments since the previous inspection: the attainment of younger pupils has improved, there is consistency in the quality of teaching and the regular assessment of pupils' achievements is well managed, with data used to put together a picture of progress made by individuals and by groups. Current evaluation of the subject has correctly identified a weakness in painting skills and a need to improve the numbers of pupils working at a good standard. The departmental plan does not articulate in sufficient detail what will be tried at a classroom level and there is a lack of information on how developments will be monitored and appraised within specific steps and timescales.
- 88 In order to secure further improvement the following points should be addressed:
- the structuring of lessons should reflect learning objectives more directly,
 - learning objectives should seek to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject more overtly, emphasising terms and concepts,
 - and painting and drawing need further development, for example by developing sketchbooks more flexibly to practise skills and prepare ideas on a small scale.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 89 In design and technology, pupils benefit from satisfactory teaching, which imparts a sound understanding of the subject. Pupils are eager to participate in the subject and make good progress in developing their practical skills.
- 90 Attainment at age 11 is in line with levels normally seen at that age. When designing, pupils are able to use pictures to convey their ideas, as in the puppet designs in textiles in Year 5. In Year 6, pupils make limited use of labelled sketches and models to show the details of their designs. In resistant materials (wood, metal, plastic or card), when designing a buggy, pupils use only very basic drawing skills, in the form of a teacher-generated template to record ideas, which do not allow them to suggest improvements to their designs. Designing is unsatisfactory, but making skills are much better. Pupils are able to use tools with some accuracy when constructing their buggies in resistant materials and glove puppets in textiles. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make steady progress, though better progress is made in acquiring and applying making skills than in designing, particularly when using resistant materials. Pupils can understand how materials can be processed using tools and equipment but do not fully utilise design strategies for communicating ideas and evaluating products.
- 91 Standards by the end of Year 8 match those normally seen at age 13. When designing, some pupils in Year 7 are able to generate ideas and use labelled sketches to show details of their designs, as exemplified in designing a funny face pizza in food. In resistant materials, the hand steady game makes use of limited drawing and modelling in cardboard, so pupils cannot clarify their ideas. In Year 8, the clock project shows that pupils have the potential to design well, but it fails to

capture the basic requirements of communicating ideas and developing them. Pupils lack a range of designing strategies to support their work, particularly when starting the design process and showing different ways of presenting ideas. When making, pupils are able to produce step by step plans that identify the main stages, including tools, materials and processes. These are evident in a robot arm project where the production of a flow sheet records the order of designing and assembly. Pupils are able to measure, mark out and cut simple forms with a satisfactory degree of accuracy. This is particularly evident when pupils make the hand steady game where the construction is particularly good and holes are correctly marked out and drilled. Pupils use tools well and improve their control. In resistant materials, pupils are not always able to evaluate the quality of their products. They do this better in food, where they can analyse their products well.

- 92 Pupils show a keen interest in their work and are very enthusiastic about working with materials and using tools. They concentrate appropriately on the tasks set, listen attentively to the teacher and work independently on their products. Behaviour is nearly always very good, as the pupils relate well to each other and show respect for their teacher.
- 93 Teaching is sound. In the best lessons, teachers make use of a well formulated lesson structure, starting with a clear introduction, leading to practical activities where the teacher provides good support and works with individual pupils to make sure each understands and makes good progress. Effective lessons end with a good review and consolidation of what has been learnt or achieved. In these lessons, the impact on pupils' creative and making skills is good, as was observed in resistant materials, where pupils made a tracktronics hand steady game. Teachers create an exciting but orderly atmosphere and have a clear plan of what is to be covered. Pupils are managed very well and are kept on task by regular intervention and review of what they are doing. Teaching of basic designing and drawing skills is less well defined within lessons, resulting in poor quality portfolios of pupils' work. This is because time allocation to the subject is too low, leading to pupils not having sufficient time to refine their skills and improve their work.
- 94 Curriculum planning is generally sound and fully addresses the media coverage of design and making, although few projects demonstrate multi-cultural research. There is a distinct lack of continuity and progression between the units of work, resulting in disconnected projects rather than a scheme of work. Insufficient curriculum time in both key stages is a limiting factor in progress made in the subject. Assessment of pupils' work is good and benefits from a clear system of recording pupils' achievements together with targets for the year. The pupils' portfolios do not always contain teachers' comments on how to improve and are not shared sufficiently between teachers. Reporting provides appropriate information on pupils' standards in designing or making. The subject is co-ordinated well to ensure effective support, with appropriate monitoring of teaching, but coherence across all areas of the subject is a weakness. The departmental development plan does not identify sufficiently how priorities will raise standards or how actions will be costed. Lack of technical support, particularly for work involving resistant materials, puts significant pressure on staff to prepare materials and maintain the resources and accommodation to ensure pupils can use them effectively. Accommodation and resources are in good order and staff have worked hard to create vibrant areas despite shortcomings of size and shortage of storage space. There is limited use of information technology in the subject. Effective displays of pupils' work celebrate their success.

95 Since the previous inspection report, attainment and progress have generally remained at the same level and the lack of basic designing and drawing skills remains. Many of the other action points have been addressed fully, with good progress made to remove weaknesses. Action to promote further improvement should include:

- the provision of a wider range of designing strategies in all media,
- improvement to the subject development plan, to include clear priorities, costs and IT developments,
- and provision of technical support for the preparation and maintenance of the workshops.

GEOGRAPHY

96 In geography, pupils try hard but progress is affected by weaknesses in curriculum planning and lack of challenge in lessons.

97 Standards at ages 11 and 13 are in line with expected levels for pupils at that age. In Years 5 and 6, pupils make steady progress in some aspects of the subject, so that by the age of 11 they have a sound knowledge of places. For example, in Year 5 they learn about the similarities and differences between the farming landscapes of East Anglia and the Lake District, and in Year 6 about patterns of weather in the United Kingdom. However, their understanding of the subject is insufficiently developed. For example, in Year 6 pupils can identify effects that visitors have on Snowdonia, but are less confident in explaining how this can cause changes to the environment, or in suggesting ways in which people might attempt to manage the environment in a more sustainable way. Pupils have a sound grasp of some mapwork skills, for example using grid reference and measuring distances on maps. Pupils continue to make steady progress in the same aspects of the subject in Years 7 and 8, so that by the time they leave the school they have a broader knowledge of places, including the United Kingdom, Europe and places with differing levels of development such as Bangladesh. They gain a better understanding of the processes which shape the landscape, for example from work in Year 7 on the causes of volcanoes, and in Year 8 on environmental management in Antarctica. They extend their mapwork skills by learning how heights can be shown on maps. However, progress in the development of enquiry skills is too slow. Pupils can use the resources provided to respond to questions, but do not gain sufficient skills in identifying questions for themselves, and in selecting and using appropriate skills and resources to pursue investigation into issues which affect people in different places and environments.

98 Pupils with special educational needs make steady progress because they are well supported in the classroom, and take a full part in the lesson. The progress of the more able pupils is unsatisfactory, and they underachieve in all aspects of their work.

For example, in work on farming in Year 8, the pupils can identify increases in mechanisation and changes in farm size, but cannot give a detailed explanation of the effects of the interaction of physical and human processes on the rural community.

- 99 Attitudes to the subject are satisfactory. Pupils are well behaved and generally try hard, but some of the younger pupils lack concentration. Some of the older and more able pupils work with interest, but with little real enthusiasm or commitment.
- 100 On balance, teaching of geography is satisfactory, but there are some weaknesses, which need to be addressed. Teachers have sound subject knowledge, and teach confidently. Particular strengths are the way in which lessons are managed and the positive relationships which teachers have with their pupils. However, lessons do not encourage pupils to work in an investigative way, or provide sufficient challenge, particularly for the more able. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on pollution in the North Sea, the teacher set a class activity in which all the pupils were answering questions in the text book. This only enabled them to identify the countries which cause pollution, and to list some of the causes. None of the pupils were challenged to explain in any detail these causes, or to suggest different approaches to the management of the marine environment. The enquiry skills and understanding, which the pupils gained was at a very low level. In addition, textbooks were quite old so that some of the knowledge which the pupils gained was out of date. Separate tasks are not set to challenge the more able pupils although, in some lessons, the early finishers are set extension activities but these do not necessarily extend their understanding. Older pupils are set some useful homework activities which consolidate the learning in the lesson. Pupils' books are checked regularly, but some of the teachers' comments are not sufficiently helpful for pupils to target their weaknesses in subsequent work and raise standards. Information from assessment is rarely used to plan lesson activities. Some teachers, for example in Year 5, make very good use of display to create a stimulating atmosphere, but other classrooms appear comparatively uninspiring.
- 101 The subject co-ordinator was absent, owing to illness, during the inspection week. Work seen in lessons, in pupil's books, and in the department documentation, indicates that there are a number of aspects of the organisation of geography which need some reconsideration. These include the aims and purpose of the subject, clarity in priorities for improvement, and the way in which teaching is planned, including identification of how information technology will support pupils' learning.
- 102 The issues identified in the last inspection remain to be addressed, particularly those relating to the deeper application of learning skills and the higher levels of challenge needed in lessons. Insufficient progress has been made. In order to raise attainment the school should:
- develop an approach to the subject, in which pupils are challenged to gain higher levels of understanding, through active participation in enquiry and investigation,
 - use assessment information more effectively to set individual targets for learning,
 - improve curriculum and departmental planning,
 - and extend the range of resources, including IT.

HISTORY

- 103 The history department at the school provides a rich historical experience for all pupils. It achieves high standards.
- 104 Towards the end of Year 6, standards in history match those found nationally. By Year 8 half the pupils are working at level 5 and above. Such attainment is above and, in some classes, well above that found in similar schools. This represents good progress from entry to transfer to the upper school. There is a less marked difference than normally found between boys and girls. A significant number of pupils are gaining the higher levels.
- 105 By age 11, pupils have acquired a sound knowledge and understanding of the historical events, people and situations studied. They appreciate a broad range of the characteristic features of a society such as Greece when they study its religion and gods, its myths and legends, its theatre, art and architecture and the political conflict between Greece and Persia. They are acquiring a sound chronological framework and appreciate how historical conventions such as BC or AD are used. They can sequence events correctly, as they place six Pharaohs in date order. They are beginning to appreciate ideas of cause and consequence as in their detailed work on the impact of Nile floods and the sites chosen for the Pyramids. They understand that objects and texts can be useful to a detective historian and by Year 6 comprehend written sources about the voyages of discovery well. They can use IT to access census information for Leighton Buzzard in 1851. They are beginning to conduct sound, structured research, as in their work on Shakespeare and the Elizabethan theatre, and many can write well and at length. Too much of their work is descriptive and there is not enough evidence of pupils deducing or inferring historical points from artefacts or sources. All pupils, including those with special needs, are making good progress. There is no significant difference in the progress made by boys and girls.
- 106 By the end of Year 8, pupils have acquired a good knowledge and understanding of the historical features studied, together with an appropriate historical vocabulary. Their work on Medieval England, the different Crusades and sixteenth century England shows much understanding and some reasoning as they investigate demanding questions, such as the reasons for, and results of, the Acts of Union with Wales (1526 and 1543). They show a good understanding of historical concepts in their investigation of the general causes and specific trigger events of the Civil War. Much of their work is rich in historical detail, as in their study of the siege of Brampton Castle or in the source analysis associated with the Royalist attack on Birmingham. Many pupils write fluent, extended narratives and descriptive responses, sometimes encouraged by writing frames, and many are writing reasoned accounts. They use IT well in the classroom as they research details of the Black Death from the department's growing website, or use a desk top publishing program to construct a newspaper front page on the death of Becket. A major strength is the pupils' ability to engage in sustained research, through units of six or ten weeks of structured independent learning studies. Such work on the Crusades show pupils are able to extract information from a range of books and sources and present their findings thoughtfully and well. Whilst pupils have some opportunities to consider different points of view and interpretations of history, as in their work on the Gunpowder Plot, there is less evidence of them analysing and evaluating such historical interpretations. All pupils, including those with special needs, are making good progress. The work challenges all pupils and more able

pupils make particularly good progress. There is still little significant difference between boys and girls at this stage.

- 107 Pupils' response to learning across the school is very good. There is an atmosphere of learning in all classes and behaviour is very good. Younger pupils show much interest in the work and concentrate and work well on task. Many older pupils show initiative and a growing independence of thought. Oral responses are thoughtful and extended. There are good relationships between pupils and teachers.
- 108 Teaching in lessons is always at least sound and in nearly two thirds is very good or excellent. Pupils learn well, gaining knowledge, skills and understanding. Where there was high quality teaching the teachers had clear purposes which were shared with pupils, they challenged pupils and ensured that tasks were well matched to previous attainment. Pupils in a Year 5 class were formally taught a simple time line for Greece. Then, using guiding questions, pupils saw a 10 minute video about the Greek-Persian war and their knowledge was demonstrated in a brisk question and answer session. Grouped by prior attainment and using appropriately matched tasks, they gathered further information from their textbooks. The teacher had structured the lesson to help all pupils gain relevant information in order to write well informed paragraphs about the battle of Marathon. There was good learning by all and the more able were challenged well. In a Year 7 class the teacher set a visual problem. Through good questioning she led the pupils to draw on their previous historical knowledge and suggest links between five seemingly random sketches, a map and two dates (1333 and 1348). Using two levels of textbook information and two levels of prompt questions, she led pupils to read, extract and write what the Black Death was and what were its results. For half a Year 8 lesson the teacher led pupils to describe precisely and to analyse in detail three seventeenth century sources about the 1643 Royalist siege of Birmingham (a pamphlet drawing, a written eyewitness account and a satirical cartoon). She then set different tasks pitched at three different levels for different groups of pupils. With good teacher support all pupils drafted their historical responses to these appropriately demanding questions. Not all the teaching was at this high level. Pupils in a Year 6 class were not given a sufficiently clear focus question around which they could gather their thoughts and ideas. Pupils in two Year 8 classes needed the teacher to structure the learning more, in manageable steps, and to ask more analytical questions.
- 109 The department is well managed and led by an able and enthusiastic practitioner. There is an excellent scheme of work. This underpins a broad and balanced curriculum which is much enriched by visits, IT and research, and such planning provides good guidance to the non-specialist teacher. Pupils' attainment is accurately assessed by tests and tasks. Pupils receive good feedback and are now in a position to set themselves subject specific targets for improvement in addition to those which currently relate to literacy. There is a good development plan for improvement with helpful, statistical attainment targets. Monitoring of teachers' work by observation in the classroom is less well developed.
- 110 Since the previous inspection standards have improved to be above average by Year 8. The teaching quality has been maintained but there are still some relatively weaker lessons. Pupils now have good opportunities to show initiative through increasingly independent investigation.
- 111 Action to promote further improvement should include:

- ensuring that the sound teaching is improved to good by teachers providing a clear focus question for each lesson and stepped activities to build learning,
- encouraging more deduction and inference from artefacts and sources in Key Stage 2,
- and strengthening the opportunities for evaluation of historical interpretations in Key Stage 3.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- 112 In information technology pupils work with interest and are supported well by competent teachers. Pupils make good progress but they have yet to use IT fully to enhance their work in other subjects.
- 113 Standards at age 11 are well above those expected at that age. When communicating information pupils are able to use information technology to generate ideas using different fonts and styles and adding graphics to create a front cover for their folders and a newsletter for history. Pupils are able to handle information to amend and add data to a pets database that they can then effectively interrogate to obtain the information they require for a presentation to their class. They are able to use a program, called Junior Pinpoint, to create graphs and interrogate a database focused on an eating survey of popular vegetables. When controlling the movement of a screen rabbit, using 'gogo', pupils in Year 6 create a set of instructions to draw a maze on screen. Progress overall is very good, from pupils gaining basic understanding of the features of specific software in Year 5, to selecting software and applying its features in new contexts in Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- 114 Performance at age 13 is above that normally seen. When communicating information pupils are able to amend, organise and present ideas through a range of topics which includes a letter that combines text and tables from a spreadsheet and a newsletter combining graphics and text. Pupils do not yet refine their work to match different audiences such as adults or children or look at the value of it for these people. However, when handling information, they are able to add to, amend and interrogate information that has been stored to create graphs and a report on pocket money. Pupils' capability in modelling, particularly to investigate relationships between data and the effects of changing the variables in a spreadsheet, is demonstrated through a large number of activities, including tuck shop, accidents in the garden and the burger challenge. In control, pupils continue to create pictures and patterns but do not yet frame commands appropriately for controlling a screen image. Pupils make good progress over the two years consolidating the learning acquired at age 11, and building up additional knowledge and skills in communicating information. There is no difference between the progress of boys and girls.
- 115 Pupils show a keen interest in using information technology. This is evident in lessons, as well as the high level of interest shown by the good attendance at the IT club. Older pupils would welcome better access at lunchtime, and the school is providing a second IT room. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to use IT across the subjects studied. In their IT lessons, pupils concentrate well on tasks set and persevere until these are completed to their satisfaction. Behaviour is nearly

always very good as pupils relate well to each other and show respect for the teachers and resources.

- 116 Teaching is consistently good or very good. Teachers create a calm, orderly atmosphere and have a clear plan of what is to be covered. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject is very good but this is often not reflected in the delivery of some tasks. For example, a lesson on creating a multimedia presentation required such significant direct instruction on the features of the software, without additional support, that it gave pupils little opportunity to explore and experiment fully, particularly the higher achievers. Pupils are very well managed during most lessons with effective whole class delivery and sensitive individual support when required. There is far less use of IT in subjects across the curriculum than is typically seen and it rarely extends pupils' capabilities beyond that of the IT lessons.
- 117 Curriculum planning is good with the schemes of work being effective in raising pupils' attainment, however progress from one year to the next is not planned in sufficient detail. Assessment and recording of pupils' achievement at the end of a unit of work are very effective and provide clear targets for improvement. The subject co-ordinator provides very good leadership and is in a position to exercise effective management in the use of IT across subjects of the curriculum. Good use of IT, to support other subjects, tends to happen only during the IT lessons when pupils apply their skills to a particular program to produce work which is then used to enhance a subject. An example of this is the use of a draw package to create a mythical creature as part of a literacy project. Another example is the designing of a historical newsletter for history. There are a few more opportunities in science, but across subjects examples are limited.
- 118 At present, equipment and resources are insufficient to service pupils' needs, with barely enough computers, and restricted access to the facility for other subject areas. A significant number of the computers are of a limited specification and technical support is also poor, putting unnecessary demands on the co-ordinator to maintain current resources. The school has identified IT across the school as a key priority and seeks to address all these issues in the near future, starting with the imminent opening of a second IT room.
- 119 Since the last inspection, standards and the rate of progress have been maintained. The co-ordinator and the school have addressed many of the key issues very effectively. The school should:
- provide a detailed scheme of work to show subjects' contribution to the development of IT capability,
 - ensure that current and future resources are monitored and their use evaluated in terms of their impact on raising standards,
 - and demonstrate and measure progress, from one year to the next, across all the strands of the IT curriculum.

FRENCH

- 120 Pupils begin to learn French in Year 5, two years before it is required by the National Curriculum. Standards at age 11 are as expected, with most pupils able to understand a reasonable range of basic, familiar language about themselves, their house and home. However, there are wide variations in the levels of confidence in speaking. High attainers can talk confidently about the rooms in their house, while others need considerable support to say a few basic phrases.
- 121 During Key Stage 3, high attainers make good progress, so that, by the end of Year 8, they achieve language levels well above average. Most other pupils make adequate progress, achieving levels broadly in line with those normally seen. By the end of Year 8, more able pupils understand past and future tense. They confidently use a good range of familiar language, both in speaking and writing. They develop a good grasp of grammatical structures and, through the structured teaching and their positive attitudes to learning, learn to apply them confidently. Their pronunciation is good and they are fluent with short dialogues and cope well with some extended writing, although not always accurately. Most others can understand familiar language with support, such as identifying key buildings in a town, and they can match up information about visits with a programme of days to do them. Pupils use listening and reading skills with accuracy and confidence, whereas their ability in speaking and writing is still hesitant. Low attainers have difficulty picking out the key information and need a lot of support in reading and listening, needing to hear a dialogue several times before understanding basic details. However, their progress is steady over the key stage. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress when they receive individual support from a specialist, who speaks French and also helps other pupils. In both Key stages, girls speak and write more confidently and accurately than boys.
- 122 Teaching is sound, with some strong features and some weaknesses. In a good Year 7 lesson, the teacher sustained authentic French almost all the time, effectively using mime and a pupil interpreter to make sure that pupils understood. She set the learning in context, so pupils knew what they had to learn, moved logically from use of receptive to active skills and, finding pupils slow to respond, extended the practice appropriately, so they began to take part more confidently. Teachers plan a series of carefully structured, well-organised activities, so pupils gain a reasonable understanding of the topics covered. The teachers sustain their use of French almost all the time, although they do not always ensure that pupils understand what they say. At times, the teacher generates interest through lively activities, to which pupils respond enthusiastically, as when a Year 7 class moved round asking other pupils questions until they matched up their interests with two other pupils'. Once pupils had been reminded to ask in French, the activity helped them to practise intensively to build up their confidence in speaking, and to develop their sense of responsibility and co-operative skills. Teachers pitch the work broadly to the correct level, but do not consistently cater for the needs of those with learning difficulties, except when specialist support is available, and of the high attainers, except in the top group in Year 8. They quickly establish positive relationships and calmly but firmly keep appropriate control, ensuring that there are good conditions for learning. Pupils respect the rules and accept tasks set, maintaining reasonable concentration. High attainers apply themselves conscientiously and make good use of their time. Some pupils are slow to grasp the idea or lose concentration, which slows the pace of learning. Teachers use a reasonable range of methods, including games, songs and prompt cards, but promising ideas are not always exploited fully,

and real engagement of pupils in active use of language is limited. Resources lack variety and there is an over-reliance on the textbook.

- 123 The head of department is new to the school and only in her second term. Good systems are already in place for monitoring provision, assessing pupils and analysing test results, leading to targets for improvement. These all reflect satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. However, they have yet to have a lasting impact on the quality and consistency of teaching. Marking and other on-going assessment have yet to be developed to give pupils guidance about how to improve. One teacher's range of teaching styles is limited by not having a language room and there is insufficient access to and training for information technology. The new head of department has a clear vision for the future but it is too early to judge the impact of leadership because necessary changes, such as updating resources and revising the schemes of work, are not yet in place.
- 124 In order to improve further, the department needs to:
- plan lessons better to focus more on standards and active use of language skills,
 - make clear to pupils how well they are doing and how to do better,
 - and use a wider range of resources, including information technology, to enhance language learning.

MUSIC

- 125 Music makes an effective contribution to the life and aims of the school. The department runs a range of extra-curricular activities and contributes to school productions. These enhance pupils' personal and social development well.
- 126 Standards at the end of Year 6 are similar to those normally found at that age. When composing a piece based on a 'rondo' structure pupils have a good understanding of how the various sections fit together and are able to recognise these in performances they listen to. They listen to each other well when performing their pieces and consequently are able to adjust their performance in subtle ways. Performance skills are sound. A few students make use of untuned percussion instruments for their performances. These instruments do not require sufficient skill levels and consequently their performance is below expectation for this age group.
- 127 The attainment of Year 8 pupils is similar to that normally found for this age group. Pupils have a quite good understanding of some musical terminology. For example when working on 'friendship songs' they are clear about sections, such as verse, bridge and chorus, normally found in a song. They lack sufficient performance skills for their age and are too reliant on effects found on keyboards (such as single-finger chords, fills and auto accompaniments). Although these effects make their compositions sound convincing they require relatively little skill to operate. Pupils have covered more sophisticated skills in previous topics but these are not developed sufficiently or applied effectively in new contexts. There is very limited access to IT in all year groups.

- 128 All pupils have good attitudes to learning. They arrive to lessons promptly, listen to instructions and begin work quickly and efficiently. They maintain their concentration well in groups and co-operate with each other. They listen to each other's work with courtesy. The attitudes of pupils in Years 5 and 6 are especially good. In Years 7 and 8, pupils complete all the tasks as required, but are less enthusiastic and have lower levels of concentration. This is particularly the case for a small number of boys. However, in the main, pupils at Key Stage 3 want to learn.
- 129 Teaching at Key Stage 2 is good. In Year 6 lessons the teacher sets out clear expectations for the work required and this helps the pupils to move quickly into their work. Good support is given to pupils and challenging targets are set for how long the pupils have to complete their compositions. Good links are made between composition activity and exemplar pieces of music, such as the last movement of a Mozart horn concerto. Pupils are aware of the fact that they will be expected to perform their pieces at the end of the lesson. This adds urgency to their work and ensures that they rehearse efficiently. A particularly effective feature of teaching in a Year 6 lesson on 'rondo' was the use of questioning. This enabled the teacher to draw attention to key features in the music and helped to ensure that they listened attentively to each other's performances. The learning of Year 5 pupils is affected by the considerably less than average amount of time they spend studying music, as a result of a timetabled carousel arrangement with other subjects. The teaching of pupils in Year 7 and 8 is sound. Many of the features described about the teaching of younger pupils apply to this group of pupils as well. There is however insufficient challenge and expectation for this age group. Pupils do not develop sufficient skills needed to compose and perform more sophisticated pieces appropriate for older pupils. A relative lack of resources, particularly tuned instruments, contributes to lower skill levels. The lack of time for Year 5 pupils, a lack of resources and a lack of challenge for older pupils means that between Years 5 and 8 pupils make insufficient progress.
- 130 The department is efficiently managed and led. There has been good support from senior managers for teaching and learning with an effective review process involving the local advisory service. This has helped to identify some important points for development. Some of these are addressed in the departmental development plan. However, this lacks sufficient emphasis on teaching and learning and gives too much emphasis to extra-curricular activities.
- 131 Sound improvements have been made since the last inspection. Since then the department has been reviewed and an action plan agreed. A lot of work has gone into the area of assessment. This now has some very positive features, but still requires consolidation. Composition has now been developed more effectively into schemes of work.
- 132 In order to secure further improvement the department should:
- ensure greater challenge for pupils in Years 7 and 8 through provision of more appropriate resources, including IT, coupled with curriculum activities that offer appropriate expectations for this age group,
 - and revise the departmental development plan in order to give more emphasis to improving teaching and learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 133 During the inspection the only activities available to be observed in curriculum time were volleyball, football and netball. Extra-curricular netball and dance sessions were also seen together with video recordings of dance productions. The subject, and opportunities provided for extra-curricular activities, make a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development.
- 134 At age 11, pupils' planning, performing and evaluation skills match those normally seen, with several pupils achieving high standards in football and dance. In volleyball, most pupils can sustain a short rally using a recognisable shot. Their levels of skill match their limited experience of the game. In football, pupils' passing, receiving and dribbling skills are at least in line with those normally seen, with some pupils showing high levels of skill. Pupils understand the importance of creating and moving into spaces to receive the ball. The Year 6 football team has reached the semi-finals of the District Cup and the County Cup.
- 135 At age 13, pupils' planning, performing and evaluation skills are in line with those normally seen. Pupils show sound knowledge and understanding of the rules of the games they play. They can pass and receive the ball accurately in football and netball. They begin to understand the value of using the full width of the pitch in football. In netball, pupils know how to dodge into a space to receive the ball and several pupils are able to put this into practice in the games situation. In volleyball most pupils can maintain a rally but using a limited range of shots. Pupils can perform a number of stretching exercises when warming up, and know which muscle groups they are using. Many pupils throughout the school show good dance performance skills in school productions. They show good characterisation and can perform in a variety of dance styles, such as the Charleston. Most pupils show a good sense of rhythm and clarity of movement. Several pupils achieve high standards in extra-curricular activities, especially in cricket, dance, football, hockey and netball. The Year 7 netball team and the Year 8 hockey team have won this year's local middle schools' tournament. The Year 8 hockey team was also the runner-up in the County Tournament. The Year 7 football team has reached the quarter-finals of the County Cup and the Year 7 rugby team reached the semi-finals of the Dunstable Rugby Club Tournament.
- 136 Pupils' attitudes to physical education are good. Pupils are punctual to lessons, but several do not show any sense of urgency to reach the playing areas. They listen well to instructions and watch demonstrations with interest. They are courteous to each other and co-operate well in small groups and teams. They are willing to answer questions and to comment constructively on other pupils' work. They take responsibility when they are given the opportunity to do so. For example several Year 7 girls led warm up activities very effectively in a netball lesson. Pupils enjoy their physical education lessons.
- 137 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. The main area for improvement is teachers' planning, because teachers do not always ensure that lesson objectives are clear and shared with pupils so that they are aware of what they will know, understand and be able to do better by the end of every lesson. The management of pupils is usually at least satisfactory, but teachers do not always ensure that all pupils are listening or watching before instructions are given or demonstrations are observed. Teachers have good subject knowledge in most activities. They use a variety of appropriate teaching strategies effectively, including teacher and pupil demonstrations to clarify tasks or show correct techniques or to give opportunities for

pupils to observe, analyse and evaluate each others' work. Question and answer is often used to check pupils' knowledge and understanding, and in a football lesson it was used to encourage pupils to hypothesise what would happen in different tactical situations. In several lessons, however, questions were poorly phrased so that pupils were unclear about how to answer them. Work is usually pitched appropriately to match pupils' needs and interests, for example, in a football lesson the more able performers were only allowed three touches on the ball before they passed it, whilst other pupils were allowed five touches. Pupils usually expend a great deal of physical energy in lessons and most pupils concentrate well on the tasks in hand. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress in planning, performing and evaluating physical activities in each lesson, but in volleyball progress over time is unsatisfactory. This is because there are usually only four or five lessons in a volleyball unit of work. There is then a year's gap before volleyball is played again, so that much of the previous year's work needs to be revised before new work is attempted. In some lessons the number of pupils exceeds 35 and this hampers progress in these lessons. Most pupils who take part in extra-curricular activities make good progress.

- 138 The curriculum is broad and balanced in the range of activities offered over both key stages. Both members of the department give unstintingly of their time to provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended by pupils. Appropriate liaison takes place with the upper schools on curriculum content and pupils' attainment, but not with contributory lower schools. This hampers continuity and progression. Although information is received as to which pupils can swim 25 metres on entry to the school, there is insufficient provision to ensure that this standard is achieved by all pupils, at age 11. The department is efficiently managed and is led well. The head of department has been in post only since September, but she has already written a very thorough risk assessment policy and improved the assessment and recording procedures. Reports to parents still do not give a clear statement on progress that pupils have made since the last report. The department development plan is in place, but tasks are not prioritised and success criteria are not clearly defined.
- 139 The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards and the quality of teaching and learning have been maintained. Extra time has been allocated to gymnastics and dance so that the curriculum is now broad and balanced. Assessment and recording procedures have been improved. Liaison arrangements with lower schools are still to be addressed. In order for further improvement to take place the department should:
- ❑ improve progression and continuity of pupils' learning by liaising with contributory lower schools, and in volleyball by reducing the long gap between units of work,
 - ❑ share specific learning objectives with pupils and select tasks to bring about the desired learning outcomes,
 - ❑ and improve the departmental development plan by prioritising areas for development and making success criteria more specific.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 140 Standards in religious education are below average both by the end of Key Stage 2 and for pupils when they leave the school aged 13. At all ages, pupils know basic facts about the beliefs and traditions of the religions studied. For example, pupils in Year 5 can tell the story of Noah, and pupils in Year 8 can name the Five Pillars of Islam. This is acceptable for lower attainers, particularly in Years 5 and 6, but is below the standard normally found for pupils aged 9 to 13. Lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 2 make satisfactory progress. Otherwise, progress is too slow, and achievement is unsatisfactory. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils do not make gains in understanding the key concepts and ideas that underpin religious education. For example, pupils in Year 7 can tell the story of Jacob, but do not understand that the story has other meanings. In all years, pupils are unfamiliar with the meaning of basic terms, such as myth, symbol, rite and ritual when talking about stories and ceremonies in religious education. In addition, there are too few opportunities for pupils to reflect on the experiences and questions of meaning and value that are raised in religious education, although a good instance was seen during the inspection where pupils empathised with flood victims in Mozambique. Consequently, religious education makes little contribution to the spiritual development of pupils.
- 141 The main reason for pupils' slow progress is that teaching in religious education is, by and large, unsatisfactory. The good features of the teaching are that teachers have built good relationships, and show great care and concern for pupils. They prepare their lessons well, and use a good range of resources and activities. For example, a lesson on rites of passage in Islam included video, a range of textbooks, worksheets, whole-class teaching and group work. However, the teachers do not have enough understanding of what pupils of different abilities should be achieving, and rarely take pupils beyond activities which merely require them to seek out and present simple information. For example, in a lesson about rites of passage in Islam, pupils were given clear instruction about where to find information, and how they might present it, but the teacher did not ensure that pupils understood what a "rite" was. Despite this, most pupils are co-operative, and behave well in lessons. However, in many lessons pupils are only engaged with learning at a superficial level. In some lessons, undemanding activities that do not challenge pupils lead to inattention and minor misbehaviour.
- 142 There are three key reasons why teachers do not know how to teach the subject effectively. Firstly, the scheme of work is not detailed enough. The syllabus is rich in resources and covers the content of the local Agreed Syllabus for religious education, but does not give enough detail about what should be expected from pupils at different levels and ages, or how to use the resources to help pupils achieve the appropriate level. Secondly, most teachers are not specialist teachers of religious education and, despite efforts to give them some training in school, not enough has been done to ensure that they know how to teach the subject effectively. Thirdly, statements that describe what pupils should attain at different ages have only recently been introduced, and are not yet being used by teachers to plan teaching except for a few end-of-topic tests.
- 143 Since the last inspection, much time and honest effort have been put into improving religious education. The time devoted to the subject has been increased, there has been some in-service training, the scheme of work has been made more detailed, and assessment procedures have been introduced recently. The subject co-

ordinator monitors exercise books, but not classroom practice. Overall, these measures have not been enough to make a difference to pupils' standards and achievements, or to the quality of teaching. In order to improve standards, the school should ensure that:

- the scheme of work includes details of how the objectives for each lesson are to be achieved,
- all teachers of religious education know what standards to expect from pupils at different ages and stages,
- teaching is monitored, and teachers are supported in improving their practice where appropriate,
- and the assessment system is implemented fully, is used to set targets for improvement and informs curriculum and lesson planning.