

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CHURNET VIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Leek

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124436

Acting Headteacher: Mrs Julia Turner

Reporting inspector: Mr Paul Renton  
1581

Dates of inspection: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2001

Inspection number: 188129

Full 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:	Churnet View Leek Staffordshire
Postcode:	ST13 6PU
Telephone number:	(01538) 384939
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Cheryl McIndeor
Date of previous inspection:	17 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1581	Paul Renton	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What the school should do to improve further?
13762	Norman Shelley	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
31135	Rachel Hobson	Team inspector	English	
31100	Geoff Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics	
22370	Peter Harwood	Team inspector	Science	
7531	Elizabeth Coles	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)	
10209	Vincent Gormally	Team inspector	Design and technology Art	
24887	Yvonne Salmons	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
18795	Gill Bremner	Team inspector	History Geography	
8645	David Ward	Team inspector	Music Special educational needs	
22590	Robert Castle	Team inspector	Physical education	
11890	Dot Thomson	Team inspector	Religious education Equal opportunities	How high are standards? How good are the curricular opportunities?

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Churnet View is a large middle school (Years 5 - 8) with 591 pupils (291 boys and 300 girls). It draws its pupils from 11 partner schools and, at the age of 13, the vast majority transfer to the local high school. The school serves a 120 square mile area where 40 per cent of pupils live in rural locations, whilst the remainder live in the area that surrounds the school. This area is one of the most socially disadvantaged in Staffordshire. Whilst the school does have able pupils, there is a considerable number who join the school with lower than average academic standards and overall, attainment on entry is below average. The number of pupils with special educational needs is close to the national average. Twenty pupils have a statement of special educational need. The number of pupils eligible for a free school meal is below average. There are very few children from ethnic minority backgrounds or for whom English is an additional language. For the last ten months, the school has been led by an acting headteacher.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Churnet View is an improving school. The school has moved forward considerably, in a short period of time, under the direction of the acting headteacher who enjoys the support of parents, governors and staff. The relatively new management structure, albeit temporary in nature, has led the school forward with increasing effect. The attainment of pupils on entry is below average. Overall, the standard of pupils' work is average by the time they leave and they achieve well. The quality of teaching across the school is good. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The standards of pupils' work in art and design are very good.
- The vast majority of pupils have very good attitudes and behave very well.
- Teachers manage pupils very well and this leads to their positive attitudes to learning.
- Provision for personal and social education is very good.
- The acting headteacher's very good leadership provides a clear vision and direction for the school.
- Extra-curricular activities are very good.

#### **What could be improved**

- The standard of pupils' work in English, particularly writing.
- Opportunities for pupils to regularly apply what they have learnt in information and communication technology lessons in all other subjects.
- The use of assessment to inform pupils' learning and curriculum planning.
- The quality of information for parents about their pupils' progress.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in 1996. Since then, and in particular more recently, the school has made important changes. The curriculum organisation has changed, managers are placing much higher importance on improving teaching and learning and there have been staff changes in a number of important areas. All these factors have led to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and therefore the progress that pupils are now making. However, they have yet to impact fully on the standards that pupils achieve. Nevertheless, the school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and now has the commitment and capacity to improve.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	C	D	D	E
Mathematics	C	D	E	E
Science	C	C	C	C

Key	
well above average	A
above average average	B
below average	C
well below average	D
	E

The only national benchmarks that allow comparison with other schools are the national tests that pupils take midway through their time at the school in Year 6. Until the latest set of results there has been an improving trend in the average points score at a rate above the national picture. In the core subjects of English and mathematics there have been fluctuations over the last four years with standards being either average or below average and now in both subjects, well below average. Standards in science, over the same period, have been average. The school has set targets for its results in national tests in 2002 of 80 per cent in English and 78 per cent in mathematics. These are challenging as a high proportion of the cohort of pupils are of below average attainment on entry to the school.

Inspection evidence shows that standards are now rising. This is a direct result of purposeful teaching and, in particular, changes of staff in the English and mathematics departments. The present Year 8 pupils are making good progress and reaching average standards in mathematics and science. In English, pupils are making sound progress although their standards are below average, particularly in writing. Pupils' standards in Year 8 are average in all other areas of the curriculum apart from design and technology and physical education, where standards are above average, and in art, well above average.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to work and school are very good.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of the vast majority of pupils, both in classrooms and around the school, is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good. Pupils work very well together and show respect for the views and efforts of others.
Attendance	Overall, attendance is satisfactory with the large majority of pupils having a satisfactory or good record of attendance.

Pupils appreciate the very good support they get from the school and their teachers. They are very enthusiastic about their school. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are very good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 – 6	Years 7 - 8
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching across the school is good, meets the need of all pupils and promotes good learning. Pupils enjoy lessons and work with interest and concentration. The proportion of good and very good lessons is higher in Years 5 and 6. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science teaching is good. Many aspects of teaching are consistently good, the management of pupils being a particular strength. However, whilst the quality and use of assessment to inform pupils' learning and curriculum planning is satisfactory overall, it varies between subjects. The teaching of literacy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. The teaching of numeracy, other than in mathematics, is unsatisfactory. Insufficient attention is given to the use of information and communication technology to improve literacy and numeracy skills and learning in other subjects. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Some elements of information and communication technology, history and religious education are not covered in sufficient depth, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Extra-curricular provision is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. A good policy is interpreted well in practice.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Pupils' moral and social development is very good. Provision for spiritual development is good and for their cultural development, satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of pastoral care is high. The programme for personal, social and health education contributes very well to pupils' personal development. However, procedures for academic assessment to inform teaching and to record pupils' progress are not yet sufficiently well established.

The school has a good partnership with its parents but does not keep them well enough informed, particularly about pupils' progress and this has not changed since the previous inspection. Across the school, there is equality of access and opportunity for all pupils to the curriculum, including pupils for whom English is an additional language. Links with the local community are strong and useful resources for learning have been developed through connections with local commerce and industry.

As the school does not provide a regular daily act of collective worship, a 'thought for the day' is undertaken in form groups. This is not carried out consistently and therefore this arrangement does not meet the statutory requirement.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The acting headteacher has introduced a new sense of purpose that focuses attention on improvements in teaching and raising pupils' attainment. She is very well supported by senior and middle managers and by governors.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their duties to a satisfactory level and are fully committed to the new sense of direction the school now has. Whilst most statutory duties are met, provision for daily collective worship is still unsatisfactory. This was identified at the time of the last inspection and has not been fully addressed.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is fully aware of its strengths and weaknesses. New procedures are in place for monitoring teaching and sharing good practice.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are generally used carefully. Financial control is satisfactory. Spending is controlled effectively. Overall, resources are good. The library provision is satisfactory. ICT resources are adequate but below those found nationally.

Levels of staffing are appropriate to meet the needs of the school. Generally, accommodation is good and is very well cared for. However, poor accommodation and facilities in physical education constrain pupils' learning and curriculum provision. Whilst the school and governors are not fully conversant with the principles of best value, these are applied when spending decisions are made.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of teaching.</li> <li>• The high expectations of pupils that the school has.</li> <li>• The progress that pupils make.</li> <li>• The very good standard of pastoral care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information for parents and particularly about pupils' progress.</li> <li>• The amount of homework that is set.</li> <li>• The school to work more closely with parents.</li> </ul>

Approximately 57 per cent of parents returned the questionnaires and 14 parents attended the parents' meeting. Inspectors agree with all of the positive views expressed by parents. Parents are right to wish to be better informed because very little general information about the life and work of the school is offered to them. Annual school reports do not adequately describe pupils' attainment or explain what they know, understand and can do. The amount of homework set for younger pupils is now more realistic. Most homework usefully supplements lessons and contributes to the development of pupils' independent study skills. It is not consistently set in line with the timetable in all subjects. Inspectors judge that the school now makes substantial efforts to work closely with parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. At the time of the last inspection standards in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science were broadly in line with those found nationally.
2. In the most recent national tests that pupils take at the end of Year 6, the results in English were well below the national average and well below schools with a similar social intake. There was a significant difference between results in reading, where 80 per cent of pupils attained Level 4 or higher and in writing where only 34 per cent attained the same levels. In mathematics the results in summer 2001 were the lowest in recent years. Pupils' attainment in mathematics was well below national results and also those of similar schools. The picture in science was slightly better, test results being in line with both national expectations and attainment in similar schools. There have been fluctuations over the last four years in both English and mathematics. Whilst there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls in mathematics and science, girls do better than boys in English. This is similar to the national picture.
3. Standards in work seen in school currently are better than the last set of national tests. In English, most pupils develop the ability to listen well, speak fairly confidently, read simple texts with understanding and write straightforward sentences. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils can read fluently, write imaginatively and are beginning to adopt their writing for different readers. However, middle attaining pupils tend to write less extended pieces, making more mistakes in spelling and punctuation than would be expected. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 8, the majority are a little below levels expected nationally, although higher attaining pupils are working at appropriately high levels. Overall, weaknesses in writing are still present. Both lower and middle attaining pupils tend to write less detailed pieces and make rather more mistakes in spelling less familiar words than would be expected nationally. The vast majority listen well and speak confidently. Some pupils do not yet use standard English consistently on formal occasions.
4. In mathematics, standards overall are now in line with those found nationally at the end of both key stages. When pupils enter the school in Year 5, many are weak in their knowledge of basic multiplication. By Year 6 pupils in higher attaining groups can use long multiplication for numbers involving two or more decimals. Middle attaining pupils show they can understand the difference between mean, median and mode. Lower attaining pupils can recognise lines of symmetry for simple and compound shapes and show secure knowledge of place values for numbers larger than one. In Year 8, lower attaining pupils have good understanding when relating basic fractions although many find adding and subtracting directed numbers difficult. Middle attainers can round numbers to two decimal places and to one or more significant figures. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 show good levels of attainment. In some other areas of the curriculum numerical skills are in line with the national average. Here pupils demonstrate good use of these skills in their work to enable them to make progress. For example, in design and technology, measuring and weighing skills are good and pupils show that they can apply spacial ideas through drawing nets of shapes expressing three-dimensional ideas in two-dimensional form. In science, pupils also show good care and accuracy with measurement. However, in remaining subjects opportunities are missed and few departments have policies in place for the teaching of numeracy.
5. There are several factors which have influenced pupils' performance. The first of these is associated with pupils' attainment on entry to the school. Pupils' standards in English and mathematics, as indicated by the end of Year 2 tests taken when pupils are in their primary or first schools, are broadly in line with national averages. However, data from optional tests in Year 4, immediately prior to entry, and the baseline assessments on entry to Churnet View in Year 5 indicate that three quarters of the pupils have made less progress than expected in relation to their prior attainment and so their attainment is below average on entry. By the end of Year 6, evidence from national tests shows that pupils have therefore made good progress to achieve standards which are just below those achieved nationally.

6. Other factors impacting on standards have been changes in staffing and time allocation. Until this year the time allocated for English (four hours per week at Years 5 and 6) was significantly below the recommendations of the national strategies for literacy. The current timetable ensures that more appropriate time is given to the development of these important subjects. Staffing changes have had a major impact on the stability of the mathematics department. The appointment of new staff with enthusiasm for their subject is securing more consistent provision. The school has also altered the way the staff are deployed within the timetable and across classes to ensure that more effective use is made of their subject expertise and this provides pupils with specialist teaching.
7. In September 2001 a new head of English took up her post, after a period in which the department had not addressed how well pupils were doing rigorously enough, particularly in their writing. Standards in writing were considerably lower than would be expected nationally and previous timetabling and staffing arrangements had contributed to slow progress in this area. Another issue is the fact that pupils do come into the school with writing skills below those found nationally and although they make satisfactory progress during their time in the school, they leave with levels still below the national average. Since September, a number of initiatives have been started which are resulting in standards rising, particularly in writing, but it is rather too early to measure how successful they are being.
8. Finally, pupils are now being taught in ability groups more widely since the beginning of this academic year. All of these changes are having positive effects on standards and are reflected in lessons seen during the inspection.
9. At the last inspection standards in other curriculum subjects were in line with national standards except for information and communication technology, music and religious education, which were lower than expected. This has now changed.
10. Standards in art and in design and technology are at least good at both key stages. Pupils are skilled at drawing from observation and work very well with both textiles and resistant materials. Pupils' progress is good in physical education, mathematics, science and design and technology in Years 5 and 6. In others areas of the National Curriculum and religious education, pupils' achievements are satisfactory.
11. Overall, pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress. Those with statements progress well toward the targets which are set for them. Their learning is good. However, pupils with special educational needs make insufficient progress in information and communication technology because their work is not linked closely enough to their individual education plans.
12. The school has set targets for results in national tests in 2002 of 80 per cent in English and 78 per cent in mathematics. These targets represent a significant challenge for the school and its pupils when a high proportion of them are of below average attainment on entry to the school. Improvements in departmental management, use of teachers' subject expertise and improving the quality of teaching are factors assisting the school in their work towards achieving the targets.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

13. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good. Attendance is satisfactory. Standards of behaviour are better than those found during the previous inspection but attendance is not as high. The large majority of parents are pleased with pupils' behaviour and personal development.
14. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school. They enjoy all the experiences that are offered to them and many participate in the extra curricular activities. They are positive in their attitudes towards their work and are right to say that teaching is good. They value the relationships that they have with adults in the school and say that teachers treat them fairly. They would like better outside games facilities and prefer that homework is set evenly because sometimes they receive none and at other times they are set work in four subjects which, they feel, is too much.
15. Most pupils with special educational needs develop good attitudes to their schoolwork. They behave well in lessons, at playtime and as they move around the school. Most of them benefit well from the extra

help given to them by their class teachers, specialist teachers and support assistants. Many pupils gain a good degree of self-confidence during their time in school and they relate well to their peers, teachers and to visitors.

16. Behaviour is almost always good and often very good in and out of lessons. Pupils are polite and orderly. Instances of bullying are very few. Disruption of lessons occurs from time to time because a small number of pupils are disaffected and a few have difficulty exercising appropriate self-control. The number of temporary exclusions is average compared with other schools in the authority but above average nationally. The exclusions relate to a comparatively small number of pupils.
17. Relationships between pupils are very good and are characterised by friendliness, tolerance, co-operation and mutual support. Pupils work very well together in pairs, groups and teams and show respect for the views and efforts of others. Older pupils recognise the right of others to hold different views and to have different beliefs. They develop responsible attitudes to social issues and sensibly express views about them.
18. Pupils make very good progress with their personal development. They take on responsibilities very well, for example by very conscientious involvement in the school council and acting as hosts to parents and visitors. Some older pupils take part in paired reading and others provide a very caring service to their peers through a 'buddy club'. By the time pupils leave the school, they are suitably mature to go on to the next stage of their education.
19. Attendance is a little below the national average for middle schools. The large majority of pupils have a satisfactory or good record of attendance. A very few have had extended absence owing to long-term illness and a few others are frequent non-attendeers. Pupils arrive punctually for the start of school.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

20. There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection when 20 per cent of teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory and it was noted that there were insufficient good or very good lessons. Overall the teaching throughout the school is now good and the number of very good lessons has increased. This is having a direct impact on pupils' learning.
21. There are overall strengths in the teaching of art and design and the teaching of physical education to Year 5 and 6 pupils where it is very good. In music, teaching is sound, as is the teaching of history and information and communication technology to Year 7 and 8 pupils. In all other areas of the curriculum teaching is good.
22. In Years 5 and 6, where pupils are taught mainly by their class teachers, 93 per cent of lessons were good or better, with 44 per cent being very good or excellent. In Years 7 and 8, where pupils are taught by specialist subject teachers, 69 per cent of lessons were good or better and 27 per cent were very good or excellent. Much of the very good teaching in Years 5 and 6 challenges pupils to think deeply and to apply what they know, for example in English, to improve their writing and in science when open ended tasks enable particularly high attaining pupils to develop their thinking and to contribute ideas.
23. In Years 7 and 8 the best teaching is typified by effective lesson planning, clear exposition and the good use of time and resources. The combination of these factors ensures that pupils of all abilities work productively and are stretched by the pace of lessons, thereby making good gains in skills, knowledge and understanding.
24. The quality of teaching throughout the school has a number of particular strengths that account for the good progress and learning that pupils make as well as for the improvements in teaching that have been made since the last inspection. These lessons occur when:
  - teaching is based on good subject knowledge that enables teachers to plan and deliver challenging lessons that develop all pupils;
  - teachers use a growing range of resources that captures and holds pupils' interest;
  - the very good management and motivation of pupils ensures that they apply themselves and develop high levels of interest in their work; and

- good use of learning support assistants to work with different groups of pupils enables pupils of varying ability to make good progress.
25. A particular focus for the observation of teaching during the inspection was an examination of how effectively teachers planned for different groups of pupils and therefore how well they learnt according to their ability. Good practice was observed in a significant number of lessons. For example, in an English lesson the teacher planned appropriately for a number of groups of pupils within the class, including those with special needs. In practice, this resulted in the teacher working with a lower attaining group of boys whilst other pupils worked very well and independently on different tasks. All pupils therefore made good progress. Similarly, in a mathematics lesson for Year 5 pupils on the use of two-digit numbers, work was adapted for different pupils by employing different resources, such as counters and different worksheets, so that they made progress. In a design and technology lesson, the class teacher's planning identified appropriate strategies, such as peer support groups. This ensured that all pupils could use a computer program to control the speed of the motors in their models.
  26. There were very few unsatisfactory lessons and these only occurred in the teaching of older pupils. In these lessons, the positive aspects of teaching observed across the school were absent. In particular, the management of some unsatisfactory behaviour was not observed or corrected and there was no evidence that teachers had taken account of the different needs of pupils within the lesson. This resulted in pupils' attention not being sustained and some groups of boys engaging in silly behaviour.
  27. Teaching has clearly improved since the last inspection. However, a number of interrelated aspects concerned with the marking and assessment of pupils' work whilst being satisfactory overall, are not addressed consistently across subjects. There are examples of good practice in English where work is marked thoroughly and comments are helpful to pupils. In design and technology pupils undertake self-assessment of their work and this helps them to determine their own practice. In French, discussions with pupils, using National Curriculum levels, provide them with a good understanding of their learning for the different aspects of the subject. However, practice varies too much between subjects and the use of National Curriculum levels to assess how well pupils are doing and to help them improve is not undertaken consistently.
  28. Overall, the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. In some English lessons, in art and in design and technology teaching is very good; it is unsatisfactory in ICT because insufficient attention is paid to individual education plans (IEPs) and to the deployment of learning support assistants. Support assistants usually contribute very well to the teaching, although the extent and manner in which they are deployed varies across different subjects. Some very good practice was observed in an English lesson in which the support assistants were fully prepared well in advance of the lesson. Their roles were very sharply defined and all available lesson time was used productively in the teaching. This very good practice, which includes the careful attention to pupils' individual education plans (IEPs), needs to be shared amongst staff in all departments. Class teachers' deployment of the learning support assistants and use of IEPs have improved overall since the last inspection.

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

29. The school provides a good curriculum for its pupils. In all years, pupils are provided with an appropriately broad and balanced curriculum which has significant strengths. The quality found at the last inspection has been sustained and further developed. The school is now placing a strong emphasis on raising standards and has adapted the pattern of lessons in Years 5 and 6 to place greater emphasis on the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Weaknesses noted in the last inspection have been resolved. Attractive displays help to create a stimulating learning environment. They are used effectively to celebrate pupils' achievement, support their learning and promote enquiry.
30. The basic English curriculum for all pupils is enhanced by good provision for the development of literacy skills. All pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a lesson each day devoted to the development of literacy and a further lesson each week for writing. There is an appropriate focus on the development of technical language and understanding key concepts in other subjects. Each day 20 minutes is given to reading

individually, in pairs, or within a small group although the school has not yet evaluated the quality and impact of this provision.

31. There are good procedures in place to develop pupils' literacy skills, such as the literacy summer school, a paired reading scheme and progress groups. The development of literacy skills underpins the work in several subjects very effectively. They are established through implementation of the literacy strategy in English lessons and consolidated effectively in the other subjects such as the good presentation of work, attention to spelling and awareness of sentence structure offered within the French curriculum. In science and religious education there is a good focus on the acquisition and understanding of subject specific terminology and in science opportunities are given for pupils to extend their writing.
32. Whilst the school is beginning to develop good practice from the national strategies for literacy and numeracy at Key Stage 3, it has yet to develop a policy to ensure a consistent approach to the development of numeracy skills within the whole curriculum. Such skills are developed effectively in mathematics but there are few opportunities for pupils to extend their numeracy skills during work in other subjects. The school does not have a policy to ensure these skills are practised and developed across the curriculum.
33. All the requirements of the National Curriculum and Staffordshire's Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education are met fully and the school offers an extensive range of extra curricular opportunities supported and enjoyed by almost three-fifths of the school. Many of the clubs are sporting in nature but other clubs include information and communication technology, a 'happy club' and a 'boards games' club. At the school council meeting, pupils made suggestions for further clubs such as art, to extend the current range. Outside school, pupils experience a good range of visits, and visitors to the school support pupils in their learning. A breakfast club is held each day; up to 30 pupils and some staff arrive early for breakfast. Pupils enjoy the warm and friendly welcome of kitchen staff and the relaxed relationships enjoyed alongside hot chocolate and toast or cereals and fresh fruit.
34. The planning of the curriculum has been organised after consultation with partnership schools to ensure continuity and progression in learning. There is a good system of joint planning with partner first schools and the high school. The main weakness in the curriculum is the lack of practice that pupils' have in using information and communication technology in their everyday lessons. Although pupils have opportunity to develop these skills in a designated lesson each week, they have insufficient opportunities to use the skills developed within the context of other subjects. The time allocated to French would be more useful in shorter periods more frequently in the week to allow pupils regular practice of their developing skills. The curriculum provision for religious education has improved since the last inspection. Greater attention is now given to cultivating pupils' spiritual development. However, the way the work is organised prevents pupils from developing a clear picture of each religion studied.
35. The arrangements for teaching personal, social and health education are very good. The curriculum is well planned and encompasses sex and drugs education and careers education and guidance. The sex and health education programme is enhanced by a drop-in session offered once a fortnight by the school nurse. This is well attended by pupils who are able to seek advice and support on health matters. There are practical approaches to implementing the new curriculum on citizenship. The school has a long history of successful voluntary work within the local community which is acknowledged to be of high quality. The school has already achieved the standard required to be awarded status as a 'healthy school' for programmes which help pupils develop healthy patterns of eating and for making good provision for pupils' emotional health and well being. Provision for the emotional wellbeing of pupils is well developed. It is supported by lunchtime assistants who provide friendly discipline and care for pupils during the midday break. Within the 'healthy school' standards, the school is currently working towards recognition for its work on active citizenship and environmental awareness by seeking 'eco school' status.
36. Throughout the school, careful planning ensures that the curriculum meets the needs of pupils irrespective of race, gender or background. All pupils are included and involved in all aspects of every subject offered in each year group. An example of the care taken by the school to ensure pupils' needs are met, is the review of work in English which has been adapted to take account specifically of the needs of boys.

37. The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs. All pupils have the opportunity to study the full range of subjects offered. In most subjects, pupils are taught in mixed ability groups, however, they are grouped by their prior attainment for mathematics in Year 5 and in the core subjects from Year 6 onwards. This arrangement works effectively as pupils are taught in smaller groups and at a pace more appropriate to their needs. In most lessons, work is matched appropriately to the needs of pupils with special educational needs. Small groups of pupils who have the greatest need for extra help, particularly in literacy, are taught in appropriate 'sets' or are withdrawn in small groups to enable them to have specialist teaching and close attention. Where appropriate, pupils with statements of special educational need are given some individual tuition, usually in literacy. The school takes reasonable steps to ensure that pupils are not disadvantaged by missing lessons in the foundation subjects as a result of withdrawal.
38. The school has not yet formally defined or identified pupils as gifted and talented. Nevertheless, some work which is particularly challenging is provided in mathematics, science, music and physical education.
39. Curriculum links with the local community are strong. The school makes good use of the opportunities afforded through the Staffordshire Partnership. The pupils have written their own newspaper as a result of work with the Leek Post and Times. Useful resources for learning have been developed through fruitful connections with the Inland Revenue and Safeway Bakery. Materials created are of high quality and are being published for use in other schools.
40. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development overall, although the strongest dimensions of school provision are moral and social development. These aspects of provision are very good.
41. Assemblies and some form periods provide good opportunities for spiritual development. 'Thought for the day' in form groups varies in quality and does not always fulfil the requirement for worship. This aspect of school provision is dependent on the form teacher. On some occasions it was omitted from form time or expressed in a manner that focused on moral rather than spiritual development. The main act of worship observed during the inspection was of excellent quality. Led by a senior member of staff and supported by the presence of teacher colleagues, it provided an uplifting and truly spiritual beginning to the school day. Pupils were fully involved in prayer and reflection, were inspired by the theme and enjoyed the well-selected music that contributed to the reflective atmosphere established. The quality of this act of worship sets the standard for the school in adapting its pattern of worship to ensure statutory requirements are met.
42. Good provision is made for spiritual development. In religious education, regular opportunities are provided for reflection on ethical and religious issues. After reading David Almond's novel 'Skellig' in English lessons, pupils writing on angels brought out mystical and spiritual aspects.
43. Pupils' social and moral development is a strong feature of the school. Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop a good sense of fair play in accordance with the rules of games in physical education. Within their studies pupils have opportunities to work in pairs, groups and teams and are encouraged to be mutually supportive, tolerant and respectful of the views of others. High levels of co-operation are expected in many other lessons and achieved. Pupils are encouraged to show their concern for others through voluntary work with the elderly, raising funds for charity and within the school community. Pupils are expected to offer support for those who feel vulnerable. The programme for personal, social and health education contributes very well to pupils' personal development. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility. They represent others in a school council and act as hosts to parents and visitors. The out of school visits, that include a residential experience in Europe, broaden pupils' awareness of the wider community. They are also encouraged to take other responsibilities, for example within the library or simply clearing plates at lunchtime.
44. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Very good provision is made in art where pupils regularly explore the work of artists from a range of cultures and French where pupils learn about French-speaking countries worldwide. Within personal, social and health education and religious education there

are good opportunities for pupils to learn about a wide range of faiths, values and lifestyles. There is a helpful focus on tolerance, respect for others and strategies to promote racial harmony. Opportunities in several other subjects are less well developed. Provision needs to be secured within subjects by identifying the opportunities afforded by the National Curriculum to raise cultural awareness. These could then be secured within the current schemes of work to further develop provision.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

45. The school's arrangements for pastoral care, health, safety and welfare are very good. Pupils' behaviour and personal development are very well supported. Parents are pleased with the quality of pastoral care. However, procedures for academic assessment to inform teaching and record pupils' progress are not yet sufficiently well established. These findings are similar to those of the previous inspection. Improvements in the procedures for assessment and their use have recently been put in place but have not yet fully taken effect.
46. Child protection procedures are in place. The arrangements for health and safety are very well managed. First aid cover is good. Relevant specialist educational and health agencies provide appropriate services to the school.
47. The quality of pastoral care is high. Relationships between all adults in the school and the pupils are very respectful, trusting and constructive and form the basis of an environment that is conducive to learning and in which pupils feel valued and secure. Although formal strategies are used from time to time to monitor and support pupils' behaviour, it is the quality of adult and pupil relationships that has the most effect in influencing pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Several non-teaching members of staff play an important and very effective role in mentoring pupils who require support. There are few incidents of bullying because pupils are confident to report these and know that teachers always deal with them immediately. Attendance is satisfactorily monitored and the school is quick to contact parents, when necessary, in order to ascertain reasons for absence. The school operates a system of recognition and reward that successfully motivates pupils to work hard and behave well.
48. The assessment of pupils' work has not previously been directly related to National Curriculum levels but based on the school's own system. Consequently, neither pupils nor parents have been able to compare attainment with national standards. The planning of teaching has not been adequately informed by assessment in order to raise standards. New and appropriate procedures have recently been introduced but are not yet fully in place and some departments, such as science, are further on than others with their implementation of them. The school has commenced a database of pupils' prior attainment that includes information received from their primary schools. Improved arrangements are in place for transferring assessment data to the partner high school. Although the marking of pupils' work is generally satisfactory and good practice is increasing, the use of National Curriculum levels to grade work periodically and target for improvement is not yet sufficiently developed.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

49. Parents hold positive views about the school and are pleased with the quality of education that the school provides. The school has a good partnership with its parents but does not keep them well enough informed, particularly about pupils' progress and this has not changed since the previous inspection. Overall, parents are more supportive than previously.
50. Parents are right to be pleased with the quality of teaching in school, the progress that pupils make and the very good standard of pastoral care. Inspectors confirm parents' views about information because, apart from letters about individual events and a beginning of year newsletter, very little information is offered to them either about the work and life of the school or about the curriculum. The school realises this and, as a first step, is currently arranging for a newsletter to be published by the pupils each term. Annual school reports do not describe how pupils attain with regard to national standards or expectations and do not adequately explain what pupils know, understand and can do in all subjects. Interim progress reports are not compiled to enable parents to more effectively support and encourage their children at an early stage in the year. After consultation with parents, the amount of homework set for younger pupils is



now more appropriate. The homework for older pupils, whilst mostly usefully supplementing their learning, is not consistently set in all subjects in line with the homework timetable. Some parents claim that the school does not work closely enough with them but inspectors judge that the school is very positive in its attitudes and efforts to involve and consult with them.

51. The school makes good links with most parents of pupils with special educational needs. Very good links are made with parents of those pupils who have statements. These parents are appropriately involved in the formal reviews.
52. Parents enthusiastically support the various events that the school organises and particularly pupils' performances. They help with trips out of school and a few parents and relatives regularly help in school, for example by helping to manage the library. The parents' and teachers' association is very active and provides much valued financial assistance through its fund raising activities. Parents support well the school's homework diary system and the workshops for family learning are popular.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

53. The school has been through a difficult period in terms of leadership as it has been without a substantive headteacher for the ten months prior to the inspection. Nevertheless, the overall quality of leadership and management is good and has improved since the last inspection. This is particularly the case in terms of explicit school aims, an awareness of strengths in teaching and pupils' learning and strategies to bring about improvement.
54. The acting headteacher provides very good leadership and many of the improvements that have occurred recently have taken place under her direction. She has been the catalyst that has ensured that staff and governors now work together with a clear, shared sense of direction that is firmly based on raising pupils' academic standards whilst maintaining the importance of pupils' personal development.
55. The Chair of Governors and many governors give generously of their time and have a clear idea of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. As they now have fuller access to information and data about the school's performance, they are undertaking the important role of critical friend to the school with commitment and enthusiasm. The governors fulfil their statutory duties in the main. However, the requirement for collective worship is still not met.
56. The acting headteacher knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school as a direct result of effective monitoring and evaluation procedures. On the basis of these, the newly expanded senior management team, in co-operation with governors and staff, have reviewed and rewritten the school's improvement plan (SIP) with a clear set of priorities designed to maintain the rate of improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Whilst the SIP is now a clear, working document in terms of actions, it is not yet fully costed with respect to the use of time or resources nor are outcomes clearly measurable in terms of desired improvements in pupils' performance. Improvements in the latter will be achieved as the school develops its database of pupils' attainment and assessment procedures by building management information systems.
57. A criticism of the last inspection was that the school's aims were not sufficiently focused on raising pupils' standards. The school has not addressed this issue fully. Teaching is now monitored more rigorously and has undoubtedly led to improvement in quality. This has been the case for example when, with the assistance of the local education authority, weaknesses in teaching have been clearly identified and targeted support provided. However, whilst monitoring of teaching is now satisfactory overall, practice between departments varies. Performance management has been fully introduced and is proving helpful to the school's process of self-evaluation and emphasis on sharing good practice. Newly qualified teachers are extremely well supported and staff training throughout the school is seen as a high priority.
58. There have been several recent appointments at head of department level, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics, that have strengthened the management of departments. Overall, management at this level is good and, like senior managers, has a focus on improving teaching and learning. This is an important development since the last inspection.

59. A good policy is in place for pupils with special educational needs. The policy is well interpreted in practice. The level of provision is good. Learning support assistants provide positive and sensitive help in the daily classes which contributes significantly to the overall good progress the pupils make.
60. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is managed well. Documentation is orderly and secure and the day-to-day organisation of the provision is sound. Special rooms are designated for learning support. These rooms are welcoming and contain attractive displays. Resources are good and are well maintained. The learning support rooms sometimes serve as a focus which pupils feel is not only educational, but also pastoral.
61. There is an appropriate match of staffing to the needs of the school. Since the beginning of this academic year, teaching staff have been deployed to their specialisms and are therefore more secure in their teaching. This is having a positive impact on the school's effectiveness in raising standards.
62. The last inspection found the accommodation to be adequate and the standard of upkeep and cleanliness to be very high. Little has changed since then. The maintenance of the building, the quality of displays and the lack of any form of vandalism demonstrates a pride by all involved at the school. However, accommodation for physical education is poor and restricts pupils' achievements and the curriculum that can be offered.
63. The school hall is used for a range of functions: physical education; school meals; and assemblies. One of the consequences of the narrowness of the hall is that the concept of space is not well developed especially the use of width in attacking play in basketball. No indoor activities can be undertaken at lunchtime and pupils are unable to consolidate and extend activities, such as gymnastics and basketball. During inclement weather, there is no suitable indoor space for physical education; lessons are adapted to suit classrooms. Changing space is basic and frequently insufficient for the size of the group with pupils having to change in the showering area. Outdoors accommodation is poor; poor field drainage means for the major part of the winter months the area is not useable and unsafe at times. A large playground area is successfully used, however, this has an impact upon the excessive wear on equipment.
64. The day-to-day management of the school is good. Financial management procedures are secure and linked to the school's priorities. The governors are appropriately involved in budget setting, largely through the finance and staffing committees. Unknowingly, the school demonstrates the application of best value principles. For example, when negotiating the leasing arrangements for computers, the school did undertake comparisons with other schools and used fair competition through quotations and tenders to ensure that resources were secured in an economic way.
65. The overall unit costs for running the school are higher than those in similar schools. However, considering the quality of education provided, the overall effectiveness of the school and the socio-economic circumstances of the pupils, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

66. In order to further improve the quality of education the school offers its pupils, the acting headteacher and staff together with the governing body should:
- (1) continue the initiatives started by the new head of department to raise standards in English to ensure that pupils are taught systematically and explicitly the strategies, skills and knowledge they need to improve their attainment, particularly in writing;  
*(paragraphs 3, 68, 69, 70)*
  - (2) effect whole school policies and strategies for information and communication technology development by:
    - establishing accountability of each department in contributing to a whole school approach;
    - reviewing the job description of the head of department with the intention of enabling improved leadership and raising the quality of teaching and learning; and
    - improving resources in line with national averages to enable greater use of electronic

technology.

*(paragraphs 34, 117, 118, 120, 124)*

- (3) develop teachers' knowledge of National Curriculum level descriptors in all subjects so that they can:
- assess each pupil's attainment accurately and identify what each pupil needs to learn to improve;
  - record pupils' progress and accurately predict their attainment;
  - use the information to provide better information to parents about their child's progress.

*(paragraphs 27, 45, 48, 72, 110, 115, 120, 129, 151)*

- (4) work with the Local Education Authority to improve the facilities for physical education.

*(paragraphs 63, 147)*

67. Together with the main issues identified above the school should also consider:

- establishing an agreed whole school policy for the teaching of numeracy;
- based on developments associated with point (3) above:
  - i. build into the school's improvement plan clear and quantifiable success criteria based on improvements in pupils' levels of attainment;
  - ii. further develop management information systems that can regularly update pupil-level information, progress towards meeting targets and the transfer of data between partner schools.
- ensure that there is a consistent approach to implementing the school's policy to meet the statutory requirements for collective worship.

*(paragraphs 41, 56)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	90
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	28	41	16	2	0	0
Percentage	3	31	46	18	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	591
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	68

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	20
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	97

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	13

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	6.1	School data	0.1

National comparative data	5.9
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National comparative data	0.4
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*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 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	61	66	127

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	38	33	50
	Girls	45	29	53
	Total	83	62	103
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64.4 (71)	48.8 (71)	81 (83)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	82 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	43	46	44
	Girls	48	50	50
	Total	91	96	94
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71.7 (69)	74.7 (72)	74 (71)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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	0
Chinese	0
White	590
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***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	36	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)	35.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.5

#### **Education support staff: Y5– Y8**

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	154

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y5– Y8**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	92.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y5– Y8**

Key Stage 2	26.2
Key Stage 3	27.1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	1202147
Total expenditure	1218652
Expenditure per pupil	1947
Balance brought forward from previous year	44170
Balance carried forward to next year	27665

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	14
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*





## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	591
Number of questionnaires returned	336

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	55	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	31	61	5	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	55	14	2	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	56	18	5	1
The teaching is good.	26	64	2	1	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	45	26	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	37	49	10	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	51	21	2	8
The school works closely with parents.	21	46	21	2	8
The school is well led and managed.	23	54	7	2	12
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	59	7	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	31	48	8	2	10

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

### ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good, with teachers having very good subject knowledge and appropriately high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils have positive attitudes that contribute to good learning in lessons.
- The department is very well led and managed.

#### Areas for improvement

- Standards of writing.
- Continuing to work on the Key Stage 3 literacy strategy to ensure that all teachers are confident in employing the techniques.
- More regular use of National Curriculum levels to assess how well pupils are doing and to identify areas for improvement.

68. In the National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils in 2001 in English, results were below the national average and were well below schools with a similar social intake. They were worse than the results in science and better than those in mathematics. There was a great difference between how pupils did in reading, where over 80 per cent achieved a Level 4 or higher and in writing where only 34 per cent attained this level. The trend over the last four years has fluctuated. The attainment gap between boys and girls was similar to the national picture, with girls outperforming boys.
69. The majority of pupils come into the school with standards in English that are below the national average in reading and writing. This is borne out through analysis of school performance data and looking at pupils' work. During Years 5 and 6, most develop the ability to listen well, speak fairly confidently, read simple texts with understanding and write straightforward sentences. By the end of Year 6, middle ability pupils tend to write less extended pieces, making more mistakes in spelling and punctuation than would be expected. Higher attaining pupils can read a wider range of texts fluently, and can use appropriate strategies to help them understand what they read. They can also write imaginatively and are beginning to adopt their writing for different readers. Pupils are introduced to basic skills of literary analysis. Work from some Year 6 pupils on 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' showed that they had a straightforward understanding of aspects of character and plot. Analysis of work and observation of lessons during the inspection indicates that the majority achieve satisfactorily during their first two years and some, including pupils with special educational needs, achieve well.
70. Pupils leave to go to the high school at the end of Year 8 and when they do the majority are a little below levels expected nationally, although higher attaining pupils are working at appropriately high levels. Lower attaining pupils can write simple sentences accurately and attempt complex sentences to convey meaning. Both lower and middle attaining pupils tend to write less detailed pieces and make rather more mistakes in spelling less familiar words than would be expected nationally. Higher attaining pupils can write both formally and informally and they choose vocabulary precisely. They use a range of punctuation and paragraphing correctly. Some course work seen by a Year 8 pupil included research into William Blake, Charles Darwin and Persephone and other Year 8 pupils had effectively analysed poetry, commenting on poets' use of imagery and interpretation of particular lines. The vast majority listen well and speak confidently. Some pupils do not yet use standard English consistently on formal occasions. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8.
71. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good, with some very good and excellent teaching seen during the inspection and pupils have positive attitudes to the subject. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teachers have a good command of their subject and they use their knowledge to challenge pupils to think deeply and to apply what they know to improving their own writing. They teach literacy well in Years 5 and 6, using National Literacy Strategy techniques successfully. This is a developing area in

Years 7 and 8. Literacy skills are reinforced in other curriculum areas. Most subjects use key words and stress correct spelling. For example, in a Year 6 physical education lesson seen during the inspection, the teacher stressed the use of physiological terms such as the 'cardio vascular system' and in a personal and social education lesson pupils practised note-taking skills. This is a developing area for the school. In the best lessons, teachers manage behaviour very well. In one excellent lesson seen, a group of Year 6 pupils with very short concentration spans was managed expertly by the teacher. She planned the lesson very well, using a number of strategies and resources to keep pupils engaged and very interested in the tasks and to maximise the time available. In another very good lesson, Year 8 pupils were experimenting with language to try to create memorable and powerful effects. The teacher's insistence on high standards of behaviour, together with her expectations of what pupils could achieve, resulted in very good progress in the lesson. Where lessons are less successful, whilst still satisfactory, the pace is a little leisurely and the best use of time is not always made. Teachers use learning support assistants, when they are present, well. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, two learning support assistants played a full role in working with different groups of pupils in the second half of the lesson and their work helped them to make excellent progress in understanding how to write in an interesting and imaginative way. Computers are sometimes used by pupils to help them learn, for example using the Internet to find out about things and for word-processing work for presentation purposes. The department is planning to increase this use.

72. Teachers mark and assess pupils' work thoroughly and helpfully. They write enthusiastic and appreciative comments and also set improvement targets (like concentrating on correct use of capital letters or extending writing by including more descriptions). Mistakes are judiciously corrected. The department is not yet consistently using National Curriculum levels to assess how well pupils are doing and to help them move on and their current target setting system is rather unwieldy.
73. The new head of department has already made a significant impact in terms of restructuring the curriculum for Years 7 and 8 and has jointly planned this with her colleague in the high school. She has identified raising attainment as the main priority and to this end has introduced strategies designed to raise standards of writing. Curriculum and setting changes have been in place since September designed to help pupils make quicker progress in acquiring literacy skills. She recognises the importance of observing and monitoring teaching and is encouraging a climate of mutual observation and learning from one another. The specialist teachers in the department work well together as a team and the Year 5 class teachers also tackle the teaching of literacy in a concerted fashion. They support one another and are open to ideas and challenges. This process is having a positive effect on learning and achievement.
74. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards have largely been maintained and the quality of teaching has improved. Since recent changes in the school's senior management and the appointment of the new head of department, a number of significant developments have taken place which are likely to lead to improvement in learning; it is possible already to see some impact of these in lessons. The head of department has started to use performance data to analyse how well pupils are doing and where they need to improve, and this is a developing area, as is the use of assessment.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good.
- Teachers and pupils take a pride in their work.
- The pupils' behaviour in lessons and their attitudes to mathematics are very good.
- The pupils make good progress in mathematics throughout their time in the school.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve arrangements for monitoring the teachers' work by more regular checks on marking and recording outcomes for lesson observation in writing.
- Enable better individual pupil access to computers during mathematics lessons.

- Improve resources for teaching work on shape and space in particular.

75. The mathematics department has been through some difficulties over recent years. Three specialist teachers now teaching mathematics on a regular basis, including the head of department, have been appointed within the last year. Pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 have varied markedly from year to year. In 2000, they were below the national average and below those obtained by pupils from similar schools. In 2001, they were well below in each case. In general there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
76. The work seen during the inspection showed that pupils make good progress in mathematics. Attainment is below the national average when pupils join the school in Year 5. It improves over the first two years so that by Year 6 it is broadly in line with the national average. By the time that the pupils leave in Year 8, it is well in line with the average. The pupils who left in Summer 2000, for instance, showed gains of more than one curriculum level, as measured on the optional national tests set for pupils in Year 8, over their scores in the national tests two years earlier.
77. When pupils enter the school in Year 5, even in middle ability sets, they are weak in their knowledge of basic multiplication facts such as the three, four or five times table. Several have difficulties also when subtracting a larger digit from a smaller as part of a problem. For instance  $27 - 9$  is answered as 22. By Year 6 pupils in top sets are using long multiplication for numbers involving two or more decimals. They can plot and read points in all four quadrants of a graph. Middle attainers show they can understand the difference between mean, median and mode. Lower attaining pupils can recognise lines of symmetry for simple and compound shapes and show secure knowledge of place values for numbers larger than one.
78. The work of higher attaining pupils in Year 8 is above national expectations. They can use the exponential keys on a calculator for calculations involving standard form. They are secure with the four rules for directed numbers and can use Pascal's triangle to solve problems involving probability. Middle attainers can round numbers to two decimal places and to one or more significant figures. They can find percentages of a quantity although they sometimes give the percentage increase or decrease when asked for the final price. They can also express one quantity as a percentage of another with only one or two finding difficulty when asked to include or exclude VAT. Lower attainers can use a sample space diagram to find probability and have good understanding when relating basic fractions such as a half, fifth or tenth with percentages and decimal equivalents. Many, however, find adding and subtracting directed numbers difficult. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress throughout their time in the school.
79. All teaching of mathematics is good and the quality of relationships does much to contribute to pupils' progress. All teachers who teach mathematics have benefited from the training for the National Numeracy Strategy. In lessons, pupils are challenged by the work and by the pace at which it is presented. Their behaviour is very good. Teachers' exposition is clear so that all including those pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Year 5 lower attaining pupils were, for instance, able to grasp that the denominator of a fraction relates to equal portions of a whole. As one boy said, "There are four of them. Two are shaded, so that must be a half". The school does not specifically identify gifted and talented pupils. Those who are strongest in mathematics are, nevertheless, making good progress because of the good teaching they receive.
80. For the most part, teachers plan lessons effectively and manage the pupils well so that no time is wasted. Most lessons begin with a short activity that enables the pupils to settle quickly into their work. Most teachers mark pupils' work carefully. There is some very good practice within the department in this respect. In addition to indicating whether the work is right or not, some teachers comment fully on how it might be improved making use of the school's reward system to motivate pupils to do better. Pupils take pride in their work and their books are neat, well presented and well kept. A good contribution is made to improving pupils' literacy skills with the use of key words and a vocabulary book for spellings. Regular testing informs good setting arrangements and is used to show where lessons and schemes of work need to be changed. The test results also form the basis for setting targets for pupils. In spite of this, there are still cases where pupils need a clearer understanding of what they must do to improve.

81. Departmental leadership is good. The head of department is an experienced teacher, who in the relatively brief time he has been in post has gained the respect and trust of his colleagues and the pupils. Departmental meetings are focused on improving teaching and learning. The analysis of examination results is rigorous and effectively used. There are sound arrangements for improving teaching based on regular performance review. Not all lesson observations are, however, followed by formal feedback supported by written reports. Monitoring of the marking of pupils' work is also done too infrequently. The need for enhanced information and communication technology equipment within the department is acute. There is no direct access to the Internet from the mathematics classrooms and variations to the teaching programme have to be made frequently because of restricted access to the schools' computer network.
82. Improvement since the last inspection in the mathematics department has been good. All areas of concern have been addressed and improvements made. Teaching has improved, and attainment has risen faster than nationally in spite of the challenges that have had to be faced.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **good**.

### Strengths

- A corporate departmental approach to improving the quality of teaching with a focus on raising pupils' standards.
- Pupils' positive and purposeful attitudes to learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Planning for activities that allows pupils, of all abilities, to explore and develop their ideas fully.
- Developing assessment procedures that are based on the acquisition of skills and the development of concepts.

83. The standards attained by Year 6 pupils in the National Tests have been average over time. Observation in lessons and examination of pupils' work shows that levels of attainment are increasing in all age groups. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
84. Generally, good progress is made by pupils in all year groups. Pupils plan and carry out investigative work to obtain meaningful results, they can use a range of measuring instruments competently and identify factors that need to be controlled. As the pupils progress through the school they demonstrate increasing levels of skill and they gain a deeper understanding of the significance of controlling variables.
85. Pupils are acquiring appropriate scientific knowledge and use scientific terminology effectively to ask scientific questions, express their ideas and evaluate the data they obtain. They can make predictions about friction on different surfaces and explain the reasons why a rougher surface will result in greater friction. Year 5 pupils can explain that materials with trapped air make good insulators. They relate these ideas from their investigative work to everyday life and apply them to new situations. By Year 8, pupils use their increased scientific knowledge to discuss and make judgements on the impact that science has on society as well as relating this to other factors that affect lifestyles.
86. Overall the teaching is good and in many cases very good and this applies to both key stages. This is reflected in the very good attitudes pupils display and the pride they take in their work. They enjoy lessons, co-operate well with each other and work co-operatively in groups being supportive of each other. Relationships between pupils and their teachers contributes to a purposeful working environment. Teachers identify clear learning objectives in their planning and these are shared with the pupils at the start of each lesson. This is followed by a check on the previous knowledge required to make progress in the current lesson. Generally, expectations by the teachers of the pupils are high and are matched to the age and ability of the pupils. However, some activities are more restrictive and are not allowing the full development of higher ability children. Here, pupils are given good factual knowledge but activities do not allow them to explore their ideas further. Where activities are more open-ended, pupils are able to contribute their ideas and these contributions, which are sometimes at a high level of scientific thinking,

are celebrated. These examples of good practice should continue to be developed and disseminated throughout the department.

87. Teachers have good scientific knowledge and non-specialist teachers are very well supported by the head of department and the Year 5 and 6 co-ordinator. The development of scientific knowledge for all the teachers should continue to be developed through further training and support.
88. Use of information and communication technology by teachers is variable but is improving. There is a newly installed interactive white board in one of the laboratories, which was used with varying degrees of confidence. There is some evidence of data logging activities having taken place but not with all groups. There is no evidence of children using spreadsheets for processing and analysing data from investigations.
89. Pupils with special educational needs are served well by their teachers. Teachers take account of the individuals' barriers to learning and provide appropriate support and stimuli to minimise these barriers as much as possible. Teachers, for example, use simplified data and reduced quantities so that the pupils are not left behind or can demonstrate the skill. These pupils make good progress in relation to prior attainment.
90. The department is well managed. The head of department is working very hard to improve both the quality of provision and attainment of pupils. She is assisted by a Year 5 and 6 co-ordinator who has responsibility for short-term curriculum planning and support for non-specialist staff. These measures are proving to be very effective, but the benefits have not yet fully emerged. There is a process of assessment and target setting which is impacting on pupil performance. Pupils' work is marked with positive comments and they are appreciative of this. A more rigorous system of monitoring written work would help this developing department to raise its standards even further. Specialist accommodation and resources are both deployed appropriately to promote learning. Good support is provided by the technician.
91. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The variability of practice has been reduced significantly and no teaching was unsatisfactory. The support for non-specialist teachers has improved.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning.
- Well above average standards of work.
- Excellent provision for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress.

### Areas for improvement

- The development of provision for information and communication technology.

92. At the end of Year 6, pupils' standards are above average. Drawing from observation is a strength and shows keen perception and accurate recording. Pupils show skill in using both pen and pencil in finely detailed work and in the application of colour. In design, pupils use the art of other cultures very effectively and make good use of art historical material. Japanese art is used as a basis for three-dimensional work in sand and paper in a project on masks and the work of Matisse is used to illustrate technique in collage and design. There is little evidence of the use of computers by pupils in their work, but a digital camera is now used to record work at different stages and to aid composition and design. Progress in Years 5 and 6 is very good. The nature of the subject provides for success at a wide range of levels but, additionally, sensitive individual teaching promotes very good progress by pupils with special needs, whilst gifted and talented pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in 'open-ended' projects.
93. By Year 8 pupils' standards are well above average. Drawing from observation is again a main strength.

Pupils are involved at the outset in setting up 'still life' groups prior to using them as a source of ideas for drawing, painting and collage. Work in collage is very strong. Pupils are encouraged to cut shapes directly and to 'draw' with scissors. Plant forms are used as the object of study in many cases and pupils develop a confident, bold approach to design as a consequence of developing this technique. Polynesian and Eastern art are very effectively used for the development of work in drawing, design, collage and in three-dimensional design.

94. Pupils' progress in Years 7 and 8 is very good, aided by very well-planned projects and an excellent departmental assessment system which involves pupils closely in the evaluation of their own learning. As in Years 5 and 6, pupils with special needs are able to make very good progress in relation to their prior attainment. This is due to the structure of project work which allows pupils to make progress at their own pace. There is no significant difference between the attainment and progress of boys and girls at this stage.
95. The quality of teaching is a major strength in the department. Activities are well matched to each year group which was not the case at the time of the last inspection. Work is very carefully planned to provide the maximum in terms of pupil interest and enjoyment and to afford the fullest opportunity for success at the widest range of prior attainment. This results in pupils having very good attitudes towards their work. They are eager and co-operative and behave very well. The pace of lessons is invariably very good and is reflected in the good pace of learning. The provision of resources, including well-chosen prints of works of art, helps to form a rich learning environment. Linked within this is the excellent quality of teacher-pupil relationships, which promote a very good and productive working atmosphere in class. Learning by pupils of differing attainment is aided further by very sensitive individual help and encouragement. Many pupils in Years 7 and 8 are able to work in an independent manner, showing a good measure of creative self-confidence. The quality of assessment is a further important strength. Pupils evaluate their own progress and attainment in all projects to supplement teacher assessments. This has a significant impact upon pupils' awareness of their level of attainment.
96. The management of the department is excellent. The head of department is the sole teacher and has produced a very high standard of documentation. The working environment is very well maintained as a stimulating place in which to work. Display within the department and around the school provides a learning resource and a source of pleasure.
97. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have risen and pupils now make better progress.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

### Strengths

- Standards of work in textiles and resistant materials.
- Quality of teaching at both keys stages.
- Provision and use of information and communication technology, particularly in 'control'.

### Areas for improvement

- Provision for the teaching of graphics.

98. By Year 8, pupils' standards are above average. Pupils show good skills in designing and making with particular strengths in textiles and resistant materials. Weaving shows imaginative design and good practical skills. Pupils are able to interpret complex images into woven designs. In resistant materials pupils are able to cut and shape materials, including wood and plastic, successfully and to use a range of hand tools in addressing their tasks. In electronics, pupils show an understanding of circuits and switches when using a computer program to control traffic lights. There is evidence also of sound standards in food technology. This involves project work in 'healthy eating' and the preparation of menus and invitations.

99. Literacy is addressed by the compilation of word lists derived from subject terms and displayed in the classroom. Pupils also extend their knowledge of subject terms by using them in their self-evaluations. Measuring and calculation reinforce numeracy in all areas of the design and technology curriculum.
100. Learning in Years 5 and 6 and in Years 7 and 8 is good. Pupils work purposefully in response to the well-planned and demanding projects, which allow for success at a range of levels. As a result, pupils with special needs make good progress. In Years 7 and 8 pupils attain above average standards. In textiles and resistant materials skills and understanding build upon the progress made in Years 5 and 6. Work in resistant materials shows imagination and good skills in the production of 'travel games', for example. These are designed in a highly individual manner and in many cases very well finished.
101. Achievement through the key stage is good. Pupils make progress in developing further their skills in working resistant materials and textiles. They also progress in electronics and graphics with good development of skills in applying computer control in projects. However, timetabling of graphics alongside electronics, due to resource restriction in electronics, tends to work against overall learning in the groups where this occurs. Progress by pupils with special educational needs is very good in all year groups.
102. The quality of teaching in the department is good. No lessons were less than satisfactory and most were good or very good. Work is well planned and prepared and most lessons are conducted at a good pace, which is reflected in the pace of pupil learning. A further strength is the quality of pupil-teacher relationships. The teachers in all areas are sensitive to individual pupils' need and take care to adjust demand according to capability. Worksheets are modified to give different levels of challenge and to provide for wide differentiation. A good level of co-operation exists between the teachers in the department who make very effort to support each other in their aims for the subject. Pupils are carefully supervised in class with appropriate regard for health and safety. Good use is made of demonstrations with clear, informative explanation of techniques; the use of the coping saw, for example. There is a positive response from pupils, with good levels of concentration sustained throughout lessons, and very good behaviour. Assessment is very thorough; all projects are assessed by both teachers and pupils for effort and attainment. This process of pupil self-assessment provides a good basis for pupils' knowledge of their own progress. Good liaison with the secondary school exists and mark lists are exchanged in order to achieve consistency in approach to grades.
103. The curriculum is broad and varied and fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. Time allocation is low but resultant small groups minimise the impact on progress.
104. The management of the department is good. All members of the department are highly committed with good relationships, good communications and shared aims for the development of the subject. Documentation is excellent, with detailed schemes of work and clear policies. Accommodation is well equipped and comfortably furnished. There are good specialist rooms for work in resistant materials, food technology and graphics and the department shares a specialist room for information and communication technology, which houses 14 computers and a range of printers.
105. Departmental progress since the last inspection has been good with maintained standards of work, the development of electronics and improvements in assessment procedures.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching.
- The positive attitudes of the pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- The development of assessment and monitoring of pupils' work.

106. Standards of work seen show that the attainment of pupils is in line with national expectations. Year 6



pupils are able to use a range of mapping and diagrammatic skills developed across Key Stage 2 as observed in a unit on volcanoes and their stages of development. Pupils are able to describe similarities and differences between arable and dairy farming in Great Britain, developing knowledge and understanding, as well as beginning to use geographical vocabulary.

107. Pupils in Year 8 attain average standards. Pupils are able to participate in discussion using a good geographical vocabulary, for example in identifying the reasons for the growth of favelas around cities in Brazil and the reasons for and against the construction of a by-pass around Leek. Geographical skills continue to be well developed with some good examples of analysis and representation of data on urban changes in Leek.
108. All pupils make satisfactory progress in both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs progress satisfactorily and benefit from well-planned lessons and the work that is tailored to meet their needs. There are insufficient opportunities for higher attaining pupils to have separate more rigorous tasks to challenge them, particularly at Key Stage 3. Little use is currently made of information and communication technology to carry out information gathering, represent statistical data or to produce written work.
109. The quality of teaching is good. In all lessons planning is thorough and clear aims are set and explained. Pupils in all years are expected to think and develop independent learning skills. This was seen in a Year 5 lesson on wind force in which pupils were determining why wind force varied and the effects it would have, based on a practical investigation using anemometers. Teachers use a good range of teaching and learning strategies to motivate and maintain interest, encourage pupils to ask geographical questions and to use geographical language correctly. Pupils are stimulated by interesting teacher input and good progress in learning results. This was seen, for example, in a lesson in Year 8, where pupils were exploring inequalities in Brazilian society. In all lessons pupils behave well, show positive attitudes, concentrate and achieve a good standard of presentation in their written work.
110. Geography is well led and managed by the subject co-ordinator who gives effective support to other teachers. Schemes of work have been well written and organised, which assists the needs of a wide range of staff. There is a clear commitment to raising standards. Assessment arrangements for establishing pupils' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory and do not inform future planning of the curriculum and monitoring of pupil and class performance against prior attainment. Progress has been made recently in introducing assessment procedures to monitor individual pupils' progress although this has not produced any outcomes so far.
111. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved and teachers are now sharing good practice. Pupils have greater locational awareness and understanding and are able to analyse and critically use data from a range of sources. Pupils' work is marked regularly and is supportive, although comments are too generalised to help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve their work.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning.

### Areas for improvement

- The development of assessment and monitoring of pupils' work.

112. Pupils' standards of work are in line with the national average. Pupils in Year 6 are able to identify some of the different ways in which the past is represented, for example through primary evidence such as artefacts, documents and photographs from Victorian Britain and to identify differences between Victorian schools and their own. Pupils have a secure grasp of chronology and can describe some of the main features of the period studied as seen in Year 5 lessons on Elizabeth I and the Tudors. In Year 8, pupils are able to describe features of past societies and the impact of change, for example by identifying the changes imposed by European settlers upon the Plains Indians in the late nineteenth century and make

simple observations about changes and similarities across historical periods, for example from the Tudors to the Stuarts.

113. Pupils of all ages make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs progress satisfactorily and benefit from well prepared support staff. They participate in small group discussion and persevere with written tasks that have been designed to meet their needs. There are insufficient challenging activities to stretch the more able pupils and to stimulate their thinking particularly in Years 7 and 8. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology in pupils' research and in the presentation of their work.
114. The quality of teaching overall is good, although one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in Year 7. Lessons are well prepared, for example in the teaching of how to describe Elizabeth I in Year 5. In good or very good lessons, there is a high expectation of pupils and this is reflected not only in the sustained effort made by pupils throughout their lessons but also in their positive attitudes, behaviour and very good presentation of their written work. These lessons additionally include a brisk pace, a wider variety of engaging tasks and some opportunity for pupils to reflect upon their own learning. Teaching seen in Year 6 was particularly inventive in a dramatic recreation of a Victorian classroom and teaching seen in Year 5 created an environment which stimulated pupils to develop their skills of investigation using different sources of information. Most classrooms provide well-presented displays of pupils' work.
115. The subject co-ordinator provides satisfactory management through a detailed scheme of work, which assists the needs of a wide range of staff. The assessment arrangements for establishing individual pupils' progress are unsatisfactory and there is no use of available data to analyse progress or to guide curricular planning. Progress has recently been made in developing assessment procedures to monitor individual pupil progress but this has not produced any outcomes so far and there needs to be a more formal evaluation of the quality of provision. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to the spiritual, moral and cultural life of the school, with an example seen of reference to the beliefs of the Plains Indians.
116. Since the last inspection, the proportion of teaching which is good or better has improved although this has mainly taken place in Year 5 and Year 6. There has been continuous review of curricular needs and detailed revision of several units of study. Marking is regular and supportive to pupils although there is limited evidence of teachers' explanations to pupils as to how they can improve their skills and understanding. Homework opportunities are insufficiently used to provide pupils with opportunities to develop their investigative skills and to challenge the more able pupils.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Standards are broadly average at the end of Years 6 and 8.
- Since this term all pupils receive one lesson of ICT each week.
- There is a strong commitment by the whole staff to improvement.

### Areas for improvement

- The creation of whole school policies and strategies for ICT development.
- Determine the accountability of each department in contributing to a whole school approach.
- Review the job description of the head of department with the intention of enabling improved leadership and raising the quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure a manageable system of recording pupils' progress and accurately predicting their attainment.
- Improve and increase resources in line with national averages and enable greater use of the technology.
- Implement a strategy for monitoring and evaluating progress and systematically review.

117. Inspection evidence considered the subject on its own and its contribution to raising standards across the curriculum. Work seen during the inspection shows that attainment overall is broadly average. In specific information and communication technology (ICT) lessons, the levels of attainment are average at

the end of Years 6 and 8. A high proportion of pupils reach Level 4 by the end of Year 6 and the proportion working at Level 5 is similar to that usually found. Across the school, pupils do not have regular opportunities to apply what they have learnt in ICT lessons in all other subjects. Generally, the higher and average attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged especially when the teaching has weaknesses. Pupils with special educational needs, make insufficient progress because work is not linked closely enough to their individual education plans. Increased attention should be paid to how different groups of pupils learn, including those with special educational needs and to exploring ways of using the technology to help raise standards in all other subjects.

118. The use of ICT is sometimes planned for in other subjects although departments are confused about their responsibility for ICT and when and how it should be taught. This weakness needs to be clarified so pupils acquire greater knowledge and skills, which they can apply to other subjects. Good work was seen in a science lesson on insulation. Effective use was made of the technology to record temperature using a data-logging sensor. In a Year 8 ICT/design and technology lesson, pupils investigated and modelled an electrical circuit using simulation software, carrying out a much larger volume of work on screen than could be done in class in the same time. In Year 5, good use was made of data handling to process and present numerical data into a range of pie charts. This problem-solving approach uses computers to advantage and is an economical use of time and resources. However, the contribution of ICT to raising standards in individual subjects remains variable and its absence is more marked in some departments than others.
119. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and better in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 7 and 8. In a good Year 6 lesson, pupils prepared an electronic storybook for a young child. They prepared several screens, each with a background picture and successfully imported clip-art pictures, altered the size and location and added text. They experimented by adding different sounds to accompany the picture, creating humour and enjoyment to the reader. Where there are weaknesses in teaching, this relates mainly to unsatisfactory teaching methods and the management of pupils. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, work set is too easy for the majority of pupils and this results in a significant number becoming distracted and valuable teaching time is lost. There is a need to set targets for individual pupils with a much clearer focus and then to check they are being achieved. The work set in data handling is too repetitive from one year to another and does not build sufficiently on pupils' previous knowledge to teach them more advanced ICT skills. The attention given to using ICT to improve literacy and numeracy is insufficient. There are missed teaching opportunities to raise these standards, for example, spelling, composition and percentages.
120. A weakness across the school and within the department is that inadequate emphasis is given to the assessment of ICT capability. Teachers require much more guidance on how to do this in order to have an accurate view of pupils' standards and progress at the end of lessons, and modules, and then be accurate when reporting to parents. Teachers' confidence in ICT is growing and this is due, in part, to teachers' personal use of computers and training. Others, who have experienced faulty technology or insufficient technical support in school, are sceptical about the capacity of ICT to help raise standards.
121. There is much enthusiasm shown by pupils for ICT as a taught subject and as an extra-curricular activity both in and out of school. Boys and girls are equally motivated by ICT and no noticeable differences in their achievement were observed, except when aspects of teaching are unsatisfactory. Relationships are good between teachers and pupils. Across the school there are too few opportunities for pupils to use their initiative, especially to research using the Internet.
122. The quality of leadership of the head of department is unsatisfactory. A lack of clear direction results in a narrow and unbalanced curriculum and a serious shortfall in the assessment and monitoring of pupils' ICT capability. There is a need to track pupils' progress more accurately with the use of more sharply focused target setting strategies. Once these and a more rigorous monitoring by senior staff are in place, standards in ICT and other subjects are likely to rise. A review of the head of department's job description is also needed as currently it is unrealistic in terms of maintenance of the school's network without technician support. Energies should be focused on raising standards via improved target setting and accurate data collection.
123. Although increasing numbers of pupils have access to computers at home, too little account is taken of

this when planning the ICT curriculum or surveying the availability of ICT in homes. The accommodation is fully used but it does not always provide for a good learning environment, for example where there is inadequate ventilation. The improvements to hardware, networks and interactive white boards leave the school with adequate resources but a computer ratio which is below that found nationally in middle deemed secondary schools.

124. At the last inspection, standards were below average. Now, standards are better but shortcomings in teacher subject knowledge and leadership remain an issue. The school is in receipt of the National Grid for Learning (NGfL) and the associated New Opportunities Fund (NOF) for training teachers, which is being used appropriately. The school is not well enough on course to enable pupils to fulfil their potential.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teachers' good use of French in lessons.
- Teachers' good lesson planning and skilful use of learning resources.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' speaking skills.
- The attainment of able pupils.
- The professional development of staff.

125. French is taught in Years 7 and 8 and by the end of Year 8, standards in French are in line with national expectations. Achievement by the end of Year 8 is satisfactory.
126. In Year 8 in listening, most pupils achieve average standards overall and able pupils reach above average standards. This is the result of teachers' consistent use of French in lessons, which enables pupils to understand classroom language easily and identify information in tapes of native speakers. This was seen in a Year 8 upper set lesson about travel by train, in which most pupils understood brief conversations in French and most successfully recorded the train times on a grid. Writing is satisfactory overall in content and is very neatly presented, showing pupils' good personal organisation. Pupils' written work shows that most have developed a sound topic based vocabulary, can write brief descriptions with reasonable accuracy and express opinions competently in French using familiar language. Low attaining pupils write to similar standards but need help with spelling and verb forms. Able pupils achieve above average standards and can use the past tense confidently in brief sentences. In speaking, standards are below average. Pupils generally have poor French accents and speak hesitantly. For example, in an otherwise good Year 7 middle set lesson about the weather, most pupils could not fully understand the teacher's introduction but most were subsequently unable to speak readily and confidently in answering the teacher's questions. Average and higher attaining pupils in Year 8 do not develop confidence in speaking due to the large top set class and wide range of ability which limits response opportunities for many pupils in whole class questioning. Reading is satisfactory overall. Most pupils can understand a range of texts, for example letters and short articles, which are within their linguistic experience; however, able pupils require extension material which is more challenging to develop advanced skills such as deducing the meaning of unfamiliar words. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the good teaching methods teachers use to motivate pupils in the low sets. For example in a good Year 8 low set lesson, all the pupils could readily produce simple sentences for a weather forecast as a result of repeating the new expressions after the teacher; in this lesson, the good use of a map and coloured cards showed the teacher's very good understanding of the learning needs of all the pupils. The pupil with English as an additional language makes good progress generally, responding well in class with a good French accent.
127. Pupils have good attitudes to learning French; behaviour in lessons is good and written work is particularly well presented. There is a good pupil response to the Year 7 annual trip to France.
128. Teaching is good overall. In over half the lessons seen, teaching was good, and in one case very good. Teachers plan lessons well, addressing listening, speaking, reading and writing and including a well selected range of activities. They use the target language confidently. These two factors motivate pupils and make good use of lesson time available. In a very good Year 8 lesson the pupils listened to the teachers' introduction of expressions for train travel, practised these as a class in pairs with guidance sheets, listened to tapes of native speakers and finally wrote their own versions of all the language acquired in the lesson. Resources are used well to support pupils in their learning. For example in one Year 7 lesson based on personal information, the teacher made excellent use of pupils' individual mini-whiteboards for pupils to record in writing her spoken descriptions of imaginary people. This motivated pupils and enabled each to work at his/her own language level. Although the attainment level of some able pupils is above average, teaching methods are needed to extend their learning generally, especially in reading and speaking. Paired speaking practice should include extension into unprepared

conversation and extra reading and listening tasks should be made available for the keen linguists, to enable them to reach higher National Curriculum levels in these skills.

129. Teachers monitor pupils' progress well through regular testing in listening, speaking, reading and writing; however, each pupil requires additional support through individual target setting for improvement. Classes need to be more consistently informed of the National Curriculum levels at which they are working in each skill. Where this happens, pupils gain significantly in awareness of their own learning. For example, in one successful Year 8 lesson, the teacher's discussion of National Curriculum levels in listening enabled them to be aware of their progress within the lesson. The large numbers of pupils in one Year 8 group limit the time available for individual feedback and guidance after speaking tests.
130. Teachers support the school literacy policy well in training the pupils in careful listening, speaking, spelling and in awareness of how grammar works in language. Pupils' numeracy is consolidated through learning the 24-hour clock and in the simple arithmetic needed for transactions in shops and cafes. ICT is not generally used as an integral part of French teaching; however, displays show that some pupils use information and communication technology well to present written work in French, with accurate accents and colourful graphics.
131. The department is generally well led and managed. Departmental documentation is clear and comprehensive; there is a shared teacher commitment to raising standards; and there are good professional links with the upper school. Areas for development are the professional development of staff; the monitoring of teaching; and the departmental policy on raising the attainment of able pupils should be consistently implemented. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes towards music, and behaviour in lessons.
- The good continuity provided by visiting instrumental teachers.
- The physical accommodation.

### Areas for improvement

- Carefully devised schemes of work tailored to the needs of present pupils.
- Use of computer-assisted music.
- Assessment through the use of National Curriculum levels.
- Extra curricular activities.

132. During the inspection, music was taught by a temporary music specialist. The school has had a succession of heads of music in recent years and this has had an adverse effect on pupils' standards.
133. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 6, their overall attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils clap rhythmic patterns of reasonable difficulty which they read with confidence from staff notation. They perform these rhythms in groups in which they hold a part against a contrasting rhythm. They make kindly critical comments about and identify errors in pieces played by their peers. Pupils also play simple melodies on recorders and build up a satisfactory level of general knowledge of the musical elements and instruments of the orchestra. Girls are slightly ahead of boys in physical co-ordination, especially noticeable in performing musical rhythms.
134. The overall attainment of pupils is broadly in line with the national average at the end of Year 8 when they move on to secondary school. At this stage, they play keyboards satisfactorily. In one lesson they worked in pairs, learning to play 'Jingle Bells' from staff notation with added letter names. High attaining pupils invented a minor key variation on the tune. High attainers also understand how primary chords are formed and a few pupils add three-chord accompaniments to their tunes. They gain familiarity with graphic scores which they use to invent pieces to express moods and illustrate events. Pupils have the opportunity to learn guitar chords as well as triads which they build up on electronic keyboards. At this stage, most know and understand some musical terminology, for example drone and ostinato.

135. The quality of learning in all four years is satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with widely varying levels of musical attainment and experience. Lessons in Year 5 rightly emphasise the importance of singing and rhythmic work. Pupils learn how to use the classroom instruments effectively and to practise set tasks without constant supervision, although girls tend to apply themselves better in independent tasks than boys. Pupils with special educational needs receive appropriate extra attention in lessons to enable them to progress equally with their age group.
136. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and often good. It is characterised by a secure subject knowledge and expertise and also by a fair mixture of methods which include explanation, rote learning and practice in pairs and small groups. The technical language of music is used deliberately in order to encourage pupils to use correct terms themselves when describing features of pieces they invent or listen to. The teaching of the rudiments of music arises directly out of practical work. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when a mechanical approach to teaching notation was criticised. The wider teaching of literacy within the subject is not well addressed and not identified in the department's handbook. Also, there is no provision within the department for pupils to learn about computer-generated music.
137. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning in music throughout the school are good. They take a serious interest in lessons and especially enjoy working at their set tasks in groups. Most pupils apply themselves productively in these tasks, although a minority of boys in some classes lose concentration and resort to irrelevant chattering and occasional silliness. The good accommodation for music normally makes it possible for pupils to use various rooms and spaces to work independently.
138. Lessons are prepared and organised in fair detail. Insufficient attention is paid to the timing of each section of the lesson with the result that a number of pupils do not work with a sense of urgency. Pupils are, however, expected to work diligently and behave well. They are generally managed effectively, usually in a calm yet firm manner.
139. Visiting instrumental teachers contribute well to the musical education of up to 60 pupils. These teachers convey high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding to the pupils, and above all a respect for good playing, care for instruments and a love of music. Pupils with musical talent are given suitably challenging pieces to learn and opportunities to perform to an audience.
140. The day-to-day assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own standards of performance and composition. Assessments are suitably recorded. At present, the newly introduced National Curriculum levels are not used; these need to be introduced, together with criteria for improving performances and compositions in order to raise the standards which pupils at this school are capable of achieving.
141. Due to staff changes and long-term lack of continuity, the choir, orchestra and other ensembles have been suspended, much to the disappointment of some pupils. In spite of these problems, standards have been broadly maintained since the last inspection and improvements have been satisfactory overall.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Years 5 and 6.
- The subject is very well led; planning and preparation of work for specialist and non-specialist staff is very effective through good documentation.
- Participation and standards in extra curricular activities are good.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment to inform curriculum development.
- Indoor accommodation and drainage of the school field.

142. Pupils' standards are above average. This represents a good level of achievement for these pupils, whose levels of attainment were average when they joined the school. Both boys and girls reach above average standards in competitive sport and gymnastics. Several pupils represent the county; a very small minority compete at national level.
143. Year 5 and 6 pupils show a very good range of skills in gymnastics, dance, netball, rugby and hockey; they know many of the basic rules for playing these games and for performing small group dances. In games, pupils apply the rules fairly and accept decisions gracefully. They have a very good awareness about the safety requirements for the different activities. Year 5 pupils make simple dance sequences incorporating mime. The large majority shows a very good understanding for body tension in gymnastics. Both Year 5 and 6 pupils know the reason for stretching in warm up is to minimise injury. Many pupils know the anatomical names of the different muscles they use when taking exercise. Year 6 pupils in rugby are starting to understand the concept of moving forward with the ball yet having to pass back. However, low attaining pupils find this concept difficult. High attaining pupils successfully receive a pass at speed and pass effectively to their left. In football, basic ball control skills are very good; high attaining pupils make good use of different parts of the body when controlling the ball. Low attaining pupils understand spatial awareness, however, they find difficulty applying it within a game. All pupils in Years 5 and 6, including those with special educational needs, are fully integrated into lessons and show very good achievement.
144. Achievement in Years 7 and 8 is good and builds on work in Years 5 and 6. Year 8 pupils dribble a hockey ball successfully using the correct technique with the hands apart; a small minority of lower attaining pupils is less successful, as they fail to keep their hands apart when using dribbling and stopping techniques. The majority of pupils when dribbling a hockey ball keep the ball ahead of themselves and slightly to the side in order to increase their options. Higher attaining pupils begin to make good use of reverse stick practices in controlling the ball both in the dribble and tackling. By Year 8 pupils have developed a good understanding of the importance of warm up; in addition to minimising injury they now know that warm up also enhances performance. Pupils successfully take responsibility for aspects of their own warm up. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are well integrated into lessons and receive good support from teachers and their peers. In all lessons throughout the age range, pupils with special educational needs are well included into lessons; achievement is good and in line with their peers.
145. All teaching is at least good and in Years 5 and 6 teaching is very good. Teachers show very good knowledge of physical education. This knowledge has a positive impact upon pupils' learning. In a Year 7 basketball lesson, pupils learnt good defending techniques using the arms and hands very effectively. Teachers' expectations are high. This ensures very good behaviour and good attitudes and as a consequence pupils acquire new skills, consolidate and then develop them. Pupils learning is always good. They are very interested and concentrate well, which combines with good teaching to ensure that pupils' work is of good quality. Good questioning by teachers reinforces pupils' knowledge and understanding. For instance, during a Year 8 hockey lesson the teacher probed and challenged pupils' knowledge of the rules and the implications for players in different positions very successfully. Technical vocabulary and anatomical words are successfully used to support the subject; numeracy is used to support learning, as observed during warm up sessions and in Year 8 hockey lessons. Within lessons, there is a good range of activities to meet the needs of the ability range of pupils in the class. Teachers successfully adapt their teaching strategies to meet individual pupils' needs.
146. Leadership and management are very good. Schemes of work and lesson planning are good and pupils receive a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. However, poor accommodation and facilities constrain the learning and curriculum provision. For example, bad drainage restricts use of the field and basket ball and badminton cannot be taught fully in the small hall. The subject offers a very good and varied range of extra-curricular activities for pupils with over 50 per cent take-up. Team representations give opportunities for pupils to be challenged and extended. Some monitoring of teaching is undertaken although not systematically or in a formalised manner. Further development is needed in order to analyse assessment data.
147. Since the last inspection, many of the issues have been addressed and good improvements have been made. The standards are above average at the end of Years 6 and 8. Teaching and learning have



improved. Dance has been successfully re-introduced into the curriculum.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The opportunities provided for pupils' spiritual development and the way pupils' respond to lessons.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Curriculum organisation.
- The use of assessment.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning.
- The use of information and communication technology to enhance learning and as a tool for research.

148. Overall, standards in relation to the requirements of the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education are satisfactory at the end of Year 6 and in Year 8. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are able to discuss issues of a personal nature using sensitive language to describe their feelings. More able pupils can suggest ways of interpreting the symbolism of light at Hanukah, for example, "The slave candle shows the oil should have only lasted one day, the other candles show how it lasted for a whole week". In all years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils in Year 8 are able to recognise the links between what people believe and their actions. Prompt cards enable lower attaining pupils to illustrate beliefs and values using role-play. Middle and higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. They are able to analyse stories with moral themes from the Muslim tradition and match them to the five pillars of Islam or teaching from the Qur'an. Pupils are able to express feelings and ideas about sensitive issues and are developing insight into the feelings of those affected by sad times in their lives.
149. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now generally good. There is a higher proportion of better quality teaching in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 7 and 8. Teachers have good subject knowledge and schemes of work have been carefully planned. This helps those teachers who are not subject specialists to be well prepared for lessons. Some teachers share learning objectives with pupils so they know what is expected of them. This practice is not consistent across all the staff teaching religious education. There is a good balance between pupils gaining knowledge and understanding of the subject and learning from study of religions. As a result, pupils are able to relate their learning to their own life experiences. This is an improvement since the last.
150. Practical activities and games engage pupils' interest in their work. In lessons, pupils generally work hard and sustain their concentration and involvement in their work. Attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good. Carefully structured opportunities for reflection contribute much to pupils' spiritual development. Pupils respond well to these times of quiet thinking. Links with faith communities enhance provision for pupils' cultural development. Teachers ensure that specialist language is carefully explored and clearly understood. Procedures for assessing pupils' work are, however, unsatisfactory. Teachers lack confidence in the use of the local system (the Staffordshire Steps) for assessing work. Insufficient use is made of assessments by teachers to plan future lessons and the absence of a clear understanding of what pupils know and understand means teachers are not precise about how pupils need to improve.
151. The curriculum offered meets the requirement of the Staffordshire Agreed Syllabus in its breadth but not depth of study. It is organised in themes that require pupils to study aspects of more than one faith. However, thematic studies of topics within religions are insufficient to allow pupils to gain a coherent understanding of individual faiths. Discussions with pupils reveal that in Year 6 and Year 8 they are confused about which festivals belong to the faiths studied within each theme or topic, for example suggesting that Diwali is a Jewish festival. They need to develop a coherent understanding of each faith before they begin to compare and contrast. A systematic audit of learning experiences and tasks set would enable the department to be very clear about where and how the work challenges pupils' thinking effectively. The use of information and communication technology for research and presentation of work is low.

152. Whilst the overall management of the department is satisfactory, methods of monitoring and evaluation are unsatisfactory. They do not match the school's methodology in that they are not based on a systematic review of teaching and learning. The department needs to establish an approach focused on raising attainment and incorporating the current good practice of joint planning for improvement with the school's partner high school.