

INSPECTION REPORT

MARSTON VALE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Stewartby, Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109653

Headteacher: Mr J Godfrey

Reporting inspector: Mr E Wheatley
10013

Dates of inspection: 10th - 13th January 2000

Inspection number: 188867

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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:	The Crescent Stewartby Beds
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Tait
Date of previous inspection:	July 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Edward Wheatley	Registered inspector	Science	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed?
Gillian Smith	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with its parents? Pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Jerry Royle	Team inspector	English Music	
Shân Mullett	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well are pupils taught? Staffing
Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
Roslyn Fox	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	Assessment
John Carnaghan	Team inspector	Geography History Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Peter Sellwood	Team inspector	Art	Accommodation
Alan Giles	Team inspector	Physical education	
Michael Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	Resources
Sue Russam	Team inspector	Special educational needs	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Marston Vale Middle School is average in size to similar schools with 380 pupils aged from nine to thirteen years. Numbers of pupils attending the school are rising. Pupils are mainly of white United Kingdom origin and there are eight pupils who have English as an additional language. Other languages spoken are Italian, Punjabi and Swedish, although the pupils for whom these languages are their mother tongue all speak English as well as other pupils in the school. At the time of the inspection, two pupils are temporary pupils in the school. The majority of pupils come from small schools in local villages. Twenty pupils, about five per cent, which is below average, are entitled to receive free school meals. Six pupils, about 1.6 per cent, which is about average have statements of special educational needs, and 23.7 per cent of pupils are on the school's register of special educational needs, which is also about average. The attainment of pupils is broadly average on entry to the school.

The school is in the village of Stewartby, about six miles from Bedford. The main part of the school was built in the 1930s and there have been extensions since then in the 1940s and 1960s. Further building is planned and some buildings are due to be demolished. The main building, however, has been classed as a building of special interest and must be modernised with care.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is effective in providing a good standard of education for its pupils and standards are higher overall than they were at the last inspection, although there is still some underattainment. The school's sustained efforts to improve teaching and provide a positive environment in which pupils can learn without disruption have been successful. The school is well led by governors and the headteacher, with a clear view on raising standards as the most important issue. This is a good and improving school, which gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching and learning are good as a result of clear educational direction and planned improvements.
- The leadership and direction provided by the headteacher to raise standards are very good.
- The school's own procedures to evaluate its own performance and plan future development are good overall.
- Pupils' attitudes to work are good.
- Pupils' relationships with each other and with adults in the school are good.
- The school's provision for social development is very good and for moral development is good.
- Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are effective.

What could be improved

- There is underattainment in English and geography at Key Stage 3, information technology at Key Stage 2 and in religious education at both key stages. Higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
- The whole school strategy for teaching numeracy skills has not been implemented.
- The use of individual education plans in lessons is not sufficiently well developed and the effectiveness of special educational needs work in the school has not been evaluated.
- The quality and use of day-to-day assessment of pupils' work to provide targets for pupils and to plan future teaching is inconsistent.
- Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are unsatisfactory.
- Statutory requirements for governors to provide annual targets for the headteacher and deputy headteacher are not met.
- The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents do not include appropriate information on attendance, comparisons of end of Key Stage 2 tests with national results or targets for the current year, details of access for disabled pupils and details of progress on the last inspection action plan.
- Statutory requirements for collective worship are not consistently met.

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

In spite of there being several areas for improvement, the work to raise standards in teaching and

pupils' attitudes to work have been impressive and the school's evaluation of its own performance and plans to improve are good.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in July 1996 and, at that time, attainment in end of Key Stage 2 national tests was below average, although standards were starting to rise. Overall, progress since the last inspection has been good. Since then the improvement in standards has been good, although there are still areas where standards are not high enough. Standards are now higher in English, French, information technology at Key Stage 3, geography and history. However, there is still room for further improvements in English and geography at Key Stage 3 and information technology at Key Stage 2. Teaching has improved considerably. At the last inspection more than 30 per cent was unsatisfactory and now 96 per cent is satisfactory or better. There are now schemes of work for all subjects except information technology in Years 5 and 6 and this will be addressed in September 2000, in accordance with the school development plan. Assessment procedures are still unsatisfactory. Although there is now a suitable assessment policy, procedures to inform pupils of what they have achieved and to guide them in how they can make further progress are not fully implemented. Progress in evaluating the school's development and progress is good overall, although there has been no evaluation of the effectiveness of the provision for pupils with special educational needs. Progress in developing the spiritual aspects of the curriculum are satisfactory, but the school still does not meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in end of Key Stage 3 national assessments.

Performance in:	compared with			
	All schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
End of Key Stage 2 tests	D	D	C	C

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

Standards are higher in mathematics and science than they are in English. Standards have risen in mathematics and science over the last three years overall; the most significant improvements were between 1998 and 1999. In English, standards rose between 1998 and 1999, but not to such an extent as in mathematics and science. In all subjects, boys performed better than girls. The school has started procedures to raise attainment further and to focus particularly on girls. The National Literacy Strategy is in place in Years 5 and 6 and this is starting to have a positive impact on standards. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8, standards are broadly as expected, although in English they are below average, particularly in writing. Nevertheless, standards are rising and work seen in Year 7 indicates that standards are close to what is expected at this stage. Standards in art, design and technology and information technology are above those expected for thirteen year olds.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are good. They enjoy lessons and have a positive approach to work and the activities that the school provides.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good in lessons and pupils are generally sensible in the way they behave around school. A small number of pupils, mostly boys, are unruly in their behaviour and there has been a small number of temporary exclusions for unacceptable behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults are good. Pupils respect each other and are considerate towards the feelings of others. They learn to work well together. Opportunities to take responsibility are limited.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Thirty-three per cent of teaching is satisfactory, 54 per cent is good or better, and nine per cent is very good or excellent. Four per cent of teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Establishing firm rules of behaviour, having clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils and a range of activities designed to interest pupils are having a positive effect on pupils' learning. Work for pupils is generally well matched to learning needs, but higher attaining pupils are sometimes not sufficiently challenged in all subjects and this impedes their progress. In art, work is consistently challenging for all pupils. Teaching is good in English and mathematics and the recently introduced National Literacy Strategy is leading to rising standards. However, the effects of this are not yet apparent throughout the school. Although there is a whole school numeracy policy, this is not fully established in all subjects. The small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was not contained within one subject or shown by one teacher and was characterised by occasional ineffective management of pupils' behaviour and unsatisfactory subject knowledge; the school is aware of these weaknesses and is addressing them.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is generally broad and balanced with appropriate time spent on English, mathematics and science. Information technology is well established in Key Stage 3, but is not fully implemented at Key Stage 2. The curriculum is supported by a sound range of extracurricular activities. There is no whole school literacy policy.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall, provision is satisfactory, although on occasions some pupils lose time in other subjects because they are withdrawn for support work. Individual education plans are not used consistently by teachers to help their daily lesson planning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is good overall and for social development it is very good. Spiritual development is sound, with particular strengths in the way the school encourages pupils to value themselves. However, daily collective worship does not consistently take place. Moral development is good and has improved since the last inspection. Teachers set a good example of how people should treat others. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Generally the school looks after its pupils well. Procedures to improve behaviour are excellent. Pupils are well supported by teachers, both academically and personally. However, procedures to monitor and improve attendance are undeveloped and there is no early afternoon registration.

The school has a sound working relationship with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is led and managed well by the headteacher, deputy head and other staff with subject responsibilities. The headteacher gives very clear direction for development and has had a significant impact on the improvement in teaching and establishing effective behaviour management policies which have led to rising standards. Subject leaders carry out their responsibilities effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have rightly worked with the headteacher to focus on improving teaching and raising standards as their main responsibility. However, they have not ensured that all statutory information is included in their annual report to parents or the school prospectus and they have not provided annual targets for the headteacher and deputy head.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Overall the school evaluates its own performance effectively. Teaching is observed and evaluated; feedback is given to teachers to share good practice. Effective action has been taken to raise standards and improve behaviour. However, there has been no evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategies used to teach pupils with special educational needs.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes sound use of its resources overall. At the time of the inspection, Key Stage 2 pupils were not using computers enough. Spending is linked to careful planning for required resources.

The school has sufficient experienced and qualified teaching staff and support staff. Accommodation is adequate at the moment but the school is expected to have increased numbers of pupils in the next few years.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children enjoy coming to school.• Pupils make good progress in their work.• Behaviour is good.• Teaching is good.• The school deals well with any problems that parents or pupils have.• The school has high expectations of pupils.• The school is well led and managed.• The school helps pupils become responsible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small number of parents are not happy with the amount of homework which pupils receive.

Inspectors generally agree with what parents like most about the school, although they consider that the expectations for the highest attaining pupils are sometimes not demanding enough. Generally, the amount and quality of homework provided are satisfactory.

Eight parents attended the meeting for parents with the registered inspector held before the inspection and their support for the work of the school was very positive. Parents felt that school had improved significantly since the last inspection.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. On entry to Year 5, which is half way into Key Stage 2, the attainment of pupils was broadly average. In the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests in 1999, pupils' results were close to the national average. The proportion of pupils obtaining Levels 4 and 5 was below the national average in English. In mathematics, the proportion reaching Level 4 or higher was close to the average and in science it was above average. Overall, the performance of pupils was similar to the performance of pupils in similar schools. Over the years 1996 to 1999, standards have been rising at a similar rate as that seen nationally and from 1998 to 1999 they have risen faster than the national rate. Levels of attainment achieved by pupils in end of Key Stage 2 national tests have risen since the last inspection and are close to the school's targets.
2. Evidence from the inspection shows that standards in English are rising at Key Stage 2, mainly because of the positive impact of the introduction of the literacy hour. In mathematics, standards are broadly average, but the introduction of the numeracy hour is having a significant impact on pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills. They know their tables, they work out problems competently and the higher attaining pupils convert fractions to decimals accurately. In science, pupils have good practical and investigation skills and a sound knowledge of why the body needs oxygen. Higher attaining pupils explain well how the oxygen is used. Standards achieved by pupils in geography, history, music and physical education are broadly average at the end of Key Stage 2. In art, and in design and technology, standards are above average with a significant proportion of pupils exceeding the national expectations. In information technology, attainment is below that expected for eleven year olds, because the subject is not yet taught and there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to obtain experience through the use of computers in other subjects. However, plans for full implementation of the information technology curriculum in September 2000 are advanced. In religious education, standards are below expectations overall because the scheme of work for the local agreed syllabus for religious education is not complete. The school has experienced disruption in the teaching of religious education, but now has a teacher responsible for the subject.
3. By the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment is as expected for pupils in the middle of Key Stage 3. Standards in English are below average generally. Pupils generally read competently and higher attaining pupils read a wide range of difficult texts well, although they rarely read these outside of the literacy hour. Writing skills are below average overall and speaking and listening skills are broadly as expected for thirteen year olds. However, the impact of introducing the literacy hour and the work teachers have done to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to establish an effective behaviour policy are starting to have a positive effect on raising standards. This is seen most markedly in Year 7 where speaking and listening, reading and writing skills are broadly as expected for twelve year olds. In mathematics, standards are as expected for thirteen year olds and pupils have a sound grasp of fractions and the higher attaining pupils work out percentages and simplify complex fractions quickly and accurately. In science, standards at the end of Year 8 match those of thirteen year olds generally. Pupils use scientific terms accurately in speech and writing. Practical skills are good and many pupils carry out investigations well and present results in a variety of graphical forms. Their knowledge and understanding of how light travels through glass is sound and the higher attaining pupils explain how light is deflected well. In information technology attainment is higher than expected, in spite of starting from below average standards. Pupils' computer skills are good; pupils enter information and produce graphs and charts competently and they produce attractive, well written pieces of work combining text and images. They use the key board and mouse competently. In art and design and technology, standards exceed those normally seen in Year 8. In French, history, physical education and music, standards are as expected. In geography and religious education, standards are below expectations. In geography, work set does not consistently meet all pupils' needs, most notably of higher attaining pupils. In religious education, the local agreed syllabus is not fully implemented and pupils do not have the opportunities to learn enough about world religions.

4. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall and for many is good. Introducing the literacy and numeracy strategies, focusing on establishing a whole school behaviour policy and developing a wide range of teaching styles are starting to have a positive effect on the progress pupils make. Where there are clear learning objectives in lessons, high expectations of work and behaviour and respect for pupils' opinions, pupils work well, are interested and make sound and sometimes good progress. This is evident in most subjects, but there are still occasions where expectations are not high enough for all pupils and then progress is slow. This is seen in a small number of mathematics, history, geography and religious education lessons. In some subjects homework is set regularly, for example in mathematics and science, and this is effective in encouraging pupils to develop independent learning skills. However, provision of homework is inconsistent, for example in English, geography, history and religious education.
5. Standards of literacy are broadly satisfactory. Speaking and listening skills develop well and are encouraged across the curriculum. However, with the exception of art where pupils are encouraged to analyse and describe their work, and science where pupils are encouraged to use technical language accurately in their speech and writing, the standard of writing is generally unsatisfactory. There is no whole school literacy policy to provide a consistent framework for teachers to work with. Written work is often brief and the work set does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length. The school is aware of this and has negotiated with the county to pilot a training programme for all staff to raise the standards of writing.
6. Overall standards of numeracy are satisfactory, although there are variations between subjects. Pupils produce graphs in French and design and technology. Pupils use co-ordinates well in geography, scales and patterns in personal and social education and measure, calculate and use spreadsheets and charts effectively in science, design and technology and information technology. The policy for numeracy across the curriculum is in draft form but is due to be finalised and implemented by September 2000.
7. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress. Those pupils who have statements of special educational needs attain standards in line with their prior achievements. Some other pupils with special educational needs do not consistently make adequate progress, largely because individual education plans are not used effectively by teachers to guide lesson planning. Pupils who are withdrawn from class to receive additional help with literacy gain competence in basic reading, writing and spelling skills, however, but they miss significant parts of other lessons, such as history and physical education, and this impedes their progress in these subjects.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils of all ages have positive attitudes to learning. They are proud of their school and speak highly of the increasingly wide range of opportunities they are offered. The majority are well motivated and keen to succeed in their work. During lessons, as well as during less formal situations, they get on well with each other and with their teachers. Teachers want their pupils to do well and relationships are good.
9. Pupils work well together in pairs or small groups and readily offer each other help if someone is unsure of what they are doing. Teachers plan class work carefully and pupils' response to homework is good. Pupils feel confident about asking for help when it is needed and they usually concentrate well. In a small minority of lessons, however, some pupils find it difficult to maintain concentration and are easily distracted. When this occurs, it has a detrimental impact upon the quality of their work and the progress they are able to make.
10. The school expects and achieves high standards of behaviour. Staff set very good examples of how to behave and the school has an effective behaviour policy that works well for the majority of pupils. Pupils know exactly what is expected and the result is a lively but harmonious community. Although some pupils can quickly become noisy and boisterous during times when they are not directly supervised, this school has a good atmosphere. Pupils feel able to discuss values and beliefs without fear of mockery or intimidation. They respect each other's feelings

and are tolerant of each other's mistakes. Pupils have an impressive ability to empathise with each other and, for example, during the time when Cool Certificates are awarded, they are very sensitive to the feelings of those who may not receive one. Although it has been necessary to exclude temporarily a number of pupils over the last year, the frequency of exclusion is below the national average.

11. Pupils' personal development is good. The school is keen to provide pupils with a 'voice' in the running of the school and, to this end, operates a popular and effective school council. Examples of its impact are recent improvements to the school grounds and the revision of playtime arrangements. Pupils respond well to other opportunities for responsibility, such as helping to run the Tuck Shop.
12. Overall attendance is satisfactory and no unauthorised absences were recorded over the last year. Registers are completed morning and afternoon, although the procedures followed do not fully conform to the recommended guidance.
13. Pupils with special educational needs generally respond well to their lessons and demonstrate a positive attitude to learning alongside their classmates. A minority of pupils who are withdrawn from their lessons for additional help with their literacy resent having to miss other subjects, such as physical education, art and history. Pupils who have emotional and behavioural problems respond well to the help the school provides in enabling them to come to terms with their difficulties and build meaningful relationships with adults and their classmates.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. Teaching is good overall and in about one in ten lessons it is very good or excellent. There is very good teaching in English, mathematics, science and art, and in mathematics a small amount of teaching is excellent. Teaching is unsatisfactory in only a small proportion of lessons, less than one in 25, mainly in religious education, geography, mathematics and English. This is an improvement since the last inspection and teachers' rapport with pupils is never unsatisfactory. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good and is only unsatisfactory when teachers are teaching outside their specialist subject area, for example, in religious education. This secure knowledge has a positive impact on pupils' learning. The best teaching, seen in mathematics, includes excellent pace, high expectations, frequent repetition to consolidate new ideas, the use of a wide range of resources and opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own work. The effect is to produce hard-working and fascinated pupils.
15. Planning is good in the majority of subjects in both key stages and is satisfactory in history and religious education. It is very good in art and mathematics at Key Stage 2. There is good continuity and progression between lessons and year groups. Lessons usually have clear objectives and meet the needs of all pupils including those with special educational needs. However, in some subjects, for example in geography and mathematics, the highest attaining pupils are sometimes not stretched.
16. Teachers' expectations are generally satisfactory and at Key Stage 2 are good. In information technology and design and technology, good use is made of projects which are stimulating and capture the interest of pupils. Teachers use good questioning strategies which help pupils to learn effectively and lessons progress at a good pace. In some lessons, in music and mathematics for example, the teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is infectious and assists learning. In English, expectations are generally satisfactory and there is an emphasis on working towards improving skills in literacy. When teachers' expectations are unsatisfactory, the lesson lacks challenge and focus; it does not inspire pupils and the highest attaining pupils do not make the expected progress as, for example, in some lessons in English, geography, mathematics and religious education.
17. The management of pupils is good overall and teachers' expectations of behaviour are high. They establish good working relationships with pupils which has a positive effect upon learning. The use of peer approval and encouragement has had a positive impact upon behaviour in the classroom and helps pupils to make progress, particularly lower and average attaining pupils. For example, in a mathematics lessons on short division, pupils worked in pairs initially and

were encouraged to evaluate each other's work. This resulted in pupils working effectively independently and making very good progress. The respect that pupils show for the teacher and for each other makes a significant contribution to the progress made by pupils.

18. Teachers' use of time and resources is satisfactory overall and good in Key Stage 2. When the use of time is good, lessons are well structured and leave sufficient time to evaluate learning at the end of the lessons, as for example, in some lessons in art, history, information technology, design and technology, mathematics, and science. Overall the level of resourcing is satisfactory; it is good in some areas, for example in information technology and design and technology. The provision of resources in religious education is unsatisfactory and the department lacks the necessary artefacts and videos.
19. Assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory overall. The whole school assessment policy is not used consistently. Reliance upon pupils marking their own work does not help teachers to assess pupils' work thoroughly and plan effectively. In some subjects, the marking of pupils' work does not indicate how the pupil can improve, although the intention of encouraging pupils to work independently and responsibly is met. In art, information technology and design and technology, good use is made of regular assessment and this helps pupils' progress. Assessment of progress by year groups is in the process of development in English, mathematics and science but, with the exception of science, this has not been extended to monitoring individual pupils and is therefore of limited value in setting targets for improvement.
20. The teaching of literacy and numeracy by teachers is satisfactory overall, although good practice is seen in many subjects. Whole school literacy and numeracy policies are not in place, although the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are in use in Years 5 and 6. Writing skills are not taught through all subjects, although in art and science pupils are encouraged, and taught well, how to explain, describe, evaluate and use technical language accurately and this is having a positive effect on standards achieved by pupils. Numeracy skills are developed through science and design and technology, where measuring, calculating, collecting numerical data and presenting it in graphical forms are established elements of these subjects. To a lesser extent, numerical information is used in other subjects.
21. The use of homework is satisfactory overall but is unsatisfactory in French, geography and religious education where it is either not set or does not extend or reinforce pupils' learning. In art, the use of homework is good; it is set on a weekly basis and is an integral part of on-going projects. In the majority of subjects, homework is set inconsistently and, on the occasions when homework is set, it does not assist pupils' progress or extend their understanding.
22. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory within lessons and appropriate support is provided. Individual education plans identify clear targets but these are not always used to plan teaching and effectively organise the use of support. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from the positive relationships within the classroom and the supportive environment which encourages pupils to attempt to solve problems and not be afraid of failure. When pupils are withdrawn from lessons, for example in French, for additional support this has an unsatisfactory effect on pupils' progress and on relationships within the teaching group.

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

23. The curriculum covers the requirements for all National Curriculum subjects, with the exception of information technology at Key Stage 2. Since the last inspection, the changes in schemes of work mean that all subject areas now meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Time allocated to subjects is generally satisfactory. Revision of the schemes of work in foundation subjects, in particular, has been undertaken in recent years. However, schemes of work for

religious education have yet to be produced and there is no programme of study to show that the requirements of the local agreed syllabus are being met. The literacy initiative has been the major focus of the school curriculum; its implementation has taken precedence in the last two years.

24. The development of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is not planned in a formal sense and there are inconsistencies of practice within particular subjects. For example, in history and geography, which might be expected to contribute to the development of these skills, there is only a limited and haphazard contribution. While some subjects other than English and mathematics make valuable contributions to developing literacy and numeracy skills, opportunities are incidental rather than planned.
25. The school follows its own sound sex education policy and educates older pupils in health and drugs issues. The programme in personal, social and health education is well planned and co-ordinated and has a strong focus on pupils' personal development and behaviour; this was considered a significant need and has clearly had an impact in improving behaviour in lessons and around the school.
26. The curriculum generally provides equality of access for all pupils. Analysis of attainment in end of Key Stage 2 national tests shows that boys' attainment has been above that of girls in recent years. The school is taking steps to remedy the situation through some mathematics and English teaching of separate boys' and girls' groups. Overall provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, but a significant number of pupils are withdrawn from lessons to address their needs and this withdrawal means that their entitlement to the full curriculum is compromised. Within classrooms, pupils are organised to enable them all to enhance their progress through working in pairs and small groups. Positive interactions between pupils and staff encourage all ranges of attainment and both genders to participate in lessons. In many classrooms, the way in which pupils are grouped helps boys and girls to work and learn well together. Teachers are good role models and deal effectively with equal opportunities issues as they arise. Schemes of work address equal opportunities issues; for example, some topics taught in art, history and geography are ethnically and culturally diverse.
27. Curriculum planning is thorough in mathematics, English and science, all of which have structures to ensure continuity and progression across both key stages. There are valuable links with feeder schools and those to which pupils transfer at the end of Year 8. Staff from these schools visit regularly to liaise over the core curriculum and, occasionally, to teach lessons. Information about pupils' attainment at the end of Year 4 is passed on to the school which uses it, in connection with its own assessment, to plan curricular provision. At the age of transfer to Year 9, pupils are well briefed about the impending changes and have good information about the curricular expectations of the local high schools.
28. The school provides a sound range of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils, mainly at lunchtime, as many pupils travel home by bus. Sport and music activities have dominated - prior to the school recently losing their music teacher. Both sexes can participate in all the clubs and practices; there are few other curricular activities outside the normal timetable, although Year 8 pupils have a social area which they can attend at lunch-time.
29. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Opportunities for reflection are regularly provided during the day-to-day life of the school. Through these, pupils are encouraged to consider their own feelings and how they can strive to meet the needs of others. The school, however, has not responded adequately to issues arising from the previous inspection report and a daily act of collective worship is not yet provided for all pupils. Although the content of assemblies is often good, opportunities for prayer or personal reflection are not always included. Religious education is not yet making a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development.
30. There are good arrangements for moral development. The behaviour policy is consistently implemented and pupils show a very good understanding of the way in which they are expected to behave and the difference between right and wrong.

31. Arrangements for social development are very good. Regular opportunities are provided for pupils to work together and they are encouraged to help and support each other, should there be a problem. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and exhibit self-control. Through developing pupils' understanding of relationships, the school has created a climate within which pupils are able to celebrate their own achievements while considering those who have not achieved similar success.
32. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Through art and music, pupils are encouraged to gain an appreciation of the culture of the British Isles and Western Europe. Older pupils are able to undertake an activity week in France. In history, they learn about the rise of Islam. In religious education, pupils are given a basic understanding of the main world religions but, across the school, there is a lack of consistent planning to extend multi-cultural understanding.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The school makes considerable efforts to ensure that pupils are well looked after and that any problems that crop up are quickly identified and addressed. The conviction that pupils' ability to learn is closely linked to their physical and mental state underpins the comprehensive and very effective social and welfare systems that permeate this school. There is regular liaison with contributory lower schools and this helps to ensure that pupils settle down quickly once they arrive. Relationships at all levels are good. All members of staff have a sincere commitment to the wellbeing of the pupils and work hard on their behalf.
34. Procedures for promoting good behaviour and high standards of discipline are excellent. Implementation of the Positive Behaviour Policy gives pupils a 'voice' and there are several schemes where, in total confidence, they are able to give their view on various aspects of school life. Peer approval forms the basis of the system. For example, secret ballots are held to nominate individual pupils who have been especially considerate or helpful. Successful candidates receive a Chocolate Commendation Certificate and these names then go forward to a termly draw for a giant bar of chocolate. Pupils are also able to vote for peers who they think are 'cool' and, depending on how many others in the class agree, the nominated pupils receive a Cool Certificate. Secret bullying ballots are also held and these ensure that the school is kept in touch with bullying and is able to help victims and perpetrators. By asking pupils what they think and by combining and monitoring their responses, the school is able to keep in touch with what it is like to be a pupil. Thus the school is very well placed to monitor overall standards of behaviour and to track the conduct of particular groups or individuals who may be causing concern.
35. The award of 'Chocolate' and 'Cool' certificates also helps the school to monitor pupils' personal development. Credit points may be awarded if a pupil has tried particularly hard with his or her work and these count towards a graded system of 'Boff' certificates. By monitoring the award of these various certificates, along with merit marks and behaviour tickets, the school is able to maintain an overview of the way in which each pupil is developing personally and academically. These procedures are very effective and help the school to provide an environment where the psychological and physical conditions for learning are optimised. This has a beneficial impact upon the standard of pupils' work as is reflected in the significant improvement in attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 since the previous inspection, and is starting to have an effect in Year 7.
36. Procedures for monitoring attendance are unsatisfactory. Although registers record who is, and who is not, present during the morning and afternoon sessions, too many of the absences remain uncoded for too long. Many registers are peppered with unexplained absences and daily and weekly totals for individuals or whole classes are rarely calculated. No one has specific responsibility for monitoring attendance and there are no established procedures for following up absences, apart from class teachers' verbal requests for information.
37. Assessment arrangements for the end of Key Stage 2 are satisfactory, as are the reports sent home to parents, although occasionally in some subjects, for example, mathematics, comments give insufficient detail to parents about the progress made by children. Procedures for

assessing pupils' progress are generally satisfactory and are good in subjects such as science and English at Key Stage 2. Not all subjects, however, use these assessments to inform future planning, an issue identified in the last inspection report.

38. The assessment, recording and reporting policy, introduced following the last inspection, is now outdated. As a result, there is insufficient monitoring of assessment procedures to ensure effective practice in all subjects and to enable the school to monitor effectively the achievement of different groups of pupils. Pupils' performance is monitored well in subjects such as science and art throughout the school and in information technology at Key Stage 3.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

39. This school sees a close partnership with parents as fundamental to its drive to raise standards. It is keen to involve them as much as possible and parents confirm that the school is very 'user friendly'. In order to gauge parents' opinion, the school recently circulated a questionnaire that covered a wide range of issues within school life. Parents' views on homework have also been considered and a clear homework policy has recently been introduced. Parents appreciate this open approach and those who attended the pre-inspection meeting were positive about virtually every aspect of the school's provision.
40. Parents' involvement in their children's learning is satisfactory overall. Some parents come in once a week to help run the tuck shop and the parent teacher organisation raises money which has recently been used to provide additional books and new classroom furniture. Although there are very few parent volunteers during the school day, many keep in touch with what their children are learning through the pupils' homework diaries and homework books. These form a useful channel of communication, although the extent to which they are used varies widely. Parental attendance at the twice-yearly consultation evenings drops off sharply as the pupils move through the school. The result is that, while virtually all the parents of Year 5 pupils come along, only around half of the older pupils are represented. Where parents are involved with their children's learning, however, the effect is very beneficial.
41. The quality of information for parents is satisfactory overall. The school prospectus and governors' annual report make interesting reading but do not contain all the information they should. Pupils' annual reports provide parents with a broad outline of how their children are getting along, but they do not always provide a clear picture of exactly what pupils can do and the academic progress they have made over the last year.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

42. The school is well led and managed and the headteacher provides very good direction for further development to continue to raise standards. He has led staff and governors forward effectively in evaluating the school's performance and in developing a comprehensive development plan to improve teaching, the ways pupils learn, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to school and the standards they achieve. Staff generally have clearly defined responsibilities, although in physical education the allocation of management responsibilities is not entirely clear. Despite difficulties in appointing staff with appropriate experience and qualifications, all subjects are now adequately covered. The deputy head and key staff carry out their responsibilities effectively, staff morale is high and they work well together.
43. Improvement has been impressive in the standards of teaching since the last inspection and the headteacher, deputy head and staff are committed to further developments. The introduction of positive behaviour strategies, accelerated learning methods and changes in teaching that are linked to recognising how pupils learn are having positive effects that are starting to be evident in rising standards. The school recognises the need to continue to improve teaching and learning and has comprehensive plans to maintain its pace of development. For example, having recognised differences in levels of attainment between boys and girls, the school is teaching boys and girls separately for mathematics and English in Year 6. Teaching is regularly observed and evaluated, appropriate in-service training is organised and good practice is shared between staff. There is a high level of support amongst teachers. The school has evaluated the effects of behaviour management and its efforts to improve

pupils' attitudes and responsibility towards school and work. Nevertheless, there is still scope for further improvements. The school has not evaluated the quality of the special educational needs provision and the effects of withdrawing pupils from other subjects for support work. The introduction of a whole school literacy policy, to help literacy skills develop rapidly, has not taken place and the whole school assessment policy is not consistently implemented so that teachers can use the information to plan lessons and set targets for pupils.

44. Governors have provided good support for the headteacher and staff and have a clear purpose to raise standards through improved teaching and learning. However, some statutory requirements have not been fully met. Statutory requirements for governors to provide annual targets for the headteacher and deputy headteacher are not met. The school prospectus and governors' annual report to parents do not include appropriate information on attendance, comparisons of end of Key Stage 2 tests with national results or targets for the current year, details of access for disabled pupils and details of progress on the last inspection action plan. Statutory requirements for collective worship are not consistently met because assemblies do not always include reflection or prayer.
45. The school has sufficient, appropriately qualified and experienced teachers to cover the curriculum, except in religious education where there is shortage of expertise and qualifications. However, suitable support and training for religious education are being provided. There is an appropriate number of administrative and support staff who make a valuable contribution but the learning support assistants are not used and deployed as effectively as they could be, particularly in relation to support for pupils with special educational needs. The site manager provides a very valuable service in maintaining the good state of repair and cleanliness of the school.
46. The arrangements for the induction and training of newly qualified teachers are very good and have significantly improved since the last inspection. A structured, costed training programme has been established and every newly qualified teacher has a mentor. In-service training has been effectively focused on whole school targets to develop learning strategies and improve behaviour and this has had a positive impact upon teaching and learning. The structured programme of lesson observation by the senior management team has contributed to improvements in classroom practice but a formal appraisal system is not in place. Every teacher has a job description and personal targets.
47. The learning resources available within the school are generally sufficient for the curriculum and match the needs of pupils. In science, design and technology and French, provision is good. The school has a good number of computers that are well used. In religious education, the lack of visual resources, especially of artefacts and videos, impairs the quality of teaching and learning. There is a shortage of reading books in French and general resources in art.
48. The accommodation is satisfactory at present and the school has planned developments to improve and make better use of the available space. Plans are advanced to improve accommodation in the future, when increased numbers of pupils are expected to attend the school.
49. The school uses its staffing and physical resources well and plans include realistic costings and timings for future priorities. However, the use of support staff for pupils with special educational needs is not always efficient. The school has a budget deficit but this has been agreed with the local education authority and plans are in place to eliminate the deficit. Departmental planning reflects the aims of the school and there is evidence of careful financial planning at this level. Departments generally have a satisfactory level of resources, with the exception of art. Effective use has been made of specific grants in information technology to enhance the level of resources and the training of teachers. The number of history books in the school library has significantly improved by the use of a direct grant.
50. Taking into account improving teaching, rising standards, the behaviour and attitudes of pupils and the cost of educating pupils in the school, which is well below the national average, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

51. The headteacher, senior staff, teachers and governors are well aware of the need for the school to raise standards and are committed to planning for this to happen. The school development plan is extensive and includes most areas identified in the inspection for improvement. The school now needs to:
- a) **raise attainment by:**
 - introducing the literacy hour for teaching English throughout the school and establishing a whole school literacy policy (5, 20, 24, 43, 56, 61);
 - consistently providing work to challenge higher attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics, geography, history and religious education (3, 4, 16, 64, 90, 93);
 - implementing the National Curriculum for information technology at Key Stage 2 (2, 23, 95);
 - implementing fully the requirements of the local agreed syllabus for religious education (2, 3, 23, 122);
 - ensuring homework is provided regularly in geography, French and religious education (4, 21, 90, 105);
 - implement the school's numeracy policy so that numeracy skills are taught in all subjects where they are appropriate (6, 20, 24, 43, 68);
 - using assessment data to guide teaching and curriculum planning (37, 38);
 - b) **improve the provision for special educational needs by ensuring:**
 - that pupils are helped to catch up on work they miss when withdrawn for support (7, 22, 26);
 - individual education plans are used consistently by all teachers to plan appropriate work for special educational needs pupils (7, 22);
 - special educational needs provision, including the use of learning support assistants, is evaluated (43);
 - c) **improve the quality of assessment by:**
 - ensuring that the good practice seen in some subjects is used consistently throughout the school so that pupils are informed of their achievements and guided on how to make further progress (19); and
 - ensure that all marking is consistent and accurate, especially where marking is by other pupils, (19);
 - d) **establish procedures for monitoring and improving attendance, including an afternoon registration (12, 36);**
 - e) **ensure that the headteacher and governors work together to ensure that:**
 - suitable targets for the headteacher and deputy head are set (44);
 - the governors annual report and the school prospectus meet statutory requirements (44);
 - f) **ensure that assemblies meet statutory requirements to be provided daily and to include prayer or opportunity for reflection (29);**
 - g) **improve the management of physical education by clarifying the responsibilities of those staff teaching the subject (42, 118).**

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	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	8	54	32	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	380
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	20

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	90

English as an additional language	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	Y5 – Y8
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	19
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	5.8	School data	0
National comparative data	6.0	National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
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Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	1999	57	43	100
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National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	35	45	52
	Girls	27	29	35
	Total	62	74	87
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (54)	74 (54)	87 (60)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	40	50	52
	Girls	34	37	39
	Total	74	87	91
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (51)	87 (57)	91 (53)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	3
White	367
Any other minority ethnic group	6

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	8	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.12
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

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

Key Stage 2	23.8
Key Stage 3	24.42

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	589 441
Total expenditure	638 424
Expenditure per pupil	1 946
Balance brought forward from previous year	-15 218
Balance carried forward to next year	64 201

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	380
Number of questionnaires returned	110

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	60	35	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	32	2	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	48	8	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	45	15	0	2
The teaching is good.	49	49	1	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	45	10	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	64	30	5	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	25	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	35	48	14	0	4
The school is well led and managed.	62	37	1	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	38	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	61	5	0	5

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

ENGLISH

52. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests, 62 per cent of pupils achieved Level 4 and above, which is below the national average and below the average for pupils in similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was close to the national average. These results show an improvement on the 1998 results, when 54 per cent achieved the expected level. A comparison of results over the four previous years shows that boys' attainment is better than girls. Inspection findings show that there has been an improvement in pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2; it is now in line with the levels expected. This improvement is a result of the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. The overall attainment by the end of Year 8 is below that expected but, in Year 7, the impact of the literacy hour has resulted in higher than expected levels of attainment.
53. Standards in speaking and listening at both key stages are generally above those found in similar schools. The literacy hour at Key Stage 2 is used well to develop pupils' speaking skills and, by the time they are eleven, pupils report clearly on their work when explaining a story line in a new text. In the shared reading sessions they listen carefully to the teacher and to other pupils. In discussion they respect the ideas of others and respond to taking turns. The friendly ethos of the school and the very good relationships between pupils and teachers give pupils confidence to speak in front of others. By the time pupils reach Year 8, they not only listen carefully when others are speaking but they respond appropriately to what is being said and take other pupils' views into consideration when answering. This was evident when pupils in Year 7 were discussing the story 'Goodnight Mr Tom' in pairs, listening carefully to one another and speaking confidently and accurately when responding to the teacher's questioning. Pupils use appropriate technical language accurately, in art and science, for example.
54. Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with expectations and shows an improvement on the previous year's results. Pupils read unfamiliar words competently and use their earlier learned skills to sound unfamiliar words phonically. Although pupils understand the text and are able to describe the main characters in stories, they lack expression when reading aloud. They know how to use the contents of non-fiction books and use the Dewey classification system when researching information in the library. The older pupils, aged 13, read more advanced texts with expression, self-correcting when necessary and they understand what they read. They describe the main characters in Romeo and Juliet accurately and talk with understanding of the text. The higher attaining pupils have knowledge of authors and talk about their favourite books well. Although pupils talk with enthusiasm about the texts that they read during the literacy sessions few have taken the opportunity to read these more challenging texts in their entirety. Pupils with special educational needs experience difficulties with reading and do not have secure strategies to deal with unfamiliar words.
55. By the time pupils are eleven, their attainment in writing broadly matches that found in similar schools. Pupils have a sound knowledge of sentence construction, use punctuation accurately, have an understanding of inverted commas for speech and the possessive apostrophe, but these skills these are not always transferred to their writing. The presentation of their work is good. Work is completed in most cases in ink and handwriting is a joined legible script. Although pupils have an understanding of the use of similes and a firm grasp of paragraphing, their writing lacks extended sentences, particularly when describing characters and scenes in their creative writing. The school is aware of this and has extended the teaching time beyond the literacy hour to improve writing. The standard of writing of the older pupils is below the standard expected, although there is evidence of improvement in the present Year 7. Most of Year 8 pupils use punctuation accurately, including direct and reported speech, but their creative work lacks imagination and is mostly in simple sentences. The range of vocabulary used is below that expected from pupils in Year 8. Pupils write for a variety of audiences to include a critical comment about true and false facts in newspaper reporting and factual writing about World War 1. Higher attaining pupils achieve appropriately with the benefit of ability

setting. Pupils with special educational needs progress well with a combination of extra help from learning support staff and the setting procedure.

56. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good. They are keen to participate in discussion and respond well to teachers' questioning. Relationships are good and pupils collaborate well, for example in the shared reading groups and when involved in peer evaluation. Pupils' behaviour is good throughout the school. They are anxious to complete and produce work of good quality. The level of concentration and independence is good. For example, when one group was involved in a timed extended writing session, pupils concentrated well throughout one piece of work and when finished started another activity without teacher intervention. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and their teachers are good.
57. The overall quality of teaching is good; in over half of lessons it is good and, on occasions, it is very good. Teaching is satisfactory in about one third of lessons. In good lessons, planning is thorough and the purpose of the lessons is explained clearly to the pupils. This immediately captures pupils' interest, resulting in their settling quickly to work and making progress. Teachers' discipline is good. This allows pupils to respond to questioning without interruption; teachers are able to explain the objectives of lesson, and pupils start work immediately. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use questioning skilfully to ascertain pupils' understanding. Teachers set high expectations which are shared with the pupils. Teachers make it clear, with the aid of checklists, the levels that pupils achieve and ways to improve. This strategy is having a positive effect on learning, resulting in pupils re-drafting their work in order to improve. The department has adopted a 'peer marking evaluation' scheme. Although this procedure is contributing to pupils' progress in reading and writing it is not regularly monitored by teachers, resulting in basic spelling and grammatical mistakes that are not corrected. In the small proportion of lessons where teaching is less effective, lessons are not planned with sufficient detail or attention to the organisation, resulting in a lack of pace and challenge. On these occasions, pupils are unsure of the task and insufficient progress is made during the session. The assessment and marking of pupils' work are satisfactory, with comments on how to improve their work. Teachers provide good oral feedback in lessons, highlighting and praising good work. However, the procedure for the corrections of spelling is not consistent across the school.
58. The curriculum is broad and balanced, although opportunities for drama are limited. The setting of pupils and the single gender groups in Year 7 means that teachers provide effective support suited to the needs of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are given good support, providing a balance of intervention and direction. The leadership of the subject is good. The two co-ordinators both are committed to raising standards. There has been good support for staff and newly qualified teachers in the implementation of the literacy hour. There are now schemes of work for Key Stage 3, providing teachers with a planned programme to promote progression. Teaching has been observed and evaluated and followed by a detailed feedback which identifies areas for development. The library has a satisfactory selection of books, is well organised and easily accessible. It is used regularly by the pupils during lesson time and the lunch hour.
59. There has been some progress since the last inspection. Although the test results in English have been below average, there are signs of improvement since the implementation of the literacy hour and schemes of work. The quality of teaching has improved considerably, mainly due to the appointment of English specialists together with a greater emphasis on reading skills. Although writing is still below average, there are signs of improvement with the extra sessions for extended writing.
60. Contributions of other subjects to pupils' literacy skills are unplanned and inconsistent and there is no whole school policy on literacy. Nevertheless, in some subjects, there is some valuable work. In science, for example, pupils are encouraged to use technical language correctly in speech and writing and this makes a significant contribution to success in the subject. They are also expected to read books and worksheets for information. In art pupils are expected to analyse and describe their work.

MATHEMATICS

61. In the 1999 end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests, pupils' attainment was above the national average and boys performed better than girls. The attainment of pupils is above average when compared with similar schools. Since the last inspection, when results were below average, attainment in end of Key Stage 2 tests have continued to improve. Since 1996, boys have always performed above the national average for boys but from 1996 to 1998 girls were performing below the national average for girls.
62. Evidence from the inspection shows that by the end of Key Stage 2 the attainment of pupils is broadly in line with the levels expected. For example, lower attaining pupils are able to use mental recall of the 2, 3, 4, 5 and 10 multiplication tables. Pupils of average attainment use number patterns to solve problems competently, whilst higher attaining pupils convert decimals to fractions. All pupils obtain a good grounding in mental arithmetic. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress; for example, they are able to measure the perimeter of a rectangle. Higher attaining pupils do not always make satisfactory progress as a result of not being given work consistently suited to their needs.
63. By the end of Year 8, the attainment of pupils is broadly in line with the levels expected by this stage in Key Stage 3. For example, lower attaining pupils use a method for short division competently whilst pupils of average attainment reduce a fraction to its simplest form. Higher attaining pupils calculate percentage increases accurately and without using calculators. In their work on shape and space, the higher attaining pupils recognise two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional objects and calculate volume quickly and competently. Pupils of average attainment use the formula for the area of a rectangle correctly and lower attaining pupils calculate the perimeters of simple shapes. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress but higher attaining pupils do not always progress as much as might be expected because they are not consistently provided with work that stretches them sufficiently.
64. Since the last inspection, the school has implemented the National Numeracy strategy and this has reinforced the grounding in basic numeracy skills that was provided by the school. The progress of all pupils, with the exception of the higher attaining pupils is now satisfactory. Higher attaining pupils are not making the progress that might be expected because insufficient time is given to more difficult topics in lesson time and in homework.
65. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with the majority of teaching at Key Stage 2 being good and some excellent. In Key Stage 3, teaching is satisfactory overall; about one third of teaching is good, one sixth is very good and one sixth is unsatisfactory. Good teaching occurs when lessons progress at a brisk pace, resulting in the sustained interest of pupils and, when teachers use questions skilfully, helping pupils to develop their understanding. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs when bad behaviour goes unchallenged and also time management within the lesson is unsatisfactory so that pupils are unable to complete work set and to analyse their results. On the occasions when teaching is excellent, lessons have a strong focus, proceed at a fast pace with pupils fully engaged in the task, there is strong collaboration between pupils and the teacher's enthusiasm is infectious. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is good and they are able to explain clearly what is required. Lesson planning is very good in Key Stage 2 and good in Key Stage 3. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good and they are interested and work hard. Homework is generally satisfactory but it is not used sufficiently to extend the learning of pupils and often concentrates on mental arithmetic. Assessment is too reliant upon pupils marking their own work and there was no evidence that pupils' assessments are checked for accuracy.
66. The subject is very well managed. The mathematics co-ordinator gives clear direction to the work of the department and leads by example. The teachers within the department are committed to making the subject enjoyable and thereby encouraging all pupils to achieve. There is a good development plan which is being implemented, although it does not include developing literacy skills as a way to enable pupils to understand and explain their mathematical thinking. The introduction of teaching boys and girls separately in Years 7 and 8 is designed to enhance the performance of girls but it is too soon to evaluate the effects of this strategy. The schemes of work are an effective means of delivering the mathematics

curriculum and meeting statutory requirements. The current procedures for the monitoring of pupils' progress do not ensure that teachers can accurately assess the attainment and progress of all pupils and plan work suited to individual needs. Marking is not sufficiently thorough or frequent enough. Currently, the use of information communication technology in mathematics is unsatisfactory. Good use is made of display and charts to show key words for lessons.

67. There is an appropriate whole school numeracy policy. It is in draft form and has yet to be implemented. However, there is good practice within subjects; graphs are used effectively in science, French and design and technology; co-ordinates in geography; scale and patterns in personal and social education; measurement, calculations, spreadsheets and charts are used well in science, design and technology and information technology.

SCIENCE

68. In the end of Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests in 1999 the proportion of pupils obtaining Level 4 or higher was above average and the proportion of pupils obtaining the higher levels was broadly average. Boys performed better than girls and slightly better than boys did nationally. Girls' performance was similar to girls nationally. Compared with similar schools, pupils' attainment was average overall. Over the last three years, standards have risen and most significantly since 1997 during which time they improved at a faster rate than that seen nationally. Standards have improved since the last inspection.
69. Evidence from the inspection shows that by the end of Key Stage 2, standards achieved by pupils are average. Most pupils have a sound understanding of why the human body needs oxygen and why it requires more during exercise. Higher attaining pupils explain well how oxygen is used to release energy from food materials so that muscles can work harder. They also know why the heart pumps harder during exercise. All pupils have good investigative skills and show a sound understanding of the need to take accurate measurements and control several factors in experiments so that results are reliable. All pupils use technical language correctly, both in their speech and writing. Written work is often detailed and reveals good understanding, for example, of ideas about forces and gravity. Pupils regularly make well reasoned predictions before conducting investigations.
70. By the end of Year 8, standards are average overall. Pupils have a sound knowledge of the circulation of blood, the digestive system and the different food groups needed for the human body to function properly. A significant minority of pupils have an above average understanding of how light is refracted through glass, explain accurately how a spectrum is formed and use technical vocabulary associated with the properties of light correctly when explaining what they see happen in experiments. All pupils have good practical skills and write well independently, although Year 7 pupils have better writing skills overall. Some higher attaining pupils predict the outcomes of experiments using previously acquired scientific knowledge sensibly and the great majority of pupils explain their understanding competently, carry out practical work well, keep detailed experimental records and draw graphs to illustrate their results. Most pupils interpret experimental results competently. For example, they carry out simple chemical tests on a set of un-named white powders and, using their observations, explain why they identify the substances as they do. However, on occasions, some higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. For example, in practical work opportunities are occasionally missed to challenge higher attaining pupils to look for more sophisticated explanations.
71. Pupils' attitudes to work are good and they generally behave well and co-operate with teachers. They work well together, often in boy-girl groups, and collaborate effectively in experimental work. There are well-established laboratory routines and high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour, which pupils respond to well. For the most part, pupils take pride in their practical and written work. Concentration is good, mostly because of teachers' high expectations and the respect with which they treat pupils. On occasions, a few pupils lose interest, but sensitive and firm management of such situations by teachers results in pupils returning to work.
72. Teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. The teaching is good in just over half

of lessons and at Key Stage 2 is very good in about one third of lessons. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and this translates into good planning and high expectations for pupils. Lessons are well planned, with clear learning objectives that are regularly shared with pupils and are often on display in the classroom. Pupils' attention is drawn to these at the start of lessons and they are used to remind pupils of the purpose of the lesson. This keeps pupils focused on what they should be learning and plays a significant part in maintaining the pace of lessons. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the displayed outline of the purpose of an investigation into refraction of light and key vocabulary that pupils needed to use, meant that the teacher's regular referral to them helped to maintain pupils' concentration and focus on what they were investigating. Teaching methods are good and reflect the work done by staff to improve pupils' learning. Lessons have very well planned sequences of activities to sustain pupils' interest and move them through tasks at a good pace. In the best lessons, teachers use questioning effectively to prompt discussion, provide simple demonstrations and group or individual experiments and opportunities for pupils to talk about or explain their understanding. This is having a positive impact on helping pupils learn well. Many lessons start with recap sessions to help pupils apply previous learning or experience to new work and this is aiding pupils' retention of scientific knowledge.

73. Management of pupils' behaviour is good and is based on the school's positive behaviour policy; it is applied consistently in all lessons. Homework is used effectively by all teachers. Work is marked regularly and teachers know pupils well. Pupils also assess each other's work, but this does not always provide a clear picture of progress and attainment. Nevertheless, teachers provide targets for pupils to improve their work.
74. The quality of learning is good throughout and has benefited from the work teachers have done to improve teaching and provide a positive learning environment. The organisation of small groups for practical work and investigations so that boys and girls work together is having a positive effect on raising standards. Careful planning to provide continuity between lessons, high expectations and challenging work are helping pupils make good progress, both within lessons and over time. With the exception of Year 8, work arising from the introduction of the literacy hour is helping pupils express their understanding and knowledge successfully. Individual support for pupils with special educational needs is generally good and these pupils make good progress overall.
75. The subject is well managed and there is very clear direction for raising standards. The use of a laboratory for science lessons for most pupils is effective and contributes positively to pupils' success. Staff work well together and links with feeder and next schools are good. The results of National Curriculum tests are analysed effectively and used to plan work and to guide development planning. Information technology is planned into the curriculum, but is in the early stages of being used in the classroom. Teaching is observed and evaluated effectively by the head of department and there is a good level of support for staff. The ethos for learning is good and standards are rising.

ART

76. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards of attainment are above the national expectation. Pupils demonstrate a capability to research ideas through preliminary sketches and incorporate them into their projects. They talk confidently about their work and have a good knowledge of art and artists. For example, pupils talked well about the plant drawings of Pablo Picasso and William Morris and compared them with their own three dimensional plant models. At the end of Year 8, standards of attainment are above the expectations at this stage. Pupils have well-developed observational skills and confidently use the elements of line, shape, texture, pattern, colour and form in their work. Year 8 pupils discuss their still-life paintings critically and are able to identify well, and provide good descriptions of the work of artists who have painted still life compositions, for, example, Vincent Van Gogh. There is no significant difference in the standards of boys and girls attainment.
77. At Key Stage 2, the standards of attainment have improved since the last inspection when they were reported to be in line with the national average. The weaknesses at that time were that pupils did not investigate their ideas sufficiently, which limited their progress. They were also

found lacking in their capacity for personal study. There is an improvement in pupils' ability to investigate and research ideas, both in classes and through regular homework assignments. Pupils are now motivated by good schemes of work and challenging tasks, they are enthusiastic in their responses and are actively engaged in lessons. In Years 7 and 8, there has been very good improvement since the last inspection, when standards of attainment were below average. The previous weakness of too little challenge for the most able has been addressed. Extension activities and individual target setting are prepared in advance for all lessons. The quality of teaching was reported to be sound to unsatisfactory last time; it is now at least good and sometimes very good. Assessment procedures were criticised in the last report for not being closely matched to the National Curriculum. This has now been rectified through revised assessment procedures that follow the scheme of work. They fully meet National Curriculum requirements.

78. The quality of teaching is consistently good. The recent appointment of a specialist art teacher has led to an extension in the quality and breadth of the art curriculum. She is well qualified and uses her subject knowledge to promote good learning in pupils. This was observed in a Year 5 class where her skills and understanding of three-dimensional design were used to develop pupils' modelling ability. Lessons are well planned and closely follow the subject's schemes of work. They are introduced with clear and concise instructions and pupils are set challenging lesson objectives. For example, a Year 6 lesson was introduced through a whole class study of a collection of old and new objects. Pupils' ideas were promoted effectively through carefully considered questions on the differences between the objects. Pupils were encouraged to describe the different colours, patterns and textures of the objects prior to making observational drawings and paintings, and this prepared pupils well for the tasks they were set, and they applied their learning effectively. Teaching strategies are varied; they include whole class discussion, open-ended questioning and individual support. The strategies employed stimulate pupils' interest and motivation. Schemes of work provide a good balance of both National Curriculum attainment targets for art. Pupils' are knowledgeable about the artists they have studied and are able to show how this knowledge has helped them to improve the quality of their own work. In a project based on the story of 'The Borrowers', a Year 7 class studied the illustrative work of Aubrey Beardsley. Thoughtful lesson planning resulted in challenging projects and tasks that met the needs of all pupils and time and resources were used effectively. Good planning ensures that pupils of all abilities are secure in their learning, the majority of pupils enjoy art and behaviour is good. Special educational needs pupils achieve standards that are high in relationship to their prior attainment; they are provided with achievable targets and individual support. The weakness is in Year 5, where special educational needs and lower attaining pupils are withdrawn for basic skills learning; this has a marked effect upon their standards of attainment and attitudes. Learning is confirmed through a regular evaluation of work, including class discussion on how well the lesson objectives have been achieved. Group work, as observed in a Year 5 sculpture project, promotes good social skills and co-operative learning.
79. There is a lack of suitable information communication technology provision; this limits opportunities for CD-ROM and Internet research and the development of computer graphics. There is also a shortage of reference materials, including books, slides and videos on artists and art history.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

80. All pupils make good progress in design and technology and, by the time they are eleven, their standards of work are above those of most pupils of their age. Pupils continue to make good progress and by the end of Year 8 standards are above those expected of pupils of similar ages. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Standards in the subject compare favourably with other subjects in the school. Standards have improved since the last inspection.
81. By the end of Key Stage 2, the eleven year-olds understand the properties of common materials and can make appropriate choices when designing and making products. For example, they make sensible decisions when selecting materials or the ingredients in their

design and make assignments. Pupils understand the importance of planning, which includes deciding what tools they are going to use. The pupils measure, cut and join a variety of materials accurately, for example, when making a jigsaw puzzle. They assemble the components carefully when making a simple electronic game. They are familiar with different methods of joining fabrics and the methods of fabric printing developed when making the oven pad. All pupils appreciate the importance of evaluating the quality of their work when it is finished and do so with a high degree of competence.

82. By the end of Year 8, pupils are accustomed to working safely from designs which specify the tools and materials that will be needed for their models. Most pupils have a good knowledge of a variety of methods to fasten materials together, which includes pins, clips, glue and thread. Pupils work competently with tools, such as saws, drills and scissors. When making pizza they follow a recipe accurately, have ideas for adapting the basic recipe, know and practise the rules of basic food hygiene, work safely, evaluate different outcomes and draw conclusions about the impact of added ingredients, different finishes and shapes of the end product. When evaluating different types of pizza, they use appropriate vocabulary to describe products including their sensory characteristics, compare pizza in terms of appearance, flavour, texture and cost, understand that people have different preferences and that designers need to consider this when designing. All apply finishing techniques, such as painting carefully, to enhance the quality of their artefacts. A prime example of products finished to a high standard are the greetings cards designed and made using different fabrics.
83. Pupils have opportunities to disassemble products in order to identify their components and to use simple mechanisms such as electrical circuits. The development of literacy encourages pupils to use appropriate vocabulary when naming tools and describing what they are doing. For example, when analysing convenience foods, they list ingredients and write out step-by-step instructions for analysis, with strict observance of hygiene. Pupils' attitudes are good. All take a pride in their work and enjoy lessons. Pupils with special needs are as successful in making things as other pupils and this raises their self-esteem. Pupils share tools sensibly and help one another willingly, for example, by holding materials that need to be joined.
84. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. A good scheme of work and curriculum plan usefully guides teachers. Planning is detailed and thorough and provides challenges for all pupils. Suitable work is provided for those pupils who finish ahead of other pupils, so that they are encouraged to improve their work further. Learning objectives are consistent with the scheme of work and the programmes of study. Good use is made of practical demonstrations to ensure that pupils know how to proceed to the next stage. Teachers emphasise the need to work accurately and neatly. Time is given for questions and discussion during lessons to ensure that pupils are familiar and confident with the skills needed to complete projects. Teachers constantly assess pupils' progress ensuring that they use appropriate skills and techniques. Projects are assessed using National Curriculum level descriptors and marks recorded. Assessment information is used effectively to plan work. Teachers provide a wide range of materials, such as fabrics, card, wood or plastic for pupils' use.
85. Teaching is regularly monitored and feedback given, although the role of the co-ordinator is insufficiently developed in this respect. Accommodation is good. The curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.

GEOGRAPHY

86. A limited number of geography lessons were seen during the inspection week because of the nature of the school timetable. As well as the lessons seen, judgements are based on scrutiny of exercise books, of displays and other documents and interviews with teachers and pupils. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations. They have a basic knowledge of geographical vocabulary and use maps competently to develop their understanding. For example, pupils studying types of settlement used an Ordnance Survey map well in conjunction with aerial photographs and a field sketch to draw conclusions about the nature of attractions and facilities in holiday resorts. Pupils have satisfactory recall and understanding of most of their topics; many pupils have a familiarity with atlases and can use them to find information. However, recall of locations is sometimes weak; few pupils in a Year 6

group summing up their studies of the River Rhine were able to name more than one country which the river flows through. In the posters that were produced to 'attract' tourists to the area, not one included a map. By the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment is below what is expected of pupils this age. Pupils in Year 8 have a weak knowledge of place. For example, a group of pupils working on earthquakes and volcanoes were unable to locate volcanoes on a world map. In addition, they had limited understanding of this topic and were unable to explain why volcanoes occur in close proximity to each other. The presentation of work in books is largely below what is expected; in particular, the quality of maps and diagrams is inconsistent and rarely good. Pupils of prior low attainment lack the close guidelines required to produce such work to an acceptable quality.

87. Since the last inspection, standards of attainment have improved in Key Stage 2 but remain below what is expected at the end of Year 8.
88. At Key Stage 2 teaching is satisfactory, teachers display good subject knowledge and relate well to pupils. The pupils respond well and show a willingness to answer questions and concentrate on tasks set. Occasionally the aims of lessons are clearly displayed in the classroom and used as an effective focus for concluding plenary sessions, when what has been learnt is reinforced. Pupils are encouraged to work in pairs and small groups in many lessons and they respond well to this, taking responsibility for what they learn. However, work produced in exercise books is frequently scruffy and incoherent; most written work includes very little extended writing or imaginative work. Geography makes only an incidental contribution to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, because of a lack of planning. Assessment of work in lessons throughout the school is frequently by pupil peer group. While pupils like this method, its lack of precision and the limited recording of attainment by the teacher mean that it only feeds back into classroom practice in an unstructured fashion. Key Stage 3 teaching is also satisfactory - most lessons are well planned and include a variety of activities to help maintain interest. For example, a lively Year 8 session to introduce earthquakes took place in a science laboratory to allow physical demonstrations of both liquefaction and a volcanic eruption. The lesson also included extracts from a video and written tasks; this variety helped to keep a class, notably lacking in commitment, on task. Little homework was set or collected in lessons observed. Work is not always adapted to pupils' levels of attainment. While teachers are careful to give personal assistance to pupils of low attainment, those of high attainment are sometimes insufficiently challenged. There are insufficient fieldwork opportunities offered to pupils and this has a negative impact on learning.
89. The scheme of work for the subject now covers the national curriculum, an improvement since the last inspection. Resources are adequate. The teaching of the subject by non-specialist teachers is insufficiently supported or monitored by the subject co-ordinator so there are some variations in quality of teaching provision for pupils.

HISTORY

90. A small number of history lessons were seen during the inspection week because of the nature of the school timetable. As well as the lessons observed, judgements are based on scrutiny of exercise books, of displays and other documents and interviews with teachers and pupils. Overall, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with expectations. By the end of the key stage, pupils have developed good understanding of the differences between life in the past and that of the present. Pupils have a satisfactory grasp of chronology and most know that there are various ways in which the past is represented and can offer simple evaluations of each. For example, a Year 6 group examining the nature of pottery from Ancient Greece were able to distinguish representations of myths from those of everyday life and make sensible deductions about their significance to the historian. Attainment at the end of Year 8 is also in line with what is expected of this age range. Pupils have good grasp of techniques that could be used in developing an understanding of an historical era; in an introductory lesson to the English civil war, Year 8 pupils suggested a number of criteria for analysis of contemporary events and social conditions. Work in exercise books is generally well presented. On occasions, opportunities to challenge higher attaining pupils are missed and these pupils do not consistently produce the high standards of achievement that are expected.

91. Since the last inspection, the attainment of all pupils has improved; in particular older pupils are now capable of using historical source materials and considering their reliability.
92. Teaching of the subject at both key stages is generally good, lessons are well planned and a good mixture of resources is utilised. Pupils are closely questioned - particularly when earlier work is consolidated - and teachers' knowledge of the subject is good. Pupils are well managed and encouraged to work in pairs and small groups as appropriate; this is helped by the good relationships that exist. Opportunities to develop numeracy and literacy through the study of history are insufficiently taken because of a lack of co-ordinated planning. There are occasional opportunities for pupils to engage in extended writing, for example a Year 5 class wrote a letter home from a Victorian navvy describing the way of life based on a recent video. They showed good competencies in writing but the lack of planning for all levels of attainment meant that pupils of high attainment finished early and had no suitable extension work. History is taught to mixed ability groups but planning for the full range of levels of attainment is inconsistent; teachers sometimes focus their intervention to help lower attaining pupils at the expense of helping higher attaining pupils who are then insufficiently stretched. Pupils' work is assessed partly through their use of a self-assessment check list; these are stuck in books when each topic is started but a number of them have not been completed by pupils.
93. The scheme of work for the subject has been well developed, allowing sufficient opportunities for pupils to study the subject through the school. Planning of the curriculum shows good co-ordination so that there is continuity and progression in developing key skills. This addresses some of the criticisms levelled at history in the last inspection report. The co-ordinator provides good resources to help non-specialist staff teach the subject. Resources are adequate. The school has good textbooks and some appropriate artefacts but has no history room. This means that the computer dedicated to the subject is now inappropriately positioned so that pupils have only limited access to this resource.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

94. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 is below average because pupils are not taught information technology as a separate subject and there is no consistently planned provision within other subjects. By the end of Year 8 the attainment of pupils is above average.
95. By the end of Year 8 pupils are confident in using computers to communicate their ideas. For example, they access information to create a spreadsheet and produce good graphs of the information. Pupils are good at entering, amending, saving and retrieving information without help from the teacher. They use a word processing program well to write a business letter. They present their writing carefully and alter font styles, colour and text size with confidence. They develop good skills in using the equipment and good skills in using the mouse to give instructions to the computer. They are beginning to develop skills and techniques of combining text and images. At present, pupils do not have experiences of controlling devices, they do not have opportunities to recognise that devices can be controlled by a computer or write a sequence to produce a recognisable event. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the key stage, particularly in their skills in using computers and communicating ideas and information. By this stage in Key Stage 3, pupils make unsatisfactory progress in developing their understanding and knowledge of measurement and control. By the end of Year 8, pupils use computers with considerable confidence and overall are making good progress in developing their information technology capability.
96. There have been some improvements since the last inspection, but not enough because the subject is not taught in Key Stage 2. The school has implemented a scheme of work in Years 7 and 8, covering fully the programmes of study.
97. Pupils have particularly good attitudes to their work. They are well motivated, able to concentrate for suitable lengths of time and respond with enthusiasm. A strong feature is the way pupils are able to use computers independently without help from teachers. Pupils are very responsible and work well together on computers. They show particularly good respect for the equipment and, indeed, for each other. Concentration is always good and this contributes very

effectively to the standards pupils attain.

98. The quality of teaching is good overall. Strengths in teaching include the teachers having a mostly secure knowledge and understanding of information technology and planning that identifies clearly what pupils are to learn. The teachers' expectations are usually appropriately high and the work set is demanding. Computers are used well to give pupils a good experience of information technology. The effective way that the teacher manages lessons has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes. Good use is made of demonstrations to ensure that pupils know how to proceed to the next stage of their work. The teacher emphasises the need to work accurately. Time is given for questions and discussion during lessons to ensure that pupils are familiar and confident with the skills needed to complete projects. The teacher constantly assesses pupils' progress ensuring that they use appropriate skills and techniques. Projects are assessed using National Curriculum level descriptors and marks recorded. Assessment information is used effectively to evaluate and plan work. Teaching is regularly monitored and feedback given. Accommodation is good and there is a better than average number of computers. The curriculum makes a positive contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.
99. The school is not fulfilling the statutory requirement to teach the subject to all pupils in Years 5 and 6. However, arrangements are advanced to ensure that the proposed information technology scheme of work is implemented in September 2000.
100. Resources are good. The new computers provide the opportunity for all pupils to have access to the full range of activities, including the use of CD-ROM and the Internet.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

101. At the end of Key Stage 2, where a modern language is not a National Curriculum requirement, achievement is in line with what can be reasonably expected for beginners learning French for one hour a week. Pupils use the French alphabet confidently, they have well-developed listening skills and have basic speaking skills. By the end of Year 8, pupils achieve satisfactory levels for this stage in their learning, and standards are good in listening, satisfactory in reading and speaking and unsatisfactory in writing. Pupils identify key points about transport from a tape played slowly and substitute individual words about methods of transport orally. All pupils understand a small number of phrases in the past tense.
102. In Year 6, pupils understand the communicative purpose of language learning and develop confidence in speaking and working in French. In Year 7 and 8 pupils work well independently on computers. Lower attaining pupils read individual words and submit their entries for assessment after several attempts. Higher attaining pupils move through the initial exercises at a fast pace: they understand short paragraphs and match phrases to make sentences. In both key stages, pupils understand more French than they can use, either orally or in writing. Presentation skills are often poor in both key stages. Those pupils with special educational needs achieve lower standards than they should as a result of constant disruption as they are removed from lessons for extra support. The highest attaining pupils achieve appropriate levels as a result of the computer programmes in use and the additional work provided by the teacher.
103. Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable improvement in standards in French. With the appointment of the new co-ordinator, teaching and learning relate directly to National Curriculum requirements and are more focused on ensuring that pupils understand and can use French.
104. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to good but is good overall. The department fully meets its first aim in its mission statement, to teach French in an enjoyable and accessible way. There are significant strengths, which are enhanced by the positive attitudes and good behaviour of pupils. Teaching is good in Year 6, where the enthusiasm and commitment of both teacher and pupils result in a good start to language learning. In both key stages, classroom management is very good. The teacher has clear aims and objectives for lessons, which ensure that pupils cover large amounts of work and make good progress in many

lessons. A range of resources and activities is used to engage the pupils' interests. Very occasionally, English is used, unnecessarily restricting the development of listening skills. Similarly, the teacher does not always ensure that pupils produce the language, which has been taught, which limits progress, particularly in writing. Lessons taught in the computer room do not always make best use of the time available. Too little homework is given to ensure that best use is made of home time to consolidate and practise work covered during lessons.

105. The subject is well managed and the co-ordinator has produced good schemes of work and lessons plans which ensure continuity and progression. Teaching has been observed and evaluated by senior staff and constantly revised in the light of suggestions made. There has been little modern language in-service training and, although area meetings for other middle schools are useful, the co-ordinator has insufficient access to specialist language teachers to share ideas and discuss the work. Since there is no requirement for statutory assessment in the subject at this level, there is little analysis of pupils' attainment, although the co-ordinator is effectively monitoring how pupils perform at Key Stage 3 and receives feedback on pupils' performance in the upper school. There is very good accommodation for language learning and resources are good, with the exception of reading books either in the classroom or in the library. Provision for the use of new technology is particularly good.

MUSIC

106. The head of the music department left the school at the end of the winter term. During the week of the inspection, as an interim arrangement, lessons were taken by two music specialists from the neighbouring upper school. Evidence of pupils' previous work was limited; for example, recordings of compositions or performance were not available for scrutiny. Judgements about pupils' achievement, therefore, have been made from examination of written work and discussions with pupils. Previous lesson plans and assessment records were not available for analysis.
107. At the age of 11, the standard of attainment is in line with that normally seen. Pupils can accurately identify instruments and place them into the appropriate families. They have good rhythmic qualities, maintain a steady pulse and imitate, with accuracy, complex rhythms. Pupils have sound technical knowledge of basic music theory and technical vocabulary and can play simple melodies following formal notation. Pupils have a good understanding of the use of a graphic score and the sound clusters that they used when creating a particular mood in composition work. However, when performing as an ensemble, pupils fail to listen carefully to other performers, resulting in performances that lack synchronisation and pulse.
108. At the age of 13, there is a much wider spread of attainment. While the level achieved by most pupils is that which is typically seen, small numbers of pupils, in particular those who play a musical instrument, achieve higher. Pupils' performance skills are sound. They have an understanding of primary chords and transfer this knowledge effectively. This was most noticeable when pupils were performing a blues melody. Here, pupils placed the correct chord to the melody, with some pupils adding a moving bass line sequence. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge of different styles of music and can name composers from different periods and also music from non-Western European cultural tradition, such as Indian music.
109. Pupils show a keen interest in the subject and participate well in whole class discussions and activities. They settle to pair and group tasks quickly and work well when unsupervised during the practice sessions. When listening to performances, they offer sensible comments and often applaud a good performance.
110. Although it was the first occasion that teachers had met the pupils, they quickly established a good relationship and progress in the sessions was good. In the lessons observed the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory. In three quarters of lessons it was good. Teachers have good knowledge and use their skills well to interest the pupils. Lessons move at a good pace and include a variety of activities. Good warm-up procedures at the beginning of lessons prepare pupils for the tasks. Clear explanations, good organisation and discipline meant that pupils fully understood the task and made progress during the session.

111. The scheme of work is generally broad and balanced. Pupils have access to a range of instruments and musical equipment and experience a wide range of musical styles. Computers were not used during the inspection and there was no evidence of their use from the work scrutiny or in discussion with pupils. The accommodation of the department is good, with ample quiet areas for pupils to practise.
112. The school choir is of a very good standard. The quality of the singing is good and pupils are confident to sing in two parts maintaining both pitch and pulse. Clear diction and quality of singing led to an overall musical performance. Pupils enjoy the experience and they are proud to take part. Some pupils are withdrawn from music lessons for extended periods of time to receive extra tuition in core skills and do not have access to their entitlement of music lesson.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

113. Pupils' attainment is average by the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils have good knowledge of the rules of games and the tactics appropriate to the games they play. Pupils learn to use appropriate hockey and football skills in attack and defence and work well together as members of small teams, with increasing control and awareness of space. Standards at age 13 are average and the performances of pupils in lessons is generally good. Gymnastic standards are average; pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the sequencing of movements. They use technical language accurately in describing their movements. A significant number of pupils show good physical control and fluidity in their movements. However, work lacks variety and technical difficulty, especially tasks requiring weight on hands. Pupils do not generally perform to their potential because their achievement is restricted by a lack of control and appropriate attention to gymnastic protocol.
114. The department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and has been successful in maintaining satisfactory standards. Recent developments in producing criteria for assessing achievement make a significant impact on recording pupils' progress as they pass through the school. This has yet to impact on standards. Development planning has not significantly prioritised key issues and there has been minimal monitoring of teaching and the curriculum to raise standards significantly.
115. Teaching is generally good. Games lessons are well planned to foster pupils' understanding of space and to develop controlling and protecting skills in ball games. Effective organisation of most lessons ensures pupils remain interested and sustain their concentration to efficiently complete their work. Teachers generally assess pupils' skills accurately and use the information to plan their teaching and set targets for improvement for most levels of attainment. However, on occasions, previous learning is not taken into account. For example, in a Year 7 gymnastics class, the teacher does not consider previous experiences and achievement and pupils under-perform. Occasionally, the pace in some lessons is slow and repetitive tasks and failure to complete planned activities results in some pupils not making sufficient progress. Progress is further restricted by a lack of planned activities to cater for the least and most able pupils. Good explanations and effective questioning by teachers result in good progress in relevant skills and techniques. Pupils' progress is aided by teaching that encourages pupils to evaluate their own performance.
116. Pupils respond positively to most teaching and they concentrate well throughout lessons. Learning is encouraged in most lessons because of collaborative group work and positive relationships. In a gymnastics lesson, unsatisfactory self-control and behaviour resulted in unsatisfactory progress being made.
117. The department successfully encourages a high level of participation. Standards improve as a result of extra-curricular practices, house matches and inter-school competition. Work is planned on a half-termly cycle and provides a good structure to ensure that teaching provides good progression in the acquisition of physical skills. However, the absence of an assessment framework means that effective planning of work to ensure pupils make appropriate progress is limited. Management of the subject is shared and responsibilities are not clear, so there is little effective monitoring and evaluation of performance.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

118. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment is below the expected level. Pupils lack the knowledge of beliefs and practices, in Christianity and other religions, specified in the agreed syllabus. Pupils are good at exploring their own experience but have not learnt how to interpret and apply religious ideas to their own lives. By the end of Year 8, the attainment of pupils is still below expectations. Pupils often contribute effectively in oral work but their writing skills are undeveloped. They do not write fluently in their own words about the people and events of religion.
119. The attainment of pupils has declined since the last inspection. Pupils do not learn enough about Christianity and the other religions studied. Written tasks remain insufficiently challenging and so do not enable pupils to reach appropriate levels of achievement. The work in pupils' files has not been carefully thought through and does not enable pupils to progress towards the learning outcomes specified in the agreed syllabus.
120. Teaching, as observed in lessons, is satisfactory. Teachers manage pupils well and insist on high standards of behaviour. Lessons are planned well with a good sequence of activities. In oral work the approach is open-ended and so engages pupils at different intellectual levels. The time available is used well and lessons have a brisk pace. But there are also weaknesses. Pupils' progress is impaired by the lack of depth and detail in teachers' knowledge of religions. Lack of competence in the teaching of writing skills is detrimental to all, but particularly to higher attaining pupils. The absence of procedures for assessment prevents the reporting of progress to pupils and the setting of targets for them.
121. The school has not constructed a programme of study or devised schemes of work. The learning outcomes specified in the agreed syllabus for each key stage are not used. The school development plan makes no reference to the weaknesses identified in the previous report but does indicate that religious education is due for evaluation in the next academic year. The teacher now managing the subject is new to the position and is receiving suitable support and training. Aspects of teaching show emerging strengths but weaknesses in the curriculum and management have led to a decline since the last inspection.