

INSPECTION REPORT

WALTON PRIORY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Stone

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124426

Headteacher: Miss S Taylor

Reporting inspector: Mr R Drew
7281

Dates of inspection: 14 – 17 February 2000

Inspection number: 185006

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	9 to 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Beacon Rise Walton Stone Staffordshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Rawlings
Date of previous inspection:	12/06/1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Robert Drew	Registered inspector	N/A	What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements
			How well are pupils or students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Rosie Burgess	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Clifford Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography	Extra-curricular provision
Robin Coulthard	Team inspector	Music	N/A
Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	N/A
Wendy Easterby	Team inspector	English	N/A
Alan Giles	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
Vincent Gormally	Team inspector	Art	Accommodation

Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	Mathematics	N/A
		Special educational needs	
		English as an additional language	
Richard Patterson	Team inspector	Design and technology	N/A
		Information technology	
Mick Sewter	Team inspector	Science	N/A
Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	History	Resources
		Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Walton Priory is a middle school for pupils aged 9 to 13; with 621 on roll it is larger than average, reflecting its popularity in the area. It is over-subscribed and 20 per cent of pupils come from outside its natural catchment area. The vast majority of pupils are white; socio-economic circumstances are favourable compared with national figures and about six per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, as against 16 per cent nationally.

Pupils' attainment levels on entry to the school are above average, though not dramatically so. The school has 98 pupils registered as having special educational needs. Of these, 58 are at stages 3 to 5 of the Code of Practice for special educational needs and 21 have a statement of special needs or are being statutorily assessed. These figures amount to about fifteen per cent of pupils being on the special educational needs register, compared with 24 per cent nationally and 3.4 per cent having statements, a slightly higher figure than average. Virtually no pupils have English as an additional language.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This school is a good school with many very good features, and a few significant aspects requiring improvement. Standards of attainment are above average in both key stages, teaching is very good and there is satisfactory overall leadership and management. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is very good and pupils learn very well.
- Standards are above average overall and well above average in some subjects.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are excellent.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent.
- The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- Pastoral care in the school is very good.
- Governors and senior managers have established good aims and values and have been very successful in implementing them.
- Many subject co-ordinators set very high standards and lead well, particularly in music, mathematics, geography, information and communications technology and science.
- The school uses its below-average income well to provide good value for money.
- The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs at Key Stage 3 and very well at Key Stage 2.

What could be improved

- There is too little delegation of management responsibilities by the headteacher.
- Assessment and target setting, while much improved since the last inspection, are not linked effectively enough to national standards, and targets are too low.
- The governing body's role in shaping senior management structure has not been sufficiently effective and it lacks adequate first-hand knowledge of the school's work.
- Standards at Key Stage 2 should improve further in order at least to match those of schools with similar intakes.
- The school should ensure that the curriculum, especially at Key Stage 3, meets statutory requirements for information and communications technology and design and technology provision and offers sufficient coverage of personal and social education.
- It should also ensure that new technology is fully used for school administration, planning and record keeping.
- Formal appraisal mechanisms should be established.
- Reports to parents should be improved, so that pupils' strengths and weaknesses in attainment are clearly reported in all subjects.
- A more systematic pattern for setting homework in Key Stage 2 should be introduced.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall the school has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection.

It is matching work to the ability of pupils more successfully and the proportion of pupils gaining higher levels in core subjects has risen; assessment arrangements are more systematic and better used, though some targets are not high enough. Management structures are more clearly defined, though more needs to be done to apportion senior management team responsibilities appropriately. The subject co-ordinator's role has been greatly enhanced and longer-term planning has improved. The school has responded to the minor criticisms of the special educational needs provision made in the last inspection report. The provision of suitable work for pupils of varying attainment has improved and the Code of Practice for special needs is now fully in place.

In addition, while not an issue during the last inspection, teaching quality has improved from being 90 per cent satisfactory or better to 98 per cent.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests and tasks in 1999.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
KS 2 Tasks and tests	A	A	B	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E

Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 were well above average in 1997 and 1998 in science and mathematics, and consistently above average in English. In 1998 and 1999, however, standards in mathematics remained above the national average, but by a narrower margin than in previous years. This depressed the school's overall gradings at Key Stage 2, especially the comparison with similar schools. The reasons for this relative decline have been analysed and addressed by the school, and current Year 6 attainment indicates a noticeable improvement. In lessons seen during the inspection, standards in all three subjects were consistently above average. Amongst the foundation subjects, standards are well above average in history and religious education, above average in art, music, information and communications technology, science, physical education, English, geography and history. They are broadly average in design and technology.

In the year before pupils complete Key Stage 3, standards in English and science are above average, while in mathematics they are well above average. In the other subjects, standards are well above average in music and above average in art, French, physical education, geography and history. They are average in design and technology, information and communications technology and religious education.

Key Stage 2 targets for 2000 in English are not high enough, having already been equalled by the school in 1999. Pupils make satisfactory progress in both key stages.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils of all ages are extremely positive about school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Both in lessons and around the corridors and playground pupils act maturely.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Great numbers are actively involved in the lessons and the extra-curricular activities on offer.
Attendance	Very good in every respect.

Pupils' attitudes are a great strength of the school: pupils are extremely positive and constructive in their involvement in school life; they support its values and enrich their own experience and that of others. They work together exceptionally well in lessons and out of hours activities and show enormous respect for the environment in which they study.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is another strength of the school. While it is still capable of improvement, it is already very good. Teachers know pupils very well, encourage and manage them well, structure lessons successfully and maintain high levels of interest through good pace and well-organised provision for pupils with special education needs. For the school as a whole, 99 per cent of the lessons seen during the inspection had satisfactory or better teaching; the quality was excellent in seven per cent, very good in 29 per cent, good in 41 per cent and satisfactory in 22 per cent.

Further improvements depend on staff as a whole teaching with the same excellent level of challenge for all pupils as some staff already demonstrate.

Among the core subjects, in Key Stage 2, teaching is consistently very good in English and mathematics and it is good in science. At Key Stage 3, science and mathematics teaching is very good, while English teaching is good.

Among the other subjects, teaching in Key Stage 2 is very good in music, history and French, good in art, physical education, geography, religious education and information and communications technology; it is satisfactory in design and technology. In Key Stage 3, teaching quality is very good in music, good in art, physical education, geography, history, religious education and French, while it is satisfactory in design and technology and information and communications technology.

Literacy and numeracy are taught well across the curriculum as a whole. Teaching in nearly all subjects gives good emphasis to these basic skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Formal curriculum in Key Stage 2 is good. There are strengths and weaknesses at Key Stage 3. Extra-curricular activities are excellent in quality and take-up.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very well managed, enabling pupils with special educational needs to make good progress in both key stages.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	n/a
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Opportunities for spiritual development are well taken; there is very good provision for social and cultural development and moral development is excellent.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Overall pastoral care is very good, though aspects of the monitoring of academic progress requires some improvement.

An essentially good formal curriculum is very effectively enhanced by a vast range of sporting, musical activities, visits, clubs and societies. However, at Key Stage 3 there are statutory failures in

information and communications technology and design and technology provision, while personal and social education has insufficient place. Dance and drama add to the range of subjects offered and there is good linkage between different aspects of the curriculum. Special educational needs provision allows all pupils to be included in the formal and informal activities on offer. Excellent use is made of the local community to enhance the curriculum both through visits made and by visitors coming into school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory at senior management team level. There is strong management in providing an orderly, safe community offering a great range of opportunities to pupils. Managing new developments and delegating responsibility are less effectively carried out. Subject co-ordination is good, with many subjects led very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Overall unsatisfactory. While governors are very supportive of staff and pupils, some important decisive actions are not taken, or taken too late on some issues; governors also lack sufficient direct, first-hand information gained on site.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Evaluations are thorough and cover all issues. Action is suggested when it is needed, but managers are not sufficiently rigorous or precise in assessing improvements made or still to be made.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory in every respect.

Leaders and managers promote a good ethos; they are very good at turning broad aims and values into reality. They have successfully created and maintained the context in which pupils show excellent attitudes and enjoy a rich variety of opportunities. Subject co-ordinators are often very good, particularly in geography, mathematics, music, art, science and special educational needs. However, there is too little delegation by the headteacher of the overall responsibilities of the senior management team. There is too little use of national benchmarks to set expectations, and the governors are not sufficiently involved in aspects of decision making or receiving sufficient first-hand impressions of the school at work.

All the resources devoted to pupils with special educational needs, including those that are specified in pupils' statements, are used appropriately and efficiently.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School expects child to work hard and achieve the best. • Teaching is good. • Child making good progress. • School is approachable. • Child likes school. • School is helping child become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework is not right. • Being kept well informed about how child is progressing. • How closely the school works with parents.

The inspection team notes the unusually high commitment to the school indicated by the very large proportion of questionnaires returned and finds that the parents are right to have the strong faith shown in the many things the school does well.

The minority who wish to see homework arrangements improved have some justification; it is inconsistently used, though not badly so. Inspection evidence indicates that parents generally receive a good supply of information, though the content of reports does not always give a picture of pupils' strengths and weakness with specific subjects. This school works closely with parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are well above average. The proportion of pupils attaining level 4 or above in National Curriculum tests over the last three years is significantly higher than national averages in English, mathematics and science. For example, in English, 83 per cent of pupils in 1999 attained level 4 or above, while 70 per cent reached this standard nationally. In 1997 and 1998, the school's results exceeded national ones by an even wider margin.
2. However, when compared with similar schools, that is those with broadly the same proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals, standards for English, mathematics and science taken together are below average. Other schools with a broadly similar intake are recording over 90 per cent of pupils with level 4 or above as opposed to the 80's and 70's in this school.
3. In English at Key Stage 2, attainment has been above average, compared with all schools, for the last three years. Compared with similar schools, standards are broadly in line with the average. In mathematics at Key Stage 2, standards were well above the national average in 1997 but have declined relatively and are now in line with national averages. Compared with similar schools, attainment was well below average in 1999. In science at Key Stage 2, standards have been well above average for two of the last three years; they were above average in 1999, but compared with similar schools they match the average.
4. Overall, therefore, while there have been gains in the actual proportion of pupils reaching level 4 and above, other external comparisons have become less favourable: the average points scores for the school have remained close to their 1996 position at 27.3 per cent, while nationally, average points scores have risen noticeably over the same period. Mathematics results in the school have been a key factor, since their performance has done much to depress the overall picture, both in terms of gradings compared with all schools and the position in relation to similar schools. Steps have now been taken to remedy the situation, by making a successful new appointment at co-ordinator level and by allocating more curricular time to mathematics. Better analyses are also being made of which aspects of learning in mathematics can be improved. Some of these issues were capable of earlier diagnosis and response by senior management.
5. Targets for attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 have recently begun to be set, but the process is not yet fine tuned. The data on pupils' prior attainment on entry to Year 5 and the assessments of general verbal and non-verbal skills taken in other years indicate an above average intake, but the school's targets do not fully reflect this. For example, English targets for 1998 and 1999 were exceeded significantly and the current school development plan has targets for summer 2000 below those already achieved. Later revisions to these targets still only suggests 83 percent of pupils should attain at level 4 or above, even though this level has been already reached and there is no evidence to suggest the pupils are lower attainers than those of the previous year.
6. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were well above average in history and religious education and above average in art, music, information and communications technology, science, English, mathematics, French, geography and physical education. In design and technology, standards broadly match the national average. Standards of literacy and numeracy are both above average. Pupils are making progress in all their subjects, and in many it is good. Overall, however, demands being placed on pupils are not as high as they could be. Their prior attainment and their very good application to learning make them capable of being further challenged in core subjects and in some foundation subjects. While teaching has many strengths, a proportion of lessons set high- and medium-attaining pupils a slightly lower level of challenge than appropriate. Lessons with excellent and very good teaching regularly manage to set expectations at a suitably high level for all groups of pupils. However, for standards to rise across the school as a whole, this good practice needs to be even more widespread.
7. In the year before the end of Key Stage 3, standards in the work seen during the inspection were well above national averages in science and mathematics, and above average in English.

Amongst the other subjects of the curriculum, standards are well above average in music, and above average in art, physical education, geography, history and French. They match averages in design and technology, information and communications technology and religious education.

8. Standards in the basic skills continue to be consolidated and built on, so that there is considerable facility in the way these skills underpin pupils' learning in Key Stage 3 and the good standards they achieve in so many subjects.
9. Achievement is sound in general, with satisfactory progress being made from Key Stage 2 into Key Stage 3. In mathematics, current progress is very good and it is good in virtually all other subjects. For it to be very good and achievement to be maximised, targets for the school as a whole, and for middle- and high-attaining pupils need to be higher. In lessons, this needs to be supported by a more consistent use of the excellent differentiation already evident in the very best lessons. In these, the wide range of potential in any one class is cleverly exploited by work tailored to challenge and support all individuals or groups of pupils. Level of demand is accurately pitched.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes to school are excellent, especially in Key Stage 2. They demonstrate great enthusiasm for all aspects of school life. They are interested and involved in all subjects and work hard even at those that they find difficult or less interesting. In mathematics, they undertake extra homework and some enter the 'Maths Challenge'. Nearly all pupils participate in the many extra-curricular activities. Pupils arrive punctually and lessons start on time.
11. Behaviour is very good and often excellent, both in lessons and at other times in the school day. There is an absence of oppressive behaviour and any behaviour of a bullying nature is swiftly and effectively dealt with. Exclusion is very rare, but has been used in cases of extreme misbehaviour when the orderly and friendly ethos of the school has been threatened. There is currently one fixed term exclusion. Behaviour in the dining room and at break times is very good. In moving around the school site, pupils are polite and friendly.
12. Personal development is excellent. Pupils understand the impact of their actions on others and show respect for others' feelings, values and beliefs. They accept refereeing decisions amicably in physical education. They take pride in the presentation of their work; this is evident in the many displays around the school and, for example, in a Year 8 design and technology lesson seen in which pupils took great care in the construction of a wooden stool and were justifiably proud of their results.
13. Pupils' ability to show initiative and exercise personal responsibility is excellent at both key stages. They ask for help as soon as they encounter difficulties. They show good initiative in investigative science lessons and Year 8 pupils in a French lesson exceeded the minimum requirement for a poster and included many original ideas.
14. Relationships in the school are excellent. There is mutual respect between pupils and teachers. Pupils act with consideration for others when they move about the school. They are capable of very good co-operative work, particularly notable in physical education and drama. They are sensitive to the needs of others, which enables good working relationships to be established in science.
15. Attendance in all year groups is good and is above the national average for middle schools. The number of unauthorised absences, for which a satisfactory explanation is not received, is low.
16. High standards of behaviour and attendance have been maintained since the last inspection.
17. All pupils with special educational needs have very positive attitudes towards the school and their own learning. They accept their difficulties without embarrassment or shame and work very hard and cheerfully to overcome the problems they experience with learning. The good relationships between pupils are an important factor in the success of pupils with special educational needs. All inspectors saw many instances of pupils helping each other and showing great patience and sensitivity towards pupils who were not learning as quickly. The school gives all pupils a sense of real personal worth and individual value. The particular

attention given to promoting independence in pupils with learning or behavioural difficulties is very effective and results in pupils with self confidence who respond well to responsibilities and trust.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

18. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good, particularly in Key Stage 2. About 99 per cent of the lessons seen had satisfactory or better teaching, so that unsatisfactory teaching was negligible. For the school as a whole, seven per cent of lessons had excellent teaching, 29 per cent very good teaching and 41 per cent good teaching; about 22 per cent was satisfactory.
19. In Key Stage 2, the quality is particularly strong: no teaching was unsatisfactory or poor and the proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching was collectively 87 per cent. In terms of subjects, the quality was very good in mathematics, English, history, French and music; it was good in art, science, geography, religious education, physical education and information and communications technology. In design and technology, teaching quality was satisfactory. In no subject, therefore, is there unsatisfactory or poor teaching overall.
20. At Key Stage 3, good teaching predominates, although very good teaching is present in varying proportions in every subject. For the key stage as a whole, 66 per cent of lessons had good, very good and excellent teaching. A higher proportion than in Key Stage 2 had satisfactory teaching - 33 per cent compared to thirteen per cent - and about two per cent of lessons had unsatisfactory teaching. In music, science and mathematics the overall quality of teaching is very good; it is good in art, physical education, geography, history, English and French. Teaching in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory in design and technology, information and communications technology and religious education.
21. The greatest strengths in both key stages are the effective teaching methods used and the excellent management of pupils. A very wide range of techniques and styles is used by most teachers in the great majority of lessons and this has a marked beneficial effect on learning. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson with excellent teaching, there was much scope for practical work, interspersed with both exposition from the teacher and extensive contribution from the pupils; periods of listening were followed by questions to assess pupils' understanding. Pupils moved on from one phase of the lesson to the next very quickly. The teacher gave excellent help and encouragement when circulating as the pupils worked. Pace in such lessons is very strong, with pupils being given a rich variety of interesting and well-timed activities. They respond with very good concentration and productivity. A very well-taught music lesson with Year 8 also showed how using deadlines within a lesson, for completing a composition in this instance, can help to sustain high pace and levels of interest.
22. Pupil management is excellent in Key Stage 2 and very good in Key Stage 3. Teachers know their pupils particularly well, treat them respectfully and expect good behaviour and respect in return. They are clear in their requirements and offer many positive, encouraging and directing comments to pupils. On the rare occasions when correction is needed, the teacher invariably applies well timed, decisive comments to regain a pupil's full attention and commitment.
23. Staff show very good subject expertise overall. In Key Stage 2, it is consistently very good, while in Key Stage 3, there are slightly more instances of non-specialists teaching well as opposed to very well. Many teachers continue to update their knowledge: for example, there was evidence of very beneficial research by the teacher in a Year 5 art lesson on 'The Egyptians', when the detailed references to mummification and social structure kept interest and expectations very high and allowed the teacher to speak with great authority.
24. Planning is very good in both key stages. For example, the preparation and organisation behind a Year 7 science lesson on dissolving sugar were particularly thorough, relevant and beneficial to the progress made by pupils. Similar work precedes a high proportion of lessons in most subjects. Another clear instance was the Year 6 lesson in physical education in which advanced preparation as well as last-minute organisation combined to give excellent structure.
25. Typically, such well-researched and planned lessons involved a very effective use of time and resources in both key stages. In addition, special educational needs support staff and materials were regularly used with far better effect than is usual, enabling such pupils to make very good progress in both key stages.

26. Teachers in all years give proper attention to promoting literacy and numeracy in their lessons. Overall, these basic skills were taught well in Key Stage 3 and very well in Key Stage 2, but certain subjects promoted the skills better than others. For instance, aspects of literacy are taught particularly well in English, geography, music and mathematics; numeracy is developed exceptionally well in mathematics, but also has above average support from teaching in art, science, music, geography and design and technology. Generally, both skills are given less prominence in physical education, information and communications technology, history and religious education.
27. In the very best teaching, several factors combined to produce particularly good results. Firstly, expectations, good overall in both key stages, are very high; in addition, assessment is used to very good effect. For example, in a Year 5 lesson in religious education with very good teaching, there was extensive use of questioning and praise by the teacher to establish precisely what the pupils had understood and to let them know that they were doing well. In a well-taught Year 8 geography lesson, the teacher made very good use of assessment, and pupils were able to evaluate their own standards on map skills.
28. This reliable gauging of what standards pupils had achieved and what might be expected of them in order to raise standards was crucial to much of the best teaching in the school. Usually, it led to lessons in which differentiation (that is, work being set at a variety of levels to match varied needs) was strong. For example, in a Year 7 French lesson, the teacher made good use of a range of resources: worksheets for most of the class, some modified materials for pupils with special educational needs, and good extension tasks for high-attaining pupils. Materials were appropriately allocated by marking rapidly as they worked and assessing what they needed next.
29. When teaching was satisfactory as distinct from good or very good, the crucial features underplayed or absent were strong use of assessment before or during the lesson and well-differentiated work to stretch all pupils. These factors tended to lead to less challenge and a weaker pace to lessons. For example, in a Year 6 history lesson on Victorian England, there were many good features, but the materials were complex and used vocabulary which many pupils found too hard; this did not allow proper access for the range of pupils in the class. In a Year 8 geography lesson on settlements, there was no opening reference to what should be achieved by the end of the lesson, nor was the pace dictated by the teacher. In a Year 7 physical education lesson on boys' hockey, there was not enough awareness of the varied skill levels pupils brought to the lesson, even though other aspects of teaching were good. Homework is used well in Key Stage 3, while in Key Stage 2 most teachers are setting homework periodically but the overall arrangements are not sufficiently systematic.
30. Occasionally, detailed subject knowledge was less secure in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 2. This was evident in a Year 8 geography lesson, but also in other subjects, for example in a Year 6 information and communications technology lesson where the teacher's knowledge was insecure when an unexpected feature appeared during word processing.
31. However, teaching is distinguished mostly by its strengths, and in response pupils' learning is very good in both key stages. In virtually every respect, pupils showed application, a willingness to work hard, and the concentration and level of interest that teachers sought. Their ability to work independently is very good. Where teaching was good rather than very good or excellent, pupils' learning followed the same trend. Thus, in a significant minority of Key Stage 3 lessons, pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding when taught by non-specialists was good and occasionally satisfactory, whereas it was very good in the best taught lessons. Similarly, the pupils tended to be less familiar with their own standards and the concept of how well they were doing when teachers used assessment less effectively. This applied both to lessons and homework, where the majority of teachers let pupils know swiftly and clearly how good their work was, while a minority were slower, less regular in assessing and did not link their marking to important national benchmarks.
32. The teaching of individuals and small groups withdrawn for specialised teaching is very good. Great care and sensitivity are allied to intellectual insight into the learning problems such pupils have, in order to produce enjoyable and effective lessons. All appropriate techniques and modern resources are used, including good use of computers. The skills evident in supporting pupils with dyslexia are particularly commendable. Full use is made of the specialised teaching provided by the local authority, with whom the school has a close and productive relationship.
33. In-class support provided by both teachers and learning support assistants is good and contributes much to the learning of all the pupils in a class, not just those with special needs.

Learning support assistants play a fully professional role in the classroom and work in partnership with teachers.

34. Across the wider curriculum, teachers are skilled in providing suitable work for pupils with special educational needs. All show understanding of such pupils' problems and fully share the school's determination to give these children the best possible support.

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

35. Curricular provision in the school is good. It adequately reflects the school's overall aims and commitment to the needs of all pupils. The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum in all subjects at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 3, statutory requirements are met, except for information and communications technology in Year 8, where the cross-curricular approach to delivering information and communications technology is not currently meeting statutory requirements. The subjects responsible for ICT teaching are not consistently delivering the full programmes of study.
36. Present arrangements for the personal and social education for all pupils are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of course structure and content, and provision is delivered haphazardly through registration periods. Elements of health education, drugs education and sex education are inconsistently taught through science and by using outside agencies. Appropriate elements of citizenship are not presently covered.
37. The provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent. There is an innovative range of sporting, musical, and various other clubs, during and after school, that forms part of the school's belief that motivation and achievement can be increased through enrichment of the curriculum.

Community Links

38. Excellent links have been developed within the community to contribute to pupils' learning. In geography, the school has achieved national recognition for its curriculum development and high standards. The local community has contributed to standards, through, for example, a planning investigation with the local town council, projects involving a supermarket and local pottery museum, a land-use survey in conjunction with the Ordnance Survey and the University of Greenwich using the school for research purposes. Science has effective links with local branches of a firm of international glassware manufacturers. The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers has planted 400 trees to improve the school environment. Visitors and visits to places of Christian and other worship promote understanding in religious education. Links with the local library have been effective in developing higher-order enquiry skills. Links over the Internet have established a joint project with the Netherlands. Since the last inspection, links have been strengthened, especially between school and industry.
39. Good relationships have been developed with first schools and the high school. Pastoral links are effective. There is a strong partnership with first schools and the other middle school at Key Stage 2. Subject co-ordinators meet regularly, as do the headteachers. Useful information is exchanged about pupils' attainment and personal development. Links are less well developed at Key Stage 3, but have improved since the last inspection. Science, mathematics and geography departments have effective links. Sufficient information about standards, especially in English, is not always passed on to the high school.

Personal, social and health education

40. Overall provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory. Personal development is promoted through opportunities provided within subjects of the National Curriculum, such as science, and in some assemblies and form periods. There is no programme of study for discrete lessons. No improvement has been made since the last inspection, which reported on the lack of a co-ordinated programme that can be monitored and evaluated for consistency, quality and effectiveness.
41. The provision of sex education outside science lessons is available only to girls in Year 6. There is no planned programme of work for boys to receive information or discuss the effects of physical and emotional changes encountered in early adolescence.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

42. Despite the shortcomings just mentioned, the school's provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Many of the assemblies and form periods make a positive contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of development, although there are no policies or programmes of study to ensure consistency and enable evaluation of the provision. Attention to such aspects is given in many lessons, in the provision of extra-curricular activities and in out of school visits.
43. Provision for spiritual development is good. Whole-school assemblies, which are held once a week, offer times for reflection and prayer, and present opportunities for pupils to share their work with others. There are very good listening opportunities in music. In history in Year 6, pupils are able to reflect on how ordinary people lived in Victorian England and make thoughtful comparisons with their own life styles. Religious education makes a very good contribution to spiritual development, with opportunities to hear from different practising Christians and to learn about other beliefs.
44. Provision for moral development is excellent. Teachers and other adults provide excellent role models. They make very clear their high expectations for how pupils will behave. The three school rules of 'work hard, take care of the building and take care of each other' are reflected in the life of the school and consistently referred to. Assemblies and lessons, especially in religious education, drama and history, enable pupils to explore the morality of different actions.
45. Provision for both social and cultural development is very good. Social development is helped by pupils being given many opportunities to exercise responsibility and serve the school community by, for example, running the tuck shops, helping in the library, organising a Blue Peter Appeal, serving as House Captains, picking up and recycling litter. Pupils nominate recipients for Easter flowers and support two children in third world Asia, and a group represented the school at a Children's Parliament. Their cultural awareness is also promoted by these activities and in addition there is a wide range of visits, including the residential visit to Conway in Year 7, and day visits to museums and galleries. Art and music lessons present a diversity of cultures and styles from Europe and around the world. Displays around the school reflect the diversity of cultural experiences which the school offers to all year groups..
46. Arrangements for collective worship do not fulfil statutory requirements. The headteacher plans the weekly whole-school assembly, but there is no consistent pattern for the use of form time on days when pupils do not attend an assembly. Class teachers often use this time well to deliver aspects of personal and social education and to reinforce moral education and promote a community spirit, but there is rarely an element of worship present. Insufficient time for prayer, spiritual reflection or 'thought for the day' is given in most of these sessions.
47. Since the last inspection, the school has continued to make effective provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all its pupils. The class assemblies on two days in the week sometimes include a clear act of worship, but are not consistent in this respect, so the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship are not met.
48. All pupils with special educational needs play a full and valued part in the life of the school. They enjoy and benefit from all the activities and experiences available to pupils which further their personal development. Such pupils receive appropriate additional help with social and organisational skills that adds much to their competence around the school. They are also very well prepared for the transition to the high school.

Equal opportunities

49. Equality of access to the curriculum is very good. Opportunities to participate in most activities are open to all pupils, regardless of gender, ethnicity or ability.

Special educational needs

50. All pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. Pupils' problems with literacy are dealt with by withdrawal for specialised help from that section of the curriculum only. Problems with numeracy are covered very well in the small additional sets within the mathematics curriculum. When specific difficulties due, for example, to physical or speech problems occur, great effort is made to provide suitable alternative experiences to compensate for any inability to work with peers.
51. When pupils enter the school the special needs co-ordinator (SENCo) uses all the information available from the first schools and the results of relevant tests and measures to produce detailed individual education plans (IEPs). These describe pupils' strengths and weaknesses and give guidance on how teachers can help pupils to overcome their difficulties. The quality of these documents and the careful responses from teachers help to ensure that pupils are fully engaged in all the subjects of the curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

52. The school has very good procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare at all times, including child protection. Excellent relationships in the school and good pastoral care by committed staff, both teaching and non-teaching, enable pupils to learn in a safe and secure environment. The school takes its responsibilities seriously in matters concerning health and safety, and responds swiftly when problems are identified.
53. Overall, the monitoring of academic performance and personal development is good. Teachers know their pupils well. The agreed systems for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are excellent and are very successful in eliminating oppressive behaviour. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are very good. Overall, however, the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. There is some very good practice in mathematics, and good assessment in art and geography. Assessment in design and technology and information and communications technology is poor, and is unsatisfactory in physical education, history, English and religious education. In class, teachers make good use of questioning to establish what pupils know and understand in English, and work is marked thoroughly. In mathematics, teachers monitor progress well through the consistent use of formal and informal tests. The department maintains a database which is analysed to monitor teaching and the curriculum. In other subjects, assessment is not linked to National Curriculum criteria, nor to levels of attainment, and is not consistently recorded on the same system. Annual reports to parents do not clearly identify a pupil's individual strengths and weaknesses in all subjects. End-of-Key-Stage 2 assessments are correctly conducted and the results passed to parents.
54. Educational and personal support and guidance for pupils are good. The use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is satisfactory. In mathematics, teachers use assessment well as the basis for future lesson planning and data is well used in art and geography. In design and technology, information and communications technology and physical education, curricular planning is poorly informed by any assessment. Whilst the 'Beads on a Wire' system gives a straightforward, comparative picture of how a pupil performs in different subjects, the system is not securely linked to National Curriculum levels and does not clearly identify strengths and weaknesses on which to plan future work. Some target-setting is undertaken but is insufficiently precise. Broad areas for improvement are identified with parents

at consultation evenings. These are discussed with pupils and recorded in their profile. Pupils are encouraged to record all their achievements, both in and out of school, in their profile folder. This process does not yet link to the preparation of records of achievement which pupils undertake at the high school.

55. Overall support for academic progress is satisfactory, whilst the support for personal development is good.
56. In addition to the school's routine assessment of progress by pupils, the IEPs form the basis for close monitoring of the achievements of those with special educational needs. These include specific targets for each child, regularly checked by learning support assistants and class teachers. Class teachers at Key Stage 2 make a full contribution to the achievement and monitoring of targets; at Key Stage 3, the systems needed to involve specialist teachers fully are not yet in place. At regular intervals, the SENCo reviews each IEP and constructs new targets. Pupils are fully involved in reviewing their own progress, and take obvious pride in their achievements. The reviews of the statements of special educational needs are completed at the proper intervals and all statutory obligations are fulfilled.
57. Pupils with special educational needs are all given the same high standard of care that is a strength of this school. In addition the special educational needs base, which is well-sited between the Years 5 and 6 bases, is a haven for pupils who may be experiencing problems of any sort at any time. Many younger pupils spend their out of lesson time doing extra reading or work on the nearby computers, clearly gaining from the secure relationships they have formed with the special educational needs staff.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

58. There is strong parental support for all aspects of the school's work. A high proportion, nearly 70 per cent, of parents replied to the inspection questionnaire. There is good support for all areas of the school's work. Nearly all parents believe the school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best, that the teaching is good, and that they would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or problems. A number of parents had concerns about homework, commenting that it was not consistently set and marked, and they were not clear what would be set. Some parents do not feel sufficiently well informed about how their child is progressing and feel that insufficient notice is given of the dates for some events. There were some reservations about how closely the school works with parents.
59. The school's partnership with parents is good and promotes effective learning and personal development.
60. The quality of information is satisfactory. The prospectus and governors' report, as well as detailed termly newsletters, are informative, and various letters are sent out to tell parents about events which support learning in particular year groups or to invite them to meet teachers and discuss their child's progress. These meetings provide sufficient time for worthwhile discussion and often involve agreeing targets for learning for individual children. However, the notice of these meetings is often relatively short. There is no calendar of school meetings and events at the start of the year. The written reports on pupils are unsatisfactory. They contain useful comments for English, but in many other subjects, the child's strengths and weaknesses are not identified, and National Curriculum levels achieved by pupils are not given. Progress in information and communications technology is not reported. Pupils have diaries in which to record their homework and parents of children in Year 8 receive a timetable so that they know what should be set for each evening. However, there is no provision for class teachers or parents to monitor homework through the diaries.
61. Parents' involvement has a good impact on the work of the school. There is an active school association for parents and staff which hosts a range of social and fund-raising events. Recent purchases include history artefacts, a sewing machine, guitars, an electronic chess set, bibles and other books, storage equipment and computer hardware and software. A theatre company visit to reinforce learning in science was also funded by the Parents and Staff Association. Parents are supportive of their children's involvement in extra-curricular activities and make suitable arrangements for after-school transport. Attendance is high at concerts and other performances, including the Egyptian evening when Year 5 show their work to their parents. Very few parents help teachers to prepare resources for lessons, but willingly help escort pupils

out of school on educational trips. Parents are diligent in providing reasons for absence. Parents were consulted about the wording of home-school agreements, which most parents have signed. Overall, parental contribution to learning at school and at home is very good.

62. The SENCo maintains very close and positive relationships with the parents of pupils with special educational needs. Apart from the regular reviews of IEPs, there is much contact by telephone, sometimes daily, if there are matters of concern to either the school or the parents. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in the learning of their own children and the SENCo's plans to introduce a special needs parents' evening will consolidate this relationship.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

63. Leadership and management in the school as a whole are satisfactory. There is much which is good and aspects which are not satisfactory.
64. The headteacher and other managers at senior and co-ordinator level have succeeded very well in first establishing and then maintaining an attractive, safe and stimulating environment for pupils. With the support of governors, the leaders and managers on the staff have established good broad aims and clear values, and they have been very effective in ensuring that these are implemented by all staff. This aspect of management makes a very beneficial contribution to the very fine attitudes, commitment to learning and keenness to participate evident in the pupils.
65. The sense of educational direction is satisfactory. Aims in the school development plan are appropriate. They focus on fostering care, support and initiative and include raising standards in crucial areas. These aims are readily adopted by all staff so that the sense of direction is a shared one with considerable momentum behind it. However, the aims and objectives involved are not always sharply defined or succinctly expressed, and the strategies to be followed in order to improve are not consistently the most effective. For example, the school development plan's two-page statement on raising attainment in mathematics does not actually say how high standards should rise. Similarly, there is a strong commitment to reviewing progress on items in the development plan and this helps ensure that direction is maintained or that the school alters course if necessary; but the reviews themselves are sometimes too complex to offer the best guidance to colleagues: for example, the evaluation of information and communications technology of September 1999 lacks a clear summary of what has been done and what remains to be done.
66. While the roles within the senior management team have been clarified since the last inspection, the delegation of tasks is still unsatisfactory. Too many of the most important responsibilities are retained by the headteacher and correspondingly too few are entrusted to the deputy and other members of the team. Reviewing both the clarity and structure of senior management team was a key issue in the last report and became an objective in subsequent planning, but the strategies only help define roles and largely ignore the equitable allocation of responsibilities. In addition, the key people charged with reviewing this area include no-one from outside the senior management team, for example, a member of the governing body.
67. As a result, some capable senior managers have been given less opportunity to contribute leadership, while the headteacher's role has been overloaded. Her current extended absence reinforces the need for the senior management team to have been given extensive managerial experience. In the current statement of senior management team responsibilities, listing some ten major roles, seven are retained by the headteacher. These include many which it would be usual to allocate to competent deputies or middle management. While improvements have taken place on many fronts in recent years, there are others on which a relatively late start has been made: greater delegation to achieve more rapid progress is a commonly used strategy in other schools. For example, the school's improvement programme has been slow to put simple national comparators into its assessment system and it brought changes into mathematics provision only after a relative decline in the subject had become established. Similarly, the current underuse of ICT for managing school administration and records reflects a slowness to use existing expertise within the school.
68. At year tutor and subject co-ordinator level, managerial skills have improved significantly since the last inspection. Their limited role was criticised then, but now virtually all operate at a satisfactory level, and many offer very effective leadership. This is particularly true in music, science, geography, mathematics and special educational needs. In design and technology,

subject leadership is not yet giving all those who teach and learn the subject a clear enough view of National Curriculum requirements and standards. However, aspects of management roles at this level, such as Year 5 liaison with first schools, and the devising of baseline assessment, are duplicated by the headteacher's work in those areas.

69. The governing body's great strength is the oral, written and overall moral support it gives to the school. Many very practical contributions are also made to help run events, maintain health and safety issues and improve the school facilities. Most statutory duties are fulfilled, but the governors need to ensure that information and communications technology and design and technology curricular requirements are met in Key Stage 3, and those applying to the daily act of collective worship and appraisal.
70. The governing body's role in shaping the direction of the school and its understanding of strengths and weakness is partially developed but not sufficiently so to be judged satisfactory. The school development plan does not put sufficient responsibility with governors. The imbalance in senior management team roles was known to governors, but decisive action to rectify matters has not been taken. Crucial knowledge about strengths and weaknesses about standards is not as widely disseminated among governors as it needs to be, or the reasons for changes in standards investigated with sufficient vigour. In general, too little information about the school is gained by governors on the basis of their own first-hand observations and discussions; the reliance on reports from the headteacher and other staff is too high.
71. There is broadly satisfactory monitoring of teaching. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good and this partly reflects the help and support of colleagues who monitor informally on a variety of occasions. There are many opportunities to see part of another teacher's lessons and some co-ordinators, and year tutors have begun to develop this practice systematically. However, there is currently no formal statutory appraisal in place, or consistent practice across the school for ensuring that the very best teaching qualities are seen by all those who might benefit from observing them in action. If some of the satisfactory teaching is to be converted to 'good' or 'very good' teaching, there is a need for staff to be monitored rigorously but constructively and to see, for example, the excellent skills of differentiation which some, but not all, colleagues show.
72. The school is undoubtedly committed to improvement and has made satisfactory gains since the last inspection. Its work to raise standards has met with some success: subject co-ordinators have continued to increase the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels at Key Stage 2 and to send Year 8 pupils to the high school ready to achieve well at the end of Key Stage 3. Action was taken to increase the time allocation and strong leadership needed in mathematics, though not early enough to stop standards declining for two years relative to national benchmarks. Assessment arrangements and target-setting are now very thorough and detailed, having been poorly developed at the last inspection. Crucially, however, targets can be too low, as, for instance, the Key Stage 2 2000 targets for English, and too little emphasis is placed on referring levels of demand in school to national standards. There has been good improvement in the role of subject co-ordinators, reflecting the effective training and advice given after the last inspection, as well as some judicious recent appointments. Too little progress has been made in restructuring senior management, but the use of strategic goals is now much better. The school development plan, though impenetrable in places, is a noticeable improvement on planning and setting goals in 1995.
73. Outside the Key Issues noted in the previous inspection, the major improvement which managers have presided over is a further improvement in teaching quality. About 90 per cent of lessons were judged satisfactory and about 30 per cent good or better in 1995; now, nearly 98 per cent are satisfactory and nearly 77 per cent are good or better.

Staffing

74. Managers have ensured a good match of teachers to the curriculum, despite the quite high incidence of extended teacher absences. Support and clerical staff are used very effectively, particularly as part of special educational needs provision. In some instances, non-specialists teach very effectively outside their own subjects; occasionally they are slightly less confident than specialist colleagues, notably in Key Stage 3, where subject expertise is at a premium.
75. Provision for specialist teaching is good in music, art and physical education, and is very good in science. In mathematics, though accommodation is basically very good, there is some noise penetration from adjacent areas. Provision for design and technology is of inconsistent quality.

The workshop for resistant materials is large with good storage and is well equipped for specialist activities such as casting . Provision for food technology is , however, comparatively small.

76. The well-qualified and experienced SENCo leads a team of very experienced and skilled learning support assistants. The SENCo, the learning support staff and all teachers share fully the school's commitment to maximising the potential of every pupil. This mutually supportive group of staff work efficiently to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and also make a significant contribution to the overall effectiveness of the school.

Resources

77. Resources for learning at Walton Priory Middle School are satisfactory. The school allocates funds to departments on an annual bidding system that is designed to promote equality of opportunity between subjects. This reduces opportunities for long-term planning and reduced the school's ability to carry out targeted funding of the library and increased computer numbers that was planned at the time of the last inspection. The school makes good use of its links with industry through the Staffordshire Partnership and values the opportunities offered to teachers and pupils to widen their experiences, for example, in the demonstration of glass techniques. The development of information and communications technology within the school is supported by funding by the National Grid for Learning, which has led to an increase in the numbers and quality of computers in the school. The pupils are benefiting from links with conservation groups and the local allotment society, who work with them to improve their environment and to increase their awareness of the world around them.
78. Resources within subject areas are satisfactory overall and good in several areas, such as music and science. Resources within the design and technology area are unsatisfactory, however, and additional safety features are required to allow items of equipment to be brought back into use. The library provides a valuable resource, supplemented by additional collections of books arranged around the school. The library has a wide range of books and is building up its collection of videos and software.

Accommodation

79. The school was built in 1974, to a design combining open-plan work areas with specialist classrooms. All the accommodation is single storey and on one level. The building was originally intended to house 540 pupils and would have been inadequate for the present population of 621; two further pre-fabricated classrooms were added, however, in 1997. Despite this, there is still evidence of overcrowding and permission has been granted by the DfEE to reduce the annual intake from 160 to 150 from September 2000.
80. The overall condition of the accommodation is good. Work areas and classrooms are pleasant and in good decorative order. Many areas are carpeted, which helps minimise noise and maximise comfort. In the open plan areas there is some transmission of noise from one teaching area to another.
81. The library, which occupies a central open area, is comfortably furnished and equipped with worktables for use by pupils and teachers. This area is well used at break and lunchtimes and pupils respect the need for quiet working. The siting of the library provides easy access for pupils and facilitates study.
82. There is some crowding at lunchtimes in the rather cramped dining areas which include a corridor, and while staff try to ensure meals are served efficiently, pupils are often eating after the bell for afternoon school had gone. Provision is adequate for those pupils who prefer to bring their own food.
83. Toilet facilities are satisfactory but in need of some refurbishment. There is provision for the physically handicapped in the form of ramps and special toilets.
84. The school is set in very pleasant surroundings with large grassed and landscaped areas. Access is good and parking provision adequate.

85. The special educational needs base is well equipped with up-to-date printed materials and apparatus and has good access to modern technology. Although small, the base is ideally sited and is the best that the school can provide.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

86. Key Issues

The school should:

1. Use assessment and target setting more effectively by:
 - ensuring that all staff have and use a clear picture of the prior attainment pupils bring to the school in Year 5;
 - making explicit and readily understood how these and all other internally used assessments relate to national standards;
 - setting targets for the school as a whole which are more demanding than those for 1999/2000 and are more convincingly linked to the prior attainment of pupils.

(see paras: 5,9, 53, 54, 67 and 72)

2. Ensure that the senior management of the school is appropriately structured by:
 - significantly reducing the number of major responsibilities assigned to the headteacher;
 - clarifying the areas of responsibility for middle managers so that there is minimal duplication of effort if senior managers' activities relate to the same aspect of school work;
 - delegating significantly more whole-school responsibilities to other members of the senior management team and, with appropriate tasks, to co-ordinators or year heads.

(see paras: 66, 67, and 68)

3. Raise overall standards at Key Stage 2 even further, so as to at least match those found in similar schools by:
 - ensuring that assessment and target setting are used more effectively across all subjects; (see above)
 - ensuring that existing good practice in differentiation and teaching with pace and challenge is fully disseminated;
 - extending the commitment recently shown in mathematics provision to analysing the scope for improvement, followed by remedial action so that it applies to all subjects.

(see paras: 9,6, 28, 71 and 101)

4. Increase the governing body's effectiveness in decision making and its gathering of first-hand knowledge of the school's work by:
 - including governors, where appropriate, amongst those responsible for the completion of school development plan targets;
 - taking early, decisive action over any aspect of school business, particularly the successful functioning of senior managers, when they have grounds for concern.
 - taking necessary steps to be on site during school session to see pupils, staff and managers at work and gain extensive, reliable information about its strengths and weaknesses.

(see paras:71, 68, 4, 70 and 67)

In addition, the school should take note of the need to:

1. ensure that the Key Stage 3 curriculum meets statutory requirements for information and communications technology and design and technology, and create appropriate provision for personal and social education;
2. introduce the widespread use of new technology for administrative record keeping and planning purposes;
3. re-introduce an appraisal system;
4. ensure that reports to parents consistently describe pupils strengths and weaknesses in attainment;
5. provide a more systematic pattern for setting homework, especially in Key Stage 2.

(see paras: 29, 35, 36, 71, 60 and 58)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	110
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7	29	41	22	1	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
Number of pupils on the school's roll	621
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	49

Special educational needs	Y5– Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	95

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.5
National comparative data	6.0

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	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	85	75

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	71	63	79
	Girls	62	52	61
	Total	133	115	140
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (76)	72 (71)	88 (81)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	62	59	74
	Girls	61	57	59
	Total	123	116	133
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (71)	73 (71)	83 (76)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (71)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	614
Any other minority ethnic group	4

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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)	30.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	111

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	82.4
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	24
Key Stage 3	24.8
Key Stage 4	n/a

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	1,059,704
Total expenditure	1,047,486
Expenditure per pupil	1,715
Balance brought forward from previous year	46,800
Balance carried forward to next year	59,018

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	621
Number of questionnaires returned	425

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	45	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	41	53	2	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	55	6	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	54	16	2	3
The teaching is good.	47	48	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	48	14	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	58	36	3	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	61	37	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	34	51	11	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	55	36	2	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	48	44	4	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	42	8	1	9

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

ENGLISH

87. In the 1999 National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2, results were above average compared with those gained nationally and in line with results from similar schools. Eighty-three per cent of pupils gained a level 4 and above, while 32 per cent gained level 5 and above. These results were better than those gained in mathematics and similar to those gained in science. Girls did better than boys, but by less so than is found nationally. Results had remained similar at above the national average for three years but have improved this year. Teachers assessed their pupils as having lower standards than were shown in the tests.
89. Work seen during inspection week confirms that standards at Key Stage 2 are above average. The great majority of pupils produce high-quality work that is carefully presented, often word processed for display. They have a wide vocabulary. High attainers' work is accurately expressed and they create vivid, imaginative similes and metaphors, as seen, for example, in their poems about 'Blue Mondays'. Middle attainers use detail well to make their narratives come alive and low attainers choose verbs carefully for their writing, for example, when the opening of a story is modelled for them with enthusiasm by the teacher. However, their spelling and handwriting are insecure. Pupils are confident speakers; for example they recited the poem 'Disobedience' with great gusto and expression. They show an interest in reading,, with many reading such difficult texts as 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin' with understanding and some with flair. Some low attainers struggle to read aloud but understand, with help, the content of the text.
90. In the year before the end of Key Stage 3, standards of attainment are above average. Though low attainers have some inaccuracies of expression, their work is lively and relevant. The majority of pupils convey ideas clearly, and many use language fluently and with maturity. For example, when analysing how society has changed during the last century, they use a variety of different sentence structures in their openings which immediately grab the audience's attention. Pupils show good understanding in their reading, both factual and fiction, and read a wide variety of genres in school. Most select appropriate detail to support their ideas and the high attainers recognise and can explain irony in 'The Pearl'. However, many do not read enough for pleasure, or choose sufficiently demanding texts in their own reading. Standards of speaking and listening are very good and are above those in reading and writing. Pupils work well in groups, listening to one another and moderating their views accordingly. They are confident and articulate. Boys, especially, are more confident orally and answer questions more often in class, but girls produce more detailed and more accurate written work. Pupils use the drafting process with increasing skill as they move up the school, and use the computer very effectively for completing work. Any work needing numeracy skills is done efficiently.
91. Teaching and learning are very good overall. They are very good at Key Stage 2 and good at Key Stage 3, with no unsatisfactory teaching or learning. The use of specialist teachers in support at Key Stage 2 has spread expert knowledge well. The literacy hour is used imaginatively to develop a range of skills and not followed slavishly, and the extra time allotted to Key Stage 2 has been beneficial. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use question and answer skilfully to develop understanding. Year 8 pupils studying 'The Pearl' were encouraged to draw on their wider knowledge of tragedy in their answers. Teachers continually assess understanding in class and move pupils on in their learning, and work is thoroughly marked, mostly with helpful comments pointing out strengths and weaknesses. However, assessment is not used sufficiently to convey comparisons with national standards. The greatest strength in teaching is the wide variety of interesting methods employed to stimulate interest. Within one lesson, pupils may be required to use drama, paired reading, reading aloud, discussion and sustained writing, and pupils remain concentrated throughout the lesson. Often, real audiences are effectively used, for example, in the reading scheme, where Year 8 pupils are paired with Year 5 pupils. This very well-organised project produced work of a very high standard, encouraged independent learning and developed reading skills. Year 5 had a real reason for sequencing their writing clearly and accurately when they wrote recipes for their honey cakes, which they had enjoyed making for their Egyptian evening. Very good management of pupils ensures that there is a calm, orderly environment where pupils' learning can prosper. Usually, pupils work at an appropriate level for their ability, with methods and content suitably adapted, especially at Key Stage 2, and pupils with special educational needs

make good progress. For example, Year 6 pupils effectively learned about conjunctions at a variety of levels. On occasion, however, there is a lack of pace and urgency, and expectations are too low. High-ability Year 7 pupils looking at rhythm, for example, were not introduced sufficiently to the ideas of syllables and stress. Also, there is not always enough emphasis on developing the basic skills, such as spelling. Where this is done well, for example, incorporating reinforcement of how to use punctuation marks while studying 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin', pupils make good progress. The pupils with English as an alternative language are well supported when necessary and make very good progress.

92. Other subjects are beginning to make a contribution to pupils' competence in literacy. For example, in geography in Year 5, group work aided pupils' understanding of Egyptian culture, and in science, key words are displayed and pupils encouraged to report back to the class after investigations. In physical education, valuable peer group evaluation develops language skills. However, a coherent whole-school approach has not yet been developed.
93. At Key Stage 2, pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good. They settle to work quickly and join in lessons avidly. Some enthusiasm is lost in Key Stage 3, but behaviour is still good. Pupils in both key stages get on well together and with their teachers. These attitudes make a substantial contribution to the high standards achieved. Pupils are co-operative and helpful in the frequent paired and group work they do. They show a keen sense of responsibility and think about others, exemplified in a drama lesson, where pupils had to face a moral dilemma. The department contributes well to the fostering of pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
94. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Standards are improving and teaching, especially at Key Stage 2, has improved, particularly in that teachers' knowledge and understanding have developed considerably. However, not enough progress has been made in developing assessment procedures or in using assessment to encourage progress. Also, there is insufficient rigour in ensuring that there is systematic progression and continuity through the curriculum across the years and across the key stages.

Literacy

95. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are good. Pupils speak confidently and sensibly and employ a wide and apt vocabulary in many of the subjects they study and in other situations. Year 6 performed very well in assembly, for instance. Pupils contribute effectively in group and pair work, supporting one another well. They are good readers, both of fiction and for information gathering. However, they do not read widely for pleasure as they get older. They are accurate writers, able to write for different purposes and to sustain their writing. Work is neatly presented and pupils are able to redraft work to improve and refine it. Final versions are often word processed, which adds greatly to their impact. Work displayed on the walls is lively and imaginative, and of a high standard.

MATHEMATICS

96. At the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999, attainment in mathematics, as measured by National Curriculum tests, matched the national average but was well below the standards in similar schools. Over the last four years, the standards within the school have been maintained, but during the same period national standards and those of similar schools have risen. Standards observed during the inspection were significantly higher than those suggested by National Curriculum test results in 1999. Pupils in one Year 6 class could interpret and construct graphs accurately and understand fully the difference between taking an intercalary reading from a straight line graph and the estimate possible from an irregular line graph. In another Year 6 class, pupils were able to give all the major properties of regular shapes, including lines of reflection and orders of rotation, using the correct terminology with accuracy and confidence. The standards observed in lessons are confirmed by the results of frequent tests based on National Curriculum levels of attainment. The rise in standards in the year 1999-2000 is due to two factors: new teaching methods based on the National Numeracy Strategy have been gradually introduced and are proving to be very effective; as importantly, the time available for mathematics has been radically increased. Until September of 1999, the time allocated at Key Stage 2 was approximately two-thirds of that normally allowed in primary schools.

97. Standards in the two years of Key Stage 3 that are followed at the school are well above the national average. Pupils in Year 7, without any prompting, were able to reflect an irregular quadrilateral in the diagonal line formed across a coordinates grid by the line ' $x = y$ '. They were also able to work out that the opposite diagonal would be formed by ' $x = -y$ ', without actually plotting the points. As routine homework, a Year 8 class successfully calculated the perimeters of irregular shapes that included fractions of circles. The firm foundation of high standards in the Key Stage 3 work is fully confirmed by the achievement of pupils in the Key Stage 3 tests which they take during their first year at the high school. Of the 1999 cohort of pupils from this school, 76 per cent attained the expected standard, compared with 62 per cent nationally. The achievement at the levels expected of higher-attaining pupils was even more impressive: 50 per cent of the pupils compared with 38 per cent nationally gained level 6 or higher. At the highest levels (7 and 8,) the figures for Walton Priory pupils were twice the national average.
98. At both key stages boys attain better than girls; they are further above the national averages for boys than the girls are above the averages for girls. Pupils of different attainment achieve equally well. Almost all pupils, including those with special educational needs, exceed expectations based on previous learning.
99. Teaching at both key stages is very good. Of the lessons observed, none was unsatisfactory, 85 per cent were good or better and over half were very good or excellent. The outstanding feature of teaching is the ability to present concepts in ways that engender understanding and confidence. Most teachers are very skilled in the art of questioning pupils so that they build new information into their existing knowledge base, and can work out new levels of understanding for themselves. The excitement and pleasure that pupils find from this way of learning was evident in almost all lessons. Pupils grasping the significance of the slope of a graph line were quite literally coming off their seats in their desperation to tell the teacher of their discovery. This confidence based on success results in pupils of all abilities thoroughly enjoying lessons and working very hard. The warm ups that start lessons, with quick-fire question and answer sessions, games based on tables and other checks on factual knowledge, get the pupils into the right mood for the lesson, are much enjoyed and form an effective way of building in constant revision. Every lesson is thoroughly planned, well matched to the attainment of the pupils and includes identified extension work for the most able. The learning objectives are clear to the pupils and the final session of each lesson is devoted to reviewing the progress made. Pupils are thus involved in the constant assessment of their own work, can see progress and identify any weaknesses. Pupils are very open about mistakes and want to understand why they have occurred. Again, teachers use sophisticated questioning techniques to guide pupils to insight into their errors rather than simply explaining.
100. It is not an exaggeration to say that most pupils at this school love mathematics. Much care and skill are devoted to meeting the needs of pupils at the extremes of the ability range. Low-attaining pupils, including many with special educational needs, are in small classes and taught with great sensitivity. One such group in Year 5 concentrated for the whole 70-minute lesson on work revising their tables and abilities to divide, because of the imaginative way in which the task was presented and the individual support given by the teacher and the learning support assistant. Pupils who are gifted mathematicians are challenged by the 'Maths Club', opportunities to attend 'Maths Masterclasses' at Keele University and by entering the UK 'Maths Challenge'. The small amount of relatively weaker teaching was due to an over-emphasis on mechanical methods of computation, which pupils could do but not understand. Occasionally, the ability of the teacher and pupils to concentrate is affected by the noise from an active lesson in a nearby classroom.
101. The co-ordinator for mathematics provides excellent leadership and management. The mathematics team are enthusiastic about the new approach introduced by the co-ordinator, mutually supportive and share the vision of effective and enjoyable lessons. All aspects of provision are very well organised. The schemes of work are detailed and include lesson plans; learning resources, of sufficient quantity, are of very good quality and distributed to teachers effectively. The assessment of pupils' work is excellent. Each lesson includes assessment and all day-to-day work is carefully marked. Detailed analyses are made of all tests taken and other relevant measures and are used to monitor pupils' progress and the effectiveness of teaching. Where a weakness is identified, pupils are given extra support. Any weaknesses in teaching are quickly addressed by appropriate in-service training. The development plan for mathematics is a coherent document which addresses the remaining areas of relative weakness and is well focused on the further raising of standards. Although the curriculum includes work with computers, this area is under-developed, and plans are in existence to

remedy this within the academic year. Some of the rooms used for lessons are not suited to the present style of teaching; ways are being sought to alleviate this problem.

102. Every aspect of the provision for mathematics that was criticised at the last inspection has been radically improved. The quality of mathematics education at this school is now very good and improving.

Numeracy

103. The standards of numeracy are good and support all relevant sections of the curriculum. For example, pupils are able to utilise their skills with number, graph techniques and data analyses to enrich their work in science, geography, physical education (orienteeing), and their skills in measurement are an important factor in gaining success in design and technology. Teachers are conscious of the need to reinforce numeracy skills and do so whenever the opportunity arises, regardless of the subject being studied. The security of pupils' knowledge of the factual basis of numeracy, the multiplication tables and basic rules of arithmetic is outstanding.

SCIENCE

104. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and through Key Stage 3 is good, and the performance of boys and girls generally in science is above the national average. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999, the proportion of pupils reaching levels 4 and above, 88 per cent, is above the national average of 78 per cent, and the proportion reaching level 5 and above, 36 per cent, is also above the national average of 27 per cent. In comparison with schools in similar contexts, pupils' results were broadly in line with the average for similar schools. Relative to the other core subjects at Key Stage 2, attainment in science is about the same as that in English and well above that in mathematics. Pupils also make good progress towards their targets in Key Stage 3.
105. Attainment in science lessons varies, but generally is good, and occasionally is very good. For example, pupils in Year 8 are very successful at developing a range of skills in working with dissolving things, and in Year 5 where pupils show progress in their work on types of forces and their units. Other than minor variation between years, there is no overall significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils are well behaved and relationships are good. Many take pride in their work and books are well looked after. They are keen, willing and attentive and approach work with enthusiasm and a sense of enjoyment, and the engagement with new knowledge, skills and processes is high for most. This was illustrated well with younger pupils in Year 6 in their work on determining the best way of keeping liquids warm and, with another group, during the lesson on the pendulum and the investigation of the factors which affect the time of the swing. Pupils enjoy practical work in science; they generally maintain concentration and work collaboratively. At both key stages, there is reasonable opportunity for genuine open-ended problem solving, for making and testing hypotheses and for developing the skills of planning and investigation, prediction and evaluation.
106. The quality of teaching is always satisfactory and often good, and there are examples of very good practice across both key stages. Specialist teachers in Year 7 and Year 8 have very good knowledge and understanding of science. They, and class teachers in Year 5 and Year 6, organise and prepare individual lessons conscientiously, often with detailed plans and lesson notes. Teachers' expectations are high for many pupils and in some lessons intended outcomes are known by the pupils. This clearly contributes to pupils' understanding and the overall success of the lesson. Whole-class questioning is used effectively, and the pace of lessons is generally good. A range of teaching and learning strategies is used and when homework is given, it is well thought out, relevant and clearly extends learning. Progress in lessons is satisfactory or better at both key stages, and for pupils of all levels of ability. Where it is good or very good, pupils are challenged and confident and they show clear gains in knowledge, understanding and skills. This is demonstrated well in Year 6, where pupils are engaged with work on micro-organisms and decay. In Year 7 also, pupils enjoy investigating acids and alkalis and they present their work with confidence and speak and listen well. Pupils' books and other work are regularly marked, often with praise and supportive and informative comment. Assessment is properly organised and effective. There are sound routines and regular opportunities for assessment, such as end-of-unit-tests and the outcome of practical investigations. Scores and levels are recorded by teachers, and information is occasionally used to modify the next stage of learning. There are links with local industry and a range of trips and visits to such places as Conway, Rugeley power station and the science museum in

Manchester. The quality and amount of pupils' work in science on display throughout the school are good and some of the work is excellent.

107. The science laboratory has recently been refurbished, and has been in use since last November. It presents a light and pleasing environment for pupils to work in and is well equipped. Activity in science is well supported by an experienced technician, and the level and proportion of funding for resources is satisfactory. There is sufficient apparatus and equipment of good quality to support an appropriate level of practical problem solving in science. Although teachers are rapidly developing skills of using computers in science and administration, there remains a shortfall of information and communications technology in pupils' day-to-day experience in science. On a daily basis, pupils enjoy science as a popular and successful subject, and its image is positive and exciting. However, recording by pupils is often quite formal, and there is less opportunity for creative and imaginative writing and recording in science.
108. Documentation is good, well organised and up to date and a helpful resource. Leadership is strong and capable and the school is fully meeting the requirements in science of the National Curriculum. The subject co-ordinator has a clear vision, enthusiasm and an effective style, supporting well and with sensitivity. Colleagues work well together and their contribution to science is strong. Since the last inspection, the department has carried out a number of significant changes. Documentation is good, major policies and procedures are in place, and schemes of work at both key stages have been completely revised. Information from the previous key stage is occasionally used to improve the targeting of National Curriculum levels. A greater awareness of the range of teaching and learning strategies has led to improved teaching and the sharing of good practice, especially in the provision of attainment target 1 activities (investigations) at both key stages and in providing greater challenge for the more able. There are good opportunities for the encouragement of planning and prediction as essential skills and routines for investigation. The frequency and quality of investigations have improved, especially for pupils in Key Stage 2, and the careful planning of lessons and the organisation of resources are strengths. Staff continue to develop information and communications technology skills, particularly in the areas of data-logging, Internet use, spreadsheets and using sensors. There are no serious outstanding health and safety issues. Teachers and the technician are familiar with safe working practice and daily routines reflect this.

ART

109. By the end of Key Stage 2, attainment is above average. At this stage, art is integrated with other subject areas as part of projects or themes. This approach to the curriculum gives rise to a rich variety of creative activities in both two and three dimensions. Pupils were able to derive personal ideas from, for example, the designs and inscriptions on burial cases found in the tombs of the Pharaohs. In another instance, pupils were able to draw expressively from the observation of two of their number dressed in Victorian costume as an aspect of a project on 'Homes and Families'. Art history is used very effectively where relevant, an example being the use of Van Gogh's 'Bedroom' as a background to pupils' homework on the same theme. Where work is annotated, writing is accurate and well presented. There is, however, no art-specific use of computers at this stage.
110. In Years 7 and 8, pupils study art as a specialist subject, though related to project work where appropriate. Attainment, at the end of Year 8 is, again, above average. Pupils show well-developed skills in drawing from observation, and some portrait work, from direct experience, is well above average for this stage. Good quality print-making is also evident, with discriminating use of colour and very careful workmanship. Art notebooks provide good evidence of the development of basic skills in drawing and in the use of colour deriving from the study of colour theory. Work, including homework, contained within these notebooks receives a written comment which informs pupils of their progress. Pupils themselves add comments in the books on their perception of their work and progress. As at Key stage 2, there is no art-related use of computers.
111. The quality of teaching at both stages is good. Of eight lessons observed, two were satisfactory, four good, and two very good. In all lessons, work is well prepared and resources well organised. This methodical organisation of materials, linked with clear and careful demonstration where appropriate, sets an example for pupils and is reflected in their work. In the best lessons, preparation is accompanied by research; for example, a teacher has

extensively researched in preparation for a lesson related to the 'Egyptians' theme in Key Stage 2. This enthusiasm and seriousness of purpose are picked up by pupils in their attitude to their own work. A further strength in the teaching is the pace and quality of on-going individual help and tuition during lessons. This influences the pace of pupils' learning and provides for fully differentiated teaching, which promotes progress at different rates and helps pupils with special educational needs to reach their fullest potential. Non-specialist teachers contrive to sustain pupils' good learning by stimulating the imagination and generating enthusiasm. This compensates effectively at this level for any lack of subject-specific expertise. Teachers manage pupils well, with due sensitivity to individual need.

112. Pupils respond very well to the teaching. They show an eagerness to take part in creative activities and to learn about art and artists. The level of concentration and commitment is consistently very good and is sustained at a good pace throughout lessons. Pupils co-operate well when working in pairs, for example, in portrait drawing, and display enjoyment while taking their work very seriously. There is a cheerful and productive atmosphere during lessons and behaviour is very good.
113. Assessment is related to whole-school policy and to National Curriculum end-of-key-stage statements. The art department has increased the number of levels of attainment it can award from three to six, and this allows more flexibility in assessment and provides a more complete picture on transfer to the high school. Level descriptions have been devised in consultation with the high school in order to harmonise assessment patterns. Work is assessed at the end of projects and termly to monitor attainment, progress, behaviour and effort. Parents are reported to at least annually, in accordance with requirements, and also at parent evenings. An interesting feature of assessment observed in a Year 6 lesson took the form of collective assessment. Pupils were invited to circulate around the room and to compare their own work with that of other pupils during a drawing lesson. Standards observed were then fully discussed. The responsible way in which pupils undertook this task revealed clearly their concern for others. Current assessment procedures constitute an additional improvement since the last inspection, when pupils were judged to have too few opportunities to evaluate their own work.
114. The art department is effectively managed. Teachers, both specialist and non-specialist, share an interest in sustaining and developing attainment and progress. A curriculum has been constructed which meets the recommendations of the National Curriculum in terms of breadth and variety, though a continuing weakness is the failure to apply information and communications technology to the curricular needs of art and design. Display is very well managed, with rich coverage of project material throughout the school. The accommodation, which combines open plan with specialist rooms, is of good quality and is used effectively. There is a good range of materials for leaning, including materials for ceramics and good reference books.
115. Teachers show a caring attitude to their pupils and there is appropriate concern for pupil welfare: a health and safety hazard exists, however, in the form of a pottery kiln which is not properly fenced.
116. There has been significant improvement since the school was last inspected, when attainment was judged to be 'in line with national expectations' at both key stages.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

117. Attainment in making in design and technology at the end of both Key Stage 2 and the last year before the end of Key Stage 3 is in line national expectations. It is below in designing. Pupils' achievement could be higher in both aspects when compared with other subjects in the school. In food technology in Year 7, pupils are able to prepare simple products but do not show an awareness of designing to meet their own needs. They make well-crafted wooden stools and football rattles, and show clear understanding of the correct methods of using tools and machinery. They are able to use formal drawing techniques, and many pupils show above-average skills in using isometric projection. However, their knowledge and understanding of the properties of a wide range of materials such as plastics, and systems and

control are underdeveloped. Pupils' design briefs lack clear analyses and product specifications, as in a project to design a pizza. This is seen also in the work of some high-attaining pupils. Evaluations of food products by many pupils lack a wide technical vocabulary. Pupils' numeracy is developed in several projects in both key stages. For instance, when testing a buggy at Key Stage 2, they calculate the speed using information and communications technology; their designs of mangonels allow pupils to consider the variables involved in the motion of projectiles; whilst in food, textiles and resistant materials, accurate weighing and measuring are performed in lessons and written up in folder work.

118. The standard of teaching and learning is satisfactory. In resistant materials at Key Stage 3, pupils learn quickly how to use a plane, helped by the teacher's very good understanding of working materials. At Key Stage 2, pupils appreciate the aromas, textures and colours of food products, stimulated by very good teaching. This was seen in a sparkling lesson demonstrating cake mixing, linked to a study of Egypt. However, some aspects of teaching have shortcomings. Teachers do not assess designing and making in the materials and food lessons so as to set clear targets. This hinders pupils' scope for improvement, especially that of high attainers who may complete work and need to move on to a more rigorous task. Teachers do not integrate designing into their lesson plans, which focus mainly on developing skills. In one food lesson, teaching was unsatisfactory, owing to the teacher's not being able to provide sufficient challenges for differing groups, constrained by too few kitchens to allow whole-class cooking.
119. Pupils' attitudes in design and technology are good. Teachers manage lessons very well, and pupils work safely and hygienically, and show respect for equipment and others. They are able to work co-operatively in pairs, as in a lesson where they designed a mangonel. They respect the work of others and share ideas to improve their products, as when they planed down the legs of a stool.
120. Co-ordination of design and technology has shortcomings. The two areas of resistant materials and food/textiles are not linked with any consistent policy of teaching design. There are no readily available records of levels of attainment in either designing or making. These are passed on to high schools at the end of Year 8, but there is no clear analysis over time or by gender, to allow evaluation of the curriculum. Teachers at both key stages have poor knowledge of national exemplary standards in design and technology, and they do not contribute to building a school portfolio of benchmark materials.
121. The accommodation and resources for specialist design and technology are inadequate. There are insufficient kitchens; modest group sizes are unable to cook together. There is also a paucity of new machinery, for computer-aided design/computer-aided manufacture(CAD/CAM), control, and working with plastics.
122. Standards have not changed substantially since the last inspection: the range of materials used by pupils remains limited; the quality of work in wood continues to be good; high attainers continue to be insufficiently extended, especially with regard to designing; breaches of the National Curriculum in the last report have not been addressed. Departmental documents now address the compulsory programme of study, but there are no links to the levels in design and making expected to be reached by differing groups of pupils across both key stages.

GEOGRAPHY

123. Evidence gained during the inspection indicates that pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 are above those expected of pupils of the same age nationally. Pupils acquire knowledge of places such as the location of Egypt and related places and develop appropriate atlas skills. Illustrative work is neatly done, though the quality is sometimes reduced by insufficient labelling or inappropriate use of colour. Pupils understand the importance of the Nile to Egyptians, with higher-attaining pupils being able to describe and offer interpretation of life styles from photographs. Many pupils are competent in drawing graphs and can plot data to show patterns of temperature and rainfall in contrasting regions, though lower-attaining pupils find difficulty in describing their observations from the data. Literacy skills for most pupils are good. Pupils speak clearly, are frequently able to develop answers orally and many, particularly higher and average attainers, write well-formed sentences with accurate spelling

and grammar. In the year before the end of Key Stage 3, pupils' standards of attainment are above those expected of pupils of the same age nationally. Most pupils are competent users of the atlas and use the index and coordinates to locate places, although the minority shows weakness in knowledge of continents and oceans and UK national boundaries. Map skills are good: most pupils are able to use Ordnance Survey maps to study settlement shapes and functions. Many pupils use computers effectively to research information and use data and word processing for their work. A case study of volcanic activity, for instance, was enhanced through the application of computing skills. Pupils acquire a range of knowledge of geographical terms. Higher-attaining pupils are able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the composition of the earth and the principles of 'plate movements'.

124. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 is good. At Key Stage 2, most teachers plan and organise their lessons effectively, enabling pupils of different attainment to make good progress. The organisation of two broad ability groups in a Year 5 lesson, for instance, enabled the teacher to give close support to lower-attaining pupils, while the individual research-based tasks set for higher-attaining pupils provided challenge and resulted in very good quality written work. Most lessons generate a positive learning ethos, and the choice of resources provides interest and enthusiasm for learning. On some occasions, however, the pace of learning is slow, resulting in some under-achievement for the higher-attaining pupils. Marking of project work is good, but there is insufficient target setting in day-to-day marking. At Key Stage 3, effective learning is evident in the enquiry-based studies which give all pupils the opportunity to research and produce responses according to their aptitude. Very good results are evident in work seen on tropical rain forests, volcanoes and pollution. Teachers make very good use of assessment against identified criteria and incorporate opportunities for pupils' self-evaluation, which is effective in helping pupils to understand how they can improve. The main weaknesses in teaching occur when lessons do not cater for the different needs of pupils, and when the reliance on the outcome of pupils' performance is not always appropriate and successful.
125. Pupils' attitudes to learning at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 are very good. In most lessons, behaviour is very good, lessons proceed smoothly and much is achieved. Occasionally at Key Stage 3, however, a small minority of pupils, mainly boys, are not fully co-operative with the teacher, resulting in lesson interruption and slowing the progress of the individuals concerned. Most pupils show enthusiasm for learning. They respond well to practical and group activities and sustain concentration for lengthy periods of time. Most take care with presentation of work and re-drafted project assignments are very well organised and presented. Year 8 pupils show responsibility when engaged in computer work without constant supervision. Many pupils are keen to participate in oral work, but others are more reluctant, and are not always identified and encouraged.
126. The geography curriculum is broad and appreciably enhanced by opportunities for field study experience, including residential visits to Conway, North Wales. In addition, there are many opportunities to learn about the local community, such as the links with Stone town council. Close links are established with local schools, and this is very effective in ensuring curriculum continuity. The schemes of work are up to date, but do not sufficiently show learning intentions for literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 3. The arrangements for assessment of performance are very good. The assessment criteria are clear; they include pupil self-evaluation, and enable monitoring of attainment and progress. National Curriculum levels are identified and links with the high school provide for consistency and progression to Year 9. The reporting of progress and attainment marks or levels on reports is not done, and this diminishes the effectiveness of communication to parents. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent and contribute significantly to the quality of educational opportunity and learning opportunities provided for pupils.
127. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 have risen. There has been an improvement in the progress of higher-attaining pupils in the enquiry-based studies, but teachers do not consistently provide appropriate challenges for pupils of different attainment. Pupils' atlas skills have improved and interpretation of data and research through investigation has been maintained at the high level previously reported. Monitoring and evaluation of pupils' progress and performance have been enhanced though are not yet satisfactory.

HISTORY

128. Standards in history at the end of Key Stage 2 are above national expectations. Assessments

are based on a school grading system; no National Curriculum levels are reported formally to parents. In work seen, pupils were achieving level 3 overall, with a significant minority achieving level 4. Pupils can identify the main characteristics of the period studied and use specialist terms confidently in their descriptions. They recognise the effects of events and empathise with the people of the period in their explanations, as seen, for example, in their letters of complaint regarding housing conditions for the poor in Victorian England. Pupils make thoughtful comparisons between their own lives and those of the past, as in their discussion regarding medicine in the 19th century. Standards in history in Year 8 are in line with national expectations. The majority of pupils are achieving level 5. Pupils select and extract information from a variety of sources and are aware of the use of bias by writers. They recognise that an event may have a variety of causes and that these may not have the same impact, realised, for example, when they considered the actions of Mary Tudor. Pupils consider the link between cause and effect and the indirect effects of historical events, for example, the effects of the Black Death on the economy of England. Pupils understand that an event may be seen from different viewpoints and that it may have positive and negative results, as in the rise in demand for labour in medieval times. They can display this knowledge in a variety of forms, such as in letters, drama and diagrams, and are confident in their use of source material, although their skills of evaluation of the source material are weaker.

129. The quality of teaching in history is good overall and in some lessons seen it was very good. In the best lessons, objectives are clear and teachers and pupils work together to investigate the past. Teachers have a good knowledge base and work hard to involve all pupils in their learning. Expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement are high. Tasks are set at a level appropriate for all pupils, although there is little evidence of material designed for pupils of differing attainment. Instructions are generally clear and concise and a variety of teaching strategies is used to involve the pupils actively and to encourage independent learning. Good use is made of group and paired work to enable pupils to share ideas and to listen to the opinions and viewpoints of others, while having the opportunity for independent thought. On occasion there is an over-use of teacher-dominated oral work that limits the opportunity for pupil investigation and discovery. Excellent use was made of plenary sessions to enable pupils and teachers to consider the discoveries made in lessons and to consolidate learning. The quality of learning is clearly linked to the teaching. At Key Stage 2, pupils are involved in the study of the history of Egypt, and pupils of all ability levels demonstrate a sense of enquiry that enables them to investigate with confidence and to demonstrate good recall and understanding of information. Teachers are good listeners and pupils are encouraged to develop their oral responses and to support them with reason and evidence. In Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrate a sense of time passing in their study of the Tudor monarchs and are able to make deductions as a result of group discussion of the information gathered. Where higher-attaining pupils are presented with challenging questions, progress is good; for example, pupils identify events of the period and suggest consequences that could have arisen from alternative possible actions in the past. The use of open-ended questions encourage pupils to develop their responses, and those of higher-attaining pupils indicate that they are developing a structured approach to their written work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They are well supported by their teachers and by the use of paired and group work. There is no departmental strategy for developing literacy skills, but good use is made of written responses, and pupils are encouraged to use specialist terms in oral and written work. Reading is a significant activity in history and pupils are keen to read aloud, reading fluently in the main.
130. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good at both key stages. They co-operate with the teacher and with each other and are mutually supportive in discussion. Pupils demonstrate interest and a sense of enquiry, and are confident in their communication in class while respecting the opinions of others. Relationships within the class are good and pupils treat books and artefacts with care, willing to share and work together. Written work is well presented and great care and effort is often displayed in their project work.
131. History is co-ordinated well and teachers meet to discuss the resources and schemes of work. Assessment is not based on National Curriculum levels, however, and there is no use of levels to inform pupils of their levels of achievement. Day-to-day assessment is positive and encouraging, but no grades are given until Year 8 and there is little advice to enable pupils to move their work forward. Pupils are unaware of National Curriculum level descriptors and so are unable to work towards them. The subject co-ordinator is trialling a form of pupil self-assessment. Reports do not inform parents of the attainment of the pupils.
132. Standards of achievement have been maintained since the last report, and teaching at Key Stage 3 which was sound, is now good. Monitoring of teaching and assessment is still informal,

and there is a lack of formative assessment to contribute to the final teacher assessments of National Curriculum levels, which would enable the school to monitor the progress of its pupils in relation to national standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

133. Attainment in information and communications technology by the end of Key Stage 2 is above national expectations. By the end of the last year before the end of Key Stage 3, it is in line with national expectations, although achievement could be higher. Using word-processing software to communicate and logo to write simple programs are strengths. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can word process with accuracy, as in the accurate re-drafting of play scripts. Pupils can use turtle graphics to write precise sequences. In Year 8, pupils use word processing, combining information sources, when they write a report of a shared reading scheme. Although there is some indiscriminate use of clip-art, images are combined with well-formatted text. However, overall information and communications technology capability is not sufficiently developed when considering skills in modelling, control and data handling. Pupils with special educational needs show appropriate levels of information and communications technology skills, as in a logo lesson where they appreciate how to edit procedures and work towards designing programs to draw particular shapes. Girls and boys show similar levels of attainment in lessons. The school does not use National Curriculum levels to measure attainment, nor any analysis of relative performance by gender, so there is no evidence of trends over time.
134. There are significant contributions to pupils' learning in both literacy and numeracy. Re-drafting, use of the spell checker, and identification of an audience are covered when developing word processing skills. When analysing data from surveys, some pupils can produce well-formatted graphs. In logo, many pupils improve their knowledge of angles and develop their spatial awareness.
135. Teaching and learning are good at Key Stage 2, and satisfactory in Years 7 and 8. Pupils are quickly able to build up a range of skills in supported lessons, led by an information and communications technology specialist. In one lesson, there was good consolidation of word-processing skills helped by the use of a well-briefed support teacher. This was followed by an orderly change to new work, with pupils quickly learning how to navigate documents on the school Intranet. These supported lessons show good planning using teacher's very good knowledge of educational software, and efficient use of older hardware. Many information and communications technology learning opportunities are well planned, with good integration with other activities, such as data gathering on a school trip to Conway, and traffic surveys off site.
136. When teaching has shortcomings this is due to little homework being set, impeding pupils' reflection and consolidation of information and communications technology lessons, and a lack of feedback and target-setting in written work and reports. In some lessons, planning for those factors is better, with the introduction of new technical terms, clarity in demonstrations using large screens, and rigour in checking pupils' accuracy, using word processing conventions and consistent formatting
137. Pupils' attitudes when using information and communications technology are very good. They enjoy working with computers, respect equipment, and, when sharing a machine, they can co-operate well, as in a lesson using a cloze program linked to a topic on Egypt. Teachers plan and supervise well-organised extra-curricular activities with a large range of stimulating, interactive software, and these are very well attended. Several regularly help with the running and monitoring of these sessions. Some pupils would like more discrete information and communications technology to be taught in Year 8, which lacks the regular lesson provided in Years 5 to 7.
138. The school does not provide the compulsory curriculum in control, and there are few opportunities in Year 8 to develop information and communications technology skills with sufficient range, rigour and complexity. There are still too few opportunities at both key stages for pupils to extend their use of information and communications technology in other subjects, such as mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages, history, and religious education. Reports and assessments do not clearly indicate how pupils can work to targets that improve their National Curriculum levels; non-specialist teachers are not familiar with such benchmark materials. Teacher assessments are not yet carried out at either key stage, although a new computer-based record card tracks pupils' experiences, helpful for Key Stage

2. There is no analysis of trends in attainment over time, by gender or by groups of particular attainers. There are too few information and communications technology specialists to meet curricular needs, and the present post of co-ordinator is covered by the acting headteacher. There are not enough computers to meet the needs of departments and there is no CAD/CAM software or sufficient control equipment. However, the school has a very well-determined development plan, balancing a vision for the future with the school's immediate priorities. This has been thoughtfully written, with thorough consultation of many staff, governors and outside agencies.

139. Since the last report, there has been improvement in attainment at Key Stage 2, Standards are no longer commensurate with pupils' abilities at Key Stage 3, owing to the lack of opportunities at in Year 8. Although there are now some breaches of the compulsory curriculum, the standard of hardware and software has improved. Teaching standards have improved at Key Stage 2.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

140. All pupils study French in Years 6 to 8, though the time allocation in Year 6 has recently been reduced to one lesson weekly. Given this limitation, pupils achieve good standards in Key Stage 2, especially in listening and speaking, which dominate lessons. They understand instructions given in French and speak with good accents and pronunciation within a limited range of activities. They cope well with using French in routine classroom situations. They have scant time for written work but, in labelling and copying exercises, they write neatly and accurately.
141. The level of attainment remains good overall in Key Stage 3. Pupils in mixed-ability classes in Year 7 and in sets in Year 8 are adequately challenged by much of the work set for them. They continue to make good progress in listening and speaking, though the range of speaking activities is not sufficiently broad to extend more able pupils in either year. They continue to demonstrate good pronunciation and intonation in teacher-dominated oral exchanges, and sometimes take part in role-plays, but do not have opportunities to use French independently in more open-ended tasks. In both listening and reading they identify key details in short passages of French, and reading skills are enhanced by the regular use of a scheme which allows for choice in personal reading. In their written work they demonstrate an increasing range of vocabulary and good awareness of grammatical structure, though pupils with special educational needs and other lower-attaining pupils need substantial extra support through modified tasks and worksheets. Most pupils begin to write paragraphs about themselves, or to describe other people, largely following a model. More able pupils find this sort of work easy and they do not receive adequate stimulation to produce the original writing of which they are capable. By the end of Year 8, however, at least three quarters of pupils have reached National Curriculum levels which are appropriate for their age and are well prepared for the transition to high school.
142. Pupils have good attitudes to learning French. They volunteer readily to participate in oral activities. They sustain concentration well for the most part, and behaviour is nearly always good and sometimes impeccable. They take pride in the appearance of their work and very little is left unfinished. Though much work is teacher-centred, pupils show flair and enjoyment in occasional opportunities to express themselves in more creative and less structured activities.
143. Teaching is good overall, very good in Key Stage 2 and never less than satisfactory. Both teachers have good command of French. In the better lessons, they use French effectively to provide an appropriate model for pupils, though there is some inconsistency in this, so that pupils do not always hear enough French in lessons and this can affect their perception of the importance of using French for themselves. Consequently, pupils in Year 6 are more likely to use French for routine situations than pupils in Key Stage 3. Teachers know their pupils well and lessons take place in a good learning atmosphere in which praise and encouragement are prominent. Planning for individual lessons is good. The lesson time is short, at 35 minutes, but teachers include at least two activities in most lessons and provide satisfactory coverage of all four skills within the prescribed range of topics. Teaching methods tend to rely on a fairly well-embedded routine with which pupils are comfortable and which ensures a reasonable range of learning experiences. Support for pupils of lower attainment is a strong feature in lessons, though strategies for extending higher-attaining pupils are under-developed. Teachers make good use of overhead projectors and cassette players to support learning, and use video and

readers to vary the routine of lessons. At present no use is made of computers, though the potential for using new technology is recognised in curriculum planning. Pupils enjoy imaginative tasks such as, in Year 8, using work on personal description to produce 'Wanted' posters, in which they have an opportunity to be more creative, and to research words and phrases outside the normal syllabus. Marking is up to date and sometimes includes advice on how to improve work. Homework is well used in Year 8 to complement classwork, but little is set in the earlier years. In view of the reduction of curriculum time for French, this represents a lost opportunity to compensate.

144. The subject is efficiently led by its co-ordinator. Policies and schemes of work are sound. Apart from the subject co-ordinator, there is only one part-time teacher. The two liaise on an informal basis to ensure adequate monitoring of standards. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Performance data are used in refining schemes of work, and in deciding setting for Year 8, but are under-used as the basis for providing pupils and parents with clearer information on progress and how to improve, especially in annual reports. The subject development plan has appropriate priorities, but is not sufficiently detailed as it does not include costings, time-scales and evaluation criteria. Extra-curricular provision has a positive impact on attitudes to French. There is an annual visit for a full week to La Rochelle, which is over-subscribed. Lunchtime activities include 'Cluéo Club' in which only French is allowed, 'Catch-up club' for pupils joining the school in Year 7, and a rota of extra lessons during morning registration time for Year 6 classes.
145. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, when the report on French was largely positive. Importantly, the quality of teaching and standards of attainment have both improved from sound to good. Extra-curricular provision now supports learning effectively for those who participate. On the other hand, there was criticism in that report of the lack of strategies to accelerate the learning of higher-attaining pupils, and this has not been addressed. To improve further, the department should address this criticism in its development planning and schemes of work, ensure the more consistent use of French by teachers in conducting lessons, improve progress in learning by more effective use of assessment data, and make more tangible progress towards enhancing learning through the integration of new technology.

MUSIC

146. Attainment is above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2; at the end of Year 8, it is well above. By the end of Year 6, pupils develop a secure working knowledge of the elements of music prescribed in the National Curriculum through a wide variety of challenging and interesting tasks. This was clear from whole-class performances in Year 6 of 'Ingonyama', an African rhythmic chant in eight parts, which combined vocal and instrumental motifs. Almost all pupils coped very well with the complicated stresses in the rhythms, and they controlled the dynamics and pitch accurately. Pupils can confidently compose and represent pieces in a graphic score. They have a good knowledge of musical theory, understanding such terms as clef, stave and note values, and they are familiar with common dynamic terms. They listen to a wide range of music from different eras and cultures, and can write an evaluation of the music they hear, such as 'Ride of the Valkyries'. Music makes a small but positive contribution to pupils' development of basic skills, and particularly of literacy. Most pupils achieve very good standards in performance. In Key Stage 3, they continue to develop purposefully all aspects of the music curriculum. By Year 8, standards of composing are very good. Some is outstanding, as when pupils devised atmospheric background music to video excerpts from 'Raiders of the Lost Ark'. Using keyboards and percussion, they showed imagination, flair and subtlety in representing, for example, danger in caves and terror at the appearance of spiders. Higher-attaining pupils used their own orchestral instruments to add to the tonal colours available. Performances were very well co-ordinated. Pupils achieve good standards in a graduated course on electronic keyboards. They increase their knowledge by learning about and performing music from China, India and Japan.
147. Teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. Both teachers are experienced specialist musicians and have very good practical skills. They communicate their enthusiasm well and in all lessons observed there was a clear feeling of enjoyment through achievement. Teachers direct class performances very confidently, which effectively harnesses the pupils' natural interest. Lessons have clear objectives and resources are well organised. Pupils are very well motivated, and they respond very well to the teachers' high expectations of behaviour. Good

relationships amongst pupils ensure that working is efficient when carried out independently in small groups. When composing, for example, pupils affably and quickly negotiate group decisions. Lessons proceed at a very good pace and the teachers set tight deadlines to encourage productivity. They assist individuals and groups and constructively evaluate work in preparation, which contributes to the very good progress achieved. All pupils sustain their concentration well when composing or performing, including pupils with special educational needs. These pupils are fully involved in all practical activities and well supported by classmates and the teacher.

148. The schemes of work are wide-ranging and imaginative in content and well matched to pupils' abilities. All aspects of the National Curriculum are covered. Pupils gain some familiarity with information and communications technology through using programmable electronic keyboards, but at present only a few older pupils have an opportunity to use a computer for notating their work. Procedures for assessment are informal but generally effective. More specific criteria are needed, particularly for the assessment of composing, to raise attainment even higher. Lessons tend to have only one objective: a second task in some of the longer lessons would allow pupils to practise a greater range of skills more regularly. Two teachers co-ordinate and teach the music very ably on a job-share basis. Day-to-day administration is very efficient. The school has an outstanding range of extra-curricular musical activities. One hundred and forty pupils learn instruments from visiting tutors. There is a very large choir and a large orchestra. In addition, there are clubs for recorders and composing. The school provides many excellent opportunities for the social and cultural development of its musicians. Instrumentalists perform at assembly, there are regular concerts, including productions of stage musicals, in school and elsewhere, and there is a bi-annual camp for musicians in Ripon. Provision for music was good at the time of the previous inspection; it is now very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

149. Standards in physical education at the end of Key Stage 2 are high and above national expectations. In invasion games, pupils show good understanding of tactics in small-sided contexts. Following an indoor skills programme, they have acquired good catching skills under pressure and the ability to use space well to create passing opportunities. Boys' skill levels in hockey are above average, with well-defined pushing and hitting, trapping and tackling techniques enabling them to take part in high level, active games. Girls generally have sound movement skills in dance lessons and perform sequences with good timing and control.
150. In the year before the end of Key Stage 3, standards are above the national expectation. The majority of boys have good stick control in hockey and above average knowledge of rules and tactics of the games. In one lesson, they intelligently worked out tactics when taking short corners to overcome a pressing defence. In dance, girls have a good understanding of individual and group timing and were seen collectively composing and refining a phase with three distinct and complicated motifs. Pupils at this stage have a very good understanding of orienteering and have developed a range of skills, plotting and running courses around the school. Standards are good in comparison with similar schools nationally, but lessons do not always consistently challenge the highest- and lowest-achieving pupils, who sometimes under-achieve. The warm-up periods in lessons do not sufficiently extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of health-related issues.
151. Overall, standards of teaching are good at both key stages. Teachers' good understanding of the relevant programmes of study is an important factor in the planning of valuable learning experiences that pupils receive in physical education. However, they do not always sufficiently deepen pupils' understanding and thinking through effective and challenging questioning and the use of relevant vocabulary. When key words were used to improve the quality and variety of movement in a Year 6 dance class, very good progress was made. Some inspiring teaching is producing very good levels of physical and imaginative efforts. The use of diverse themes and inspirational music in dance enhances pupils' compositional skills and creative curiosity. Teachers are methodical in creating situations where pupils can investigate and resolve problems. Through paired running in orienteering, pupils develop excellent decision making and route-planning skills; groups of girls display excellent collaboration and co-operation when investigating complex movement routines in dance. Teachers expect a good standard of independent thinking, positive work habits and self-discipline and pupils respond very well, sustaining concentration and refining their work. Present planning for lessons rarely considers the wide range of abilities and this sometimes means that pupils consolidate their achievements rather than undertake tasks that fully extend their thinking and participation.

152. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in providing a very good range of curricular opportunities. Pupils' experiences are enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and in-house competitions and inter-school matches. The very high numbers participating in these activities means that the extended curriculum makes a significant impact in raising standards. The ethos in the department is very good, with a shared commitment to succeed. Recent development planning has lacked a whole-school focus, and a lack of monitoring procedures limits assistance for non-specialist teachers and planning for future improvements. The present schemes of work inconsistently identify an appropriate range of learning outcomes for lessons, although a good start has been made with gymnastics. Although teachers genuinely have high expectations of their pupils, there is no short-term planning strategy to identify relevant tasks for all pupils; teachers sometimes make perceptive analyses of pupils' performances but do not use assessments to inform the next stage of learning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

153. Standards in religious education at the end of Key Stage 2 are good. Pupils are achieving step 4 in the Agreed Syllabus assessment levels. They can describe and distinguish key beliefs and use specialist terms with confidence. They demonstrate a familiarity and understanding of the practices of the followers of Sikhism and Islam, and excellent use is made of the visits to the gurdwara and the mosque. Pupils develop an understanding of abstract concepts such as 'belonging' from their study of these faiths. They recognise the significance of a wide variety of artefacts and their place in the religious traditions. In written work, pupils demonstrate secure knowledge of the religious faiths and practices studied. In Year 8, there is limited written work on which to base a judgement of achievement. The lack of systematic monitoring of work results in an unequal experience for pupils across the key stage. In classes where the teacher has a clear understanding of the purpose of religious education, pupils are developing a sense of the philosophies and questions that underpin man's search for answers and order. In Key Stage 3, where pupils receive less than their entitlement of religious education, their knowledge and understanding are weak.
154. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 2 and satisfactory at Key Stage 3. Where teaching is good, there are clear lesson objectives that are communicated to the pupils. Teachers encourage the participation of pupils by listening to them and by valuing their contributions. Good use is made of praise to develop confidence and respect for the opinions of others. Teachers emphasise the importance of questions and encourage pupils to observe and investigate artefacts and photographs. Good use is made of extension work to enable higher-attaining pupils to develop more sophisticated skills of analysis, for example in their consideration of the creation story and the scientific theory of evolution. Pupils were encouraged to move away from the simplistic idea of there being contradictory theories and to remark on their similarities. Where teaching is less satisfactory, pupils are given tasks without an understanding of their relevance; facts about different faiths are collected without regard for their role in the lives of the believers. In these lessons, pupils do not develop their understanding of the role of religion in the lives of people today. The use of discussion enables pupils to develop their ideas and to recognise that others may have different, but equally valid, ideas. The limited use of written work, however, results in a lack of a body of information that pupils can refer to and limited opportunities to develop their ideas into concrete prose. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress when they are supported, and when tasks are designed that are appropriate to their abilities. Where tasks are provided that are simplistic and do not result in furthering their understanding, progress is unsatisfactory.
155. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are good over the key stages, but are best in Key Stage 2, where pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and work in partnership with their teachers. In both key stages, behaviour is good and pupils are ready to respond to questions. Pupils work well in groups and are mutually supportive of one another, considering others' views and treating the beliefs and traditions of others with respect. Pupils respond well to their teachers and there is generally an atmosphere of trust and respect for both teachers and pupils.
156. The co-ordinator has built up good links with the first schools and with local faith communities. The visits and visitors arranged for the pupils make a valuable contribution to the learning

experience of pupils and to the knowledge and understanding of the teachers. 'RE awareness week', inaugurated last year, and the excellent displays around the school, stimulate pupils to consider ultimate questions and the variety of ways that man has sought to achieve understanding of his world. The lack of assessment, however, inhibits monitoring of pupils' progress and the opportunity for pupils to judge their own levels of achievement. Reports do not inform parents of the progress of the pupils, and teachers have little on which they can base judgements regarding the effectiveness of their teaching. The absence of any formal meetings of staff in which they can develop teaching strategies and assessment procedures results in some teachers being insecure in their understanding of both. The Agreed Syllabus provides a suggested system of assessment that is not well understood by teachers.

157. Since the last inspection, the school has developed a much wider experience for its pupils, who have benefited greatly from the visits and visitors. Links with the first schools and other middle school have been developed and there is good liaison between teachers in the schools pyramid. There is still no systematic monitoring of teaching and no direct meeting time to assist staff development and to enable teachers to contribute to the development of the subject. There is no assessment in religious education, although the co-ordinator is investigating the possibility of an assessment task. As a result of the lack of assessment, pupils cannot measure their progress and the quality of information passed on by teachers annually is poor and not related to the targets applied to religious education.