

INSPECTION REPORT

**RICHARD COATES CHURCH OF ENGLAND
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Ponteland

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122370

Headteacher: Mr John Daniels

Reporting inspector: Mr B. Jones
18462

Dates of inspection: 29th April – 1st May 2002

Inspection number: 189708

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed Secondary

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Thornhill Road
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Revd. Dr Michael Jackson

Date of previous inspection: 7 October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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18462	B. Jones	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and pupils' achievements. How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further
9132	J. Godfrey	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 parents?
30690	G. Allison	Team inspector	Geography Information and communication technology	
30911	J. Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
22531	D. Burbidge	Team inspector	Science Equality of opportunity	
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
21971	J. Glennon	Team inspector	English	
20192	T. McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education	
1845	R. Tweed	Team inspector	History Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
1340	D. Wigley	Team inspector	Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
8341	W. Wimshurst	Team inspector	Mathematics	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Richard Coates school is a 9 to 13 mixed middle-deemed-secondary school, located in Ponteland. The school is a voluntary-aided Church of England school. Its pupils are drawn from the village, local rural areas and from the west of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This represents a wide variety of social backgrounds. The school is bigger than average middle schools, having 465 pupils on roll. There are approximately equal numbers of boys and girls. On entry to the school, pupils have a wide range of attainment levels, but overall are average. In total, four per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is well below the national average. There are around five per cent of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and five pupils with English as an additional language who are at an early stage in acquiring English. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is 13.5 per cent, which is well below the national average, and 1.5 per cent of pupils have statements of special educational need, which is below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and effective school and provides good value for money. The quality of the leadership of the new headteacher, and the governors is good and they are successful in giving a clear educational direction to the work of the school, in line with its mission statement. The teaching is good and pupils achieve well to attain above average standards. Pupils develop very positive attitudes towards their studies and they behave very well. The school applies the principles of best value effectively to its use of resources and the school is well organised.

What the school does well

- The new head teacher and the governing body are providing a clear educational direction for the school's work in line with its mission statement.
- Standards are well above average in English and music and pupils achieve well in most subjects.
- The quality of teaching is good and results in good learning.
- Pupils' very good behaviour, the strength of relationships that exist and pupils' very positive attitudes ensure that there is a good learning atmosphere in lessons.
- The school provides very well for pupils' personal development.
- The curriculum is enriched by very good provision of additional activities, particularly in music and sport and from the links with the local and wider community.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics in Years 5 and 6.
- Consolidate the procedures recently introduced to measure the progress that pupils make through the school.
- Establish a more consistent approach to evaluating the work of departments.
- Use reports to parents more effectively to inform them about the progress pupils make in relation to National Curriculum levels.
- Extend the good practice that exists in the school to all subject areas in setting and marking homework.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has shown satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection in October 1996. Standards have improved and pupils' National Curriculum test results in Year 6 have risen in English and science and been maintained in mathematics at a level in line with the national average. The work seen in the inspection confirms these standards, showing that

pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. The quality of teaching has improved and is good overall. The school is responding effectively to the key issues in the previous report since the appointment of the new headteacher and has good capacity and commitment to improve further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	B	C	A	C
mathematics	C	C	C	E
science	B	B	B	C

Key

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

The majority of pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. By the age of 13, the standards that pupils attain are above average and this represents a good level of achievement. In the Year 2001 National Curriculum tests, the results of pupils at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English, above average in science and average in mathematics. The results overall were below average when compared to schools having a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The trend in results in recent years is in line with the national trend. The school's targets for 2001 were exceeded in English and science but not reached in mathematics.

In the work seen in the inspection, the standards of work in Year 6 are in line with recent National Curriculum test results and are above the national average. In English, standards are well above average. These pupils achieve very well, having entered the school with average levels of attainment in English. In science too, pupils' attainment on entry was broadly in line with the average. They attain above average standards and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. In mathematics, pupils achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their starting points on joining the school. In other subjects in the curriculum, standards are well above average in music, above average in information and communication technology (ICT) and physical education and broadly average in all other subjects. Pupils achieve very well in music and well overall across the range of subjects. There are no National Curriculum tests for the oldest pupils in the school in Year 8. The level of attainment seen in the inspection in English was well above average standards nationally, above average in science and broadly average in mathematics. In other subjects, attainment is well above average in music, and above average in all other subjects other than geography and history where attainment is broadly average. Overall, pupils in Years 7 and 8, achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment and very well in music.

Standards of numeracy are broadly average. Literacy standards are above average. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well as do higher attaining pupils and those identified as gifted and talented. In the work seen in the inspection, there were no consistent or significant differences in attainment between boys and girls. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well, in line with their peers. The

leadership and management have improved the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection leading to an improvement in standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show enthusiasm in their lessons. They enjoy coming to school and taking part in out-of-school activities. The learning atmosphere in lessons is good as a result.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good behaviour in and out of lessons. Pupils know right from wrong and understand the boundaries of acceptable conduct.
Personal development and relationships	Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Relationships with each other and with their teachers are very good. The school provides pupils with very good opportunities to exercise responsibility and they respond very well
Attendance	Satisfactory. Levels of attendance are broadly in line with the national average.

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.

The quality of teaching, and the learning that results, are good throughout the school and across most subjects. Teaching is good or better in three quarters of lessons and very good in around a quarter. The teaching seen was at least satisfactory in all but two lessons observed and excellent teaching was seen in four lessons. This is an improvement since the previous inspection and is the main reason for the improved levels of achievement of pupils.

The skills in literacy are taught well in English and good contributions are made by other subjects in the curriculum. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory and satisfactory contributions are made by subjects across the curriculum. The majority of other subjects in the school curriculum are now using ICT satisfactorily to teach basic skills.

Throughout the Years 5 to 8, the teaching is very good in music. It is good in most other subjects, including the core subjects of English and science. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in mathematics, geography and history.

Teachers know their pupils well and know their strengths and weaknesses. This leads to good learning as pupils are encouraged to work hard and sustain their level of concentration. Teachers plan effectively to ensure that the different needs of pupils are met and pupils are stretched and achieve well. The relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and pupils usually behave very well as a result, creating a very good learning atmosphere in most lessons. Teachers manage their classes very well and use appropriate methods and organisation to ensure effective learning. They use the time available to them to good effect by employing a range of approaches best suited to the activities they teach. Teachers sometimes use homework in a satisfactory manner to further support pupils' learning, but this is an area where greater consistency is needed. Similarly the approach to marking pupils' work is not consistent and needs further improvement to match some of the very good

practice that takes place. Specialist teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of their subject and where non-specialist teaching takes place, standards are not adversely affected because teachers plan well and receive good levels of specialist support. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs receive good teaching. High attaining pupils are taught well and increasingly are challenged to ensure that they make good progress and achieve well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school makes good provision for pupils with special educational needs and they make good progress throughout the school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils with English as an additional language, and they achieve well.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is very good. The ethos of the school is one where respect for the individual is promoted effectively, in line with the school's aims.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The standard of pastoral care for pupils is satisfactory. The provision for health and safety is satisfactory. The procedures for child protection are thorough and personal support and guidance are good
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Parents are very satisfied with the school and make a positive contribution to their children's learning. The school's partnership with parents is good, but the quality of information they receive about the progress made by pupils needs further improvement.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership and ensures a clear educational direction for the school's work. Key staff are new to their roles and are establishing an effective contribution to the running of the school. They have good levels of commitment and energy in pursuing continued improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors have a good understanding of the school's work and they are mainly effective in fulfilling their responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is an improving feature of the school's work. It is currently satisfactory and systems and strategies are being established to improve further.
The strategic use of resources	Good. There are clear priorities, which are supported by sound financial planning. The principles of best value are applied satisfactorily. Learning resources are satisfactory and there is an adequate level of staffing. The accommodation is good in most respects and used well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents like the caring and friendly working atmosphere of the school. • They find staff approachable and are comfortable with questions or problems. • Parents are happy that their children like school and that behaviour is good. • They believe the school has high expectations and helps their children to become mature and responsible. • Parents like the good links with feeder schools that help children settle well in Year 5. • They appreciate the high level of staff commitment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high proportion of parents feel there is insufficient homework. They would like to see more consistent and effective use of homework and better use of the homework diary. • Parents of Year 5 pupils would like an earlier, interim report. • The behaviour (and safety) of pupils who travel on school buses gives rise to some concern.

The inspection team endorses the positive views expressed. Inspectors agree that homework, and the homework diary are not used well enough by all subjects. The team found that the school makes determined efforts to ensure good behaviour on the buses. The quality of reporting to parents needs to be improved.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. On entry to the school, the levels of attainment of pupils span a wide range and include some high attaining pupils, but overall are broadly average. By the age of 13 when pupils leave the school, they attain standards above the national average and this represents a good level of achievement.

2. In the Year 2001 National Curriculum tests, the results of pupils at the end of Year 6 were well above average in English, above average in science and in line with the average in mathematics when compared with schools nationally. The results were in line with the average in English and science, but well below average in mathematics when compared to schools with a similar proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The results in the three subjects as a whole, as measured by the average points score was above the average of all schools nationally, but below the average of similar schools. The trend in results since the previous inspection has been broadly in line with the trend nationally. In the four years of Key Stage 2 that culminate in these National Curriculum tests, (Years 3 to 6), two years are spent in other local schools and two years at the middle school. The school's targets for improvement in 2001 were challenging and the school exceeded the targets in English and science, but failed to meet the target in mathematics.

3. In the work seen in the inspection, pupils in Year 6 are working at a level comparable to the recent results in National Curriculum tests. For example, standards in English are well above average overall. This represents very good achievement because pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. In mathematics, the work of Year 6 pupils is in line with national averages and this represents satisfactory achievement when account is taken of their average levels of prior attainment. In science, standards of work in Year 6 are above average and pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points, which were at the average on entering the school.

4. The new headteacher and senior management team have identified an issue around the relative under-achievement of the highest attainers in tests in past years. As a result they have instituted a number of initiatives, particularly, but not exclusively in mathematics, to tackle the problem and raise the level of results in National Curriculum tests. These initiatives are recent and the impact upon standards in the current Year 6 group is therefore limited. Pupils achieve very well in English throughout the school because of the very good quality of teaching they receive, particularly in Years 5 and 6. In science too, pupils in Years 5 and 6 receive very good teaching and this lays a good base for their work in Years 7 and 8. In mathematics pupils do not achieve as well as they do in the other two core subjects. This is, in part at least due to the large number of teachers involved in teaching mathematics, which has resulted in a lack of consistency in approaches to homework, marking and the assessment of pupils. In English, pupils have benefited from the contributions made by all subjects to developing literacy skills. As the positive effects of the National Numeracy policy are making an impact, so the contributions of other subjects to raising pupils' numeracy skills are starting to make to take effect.

5. In the work seen in the inspection in Years 5 and 6, attainment is well above average in music, above average in ICT and physical education and broadly in line with the average in other subjects. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are overall broadly average. However, there is a wide range of attainment and the many different feeder schools provide very different levels of experience in these foundation subjects. In these early years,

pupils overall make at least satisfactory progress. Many make good progress and overall achieve well in art and design, design and technology, ICT and physical education, and very well in music.

6. There are no National Curriculum tests for the oldest pupils in the school in Year 8. The level of attainment seen in the inspection in English was well above average standards nationally, above average in science and broadly average in mathematics. In other subjects, attainment is well above average in music, and above average in all other subjects except geography and history where attainment is broadly average. Overall, pupils in Years 7 and 8 achieve well in relation to their earlier attainment and very well in music.

7. In music, the high standards attained are due to the very good teaching and the very positive attitudes that pupils have. This is also the case in English, particularly in Years 5 and 6 where the positive impact of the literacy strategy has also helped pupils attain the high standards they do. In these two areas, assessment is used very effectively and pupils are made very aware of just what they have to do to improve their levels of attainment further. Pupils achieve at least satisfactorily in all subjects and across the age range. Where attainment is not as high, pupils do not receive the precise information they need from teachers' marking. There is some inconsistency too in the effective use of homework and it is noticeable that in subjects such as science where homework is planned and marked carefully, pupils benefit and achieve well. Where this is the case, pupils' learning is considerably enhanced as the work they do in the classroom is extended and they learn to become more independent in their development as effective learners. Overall, pupils make good progress through the school and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

8. In the work seen in the inspection, there were no consistent or significant differences in attainment between boys and girls. Pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and achieve well. Throughout their time in the school, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. This matches the progress made by pupils generally. They make good progress in English, French, science, music, physical education and ICT. They make satisfactory progress in mathematics, history and geography. In design and technology and art and design they make good progress in practical aspects of the subjects, and satisfactory progress in theory. In English, they communicate well in speech, but read hesitantly and write with some basic technical weaknesses. There is some limited additional provision for pupils recently identified as gifted and talented. Initiatives have been taken to extend and challenge these pupils in an attempt to meet their particular needs and to raise standards further.

9. Standards of literacy are above average. Most pupils speak confidently and articulately on entry to the school and their speech grows in maturity as they get older. For example, they learn to use the right technical language in all their subjects. Even the lowest attaining pupils know how to adapt their speech to suit the occasion. Similarly, pupils start in Year 5 with average reading and writing attainment. They make very good progress and are well above average by Year 8. By then most pupils have mastered the higher reading skills and are beginning to analyse critically what they read. They organise their writing well and enjoy using different techniques to make it more interesting to the reader. Even the lowest attaining pupils understand simple texts and write well enough to be understood.

10. Pupils enter the school with numeracy standards that are broadly average and these standards are maintained as pupils pass through the school. Number skills are developed well and this results in pupils doing calculations confidently and accurately. In science and physical education, for example, pupils use percentages effectively. Pupils' measuring skills are developing well. In design technology pupils can estimate food quantities accurately and use scales confidently. In science pupils make accurate measurements using balances and

measure lengths and heights accurately in experiments. In art and design pupils use the idea of symmetry and enlargement well in their drawing. Data handling skills are satisfactory. In geography higher attaining pupils can interpret information from population pyramids accurately. Graphical skills are regularly reinforced during lessons. Computers are used appropriately to produce graphs of information although in science the drawing of graphs by hand is limited.

11. One of the problems that the school has to deal with is the lack of information about the prior attainment of pupils when they enter Year 5 at the age of 9. This means that the school has insufficient good information about pupils' attainment levels that can be used to measure the progress these pupils make and how well they are achieving. The school has started to develop its procedures to obtain information about pupils' attainment so that it can produce accurate targets for improvement. This work needs to be developed further so that target setting becomes more embedded in the school's practice.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils have consistently very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour in lessons and around the school. When pupils start in Year 5 they enjoy the benefit of their own accommodation. This helps them to settle into the school and the benefit is seen as they develop good learning routines and very positive attitudes are engendered. The behaviour of these pupils is exceptionally good as they respond to the good and often very good teaching provision they receive. This is particularly important because the school draws its pupils from a wide area and many different schools, including pupils from first schools catering for the age range 5 to 9 years and primary schools dealing with pupils 5 to 11 years.

13. In lessons, pupils of all ages listen very well to teachers, respond well to questions and follow directions very well. They concentrate very well on activities and persevere throughout lessons. Pupils are usually very well motivated. In music they enjoy singing and Year 6 pupils performed solos confidently in one lesson. A high proportion learn to play an instrument and make assured performances in whole school assemblies. Pupils also enjoy preparing food. Pupils in Year 5 had good individual ideas of what constituted a healthy sandwich and spoke enthusiastically about what they were doing. Pupils have evident confidence in their own ability. In spite of these very good attitudes, pupils often rely too much on learning from teachers and do not do enough work to carry out independent investigations, particularly at home.

14. Behaviour in lessons is nearly always very good and sometimes excellent. Pupils behave very well at break times and can be trusted to carry out responsibilities around school with minimum supervision. They know how to behave properly and respond very well to the high expectations of teachers. Poor behaviour is rare, although occasional incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour are reported on the school buses. Behaviour at the regular school discos is very good. There were no exclusions in the previous school year, but last term one pupil was excluded for a fixed period after a series of incidents. Pupils are very polite to visitors and teachers. They look after resources and equipment very well and respect their school environment.

15. Relationships across the school are very good. The school succeeds very well in its mission statement to encourage pupils' awareness of belonging to a community with a shared purpose and commitment in which the rights of others are respected. Pupils like their teachers and form very good constructive relationships with each other. They work very well together in pairs and groups, listen sympathetically and respect each other's feelings, values and beliefs. Pupils celebrate the diversity of cultures that exists within their midst. Ethnic

groups in the school mix well, both in the classroom, on the playground, and at school social events. The very varied backgrounds of pupils merge and are lost within the school community. Pupils in Year 5 enjoy inventing their own language and culture of Lusaka and this promotes an understanding of differing cultures. This is a very caring school and pupils have a good understanding of the impact of their actions on others. Pupils and parents value the friendly working atmosphere. Pupils take good care of each other and are particularly supportive of new pupils joining the school. Pupils share resources very well in ICT and food technology for example and cooperate very well in all activities, whether in friendship groups or those dictated by teachers. Their team and community spirit is evident in musical performances. Other pupils are very appreciative of performances and usually applaud spontaneously. They are very sensitive to the contributions of others. There is very little bullying in school, but occasional incidents are dealt with quickly, sensitively and effectively.

16. Pupils with special educational needs display very good attitudes and behaviour. They are polite and respond well to their teachers. They participate fully in all lessons, joining in group discussion and presentations to the rest of the class. They work with sustained effort and concentration and show real enthusiasm for their work.

17. Pupils' personal development is very good. They enjoy the many opportunities they have to show initiative and take responsibility. They perform routine duties, such as returning registers, moving class furniture and helping teachers, effortlessly. Each form has a representative on the newly formed pupil council who take their duties very seriously. They look after the class suggestions box and take comments to council meetings. The council has helped to develop a 'Charter of Rights', which is being used to improve behaviour on the school buses. Older pupils act as librarians and run the school tuck shop. A very high proportion of pupils are involved in the wide range of musical and sporting activities outside lessons. Over eighty per cent of pupils take part in at least one sporting activity and a good number belongs to the orchestra, instrumental groups or choir. More than a hundred pupils took part in musical and gymnastic performances on Open Evening. Pupils enjoyed participating in a performance of 'The last flowers on earth'. A good number of pupils join the residential outdoor activities visits to Ford Castle and High Borran as well as an exchange visit to France. The annual ski trip to Voss in Norway is popular. Six pupils took part in an exchange to Italy last year. Pupils have a very good awareness of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and regularly raise large sums of money each year for a good variety of local and national charities such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Children in Need. Several pupils took part in the Ponteland Lions Swimathon and they also raise money for charities supported by the local Rotary Club. The pupils are very good ambassadors for the school within the community.

18. Attendance last year dropped to slightly below the national average for schools of this type, but is now broadly in line with the average. The large numbers of rural families in school that were directly affected by the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in the spring term 2001 were the main cause of this decline. A significant number of pupils were not sent to school for a period of time for fear of spreading the disease. Attendance is adversely affected by a small number of pupils with unsatisfactory attendance, a few with long-term medical problems. The school recognises a small amount of truancy, but this is not recorded accurately in the registers. Punctuality is generally good but is occasionally affected adversely by the vagaries of the buses that are used by large proportion of the pupils to get to school. Punctuality between lessons is mostly good and lessons start promptly, although some teaching time is occasionally lost in science lessons when pupils arrive late or leave early.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. The quality of teaching is good overall and there is a significant amount of very good teaching and some of teaching that is excellent. As a result, pupils acquire good learning habits and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Teaching was good or better in around three quarters of lessons seen and very good or better in over a quarter of lessons. In four lessons the teaching was excellent. One lesson was judged to be poor and one unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection with a greater proportion of good and very good teaching. There was little variation observed between the years and the consistency of good teaching across the age range is a strength of the school. This good provision is the main reason for pupils achieving well and attaining higher than average standards from a starting point on entry to the school that is broadly in line with the average.

20. Throughout the Years 5 to 8, the teaching is very good in music. In Years 5 and 6, teaching is very good in English and science, satisfactory in mathematics, geography, history and French and good in all other subjects. In Years 7 and 8, teaching is good in English and satisfactory in the other core subjects of mathematics and science. In other subjects, teaching is good in art and design, design and technology, ICT, French and physical education. It is satisfactory in history and geography.

21. Pupils respond positively to the good teaching and achieve well as they progress through the school. Progress is very good in English and science in Years 5 and 6, and satisfactory in mathematics. Pupils make good progress through Years 7 and 8 in English and science and satisfactory progress in mathematics. In the large majority of other subjects, pupils make at least good progress and achieve well. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, it is generally the result of teachers using a restricted approach and not giving pupils enough opportunities to develop greater independence in their learning. On the rare occasions where the teaching observed was not satisfactory, the methods employed did not cater for the varying needs of pupils in the classes and as a result, the progress made in these lessons was insufficient.

22. The school's careful analysis of National Curriculum test results confirm that pupils with English as an additional language make good progress and in the work seen in the inspection, pupils with English as an additional language achieve well, in common with their peers. Overall, pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Setting arrangements in English and mathematics enable specialist teachers to focus on pupils' needs. This specialist teaching is technically skilled, and enables pupils to acquire basic skills well. In a Year 7 English lesson role play between the teacher and a learning support assistant was used effectively to help pupils learn the differences between formal and informal spoken vocabulary. In a Year 7 mathematics lesson the teacher used a good range of mental methods in helping pupils to acquire division facts. In science, seating plans are used to ensure that the teacher can respond quickly to any difficulties faced by pupils with special educational needs. In music, pupils are given special tasks, which enable them to learn as well as pupils generally do. In other subjects, teaching is at least satisfactory and frequently good.

23. High attaining pupils are taught well and more teaching is now challenging to ensure that they make good progress and achieve well. Pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented are increasingly receiving more effective teaching. The school has identified that the highest attainers did not achieve as well as they should in past National Curriculum tests. Procedures have been put into place to identify these pupils. They benefited from a summer school of activities last year and the extra-curricular programme is used well to extend and enhance the teaching they receive. There are some areas of good practice in the school, for example in English where the teachers' planning is very effective in meeting the needs of these pupils, and this good practice needs to be spread to all other subjects.

24. Individual education plans are used well to set appropriately challenging objectives for pupils with special educational needs and outline strategies, which are matched well to those objectives. Specialist teachers and support staff work closely with pupils on specific tasks designed to ensure that all pupils achieve success. In-class support is not widely available. Where it is, learning support staff are effective in helping pupils to meet their learning objectives through support in basic skills, and in ensuring that they remain focused on their work. Pupils with statements receive a high level of individual support, which enhances their learning.

25. The teaching of literacy is good. The school has a literacy policy based very firmly on the national literacy strategy. The English department provides a very effective lead in raising language skills. Other subjects provide good support. In all subjects pupils are expected to use the correct terms when speaking or writing. For example, in a physical education lesson a pupil was not allowed to refer to "that big muscle in your upper leg" but had to use the correct technical language. Teachers help pupils by providing lists of key words, often displayed on the walls. In mathematics, key words that pupils are to use are identified in the lesson plans, thus ensuring that they are a focus of the lesson. In some English and science lessons teachers deliberately phrased questions so that pupils had to provide extended answers rather than a simple "yes" or "no", thus extending their oral skills. In some subjects teachers miss opportunities to help pupils improve their writing skills. In geography and history, for example, miss-spelt words are not consistently corrected. On the other hand, in many subjects pupils are given opportunities for extended writing. Science teachers help pupils consolidate facts by asking them to include them in stories and provide other opportunities for free writing. There is less emphasis, other than in English, on developing pupils' reading skills. The science department, however, has the very good practice of providing word lists for each module of work, highlighting readability levels

26. The teaching numeracy skills is satisfactory. The national numeracy strategy is well implemented in lessons and all teachers across the school have been made aware of the way in which it affects the teaching of basic numeracy skills. As a result the contribution made by other subjects to developing pupils' numeracy skills is satisfactory.

27. The contribution that other subjects make to teaching ICT is satisfactory. For example, particularly effective use of ICT is made in music and in mathematics the teaching of graphing skills is enhanced by the use of ICT. A wide range of resources and techniques are used to develop pupils' ICT competence through science. Most subjects have integrated ICT into their schemes of work, but history and geography make only limited use of ICT. The provision of laptop computers to most of the teachers has significantly encouraged the use of ICT in the school

28. Teachers know their pupils well and have a clear idea of their strengths and weaknesses. They generally use this knowledge well to ensure that the different needs of pupils are met and pupils are stretched and achieve well. However, until this year, some of the highest attaining pupils were not sufficiently stretched and they did not achieve the results they should have done in National Curriculum tests. The school has identified this issue and changed the teaching arrangements. As a result, in the work seen in the inspection, the needs of the higher attainers are now more fully met. Pupils with widely different levels of attainment learn well, acquiring good levels of skills, knowledge and understanding in subjects, commensurate with their prior attainment.

29. The relationships between pupils and teachers are very good and pupils usually behave very well and show a positive attitude towards their work. Teachers manage their classes very well and use appropriate methods and organisation. They use the time available

to them to good effect by employing a variety of activities and a range of approaches best suited to the activities. For example in an excellent science lesson with Year 5, the teacher used a computer-generated demonstration in explaining the organisation of food chains. As the lesson progressed the pupils were involved in individual work, small group work and whole class work. They enjoyed the opportunity of cooperating with others to solve problems as well as persevering on their own to work out solution to problems set. There was very good pace to the lesson and no hiding place as all pupils were thoroughly involved and excellent learning resulted. In most lessons, pupils work hard, maintain their interest and concentration and enjoy their lessons.

30. Across the range of subjects, teachers generally have a good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and they teach with confidence. Where non-specialist teaching takes place, teachers are increasingly well supported by their subject leaders and very good planning ensures that there is no adverse effect upon standards. In a very good Year 6 English lesson with lower attaining pupils, very detailed planning allowed the teacher to explain the lesson objectives in suitable terms so that the pupils were immediately focused on what they were going to learn. The targets in the lesson were very challenging, in line with the teacher's high expectations. The teacher's use of insightful questions and comments were effective in taking the pupils' work forward and ensuring that they made very good progress and learned well.

31. The teaching methods employed by teachers are well planned and effective. Very good learning resulted in many lessons observed where changes took place in methods that were swift and seamless. In such lessons, there is a good climate for learning, because teachers generally have high expectations relating to the quality of work produced. For example in a Year 7 French lesson, learning and achievement were high as pupils in a lower attaining group worked at improving vocabulary and speaking skills. The teacher's methods were well planned to ensure that groups of different attainment levels within the group were fully involved in working at a level that challenged them. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language were well catered for and the classroom support assistant was fully integrated into the lesson to ensure that all pupils learned well and met the lesson objectives.

32. Teachers plan their lessons well and use assessment satisfactorily to take pupils' work forward and inform them of their progress. In the best lessons, very good planning draws upon good assessment systems to closely target the needs of all pupils. For example in music the teacher's ongoing assessment in lessons ensures that pupils are challenged by material appropriate to their level and they respond well and learn effectively as a result. Similarly in English, the good assessment of pupils motivates and challenges pupils of all levels of attainment to produce their best as they respond to tasks that are closely tailored to their needs. As well as using formal assessment of pupils' work, teachers often assess pupils' responses to questions and tasks set accurately and stretch pupils' abilities to produce either more or better quality answers. Day-to-day assessment is increasingly being used to good effect and pupils are now starting to be involved in setting their own targets and being tested on how far they have progressed in reaching specific targets. This is an approach that pupils themselves enjoy and an approach that needs to be extended, based on good quality information about pupils' levels of attainment. The quality of pupils' learning has been enhanced by the use of targets because they are encouraged towards independent effort and see the progress they have made.

33. Teachers make good use of well-tested teaching strategies. These include clear explanations to introduce new material and the aims of the lesson and a review of pupils' progress at the end of lessons in plenary sessions. Teachers' class management techniques are effective in maintaining a good level of learning in all pupils. As a result, pupils

with special educational needs and pupils with English as an additional language learn well and make good progress.

34. There is too much variability in the use of homework. Even within individual subjects, the use, regularity and effectiveness of homework can vary. There is some very good practice in the school. In science, in Years 7 and 8 in particular, homework is used effectively to consolidate classwork and on other occasions to extend the work of the classroom and encourage pupils towards a greater independence in their learning as they research a topic. The homework is set to a timetable and good records are kept of pupils' progress, including their learning through homework. This is not the case throughout the school and across subjects and parents show concern at the irregularity and lack of consistency in the setting of homework in general. Parents show a similar concern about the regularity and quality of the marking of pupils' work. Again there is some very good practice in the school, but this needs to be identified and the good practice spread to all subjects. In some cases there are excellent marking procedures within a subject area that are not reflected in the marking of other teachers within the same area. In mathematics for example some marking practices are exemplary in helping pupils to learn from the work assessed and thus take their work forward and progress. However, marking in mathematics as a whole is an area requiring further improvement in order to raise standards. There is a need to develop the whole school's approach to marking so that it is used more effectively in helping pupils to learn from the work they have undertaken.

35. The senior management team have recently put into place a system to supplement the monitoring of teaching required by performance management procedures. Initiatives have been started to ensure that subject specialists share their expertise with non-specialists through the observation of teaching and through closer monitoring of planning. The process has only recently been put in place at the instigation of the new headteacher and its impact is not yet clearly there to be measured. However the process does make a positive contribution to the systems and strategies that are being developed to improve all aspects of teaching.

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

36. Curriculum provision is broad and balanced. All subjects of the National Curriculum, and religious education, are taught, and the total teaching time meets recommendations. The school has made good progress in producing a balanced curriculum since the previous inspection, and is starting to undertake a major review of curriculum provision. Strategies are in place for ensuring a cohesive common delivery of the curriculum. Specific needs are targeted, such as the raising of standards in mathematics through intensive mathematics days in Year 6. These sessions have been arranged in collaboration with the local education authority. Parents, mostly fathers, have joined in. Geography and history are taught as combined subjects in Years 5 and 6, and as two separate subjects in Years 7 and 8. ICT, and personal, social and health education are taught as discrete subjects from Year 5. French is taught from Year 5, and there is close liaison with the school to which the pupils move on after Year 8, in order to ensure continuity of learning.

37. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. There is an inclusive approach to curriculum opportunities. Groupings are arranged to ensure that pupils from a variety of backgrounds have equal opportunity to succeed. In Year 5, pupil groups are set for numeracy. In Year 6, there is a mixture of setting and mixed ability grouping for literacy and numeracy. These arrangements demonstrate the appropriate emphasis the school is putting on the development of literacy and numeracy. In Year 7, pupils are grouped into sets for mathematics and some English, ICT, design and technology and French. In Year 8, the same subjects are set, with the addition of music. These setting arrangements are effective, and

provide pupils with an appropriate degree of specialist teaching in Years 7 and 8, and the opportunity for those with varied learning problems to be included in smaller groups.

38. The school provides a full programme of extra-curriculum activities, largely through a vast range of opportunities in sport and music. Seventy five per cent of the school community is involved with sport extra-curricular provision. Around 30 one per cent learn to play musical instruments and many more are involved in extra-curricular musical activities. A wide range of exciting field trips and excursions is provided. Through the Comenius Project, pupils learn about the life of pupils in partner schools in Italy, France, Germany, Portugal and Romania. Parties have visited France, Italy and Norway. Pupils contribute to annual Christian festivals through choral speaking, drama and reading.

39. The provision of equal opportunities for pupils within the school is good. There is no written whole school policy document, although positive statements are made within both the school mission statement, and departmental documentation. The Coates Culture simply states that "Pupils have a right to come to school without being picked on and to work without being distracted". Opportunities for responsibility are available to everyone, and include school council representation. Open access pervades all lessons, for example in physical education where there are mixed activities and a girls' soccer team. In music, there is no instrumental stereotyping, for example boys perform well on string instruments and girls on brass instruments. The large number of pupils in the school who receive instrumental tuition during the school day have lessons based on a detailed rota system so that pupils do not always miss the same lessons each week. The school aims to give some financial support to pupils who have difficulties in meeting the costs of instrumental tuition or school visits, in order that all pupils can participate. The school building is not user-friendly for people with physical handicap. It has two storeys and the ground floor is stepped. However, in preparation for the acceptance of a pupil with disability in September, the school has been surveyed and ramps are to be introduced on the ground floor to give ease of mobility. Equal opportunity legislation is adhered to when making staff appointments

40. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Apart from the setting arrangements in English and mathematics, which allow for pupils with special educational needs to be taught in small group by teachers with specialist expertise, pupils are generally supported in mainstream classes. In science, specialised work and texts are provided, and pupils get additional support in tests. Across all subjects, they have access to the same curriculum as their peers, and there is full equality of opportunity for pupils with special educational needs. Where necessary pupils with special educational needs are supported through individual support and specially-prepared text. There is a good dialogue between the special educational needs coordinator and her subject teacher colleagues to ensure that the effectiveness of these arrangements is kept under review.

41. The school has a very strong ethos of inclusion. Pupils with special educational needs participate fully in the life of the school, including all of the extra-curricular activities which take place. Higher attaining pupils provide support for those with learning difficulties through the paired reading scheme, and the school has successfully used the 'Circle of Friends' strategy to support the full inclusion of a boy with challenging behaviour. Applications for the admission of pupils with sensory and physical difficulties are growing.

42. There are 32 pupils for whom English is an additional language, five of whom need, and receive, extra support in order to access the curriculum effectively. Provision for these pupils is satisfactory. Like other pupils in the school they make good progress in lessons. Those who need extra support have relatively good oral skills but have weaker reading and writing skills. In general teachers are aware of their needs because the school provides good information about them, though most departments do not provide formal guidance on

supporting them in their schemes of work. The school receives financial support for these pupils from the local authority, which it targets effectively. While the progress of ethnic minority pupils is effectively monitored, that of pupils for whom English is an additional language is not. Targets for improvement are not set and reviewed for pupils receiving support. There is no designated teacher, apart from the Headteacher, who has responsibility for this group of pupils.

43. The highest attainers and those pupils identified by the school as gifted and talented receive increasingly good provision. Recent initiatives, including access to an annual summer school during the vacation, ensure that these identified pupils have work that stretches and challenges them. Much of this provision is currently provided outside normal lesson time. However, the teacher designated to develop this aspect of the school's work is starting to make an impact in ensuring that teachers' planning includes extension work to meet the needs of these pupils. The extra-curricular provision is good in enhancing and extending opportunities, particularly, but not exclusively, in music and sport.

44. The school has a good programme for personal, social and health education that has a very good impact on pupils' personal and social development. It includes healthy lifestyle, sex education, drug education, relationships and careers. A new coordinator was appointed this year and the programme is currently under review. An audit of provision across the curriculum has been made and a new programme of "Education for Character" is being designed to incorporate citizenship and to tie in more closely with other curriculum areas, especially religious education, physical education and science. Personal, social and health education is taught in tutorials by form tutors. Teaching was good in all lessons observed during inspection. The school nurse has a good input in drug and sex education.

45. Personal, social and health education is supported in many other areas of the curriculum, such as health education in physical education, food technology and science. It is enhanced through themes, such as 'peer pressure', which is emphasised in assemblies as well as lessons on drug education. The school is currently piloting a very good programme for drug education that it has helped to design for the local education authority. There is a very strong emphasis on health education through lessons and display around the school. Last year the school held a healthy lifestyle week. Citizenship has not yet been formally included in lessons, but plans for its incorporation are well advanced and pupils' education for citizenship has already begun through the setting up of the pupil council and in the development of community activities.

46. Provision for careers education is satisfactory. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and make their own choices, but there is no formal careers education in Years 5, 6 and 7. The school is aware of the need to further develop careers education. In Year 8 the school uses the "Real Game" well to give pupils a good insight into the world of work. Pupils act out real life work scenarios, such as managing money and redundancy, working well in teams to help each other solve problems. This prepares them well for life after school. The school's good links with the high school prepares all pupils well for the next stage of their education, including those with special educational needs.

47. The school has very good links with the community and these contribute very positively to pupils' learning and personal and social development. The school makes very good use of the local and wider community to support the curriculum, for example visits to Woodhorn Church Art Centre, Alnwick castle, Morpeth Town Hall and Chantry Building, South Shields Planetarium, a Hindu temple and a Year 5 trip to the seaside. A visit to the Centre of Life in Newcastle supported healthy school week. Achievement in physical education is enhanced by pupils' participation in community sports, especially in swimming, for example several pupils took part in the Lions charity Swimathon. The school has good links with the local Rotary club for which it helps to raise considerable amounts of money. School musicians often perform in the community for example at the Ponteland Proms, the Northumberland police carol service, Eldon Square and the Metro Centre.

48. The school's very good links with the local church supports pupils' spiritual development very well. The school regularly attends services in the church such as Harvest Festival, Founders Day and Easter and visitors from different churches address assemblies. A volunteer from the church listens to pupils read. There are good links with the Ponteland History Society who are working with the school on a project to research the history of the school, making good use of the school log books from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The school's participation in the Comenius project greatly enhances pupils' cultural development by linking pupils with schools in Portugal, Germany, France, Italy and Rumania via the Internet. The school makes good use of the wider community to develop language and cultural skills by organising exchange visits to France and Italy and ski trips to Norway. The school initiated a Ponteland Support Forum several years ago, which has effectively improved liaison between local support services. The school nurse provides a good link with the local community and other schools. The school's very good links with the community build pupils' confidence and helps them understand their role in society making them into responsible citizens.

49. The school's relationship with partner institutions is good. There are well-established formal and informal links with local schools and good transfer of information between these schools. The school has some difficulty in obtaining reliable information from feeder schools further away. There is good liaison between subject departments of first schools and high schools to ensure that work is not covered twice and for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils in Year 5 write personal letters to Year 4 pupils who visit the school in the summer before they start, helping them to settle very well in Year 5. There are good musical and sporting links with other schools. Several local schools take part in the Ponteland Proms. Sporting fixtures are held with a number of other schools and there is shared use of the sports pitches. Schools share a number of policies to ensure a consistent approach such as those on behaviour and drugs. The school has established a useful Buddy School System link with another middle school in order to exchange ideas and further develop. The good partnership with schools in other European countries through the Comenius project extends pupils' cultural development well. The school has good links with universities. It hosts trainee teachers from Newcastle University and is working with Durham University to develop citizenship and cultural education.

50. Provision for personal development including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school's mission statement outlines the school's determination to help individuals reach their full potential by encouraging high expectations, self-motivation and the confidence to succeed. The school aims to encourage pupils' awareness of belonging to a community with a shared purpose and commitment in which the rights of others are respected. Assemblies, music, sport, tutorials and extra-curricular activities make a particularly strong contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. While it is not formally planned into the majority of schemes of work and there

has been no audit of provision across subjects. Personal development is enhanced through other areas of the curriculum,

51. Provision for spiritual development is very good. This is reflected in the quality of the relationships and the concern for all within the school. There is a daily act of collective worship in assemblies that are attended by pupils of all faiths. There is a strong Christian element but the teaching of other faiths, such as Buddhism, are also incorporated. Assemblies give pupils a good opportunity to demonstrate their skills. There is a strong spiritual message and time for pupils to reflect on their own understanding and beliefs. There is a weekly sentence from the Bible for pupils to contemplate. The strong links with the local church enhance spiritual development, with regular visits to and performances in the local church where pupils celebrate Harvest Festival, Christmas and Easter. There is sound provision for spiritual development across the curriculum. Provision in art and design and physical education is good and is particularly strong in music. The school celebrates all forms of success. Pupils' achievements in and out of school are recognised and acknowledged. Pupils demonstrate their concern for those less fortunate than themselves by working energetically to raise funds for a good number of charities such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Children in Distress.

52. The school's provision for pupils' moral education is very good. Teachers provide very good role models and have high expectations of good behaviour. Pupils respond very well to these expectations and consider discipline to be fair. A new system of discipline has recently been successfully introduced. The pupil council has helped to devise a basic charter of rights aimed at encouraging good behaviour. Pupils are taught the importance of respect and tolerance and learn not to ridicule each other's mistakes. Assemblies reinforce moral messages such as the importance of working as a team within a community. There is very good provision for moral development across the curriculum and especially in the personal social and health education programme. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 7 are currently investigating the rights and wrongs of taking drugs. In environmental studies in Year 5 pupils learn about care of the environment. In history, the work on the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire raises awareness of moral issues such as cruelty.

53. The school's provision for social development is very good. There is a very strong emphasis on teamwork. This has a very positive impact on learning and personal development. Pupils have very good opportunities in lessons and extra-curricular activities to work in pairs and groups. There is very good range of visits out of school where pupils can develop social skills. Extra-curricular music and sport provision makes a very positive contribution to pupils social development. The organisation of sporting activities through Motivation and Achievement Through Sport, librarian duties, running the tuck shop and the production of the Coates Chronicle encourages pupils to assume social responsibility. There are sports matches against other schools and musical performances, such as the Ponteland Proms, with other schools. There are very good opportunities for pupils to perform in the local community, for example at the Rotary Club Concert, the Northumberland Police Carol Service and the Metro Centre. Pupils who do not make the school sports teams are encouraged to take part in inter-form competitions. The house system in Year 5 helps pupils to form a sense of social identity within the school. The lunchtime dining arrangements provide very good opportunities for social interaction. The school's very good links with the community encourage pupils to take an active part in the local community and develop an understanding of citizenship. The parent teachers and friends association contributes very positively to social development by organising discos for pupils. Teachers' willingness to participate in activities provides pupils with very good role models in social development.

54. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. The school makes very good use of the 'Coates Culture' that "makes it distinct and gives it a special identity and cause for pride and celebration". Pupils learn about their own cultural background and celebrate the richness of cultural diversity of pupils in the school. In response to the foot and mouth disease crisis last year, the school recognised the cultural differences between town and country pupils and highlighted these differences to promote mutual awareness and understanding. Exchange visits to France and Italy and participation in the Comenius project, which provides good links with schools in Portugal, Germany, France Italy and Rumania via e-mail and letters, enhance an understanding of cultures in other European Countries. Cultural development is promoted well across the curriculum. In Year 5, pupils study poems and stories from other cultures. In geography, pupils study the French and Indian cultures and look at natural disasters in less economically developed countries such as Peru. In history they study the Aztec culture and in food technology they look at food from around the world. Modern foreign language makes a strong contribution to cultural development. Pupils in Year 5 invent their own language from Lusaka and learn to communicate with one another about the culture of this make-believe country. The contribution to cultural development of music is strong. Pupils are introduced to the music of other countries such as Indian music, African drumming and West Indian calypso as well as the popular culture of the Beatles and local Northumberland music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

55. The school provides a satisfactory level of pastoral care for pupils, which has a positive impact on achievement. There is satisfactory educational support to monitor pupils' achievements and enable them to make further progress with their learning. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good.

56. Form tutors are responsible for monitoring personal and academic progress, attendance and achievement. Strong links with local infant schools and a good induction process for pupils in Year 5 helps them settle well. Very good relationships are established between tutors and pupils that enable tutors to monitor progress effectively and provide a good level of academic and personal support. New pupils receive a good level of care. In this small school staff know pupils well and have a good understanding of their needs. Pupils are confident in approaching teachers or the school nurse with any problems or concerns. Good use is made of outside agencies to support pupils. There is a good programme of personal, social and health education to support pupils' personal development.

57. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are satisfactory. The school rightly makes parents aware of the need good attendance. Registration periods are used well to promote learning, especially in younger classes, where pupils have a set task or are expected to read. The manual registers are called efficiently, but it is unsatisfactory that most form tutors do not follow the recommended guidelines for marking and that all absence is considered authorised. Summaries of authorised and unauthorised absence are not accurate. On occasions more than ten days of holiday in one year has been authorised unnecessarily for pupils by the school. Absence rates are not included in the school prospectus or the governing body annual report to parents. There is good support from the Educational Welfare Service and targeting the few pupils with attendance problems has significantly improved the attendance of more than three quarters of them. There is no system of first day response calls to absence but where there is a particular problem, parents are telephoned. Good attendance is not yet sufficiently rewarded, but the school is rightly considering the introduction of further rewards. Analysis of attendance is not used to

target general areas for improvement. Satisfactory systems are in place to monitor lateness and encourage pupils to be punctual.

58. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. Teachers have very high expectations of behaviour and pupils respond accordingly. The pupils' council has helped to devise the basic charter of rights that is displayed in every form room. The behaviour policy has recently been revised but stresses the use of sanctions rather than emphasising positive aspects of behaviour. Pupils believe sanctions to be used fairly. Good records are kept of all incidents of poor behaviour. Incidents resulting in exclusions are properly recorded. Success is celebrated but good behaviour is taken for granted and not routinely monitored. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. There is a good awareness of bullying in school and pupils are confident that any reported incident will be resolved quickly and effectively. There is good work this term on peer pressure. The school encourages pupils to make their own decisions about the right course of action.

59. The school takes satisfactory care of pupils' welfare. The school takes good care of pupils' health, by raising awareness of a healthy lifestyle and arranging for routine dental checks and BCG vaccinations. The school nurse is a regular visitor and is available for confidential counselling. First aid procedures are good and good records are kept. There are good procedures for dealing with child protection issues. The school maintains good links with appropriate outside support agencies. Measures to ensure the health and safety of all pupils are satisfactory overall and teachers take great care to follow safe procedures in lessons. However, there are some health and safety issues that need to be tackled. Formal written risk assessments are incomplete and emergency evacuation drills have not taken place each term and recording of drills is cursory. Fire exits are not marked according to current EU legislation and emergency evacuation procedures are not displayed in all rooms. There is no guard around the kiln in the art and design room and the procedures for escorting of pupils to and from the swimming pool are unsatisfactory.

60. The overall procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' progress are satisfactory. At the time of the previous inspection, assessment was identified as an area needing improvement. The school has only recently begun to address effectively the weaknesses identified. A new policy document on assessment has recently been produced although it has not yet had time to have an effect on the overall assessment procedures within the school. The document is thorough and gives clear guidelines to teachers about the assessment process within the school. The school has had difficulty in obtaining reliable information on the attainment of many pupils when they enter the school. As a result they have not been effective in monitoring the progress of pupils as they move through Years 5 and 6. The school has begun to set up records for pupils in Years 7 and 8 and use these to monitor their progress. The use of target setting for individual pupils has only just begun to be used. In English, there is a very good system of supporting pupils in Years 5 and 6 by linking assessment with target-setting. This has not yet been developed in Years 7 and 8. Teachers in most other subjects are not yet using the data from assessment effectively to set targets for pupils and monitoring their progress towards those targets. Most subjects have at least satisfactory systems in place for assessing pupils' attainment as they pass through the school. They are particularly good in, for example, music although in history they are not frequent enough and rely mainly on projects to assess levels.

61. The use of assessment information to guide planning is satisfactory. Generally teachers use assessment effectively although the practice is variable across and within subjects and year groups. For example, whilst some marking is effective and indicates to pupils ways in which they can improve for some teachers it is little more than a cursory tick or encouraging comment. Reference to National Curriculum levels is not common practice

across the school. Not all teachers use day-to-day assessment to influence how they will approach their planned work from one lesson to the next in the light of pupils' learning and progress. Teachers do not make enough use of assessment information to plan their lessons. This means that work of an appropriate level of difficulty is not always set. This is not always the case and good examples of flexible approaches based on pupils' learning needs are seen in geography and music.

62. In general teachers are aware of the needs of pupils with English as an additional language because the school provides good information about them. Most departments make formal plans for their assessment in their schemes of work. The progress of ethnic minority pupils is effectively monitored, but that of pupils with English as an additional language is not. Formal targets for improvement are not set and reviewed for pupils receiving support. There is no designated teacher, apart from the Headteacher, who has responsibility for this group of pupils. The adverse effect of these shortcomings is offset by the good level of awareness shown about the needs of these pupils and they do make good progress in line with that of their peers.

63. Overall, the assessment of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. There is no full baseline assessment of pupils on entry to the school as yet, although the special educational needs coordinator has plans to introduce it. At present, pupils are assessed if it is felt necessary to do so by their subject teachers. The individual education plans contain strategies which are appropriately linked to clear objectives, focused mainly on literacy. These form valuable working documents. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is carefully monitored. Pupils and parents are both involved well in review processes, but insufficient information is given about the levels that pupils with special educational needs reach. The review processes for pupils with statements fully meet statutory requirements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. The school has a good partnership with parents. Parents are pleased with the school and make a good contribution to their children's education. The school is popular in the local and wider community. Parents like the caring and friendly working atmosphere of the school. They find staff approachable and are comfortable with questions or problems. Parents are happy that their children like school and that behaviour is good. They believe the school has high expectations and helps their children to become mature and responsible. Parents like the good links with feeder schools that help children settle well in Year 5. They appreciate the high level of staff commitment. The inspection team endorses these positive views. A high proportion of parents feel there is insufficient use of homework. Inspectors agree that homework is not used effectively to promote learning.

65. The school provides a satisfactory level of information to parents. The Coates Chronicle and regular letters from the head teacher are very informative. The prospectus is useful, but does not contain absence rates or the results of school's standard assessment tests together with national comparisons. The current governing body annual report to parents is unsatisfactory and contains little of the legally required information, however a new one is currently being produced which rectifies this. A significant number of parents do not feel well informed about their children's progress. Pupils' annual reports are satisfactory. They contain good information on what pupils have studied, but give little indication of what pupils understand and of their achievement in comparison with national standards. Targets for improvement are often too vague. The report on ICT has no extended text and is poor. Parents are invited to comment on the reports when they are distributed and the majority like the information contained in them. There are no interim reports and parents of pupils in Year 5 have to wait too long before they know how well their children are progressing. Parental

attendance at consultation evenings is very good and when parents are unable to attend, the school makes alternative arrangements.

66. Parents' involvement has a good impact on the work of the school. The parent teachers association is very active and contributes very positively socially and financially. They raise a good amount of money each year that has been used to enhance the technology rooms, to paint the library and provide playground toys. They organise the very successful discos for pupils. A few parents help by listening to pupils read and accompanying school trips. One parent talked to pupils about his work as a gamekeeper to enhance pupils' understanding of rural life and culture.

67. Parents have a good degree of involvement with their children's learning at school and at home. They monitor their children's work through the pupil planners, but the use of these by teachers for communication is variable. The school welcomes parents into school. Some parents appreciated a recent mathematics evening that was intended to help them help their children. During 'Parent on Line' week, parents were invited to inspect the school's Internet facilities. Parents provide a fair degree of Internet access for their children at home. Parents enjoy the many school performances and support their children's learning of musical instruments well. Many parents are musicians and encourage their children to play by joining them in practise. Parents are good at providing ingredients for food technology lessons. The good level of involvement is also apparent among parents of pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Parents are involved fully in review meetings. They receive, and have the opportunity to comment on, their children's individual education plans. The special educational needs coordinator has a very high level of commitment to involving parents in their children's education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

68. The leadership provided by the new headteacher is good. The head teacher and governing body are giving a clear direction to the development of the school in line with the school's mission statement. The management provided by the headteacher and other key staff is satisfactory. A number of the changes have been put in place in the current academic year, but have had little time to make a direct impact upon standards. The headteacher has identified areas for improvement in the management of the school, but has avoided making radical changes until appointments are made at senior levels in the school, to be in place for the next academic year. Other weaknesses, some identified at the previous inspection, are being tackled. For example, systems and strategies are now developing to ensure the school is in a better position to evaluate its work more effectively and precisely. The quality of teaching is now tied more closely to performance management and the methods being adopted to monitor and evaluate teaching quality demonstrate clearly how good practice that is present in the school is identified and is to be disseminated throughout the school. The quality of teaching is now good, but the school would benefit from a more formal, rigorous and systematic approach that spreads some of the excellent practice that exists in order to improve further. The school is aware that higher attainers were not being sufficiently challenged and as a result, they did not achieve as well as they should in past National Curriculum tests, leading to an unfavourable comparison with the results of pupils in similar schools. The new senior management team has taken action in re-arranging the grouping of pupils and other initiatives, for example in mathematics, to challenge pupils more strongly in a bid to improve results this year.

69. The assessment of pupils and the subsequent setting of targets based on good quality information about pupils' attainment are areas where the school needs to develop. The school's senior management has identified the issues and a good quality assessment policy is now in place to tackle these areas. Allied to this, the reporting to parents has lacked good

information about how pupils are progressing in relation to the National Curriculum and precise targets that they should aim to achieve. The school has recently installed commercial computer software to ensure better use of information about pupils' attainment to inform curriculum developments and target-setting. This too represents an effective, if tardy response to the issues identified in the last report and demonstrates effective leadership by the school's newly appointed senior staff. The school has a clear understanding that the lack of precise information about pupils' attainment on entry prevents any clear assessment of pupils' progress through the school. This too is an area where the new senior managers show a good awareness of the need to modify its present practices.

70. The quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory overall, but pupils do not achieve as well as they do in the core subjects of English and science. The senior management team has put in place a number of initiatives to redress the balance and improve standards. The impact of these initiatives has yet to be demonstrated, but the action taken has been an appropriate response to an identified problem. Such initiatives along with other ongoing work, for example identifying and tackling under-achievement among boys in Year 8, demonstrate that the school is not complacent about the standards its pupils achieve and is aware that there is still work to be done to achieve standards that are comparable to those in schools deemed to be similar.

71. The senior management team and teachers responsible for leading subjects show a good commitment to raising standards further. Their overall contribution to managing the teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility is satisfactory. However there needs to be more rigour in the process of monitoring standards, informed by better assessment systems to inform decisions relating to pupils' attainment. There is some very good practice in the school in most areas of its work, for example in teaching quality, in the use of homework and in marking pupils' work. However there is too much inconsistency in these important areas both across subjects as a whole and even within subjects. For example, in mathematics, there is not enough consistency in their approach to marking. As a result the excellent practice of one teacher is not used to improve the practice of others. In science, homework is used effectively to support and extend the work in the classroom. This good practice is not found across the school as a whole and the effective use of homework is an issue that the school must tackle.

72. The priorities established in the school development plan are appropriate. The headteacher has introduced an academic action plan in response to identifying weaknesses in the school's provision and the need to improve aspects of the work of the school, for example results in mathematics. The plan rightly focuses on raising standards. The cycle of school development planning is sound and it ensures full consultation with staff and the governing body. It needs to be more precise on setting criteria that show how a priority has been met and what the cost implications are. Overall, the school planning for future development is good and gives a clear direction to the work of the school. Targets for improvement in National Curriculum tests are challenging. The setting of individual targets for pupils to chart their progress is developing, but is not yet in place in all subjects and is not yet embedded in the day-to-day practice throughout the school. The longer term planning in subject departments is satisfactory overall. Increasingly, for example, departments are linking staff training needs to the needs of the department and to the priorities at whole school level. In this process, the department development plans are improving

73. Governors take an active role in the leadership of the school and make a positive contribution to the decisions that are taken. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the strengths of the school and those areas requiring further improvement. Governors are mainly effective in fulfilling their statutory duties, but there are still some details that require attention. The school does not meet fully the legal requirements relating to information to

parents. The school has not undertaken whole-school risk assessments. Overall, the degree to which the governing body fulfils its responsibilities is satisfactory. The relationship between the governors and the staff in the school is good. This enables the governors to contribute well to the leadership of the school because they are involved in key decisions that shape the direction of the school's development. The governing body is in a good position to make informed judgements when holding the school to account for the educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided. The governing body and senior managers deal well with the bureaucratic demands made upon the school.

74. The school is administered well and satisfactory use is made of ICT. As a result, daily routines operate smoothly. The new headteacher inherited a budget deficit. The last auditors' report highlighted the need to modify the school's financial accounting systems. While the auditors reported that they had no serious concerns, they recommended that the school modify its procedures to ensure greater efficiency and security. The headteacher and governing body are currently making a positive response and forecast an appropriate budget surplus in the current financial year. The strategic use of resources is good and grants are used effectively. In terms of using its finances effectively, the school has satisfactory procedures in place. There are effective procedures in place to ensure that the school consults and compares to gain best value in its spending. As a result, spending is controlled well and the principles of best value are applied well in the school's use of resources. The school gives good value for money.

75. The special educational needs coordinator is very committed and enthusiastic. Good progress has been made in implementing the revised Code of Practice, and has played an important part in establishing an ethos of inclusion across the school. She works closely with her subject colleagues to ensure a good standard of provision, through a weekly special educational needs meeting for all staff. She is well supported by the school's senior managers. Teaching assistants are managed well and meet weekly to ensure good communication. The school is very well supported by the governor designated to oversee special educational needs provision. Links with outside agencies are good. Although the assessment and monitoring of individual pupils is thorough, the school does not yet use data sufficiently to set, monitor and evaluate whole school targets for the performance of pupils with special educational needs.

76. The provision of learning resources is satisfactory, as it was at the time of the previous inspection. All subjects have a sufficient supply of text books. However, the absence of sketchbooks diminishes the quality of education provided in art and design. Equipment in physical education and science is good. Provision in ICT is satisfactory but new computers and a new server are arriving shortly to improve resources further. This will put the ratio of computers to pupils closer to the national average. A number of subjects make good use of the computers at present in school. In science pupils make good use of CD-ROMs for research and the music curriculum is enriched by the use of appropriate software. On the other hand, some subjects complain that it is difficult to gain access to the computers.

77. Pupils receive satisfactory support for their literacy and research skills in the library, where there is a sufficient stock of fiction and non-fiction books. The qualified librarian ensures the stock is well maintained and up-to-date. There is good access for pupils, who can study or borrow books at break and lunch times. The library is also open during lesson times for use by individuals or whole classes. A team of efficient pupil librarians carries out much of the day-to-day administration. There are only four computers in the library at present but there are plans in hand for the number to be increased soon in order to improve the research facilities.

78. Currently, the match of teachers and support staff to meet the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall. However, teaching qualification is not best matched for the teaching of mathematics throughout the school and for modern foreign languages in Years 5 and 6. There have been staff resignations during the last twelve months, and there are a number of temporary appointments until permanent appointments are finalised, including the permanent appointment of a deputy head teacher. The experience of teachers is well balanced in departments. It is weakest in modern foreign languages. Job descriptions are in place. There are no newly qualified teachers in post. The school is aware of the procedures to be followed in relation to mentoring, and support required for such teachers, and those taking up new posts in the school, and that its procedures require formalisation. Other staff are equally valued in this school. Educational support assistants are well qualified and give good support to pupils and teachers, as does the part-time librarian. Lunchtime supervisors are trained to support pupils with English as an additional language. Finances have not allowed the provision of technician support for science, art and design, ITC or technology subjects. This puts greater demands on time for those specialist teachers who are required to prepare and maintain apparatus, materials, software and hardware, often to support their colleagues. Administrative and technical staffs provide significant and positive support for the efficient day-to-day running of the school. The governing body of the school plays a key role in making appointments through its staffing committee. Performance management interviews and observations take place. The head teacher maintains records. Procedures are good and it has been effectively linked into the annual cycles for reviewing, monitoring and the drawing up of the school development plan and departmental development plans. It is becoming established in the culture of the school and departments, and its impact is increasing in terms of improving the quality of teaching and raising levels of achievement. In order to give wider opportunity for staff professional development, and interchange, the school is setting up a "Buddy school" system to assist the raising the standards of teaching and learning, where appropriate training cannot be identified elsewhere. The school was awarded the Investors in People Charter in October, 2001. This highlighted the very evident strong team spirit and commitment to the school by the staff.

79. The accommodation is good overall and allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. This is similar to the situation found at the time of the previous inspection. However, the accommodation for ICT is currently unsatisfactory because the rooms are small and irregular in shape, which restricts teaching. The accommodation for ICT in the Year 5 block is in a thoroughfare and cannot cope with a full class. The school copes well with the restriction of only one laboratory for science and ensures that pupils in Years 7 and 8 receive one lesson per week in the science laboratory. Accommodation for music is very good and Year 5 pupils benefit from their separate classroom block that gives them a clear identity and eases their transition into the school. The school hall allows room for whole-school assemblies and the quality of these assemblies is high and of central importance in generating the very positive ethos in the school. The good accommodation is further improved by good displays of pupils' work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

80. In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Raise standards in mathematics throughout the school by:
 - Setting homework more consistently and ensuring that it provides suitable levels of challenge for all pupils.
 - Making better use of assessment to monitor the progress of pupils.
 - Improving the overall quality in the marking of pupils' work.(Paragraphs: 10, 104, 106, 107)

- (2) Consolidate the procedures recently introduced to measure the progress of pupils by:
 - Establishing the attainment levels of pupils when they start the school as a baseline against which progress may be measured.
 - Setting precise targets for improvement.
 - Charting pupils' progress towards targets through the use of effective assessment systems.(Paragraphs: 60, 62, 63, 65, 69, 72, 93, 94, 104, 106, 111, 115, 121, 136, 143, 149, 169)

- (3) Establish a more consistent approach to evaluating the work of departments by:
 - Extending the work that has started in order to monitor the quality of teaching and learning more regularly, formally and systematically.
 - Disseminating across all subject areas the good practice that exists in the school.
 - Using assessment more effectively to measure the impact of initiatives taken to improve standards.(Paragraphs: 60, 94, 104, 106, 115, 122, 136, 149, 155, 169)

- (4) Use reports to parents more effectively to inform them about the progress pupils make in relation to National Curriculum levels.
(Paragraphs: 65, 149)

- (5) Extend the good practice that exists in the school to all subject areas in setting and marking homework.
(Paragraphs: 38, 64, 112, 122, 125, 133, 147, 154)

In addition to the areas to be improved above, the school needs to attend to health and safety issues brought to the notice of the school, (Paragraph: 59)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	94
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	33

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	23	44	19	1	1	0
Percentage	4	25	47	22	1	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	465
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	12

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	48

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	32

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9
National comparative data	6.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	59	58

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	50	43	54
	Girls	54	42	55
	Total	104	85	109
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (81)	73 (80)	93 (92)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	39	40	55
	Girls	46	45	55
	Total	85	85	110
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (63)	73 (71)	94 (92)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	7
Pakistani	19
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	9
White	424
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	22.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	96

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	26.5
Key Stage 3	26.1

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	884 462
Total expenditure	886 197
Expenditure per pupil	1 909
Balance brought forward from previous year	(3 271)
Balance carried forward to next year	(5 006)

Figures in parentheses indicate negative values

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	464
Number of questionnaires returned	182

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	51	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	6	1	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	62	4	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	46	26	4	1
The teaching is good.	43	51	3	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	49	16	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	61	36	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	35	2	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	30	53	13	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	48	45	2	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	47	2	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	45	11	2	8

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Pupils' standards are well above the national average.
- Pupils achieve very well in Years 5 and 6, and well in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils behave very well and they have very good attitudes to learning.
- The standard of teaching is very good in Years 5 and 6, and good in Years 7 and 8.
- Teachers' management of pupils is excellent.
- The subject is very well led and managed

Areas for improvement

- The system for assessing pupils' work and setting targets in Years 7 and 8 is not yet developed.
- The monitoring of teaching is not rigorous enough.

81. When pupils enter the school at the beginning of Year 5 their standard in English is broadly in line with the national average. In Years 5 and 6 they achieve very well so that by the end of Year 6 they attain a standard that is well above the national average. They maintain this standard until they leave the school at the end of Year 8. They achieve so well because the quality of teaching is good and the pupils have very good attitudes to learning and behave very well. Teachers are successful in implementing the national literacy strategy and this has a beneficial effect on pupils' learning.

82. In the Year 2001, results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 were well above the national average but average when compared with similar schools. There has been an upward trend since the time of the previous inspection with a particularly significant improvement in 2001, when results were better than those in both mathematics and science. The attainment of girls is better than that of boys by the same amount as in most schools. The school does not use any nationally accepted test of attainment when pupils enter the school at the beginning of Year 5. However, inspection evidence and teachers' assessments after pupils have been in the school for half a term both confirm that attainment on entry is broadly in line with the national average. Hence the Year 6 National Curriculum test results represent very good achievement.

83. In work seen during the inspection, standards are well above average at the end of Year 6, thus matching the test results. Pupils have very good speaking skills. The highest attaining pupils are articulate and have command of a good vocabulary: "questionnaire", "padlocked" and "artefact" were all used naturally and correctly during the inspection. Lower attainers are less certain when expressing themselves, often hesitating because they find it difficult to find the right words or phrases. Nevertheless they make their meaning clear. In many lessons teachers phrase questions so that a single "yes" or "no" is not sufficient and pupils have to reply at some length. In the best lessons teachers insist on precise and accurately worded answers. Pupils benefit from the many opportunities they receive to speak in class, either answering teachers' questions or working with a partner or in small groups.

84. Standards of reading in Years 5 and 6 are very good. Teachers help pupils improve their reading skills by consistently requiring them to think about what they are reading. Thus they have to draw inferences about characters and make forecasts about what is likely to

happen further in the story. High attainers show full understanding by reading aloud with good expression. Middle attainers generally cope well with straightforward texts and know how to de-code less familiar words like “petrified”. They correctly identify words which show that a text is about a culture other than their own. There are a few pupils who read only a word at a time with consequent limitations on their understanding. Even this group, however, cope satisfactorily with simple texts.

85. Standards of writing in Years 5 and 6, although very good, are not as high as those of speaking and reading. High attainers adapt their writing skilfully to meet different purposes. They plan their work well and show good note-taking skills. They use various devices such as the rhetorical question to make their writing more interesting. Generally their writing is simple but effective and accurate, as in this example: “All Mary heard was her echo shouting back at her. She gathered up the spilt contents of her bag and scrambled to her feet”. Most pupils, however, are unsure in their control of complex sentences and make punctuation and spelling errors. They have made clear gains from the national literacy strategy. For example, they organise their writing into paragraphs, use active and passive verbs, and use a deliberately varied vocabulary. Their work benefits from consistent use of drafting. The lowest attainers have plenty of opportunity for extended writing in different genres but in all cases poor spelling and punctuation hinder communication, sometimes making it difficult for the reader to understand the writer’s meaning.

86. In Years 7 and 8 pupils achieve well and maintain standards that are well above the national average. As in Years 5 and 6, teachers, by asking open-ended questions, provide pupils with good opportunities to express their thoughts at some length orally. Most pupils take good advantage of this as was seen in a lesson where they suggested ways in which they could improve a paragraph written on the board. Higher attainers use a relatively sophisticated vocabulary for thirteen year-olds. Even the lowest attainers are beginning to adapt their style of speech to different purposes. They know the difference between formal and informal styles of dialogue, although they confuse accent with style.

87. By the time pupils are approaching the end of Year 8 all are able to read well enough to be able to function effectively in the high school. Even the lowest attainers read simple texts with understanding. Most pupils are in at least the early stages of developing an approach to literature. They are aware of how an author builds up a character in a novel by his speech and actions, his appearance and his relations with other characters. They understand the purpose of imagery. The highest attainers show a very good level of sensitivity to language. This was seen in a comparison of two war poems, Owen’s “Dulce et Decorum Est” and Brooke’s “A Soldier”. Pupils understood the different approaches to warfare and patriotism, and the irony in Owen’s poem.

88. Pupils’ written work in Years 7 and 8 is very good but, as in the earlier years, is not quite of the same standard as their speaking and reading. The highest attainers organise their work well into paragraphs. They have very good control of a variety of sentence forms and make only a few spelling and punctuation errors. They organise sentences to create a desired effect such as suspense, as in this example: “Suddenly it happened: she slipped on a pile of wet sand, crashed to the ground, and hit her head”. They adapt their style for purposes as diverse as writing a story, writing a letter home from university and analysing poetry. Most pupils draft their work well but do not have complete control of more complex sentence forms. They make errors of spelling and punctuation and are particularly unsure in their use of apostrophes and inverted commas. The lowest attainers are more at ease when writing simple narrative than any other form. They experience real difficulties when writing about more abstract ideas, as in “Therefore prejudice is not aloud in this school, but there is a lot of prejudice in this school” (sic). Although they make basic errors, their meaning can be

understood. There are some good examples of word-processing of final drafts but more use could be made of computers.

89. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6, where teachers cater well for them in the literacy hour. Teachers know their needs and the targets in their individual education plans. Consequently, they ensure that they are properly included in the lesson and provided with work that suits their needs. In Years 6, 7 and 8 they are generally in smaller classes with other pupils of lower attainment and the objectives and pace of lessons are well matched to their abilities. Where support is available it is effective in prompting pupils with special educational needs to gain fully from the lesson. No instance was noted during the inspection of any pupil failing to make progress because of lack of familiarity with English.

90. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall; in Years 5 and 6 it is very good. During the inspection there was no unsatisfactory teaching and nearly all lessons were either good or very good. The key to the good teaching lies in the very good planning of all lessons. The department effectively implements the national literacy strategy both in its long term planning and the planning for individual lessons. Thus all lessons begin with the objectives being shared with the pupils so that they are focused immediately on what they are expected to learn. Teachers then provide a number of activities aimed firmly at achieving the objectives. These are usually timed activities so that pupils are kept working at a very good pace. Often pupils have to engage in speaking, listening, reading and writing in the one lesson. The provision of a number of activities in the lesson helps pupils to remain interested and motivated. At the end of the lesson the teacher leads a review of what pupils have learned, often very effectively using the work of pupils as a model.

91. The best elements of teaching were seen in a very good Year 8 lesson on persuasive writing. It began with pupils being given a letter, supposedly from the school governors, to say that parents were to be asked to agree that all pupils be in bed by 8.30 p.m. during term-time. The teacher linked this to the previous two lessons on persuasive writing and asked pupils to write the first sentence of a reply. These were fixed to the board and used as the basis for a plenary session focusing very firmly on the lesson objectives and involving a very well paced question and answer session. The teacher's energetic approach succeeded in stimulating the pupils' interest so that most of them thoroughly enjoyed what they were doing. Pupils then had to work in groups developing the first paragraph of their reply. During this time the teacher circulated, reminding pupils of the features of persuasive writing learned in previous lessons. The lesson finished with some pupils presenting their paragraphs using the overhead projector so that all could discuss its merits. Finally pupils were told to use what they had learned to complete their letter individually for homework.

92. Pupils learn well because they have very good attitudes to English and behave very well. This is at least in part due to the excellent class management skills of teachers, who foster an atmosphere in which they expect pupils to do their very best work. In addition, they know the pupils well and make sure their lessons are interesting. Consequently most pupils work hard and make good progress.

93. The school has developed a very good system of assessing pupils' progress in Years 5 and 6. Teachers make very good use of the National Curriculum level criteria in their marking and in setting targets for pupils. Some of the marking is excellent: it highlights good work and links comments on pupils' books to their targets so that pupils know exactly what they have to do to move to the next National Curriculum level. However, the system has not yet been extended to Years 7 and 8, so marking does not relate so clearly to the National Curriculum and pupils have a less precise idea of how well they are progressing.

94. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The overall planning of the curriculum, based on the national literacy strategy, is very good, and well managed so that it is implemented by all nine English teachers. The department development plan correctly concentrates on raising standards. Teachers have identified standards of writing, the achievement of boys, and target-setting in Years 7 and 8 as its main priorities. The head of department provides very clear direction and is responsible for the excellent commitment to succeed. However, the department does not check its overall performance by assessing pupils on entering and leaving the school. Also, the monitoring of teaching is at present not rigorous enough. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. The good and very good teaching and achievement have been maintained, and the standards have been further improved.

Key skills: literacy

95. Standards of literacy across all subjects are above average. There is a whole school policy for the development of literacy, based on the national literacy strategy. All teachers have received appropriate training. The English department makes very good provision. Of the other subjects, about half make good provision and the rest provide satisfactorily. When pupils enter the school at the beginning of Year 5 their standards of literacy are broadly in line with the national average. By Year 8 standards are above average, showing good achievement. Speaking and reading skills are stronger than writing.

96. In all subjects pupils are expected to use the correct technical terms when speaking, usually supported by lists of keywords displayed on classroom walls. In mathematics key words are actually identified in lesson plans and teachers provide support to lower attaining groups by requiring pupils to record new vocabulary in their exercise books. In some English and science lessons teachers were observed phrasing questions in order to encourage pupils to give extended answers rather than a single "yes" or "no". Generally, however, teachers do not follow a systematic method of improving pupils' speaking skills.

97. Pupils are expected to use the morning form-time to practise reading. They bring books either from home or from the school library. This provision is satisfactory but some teachers are more active than others in ensuring that pupils are reading books suitable for their attainment. The library is open at breaks and lunch times and has a suitable stock of fiction and non-fiction, both for pleasure and research. In most subjects, with the important exception of English, there is no systematic approach to developing pupils' reading skills. However, in ICT pupils cannot proceed with some programs if they do not read an accompanying text-book accurately. Reading standards are well above average but the school does not test pupils except for those on the special educational needs register. Consequently there is no way of identifying any other pupils who might not be making satisfactory progress.

98. In most subjects teachers pay good attention to pupils' writing skills. In science, pupils are taught how to report experiments and are also given opportunities for free writing. In history, teachers place emphasis on pupils using correct sentence structure. Most teachers, however, do not keep to an agreed system of marking spelling and punctuation and there is no system for monitoring consistency of approach.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Leadership is good.
- Planning for the introduction of the numeracy strategy is very good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- Standards need to be raised.
- The use of assessment data to monitor pupils' progress.
- The quality of marking of pupils' books is inconsistent and does not help pupils enough in taking their work forward.
- The quality of homework does not provide sufficient challenge for pupils.

99. When pupils enter the school their standard in numeracy is broadly in line with the national average. Levels of attainment are average at the end of Year 6 and Year 8. Pupils achieve satisfactory standards overall, but in developing their skills, knowledge and understanding they do not achieve as well as they do in the other core subjects. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory which ensures satisfactory learning. Pupils have very positive attitudes and they respond well to mental activities. This has a good impact on their learning.

100. In the 2001 National Curriculum tests, results were average when compared with all schools and well below average when compared to similar schools. Although results have been rising steadily since 1997 they were not as high as the school expected. They have not been rising as fast as national standards. There was no difference between the performance of boys and girls. Results in mathematics were not as good those in either English or science. Although the results represent satisfactory achievement in relation to pupils' attainment when they entered the school, they are not high enough.

101. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are average at the end of Year 6 and this represents a similar level of standards to those observed at the previous inspection. Achievement overall is satisfactory, but lags behind the achievement these same pupils make in English and science. Numeracy skills are being developed satisfactorily across the school. By the end of Year 6 most pupils have made good progress with consolidating and extending their number skills. Pupils in the top sets have a good understanding of rounding and estimating. Most pupils handle numbers mentally with confidence although pupils in the lower sets still have difficulty with their tables. Algebraic skills are beginning to be developed well; by the end of Year 6 the majority of pupils identify simple patterns and find a rule. Pupils' understanding of shape and space is satisfactory. They find areas of rectangles, identify different kinds of angles and understand symmetry. Data handling skills are developing well; most pupils draw tally charts and bar graphs confidently. Problem solving skills are satisfactory. They are being developed better than they were at the time of the previous inspection.

102. At the end of Year 8 standards are broadly in line with the national average. Standards for pupils in the top set are above average. By the end of Year 8, number skills have continued to improve and most pupils are now confident in recalling their tables in mental activities. Rounding and estimating skills are satisfactory for the majority of pupils. Pupils use percentages effectively when doing calculations. Algebraic skills are not well developed although pupils in the top sets solve simple equations and simplify expressions. Pupils

understanding of shape and space is satisfactory. Measuring skills are developing well and data handling skills are satisfactory. Pupils understand the concept of probability and can calculate probabilities of events occurring in activities using coins and dice. Problem-solving skills continue to be developed well. In a Year 7 lesson pupils were using new information well to revise their ideas using sound mathematical methods.

103. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is often good and sometimes very good. Eleven staff are responsible for teaching the curriculum, only one of whom is a specialist teacher. Nevertheless, all teachers are competent in teaching the basic skills of numeracy. They explain skills and concepts clearly. They are all familiar with the numeracy strategy and this is reflected in their lesson planning which is very good. Clear objectives are set for lessons, good links are made between lessons and the three-part lesson is usually delivered well. Starter activities are being very effectively in most lessons to develop pupils' mental skills. For example, in a very good Year 6 lesson, the teacher's fast pace of questioning, and the quick response required from pupils, meant that pupils developed strategies for handling numbers mentally with confidence. A good range of activities is provided to help pupils learn including practical, mental and problem solving tasks. This ensures that all pupils, including those with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress with their learning.

104. When computers are used to support learning they are used well. For example, in a very good Year 8 lesson, the teacher used computer software well to develop pupils' understanding of scatter graphs. Good use is made of overhead projectors, which helps to create a good pace to pupils learning. Questioning of pupils is generally good; pupils listen attentively and they are keen to answer. Homework is not used well enough to consolidate pupils' skills and increase understanding. It is not clearly identified in some books and often the tasks do not provide sufficient challenge for pupils. The available time is usually used to best effect. There are lessons however where too long is spent on discussions and pupils do not have enough opportunity to work individually. Good feedback is usually given to pupils during lessons about their progress with tasks although sometimes teachers check pupils' answers but do not clearly indicate to them where they are going wrong. The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent across the subject. It does not always inform pupils well enough of how they are doing or what they need to do to improve their work. The very positive attitudes of pupils ensure that all teachers manage the pupils well. Attention is given to literacy skills by the display of key words in classrooms although space is limited most classrooms.

105. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Pupils listening skills are good. They respond well to the teachers' questions and are usually keen to participate in discussions. Pupils apply themselves well to their tasks and appear interested in what they are doing. When asked to work in groups, pupils cooperate well with each other and share ideas well. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils worked very well in pairs to discuss their ideas about the questions they would ask to collect data for a survey. In most books, work is presented well. Diagrams and graphs are drawn carefully and work is nearly always dated and headed. Pupils behave very well. The positive approach adopted by pupils has a beneficial impact on the quality of their learning.

106. The leadership provided by the acting head of department is good. The national numeracy strategy is well implemented in all year groups. Very good schemes of work provide a balanced curriculum. Although ten out of eleven teachers are not specialist mathematics teachers, they have been provided with good training and support to ensure that all can teach effectively the requirements of the curriculum. There is a clear commitment by all staff to improving standards. Appropriate priorities are identified in the subject development plan. Although the procedures for assessing pupils' attainment as they move through the

school are satisfactory the available data is not used well enough to monitor pupils' progress. The setting of targets for individual pupils is not a prominent feature of the assessment process. The school is aware that pupils did not achieve as well as they should in recent national tests and has already put in place some strategies to improve standards. Booster classes for borderline pupils, a change in the way in which pupils are grouped and problem solving afternoons for Year 6 pupils have all been introduced in an attempt to raise standards.

107. Satisfactory improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Teachers now have a better understanding of Attainment Target 1 and are consequently providing more problem solving activities for pupils. Tasks are now well suited to pupils' needs, which ensures that no groups of pupils now make unsatisfactory progress. The changes made by recent initiatives have not yet made a significant impact and standards at the end of Year 6 remain the same, as does the quality of the teaching.

Key skills: numeracy

108. The teaching numeracy skills is satisfactory. The national numeracy strategy is well implemented in lessons and all teachers across the school have been made aware of the way in which it affects the teaching of basic numeracy skills. As a result, the contribution made by other subjects to developing pupils' numeracy skills is satisfactory. Pupils enter the school with standards, which are broadly average and these standards are maintained as pupils pass through the school. Number skills are developed well and this results in pupils doing calculations confidently and accurately. In science and physical education, for example, pupils use percentages effectively. Pupils measuring skills are developing well. In design technology pupils can estimate food quantities accurately and use scales confidently. In science pupils make accurate measurements using balances and measure lengths and heights accurately in experiments. In art and design, pupils use the idea of symmetry and enlargement well in their drawing. Data handling skills are satisfactory. In geography higher attaining pupils can interpret information from population pyramids accurately. Graphical skills are regularly reinforced during lessons. Computers are used often and effectively to produce graphs of information.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Leadership and management of the subject are good, giving a clear lead to the work of the department
- Teaching is often very good or excellent in Years 5 and 6, leading to very good learning. The process is reinforced by the very good relationships within the department.
- ICT skills are used effectively to assist understanding and learning.
- There are good procedures related to the use of homework in Years 7 and 8.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to raise standards, by the sharing of best practice within the department, in particular related to the planning of lessons, and to the variety of teaching methods used.
- Day-to-day assessment needs to be used more effectively to assist pupils in achieving their targets.

109. When pupils enter the school, at the beginning of Year 5, baseline testing within the department, indicates that levels of attainment are broadly in line with the national average. Levels of attainment are above average at the end of Year 6 and Year 8 and pupils achieve well. The quality of teaching is good and pupils have very good attitudes, responding well to

the use of ICT in the subject. These have a clear impact on the pupils' learning, resulting in good levels of achievement. Since the previous inspection there has been a good improvement.

110. In the Year 2001 Year 6 National Curriculum tests, the department's results, using average points, were above the national average when compared to all schools, and broadly in line with the average when compared to similar schools. There was no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils achieved better in science than they did in mathematics, but not as well as in English. The trend in results for the last three years has been broadly in line with the national trend.

111. Work seen during the inspection shows that standards overall are above average at the end of Year 6, and are higher than those observed in the previous inspection. Having entered the school in Year 5, with average ability, these pupils have achieved well. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups. They make very good progress in their classes in response to the very good and often excellent teaching, which has a significantly positive impact on their learning. In work observed in Year 6, pupils working mainly in same-gender groups, measure height competently and accurately, and show an understanding of the principles of fair testing, in their investigation of friction. Having clearly understood the objectives of a lesson, read to them by another pupil, they enjoy using Newton meters to determine the upthrust on a range of materials, when placed in water. They understand the effects of balancing forces. Higher attaining pupils naturally use scientific vocabulary such as 'thrust', as distinct from others in the mixed ability class of pupils, using the word 'push'. Pupils with special educational needs, strategically placed and supported by the teacher, make equal progress to others in the class in relation to their prior attainment. Year 5 pupils explore the world of food chains by the use of cards, which assist individual learning. Their literacy skills are enhanced and consolidated as they distinguish between examples of prey, consumer, herbivores, carnivores and omnivores. All pupils, including the lower attainers, have a good grasp of the importance of the Sun's energy and plant life within the food chain. There is no difference between the progress of boys and girls. An identified pupil with English as an additional language makes good progress, because of the support received and the well-targeted teaching.

112. At the end of Year 8, standards of work seen during the inspection are above average. Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour and satisfactory teaching overall, enable them to achieve well. Year 8 pupils can distinguish between elements and compounds and working in pairs confidently burn magnesium ribbon in air. Using a computer-generated results table they can plot and observe changes in mass. Teachers and pupils are fully aware of health and safety issues in their investigative work. Different worksheets allow pupils of different attainment levels, within the mixed ability class, to make similar progress. Year 8 girls are able to access the Internet to extend their understanding of the thermos flask. Year 7 pupils, having carefully prepared and mounted their own microscopic slide of onion cells, use digital microscope photography, with expert assistance from a peer pupil, to produce a printed image for their own records. Higher and average attaining pupils are familiar with the terminology and function of the parts of specialist cells. All pupils competently use, and carefully handle microscopes. A scrutiny of work shows the regular setting of homework, based on a homework schedule for each pupil issued at the beginning of each term, and pasted into each pupil's exercise book. The pupils' presentation of work is good and progress can be easily determined. Diagrams and handwriting are often good or better. The use of the skills to produce manual, graphical presentation of investigative work is not emphasised enough. Education support assistants give very good, and valuable support to teachers, to ensure full participation by all pupils in practical activities.

113. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. In Years 5 and 6, teaching is very good. It is never less than good, and in Year 5 is predominately excellent. In Years 7 and 8, teaching is, overall satisfactory, but there are occasions when teaching is very good or excellent. Teachers have very good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They contribute not only to the teaching of scientific skills, but also to literacy skills, for example in Year 7, using creative writing to include, and identify, the use of many different forms of energy. There is a frequent use of ICT skills within lessons, for example when supporting practical investigations and also when aiding individual research into stomata, using the Internet. Overall, relationships are very good. A greater impact on teaching and learning would be made if all teachers were consistent in setting precise objectives at the beginning of lessons, and discussing outcomes in a review, at the end. Good classroom management skills, evident in all years, and a planned, well-managed diversity of activities, support good learning, and these need to be extended throughout all classes, especially in Years 7 and 8. Teachers do not generally indicate to pupils any numbered or lettered grade assessment of their current work, other than scores in end-of-topic tests, oral comment, and on occasions written comment. The progress report, pasted in exercise books each half term is very good departmental practice, but the system would be enhanced, and the setting of targets become more precise and meaningful, if pupils were always aware of current assessment.

114. Overall, attitudes to learning are very good. Attitudes and behaviour are never less satisfactory in Years 7 and 8, and never less than good in Years 5 and 6. On occasions they are excellent in Year 5 and Year 8. Pupils apply themselves well to their tasks and show sustained concentration when listening to the teacher. Hands are raised enthusiastically to answer questions. They work collaboratively in mixed ability groupings when sharing equipment, and ideas, and handle equipment competently, and with care. Pupils help each other very successfully, as in a Year 7 lesson where a pupil controlled the output of a digital microscope. Pupils move in an orderly manner in the laboratory, especially when frequently changing their working area, for example, in Year 6, when measuring upthrust, and using a number of different workstations. On occasion, pupils' attention was not fully maintained throughout a lesson when the accommodation used was overcrowded for the number and size of the pupils, and the task set was too long, and complex, for the width of ability in the group.

115. The leadership and management of the department are good. Seven members of staff contribute to the teaching of science, four of whom have science qualifications, some having other whole school responsibilities. They are led, and given excellent support by the head of department, especially with the preparation of materials for investigative work in the laboratory area. There is no technician support within this department. An assessment portfolio of pupils' work, assessed to National Curriculum levels is held centrally to assist non-specialist teachers. The formal monitoring of teaching requires further development. Science schemes of work are good, and contents are discussed with both feeder and high schools, with whom there is close liaison. The accommodation includes one laboratory area, which allows all classes in Years 6 to Year 8 to have at least one lesson there during the week. Pupil's display areas are attractive, relevant and well maintained. One classroom area being used is not adequate for classes of thirty Year 8 pupils. Science in Year 5 is linked with literacy and pupils receive less time allocation than in other years, and this should be tackled. The quality and quantity of resources are good and they are well maintained and managed. On occasions lessons do not start promptly because of the late arrival of pupils, and occasions lessons finish too early because of a pending bus duty by teachers. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement. The attainment in work seen has risen, and there has been a significant increase in the amount of ICT used by pupils. Attempts to lead to less directed teaching, by the use of probing questioning, and the planning and using of a variety of classroom activities within a lesson should be further developed across all classes.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Pupils have very good attitudes towards the subject and try hard in lessons, securing good progress over the four years in school.
- The quality of teaching is good and brings about good quality learning.
- Pupils' behaviour and the relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Art and design makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.
- Leadership is good; ensuring pupils have interesting and purposeful experiences in art and design.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented need more appropriate starting points in lessons.
- Pupils have too little homework and there are too few opportunities for personal research.
- Pupils are unaware of their National Curriculum levels in art and design.
- The kiln is unguarded.

116. Standards of attainment in art and design are average at the end of Year 6 and above average at the end of Year 8. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection when standards were judged as average. These standards also represent good achievement over the four years in school as pupils enter with below average standards in both practical work and understanding of art and design in general. The quality of teaching by specialist and non-specialist staff is good, which ensures good quality learning. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and these coupled with very good behaviour secures interest and concentration.

117. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 6 are average. Drawing skills are weak, as pupils do not have sketchbooks in which to practice and perfect observational drawings, and build up a bank of techniques to be used later in imaginative work. Most pupils do not observe closely enough, and forget to look for proportion and size, even though they often cope well with shape and detail. Some of the self-portraiture shown by the higher attaining pupils is above average, as they understand the placement and detail of features. Skills in painting are higher than in drawing. For example, pupils in Year 6 are experimenting with applying paint in the style of three famous impressionists. They choose appropriate brushes, mix and apply paint with flair, however, they know little about composition. In applied art, such as weaving and collage, pupils' work is above average, as they understand how to get good effects by using varied textures of papers and fabrics.

118. Pupils build on to their experiences in art and design and achieve well in Years 7 and 8 to attain standards that are above average at the end of Year 8. Drawing remains weak, as pupils do not practice drawing in sketchbooks, but painting is above average. In Year 8, for example, many pupils have a good knowledge of colour and are extremely careful about mixing to get the exact shade they need. They choose the right size of brush for the task and their work is neatly finished. Many boys in Year 8 for example produced an unusually high standard of painting on fired clay as they worked carefully and finely. Clay work is above average. Pupils know something of the work of Oldenburg and have been influenced by his style and attention to detail. The items produced show good shape, texture and realistic colour. Printmaking and printing are also above average, as pupils know how to handle lino-cutting tools safely and use their initial sketches for reference. Pupils use the computer and digital camera competently to create and distort images, but they do not often use programs

for research. By the end of Year 8 pupils know about some art and design in Britain through the ages, such as Celtic crafts, Tudor portraiture and local buildings and sculptures, but their knowledge of world wide art is below average.

119. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in painting and clay work, but sometimes struggle with drawing and art and design theory. Those who are gifted and talented make satisfactory progress in most aspects, but need greater challenge, especially in theory and research, to achieve appropriately highly.

120. Pupils have very good attitudes to art and design, which many of them say is a favourite subject. They enter the room cheerfully, settle quickly and are interested in what they are doing. Most pupils concentrate, try very hard and keep busy throughout the lessons. Pupils are responsible for setting out their own workspaces and for storing their work. Many pupils show increased maturity by trying to help others when the teacher is busy and they are generous in praising each other for their efforts.

121. The quality of teaching is good from both specialist and non-specialist teachers and has a good effect on pupils' learning. Demonstrations are particularly effective in showing pupils exactly what to do and what is expected of them. The scheme of work is created to interest and motivate the pupils and to help them to acquire new skills and knowledge. Work with the computer has extended the curriculum and teachers stress the use of correct terminology to extend pupils' vocabularies. Some of the projects, such as looking at perspective in buildings, help pupils' numeracy skills. Most projects offer good practical challenges to the pupils, but some lack the necessary background and analysis, which means pupils are not gaining enough in understanding. Lessons usually proceed as planned, as pupils' behaviour is very good, and there is no time wasted in sorting out the groups or getting order and discipline. This leads to good learning. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good. Teachers are very patient in helping individual pupils with techniques and the lower attaining pupils benefit most from this as they also gain confidence. At the end of a project, teachers assess pupils' work, and the breakdown shows where and why marks have been awarded. Pupils understand the scheme and how it relates to their efforts, but they are unaware of their National Curriculum levels.

122. Leadership is good and the department has made good progress since the previous inspection. The head of the department gives clear guidance to less experienced colleagues and good support with planning lessons and assessment. The development plan is well argued and the main aim to raise the profile of art and design has been realised. Art displays now feature prominently around the school and show pupils the standards that can be attained. Display in the art and design room is less good as there are too few display boards showing pupils' work and too few artefacts to stimulate inquisitiveness and improve the environment. Overall standards have been maintained in Years 5 and 6 but have improved in Years 7 and 8, although drawing still remains weak across the school. The quality of teaching has improved and ensures pupils are learning and making progress. Assessment has improved, but pupils are not yet made aware of their National Curriculum levels and they have too little homework to do. Art and design makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development as there is now an extensive programme of visits to galleries and museums and the new scheme of work contains more references to the work of real artists and craftspeople. The art and design room is large and well arranged, but the kiln is not guarded, which is a health and safety problem.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is good and brings about good quality learning.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good and they work hard in lessons.
- The facilities are good and pupils have wide and varied experiences in design and technology.
- Pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress in the subject.
- Design and technology makes a good contribution to pupils' social development.

Areas for improvement:

- There is no head of the department, which makes management of the subject difficult.
- Pupils with special educational needs need more appropriate starting points in lessons.
- Pupils have too little homework.
- Pupils are unaware of their National Curriculum levels.

123. Standards of attainment are average at the end of Year 6 and above average at the end of Year 8. This represents good achievement over the four years the pupils are in the school. The quality of specialist and non-specialist teaching is good, which ensures good quality learning. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and these, coupled with very good behaviour, secure good progress in skills and knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to others in practical work, but satisfactory progress overall, as they often find theory work too difficult.

124. In work seen during the inspection, overall standards at the end of Year 6 are average. Practical work in food, textiles and resistant materials is above average in Years 5 and 6. Pupils work confidently with tools and materials and produce good quality items in answer to design problems connected with units of work about, for example, the millennium, Tudors, Victorians and weather. Pupils know how to cut and shape materials, fix them together and get the right consistency. They add to their literacy skills by using their coursework booklets for recording words, ideas, drawing and evaluation of completed products. Theory work overall is average in both years because many pupils do not show depth of understanding in research or individuality. Only the highest attaining pupils complete their sheets carefully and show some ingenuity in designing. Some of the lower attaining pupils do not complete all their design sheets, as the starting points are too difficult for them. There is little difference in the attainment of boys and girls as pupils are grouped in mixed teams in many lessons to give each other support.

125. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 8 are above average, as pupils build on to their early skills and knowledge and improve their understanding in the subject. Despite their haphazard organisational skills in Years 7 and 8, work with food is above average, as pupils understand about basic nutrition and hygiene. They weigh and measure carefully and produce healthy attractive dishes such as vegetable salads and reduced fat meals. Their cultural experiences extend to trying out foreign foods and learning something of the countries they choose. Work with resistant materials is also above average. Pupils understand that to get a good finished product, the early stages of marking and measuring are important. They use a wide range of hand and power tools competently and can assess the quality of their work. Pupils in Year 8, for example, making a storage unit for their treasures, state quite clearly where they have been successful, what stages have been difficult and make sensible suggestions about improving their designs. Pupils have fewer opportunities to work with textiles than with the other materials and their work is average.

They interpret the problems successfully and make neat, useful items for their bedrooms and for sale at gift shops, but design work is naïve. There is little difference in the standards of work from boys and girls, but girls tend to work slower and more methodically than the boys do. Pupils' course booklets contain a good balance of background information and allow scope for individuality in designing. Pupils who are gifted and talented make best use of these, as they work hard to produce something unusual and with sufficient challenge to show their skills. Theory work is weaker than practical work, mainly because pupils have insufficient homework and most of their research is confined to collecting pictures.

126. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject, which many of them say is a favourite because they like making things. Design and technology lessons help pupils to become resourceful as pupils are usually well-prepared for practical work and bring ingredients, protective clothing and some ideas about what they would like to make. They are good listeners and enjoy watching demonstrations, which show them new skills and give them confidence. Pupils try very hard in lessons and keep themselves busy throughout. A few of the more resourceful pupils, and these are not necessarily always the highest attaining pupils, are keen to help others who are working slowly. Behaviour is very good and pupils share resources fairly, wait patiently to use equipment when necessary and co-operate well when clearing up.

127. The quality of teaching is good from both specialists and non-specialists and has a good effect on pupils' learning. Teachers are enthusiastic about design and technology; they instruct clearly, try to make lessons interesting and follow the scheme of work logically to build up pupils' knowledge. They select worthwhile examples to show the pupils high quality work and give good demonstrations, passing on good craft skills. Expectations are highest in Years 7 and 8, where the teachers set realistic and challenging problems and allow pupils scope for individuality and development. In Years 5 and 6, the work is planned suitably to build up skills but is over-directed by teachers in designing. Class organisation and control are very good, largely because the pupils are very well behaved and motivated, but also because adult and pupil relationships are secure. One-to-one help is used very beneficially to keep pupils moving and making progress. Teachers make good efforts to boost pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by, for example, stressing vocabulary, writing about results, creating recipes, measuring, costing and calculating. Overall, the subject's use of new technology is satisfactory, but there are some weaknesses. Teachers use the equipment occasionally, if a program is appropriate, but as yet they are under-using computers for research, analysis or presentation and there is no work on computer control, even for the pupils in Years 7 and 8. Teachers constantly inform pupils how well they are doing in class work, but there is insufficient marking overall and pupils are unaware of their National Curriculum levels.

128. The accommodation and facilities are good for a school of this type and ensure pupils have space to work and access to a wide range of equipment. Display is weak in the workshop, as there is insufficient pupils' work on display. There is no technician, and the teachers have to spend too much time on duties such as maintaining equipment, preparing materials, all which take time away from valuable lesson planning. There is too much clutter around the workshop, the dust extractor is inefficient and there is too much dust now accumulating in the area.

129. Leadership is satisfactory, although there is no head of department. The acting co-ordinator has the unusual task of following someone else's scheme of work and overseeing the team of non-specialist and temporary teachers without the facility to monitor the teaching. Despite these difficulties, the management of the subject is satisfactory and the department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Standards have been maintained across the school and progress has improved, especially in Years 5 and 6. Teaching has improved, particularly with reference to the teaching of craft skills and the basic

skills of literacy and numeracy. New units of work have been introduced which have motivated the pupils and resulted in good quality practical work and improved behaviour and attitudes. Computer work is now included in some lessons, but remains insufficient overall.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Pupils show enthusiasm for the subject especially in Years 5 and 6, and are keen to learn.
- Relationships between pupils and with their teachers are very good; this creates a good atmosphere for learning.
- Pupils' work is thoroughly marked to give points for improving their attainment.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching styles needs to be widened, especially in Years 7 and 8, and a greater range of activities is needed to encourage more pupil participation.
- Homework needs to be used more consistently and effectively to extend pupils' learning.
- The use of ICT needs to be developed to support and enhance pupils' learning.
- An assessment system is needed that informs pupils of their progress, sets precise targets for improvement and enables teachers to monitor pupil progress.

130. Pupils' attainment is average at the end of Years 6 and 8. Pupils' achievement in relation to their previous learning is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are very good and are a major reason for the satisfactory progress that they make. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

131. The overall standard of work of pupils at the end of Year 6, as seen during the inspection is average. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys. Pupils' achievement in relation to their previous attainment is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress. Pupils in Year 6 identify the main physical features of a river valley. Higher attaining pupils explain the formation of features such as ox-bow lakes. Lower attaining pupils have difficulty in recalling the main features of a river. Year 5 pupils have a good understanding of the characteristics of a less economically developed country and most know that there are richer areas within such countries because of thorough explanation by their teacher. Higher attainers in Year 5 have good knowledge of places and features of Peru.

132. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 continue to make progress and their achievement is satisfactory. The standards of work at the end of Year 8 are average. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Most pupils in Year 7 describe the effect of volcanic eruptions on a city. Higher attaining pupils link other factors, such as the stage of economic development and climate of the country, to further explain the high death rate associated with eruptions in an African country. Geographical distributions and processes are now taught more thoroughly. This redresses a criticism in the previous inspection. As a result, pupils in Year 7 describe the processes involved in continental drift and how the earth is split into many plates. Written work is satisfactory overall. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 write detailed and accurate accounts from their research on India. Some enhance their work well by using ICT. However pupils' use of ICT to research and present their work is limited. This was a criticism in the previous report. The written work produced by lower attaining pupils shows below average literary skills with spelling being particularly poor. Many pupils do not

fully understand basic geographical terms such as population, density and settlement function.

133. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory. This is an improvement since the previous report. Teachers are well prepared so that lessons start and proceed smoothly. The active support given by the teachers, and their good knowledge of the needs of each pupil, enable all pupils to make progress. Pupils are well managed which results in an orderly and co-operative atmosphere. The best lessons have a wide range of activities that involves the pupils and maintains their interest. For example one Year 7 lesson had a starter activity that involved all pupils in linking a chain of geographical statements. This was followed by discussion in groups of a challenging task to assess the impact of the eruption of an African volcano. Then the teacher led discussion on each group's findings after which the pupils used paraphrasing skills to write their own notes. The whole lesson proceeded at a good pace. However some lessons, especially in Years 7 and 8 do not involve the pupils enough in discussion and exploration of ideas. They are too teacher-led and based too closely upon worksheets. This was a criticism in the previous report. Homework is inconsistently set. It often involves finishing off work started in class rather than being an integral part of the planning of lessons. Not enough opportunity is given for pupils to use homework to reinforce their understanding and to develop their research skills. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly. Teachers provide good helpful comments to show pupils how their work could be improved. Provision for geographical fieldwork is satisfactory but could be extended further so that pupils gain more experience of data collection, presentation and analysis.

134. Pupils' attitudes towards geography are very good. Pupils work well together. Discussion is orderly and the views of individuals are respected. Pupils show very good levels of concentration throughout the lessons. They show enthusiasm for the subject especially in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' behaviour is very good. Their written work is usually well presented and shows a great deal of care. Relationships between pupils, and with their teachers, are very good. This results in a purposeful and productive learning atmosphere.

135. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Good links with the first schools have been developed. There is a well thought out development plan that aims to raise the effectiveness of geography in the school. Clear schemes of work ensure that the National Curriculum requirements at the end of Year 6 are now met. Regular departmental meetings now take place. The monitoring of teaching in a systematic manner is developing.

136. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Other improvements include an increase in time for the subject in Year 6 and teachers are now more competent in their subject knowledge. However the use of assessment is still undeveloped. Pupils' progress is not tracked from a base line when they enter the school. Pupils are not consistently informed of how they are progressing in relation to National Curriculum standards. Targets for improvement for each pupil, that are specific to the subject, are not set.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Teachers have good knowledge of their subject, which adds breadth to pupils' understanding of historical events.
- Teachers use a good range of teaching methods including role play and group work which captures pupils' imagination.
- Classroom management is good and keeps pupils firmly on task.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and interested in their studies and show sustained effort in their work.

Areas for improvement

- Higher attaining pupils need more challenging opportunities to research historical sources.
- Assessment needs to be better used to inform curriculum planning.
- Homework should be used more consistently, particularly to introduce new topics.
- Timetabling arrangements inhibit the progress that pupils make.

137. Standards of attainment are average at the end of Years 6 and 8. Pupils' achievements in relation to their previous learning are satisfactory. Teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory overall, but had many good features and made a good contribution to pupils' learning. This demonstrates satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. There are weaknesses in assessment, the use of homework and in the level of challenge for the higher attaining pupils.

138. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are average. In the work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 6 are average and pupils achieve satisfactorily. Pupils in Year 5 remember a very limited amount of the history that they studied in their previous schools, but can describe their study of Aztec culture in Year 5 in some detail. The school's original log-book provides a rich resource which enables Year 6 pupils to describe some features of life in Victorian England well. Teachers use role-play effectively to bring these studies to life. Higher attaining pupils compare and contrast those conditions with the present day with a good degree of insight. All pupils in Year 6, including those with special educational needs are able to put events such as the sequence of royal dynasties into an accurate chronological order, demonstrating sound historical skills.

139. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress across Years 7 and 8. Their achievement is satisfactory and at the end of Year 8 their attainments in history are broadly average. Pupils in Year 8 use historical evidence from a range of sources effectively to understand the causes of the English Civil War. Pupils show a good understanding of the events leading up to the French Revolution. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from strong individual support and make satisfactory progress. They know that there were complex reasons for the outbreak of the French Revolution, and play a full part in presenting their ideas orally to the whole class. They describe factors such as the development of new weapons which assisted the spread of Islam in the 7th. And 8th. centuries.

140. The overall quality of teaching provision is satisfactory. There are some good features to the teaching, but the impact on learning in the longer term is adversely affected by timetabling arrangements that lead to a lack of continuity of experience for pupils. As a result, the good learning seen in lessons is not reflected in good achievement over the longer term.

Assessment is not used effectively to inform curriculum planning and homework is not used consistently enough, particularly to introduce new topics.

141. Teachers have good classroom management skills, and minor disruptions such as a pupil arriving late to the classroom are not allowed to affect the pace of the lesson. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and present their lessons with a brisk pace, which encourages pupils to work with sustained effort and concentration. In good lessons, pupils are challenged to understand the underlying causes of historical events, such as in a Year 7 lesson on the significance of the signing of Magna Carta. This enables pupils to make good progress in lessons and develop a balanced perspective of the motives and intentions of King John and the barons. Where the teacher used effective group discussion as in a Year 7 lesson on the reasons behind the rapid spread of Islam, pupils gained confidence in making presentations of their ideas to the whole class. Imaginative use of a range of activities including singing the chorus of 'La Marseillaise' was seen to make a good impact on pupils' understanding of the French Revolution. Much teaching encourages pupils to share their ideas with each other, and pupils achieve well in their ability to talk about history. In a Year 8 lesson on the French Revolution, the teacher did this particularly effectively through a class game. Teachers promote pupils' literacy skills by encouraging them to learn key vocabulary that is pertinent to discussion about historical subjects. Extended writing is less well-developed. Activities are appropriately chosen to encourage lower attaining pupils to learn. The highest attainers do not have enough opportunities to research topics for themselves, or to take a greater responsibility for their own learning. There are few examples in pupils' books of the use of ICT and the development of numeracy skills.

142. Pupils show very positive attitudes towards history and their behaviour in lessons is very good. These factors contribute greatly to the good quality learning that takes place in lessons. The subject contributes strongly to the ethos of the school in that pupils are very polite and well motivated. Most pupils work with enthusiasm and commitment. The work in lessons is further enhanced by the use of appropriate resources, especially texts, and the department is beginning to develop its use of CD-ROMs. Visits to localities such as the Roman Wall and the Hancock Museum in Newcastle add significantly to the quality of pupils' learning experience.

143. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The subject coordinator provides opportunities for colleagues to meet and discuss developments, and provides a very readable and accessible handbook, which offers valuable guidance on good practice. He has interesting ideas for the development of history such as the project to develop a CD-ROM from the school's historical log book. His strategy to enhance the learning of lower attaining pupils by pairing them with more able is imaginative, although this was not seen in practice during the inspection. Issues raised in the previous inspection have been addressed and improvement since previous inspection is satisfactory, although weaknesses in assessment and use of ICT remain.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils attain above average standards.
- The good teaching results in pupils achieving well.
- Pupils have very good attitudes towards the subject and concentrate upon their work well.
- The very good relationships between pupils, and with their teachers, create a very positive learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- The need to develop an assessment system that informs pupils and parents of progress made, sets precise targets for improvement and allows teachers to monitor pupils' progress.
- The accommodation is inadequate, because teaching rooms are poorly sited and not large enough.
- Homework is not used effectively to develop good study habits.

144. Standards of attainment are above average at the end of Years 6 and 8. Pupils' achievement in relation to their previous learning is good. The quality of teaching is good overall and this is a key factor in the good learning that takes place. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards the subject and work hard. There has been good progress since the previous inspection.

145. Work seen during the inspection show that standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. There is no significant difference in the performance of girls and boys. Achievement, in relation to their previous learning, at the end of Year 6 is good. Pupils with English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs also make good progress. Pupils in Year 5 are confident users of ICT. They can access and save their work readily. They understand that when using computers to classify information great care must be taken in composing the correct questions. Year 6 pupils produce an accurate word-processed document that they refine for a specific purpose. Teachers encourage pupils to seek their own solutions and to experiment and, as a result, pupils become more independent in their use of ICT. Teachers also use questioning well. For example in a Year 6 class the teacher discussed with the pupils the spell checking function which enabled pupils to make appropriate corrections and so improve the accuracy of their work.

146. Standards of work at the end of Year 8 are also above average and pupils achieve well. Pupils in Year 8 successfully create a web page using a variety of methods. They use their knowledge of the commands used in word processing to apply these to their web design software. They import pictures and graphics and create links to other Internet sites. Teachers use resources from some other subjects well to develop pupils' ICT skills. For example, pupils used data collected in mathematics on the time taken for them to reach school compared to the distance they travel, in a spreadsheet to produce scatter-graphs and to develop trend lines. Most pupils can access their work on the network and manipulate the Windows environment successfully. However some lower attaining pupils have difficulty in finding and saving their work. Higher attaining pupils can successfully programme a sequence of commands several steps ahead to control an on-screen robot. They also show good understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of using ICT to control machines. Most pupils use word processing software competently. However pupils do not have individual access to a computer on a regular basis. They have to work in pairs, and on occasions, in threes. In others lessons half the class use the computers whilst the rest

undertake other ICT related work. Although their teachers make the best use of the resources by good planning and providing appropriate tasks for those not using the computers, the amount of progress made is reduced.

147. The quality of teaching is good overall; none is less than satisfactory and a significant amount is very good. Learning is also good overall. The individual needs of pupils are met by the good personal support given by teachers and support staff. All teachers continually move around the room checking pupils' work, answering queries and offering advice. In this way all pupils, including those with English as an additional language and especially those with special educational needs are included in the lesson. This effective support is a major reason for the good learning by these pupils. Teachers challenge the pupils well; they have high expectations, which encourages pupils to concentrate upon their learning. Pupils also learn successfully from good demonstrations, both by teachers and pupils, through the use of projectors. Lesson planning is good with appropriate tasks being set for most pupils. Most learning takes place in lessons where the aims of the lesson are clearly outlined and the teachers move pupils through activities by giving them time targets for completion. A good review at the end of the lesson, often involving pupils, of the main learning points further enhances pupils' understanding. Very good behaviour in most lessons means that learning proceeds effectively. The setting of appropriate homework is inconsistent. As result pupils are not given enough opportunities to extend and enhance their class-work. Teachers know the pupils well and tailor their teaching appropriately. Teachers provide a wide range of extra-curricular sessions. These are well attended and help to develop pupils to develop as independent users of ICT. However the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and not related to National Curriculum levels. As a result pupils are unaware of the detail of their progress and are not given specific targets to improve their attainment.

148. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject. This is a major reason for the good learning that occurs. Pupils behave very well and are very interested in their work. They concentrate fully throughout the lessons. A particular strength is their willingness to help each other. They accept responsibility willingly, for example those who complete their work act as 'Computer Consultants' and help others with their learning.

149. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. The curriculum arrangements now meet statutory requirements. Attainment at the end of Year 8 has improved. The subject is well led and efficiently managed and enjoys the strong backing of senior managers. There is good liaison with both first and upper schools so that the National Curriculum is taught systematically as the pupils move from school to school. However the lack of technical support means that the ICT co-ordinator has to spend considerable time maintaining the system. This is an inefficient use of teacher time. There has been significant recent investment in the development of ICT and there are plans to enhance it further in the near future so that the provision of computers is closer to the expected level. However the ICT rooms are unsatisfactory. They are thoroughfares to other classrooms, which interrupts teaching. Rooms are small and one is irregularly shaped which makes demonstrations difficult for all pupils to see easily. Tracking of pupils' progress undeveloped. The monitoring of teaching is not yet formalised enough to provide a good basis for professional discussion on teaching methods to further improve pupils' knowledge and understanding. The reports to parents do not give enough information about the progress pupils make or the targets they should be aiming to achieve.

Key Skills: information and communication technology

150. The contribution that other subjects make to pupils' development in ICT is satisfactory. The provision of laptop computers to most of the teachers has significantly encouraged the use of ICT in the school. Gaining access to the computer rooms is not always possible for some subjects. However, particularly effective use of ICT is made in music to develop knowledge of musical literature and to develop composition. In mathematics the development of graphing skills is enhanced by the use of ICT. Year 6 ICT is taught through science. A wide range of resources and techniques are used to develop pupils' ICT competence through science. For example spreadsheets are used to draw day-length graphs. Pupils use display software to give presentations on the human body. The Internet is used for research into scientific topics. Sensors are used to record temperature changes in different light conditions. In modern languages, pupils use e-mail to communicate with schools in Europe as part of the Comenius project. Scanners are used effectively to store records from the school logbook. These have been used by the local history society to effect further links with the local community. Digital cameras are used in several subjects. In art and design the camera is used to record pupils' completed work. Most subjects include some provision for using ICT for communicating information. Most subjects have integrated ICT into their schemes of work, but only limited use is made of ICT in design and technology, history and geography.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

Overall the quality of provision in French is **good**.

Strengths

- The attainment of pupils is above average by the end of Year 8.
- Overall the quality of teaching is good and leads to good learning.
- The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural education.
- The behaviour and attitudes of pupils are good, resulting in a pleasant working atmosphere in lessons, where good learning takes place.

Areas for improvement

- There is a lack of precise targets for pupils based on their early attainment.
- The department needs to evaluate its performance more effectively in order to ensure that the priorities it sets are those most likely to result in higher standards.
- Teachers need to find ways of addressing the learning needs of all pupils in Years 5 and 6 more effectively.
- Current staffing problems are having an adverse impact on the attainment of pupils.

151. There are no national average levels in French at the end of Year 6. reliable and valid comparisons cannot, therefore be made about pupils standards at this stage. Standards are above average for all pupils by the time they reach the end of Year 8. Pupils make good progress in French during their time in the school and achieve well by the time they reach Year 8. Pupils' experience of language learning is enhanced because they begin to learn French in Years 5 and 6 and are able to develop their confidence in using a foreign language. They go on to develop good speaking skills in Years 7 and 8. They learn to produce extended responses using a good variety of structures. They speak confidently and with good accents. High attaining pupils in one Year 7 class were able to read aloud well, indicating that they have developed a good grasp of pronunciation rules. In another Year 7 class low attaining pupils were able to talk at length about their daily routine. Pupils with English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs in the same class spoke with confidence

and good pronunciation. High attaining pupils in Year 8 develop a secure grasp of the present and perfect tenses. In Years 7 and 8 all pupils are given opportunities to produce pieces of extended writing. Most pupils write fluently but levels of accuracy are often below what they should be. This is particularly the case for some middle and low attaining pupils where inaccuracies are serious enough to make meaning unclear. Pupils develop good reading and dictionary skills through a well-planned programme in all years.

152. Pupils behave very well. They have positive attitudes in lessons. They contribute well in oral activities, work conscientiously on individual tasks and cooperate well in group activities. In the best lessons, particularly in Year 7 where the level of challenge is high, pupils are very enthusiastic; in other lessons, particularly in Year 6, where the level of challenge is lower, pupils continue to behave well but often lose concentration and do not remain focused on the task in hand.

153. Teaching is good overall. It is good, sometimes very good, in Years 7 and 8. In Years 5 and 6 it is satisfactory overall but there was some unsatisfactory teaching. Relationships between teachers and pupils are always very good. Teachers are effective in creating a supportive atmosphere in which pupils are keen to contribute without fear of failing. Most teachers have very good subject knowledge. They use French effectively as the main means of communication with pupils in lessons so pupils develop good listening skills. The department makes a good contribution to cultural education. It has established links with several schools in Europe. Communication with these schools via e-mail has also helped pupils develop their ICT skills. Most lessons are well-planned. Clear objectives are planned and shared to ensure that pupils know what they are expected to achieve by the end of each lesson; lively presentations mean that they absorb new vocabulary effectively while a good balance between teacher-led and pupil-centred activities allow them to use the new vocabulary in active situations in order to develop their speaking and writing skills. In these lessons high expectations and challenging work means that pupils respond and achieve well. In the best lessons teachers not only set clear objectives, but review them thoroughly at the end. Information from the review is then used in planning future lessons. In one Year 7 lesson, for example, the teacher was able to use this information to set different and challenging tasks for different groups of pupils. All pupils responded well and, as a result, made very good progress in the lesson.

154. Where teaching is less successful it is because the level of expectation and challenge is not as high as it could be. In some lessons slow pace means that pupils sometimes lose concentration and pupils do not complete all tasks effectively. The marking of pupils work is always encouraging and usually thorough, though some mistakes are not corrected. However, when marking written work, teachers rarely point out to pupils the strengths and weaknesses in their performance and do not indicate to them what they have to do to improve the quality of their work. As a result, while most pupils in Years 7 and 8 know the National Curriculum level at which they are working, they do not know what they have to do to reach the next level. Assessment procedures are not as effective in Years 5 and 6 because teachers do not demonstrate a clear understanding of the attainment levels of their pupils. This often leads to low expectations in lessons and means that the needs of the most and least able are not being addressed effectively.

155. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. Intensive language days, in which all year groups take part enrich pupils' cultural experiences and develop their language skills. The timetabling arrangements in Years 5 and 6 are not effective. With only one lesson a week, pupils find it difficult to remember what they learnt in the previous lesson. The new acting head of department has made a good start in addressing key issues, though she has received no training in developing the necessary management skills. Teachers in the department feel well supported and she has succeeded in establishing a good team spirit.

The departmental handbook and schemes of work have been revised and are already leading to more consistency in departmental practices but they need to give clearer guidance about continuity and progression if standards are to be raised further. The department is beginning to monitor teaching systematically but does not yet evaluate its own performance effectively. Planning is not yet effective. The department does not have measurable targets for improvement and does not prioritise actions for achieving those targets. There is a vacancy for a permanent member of staff in the department and this is having some adverse impact on standards. There has been a good level of improvement since the previous inspection and the department has been successful in sustaining high levels of pupil attainment due to good teaching.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision for music is **excellent**.

Strengths

- The department contributes positively to the ethos and the good reputation of the school.
- Standards of attainment are well above average, due to very good teaching, and to the very good attitudes of the pupils.
- There is a rich provision of extra-curricular music activities of high quality.

Areas for improvement

- To continue the development of ICT as a means to enriching pupils' learning experiences.

156. When pupils enter the school, their overall standards in music are broadly in line with the national average. Standards are well above the national average at the end of Year 6, and at the end of Year 8. The quality of performance by extra-curricular groups taking part in instrumental and vocal ensembles is significantly higher than that found in similar schools. Very good teaching, together with the very good attitudes of the pupils to their music studies, contribute to the very good achievement by pupils from Years 5 to 8, leading to levels of attainment that are well above average.

157. The progress pupils make each year is closely monitored, being formally assessed twice a year. The difference of attainment between boys and girls is analysed. The progress made by those pupils judged to be talented is tracked. Current statistics reveal that girls have slightly higher levels of attainment than boys by the end of Year 6, though the difference is not as wide as the national picture. Able musicians achieve well by the end of Year 6. By the end of Year 8, more girls than boys achieve well, and almost all pupils have attainment levels well above the national average. The most able musicians have very high levels of attainment by the end of Year 8.

158. Work seen during the inspection confirms the school's assessment that most pupils have levels of attainment higher than the national average at the end of Years 6 and 8. Carefully structured schemes of work ensure that pupils receive a firm foundation for acquiring musical skills and literacy. These enable pupils to successfully compose and perform, using both graphic and traditional notation. Standards of instrumental ensemble work in the classroom are very high. A Year 8 group, of overall average academic ability, performed an arrangement of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy," in five parts, with a considerable sense of style and occasion. The ensemble was finely co-ordinated, pupils displayed well-developed technique on their instruments, dynamics were carefully observed, and they held their individual parts confidently. A Year 5 class demonstrated the high quality of singing in the school through the pupils' performance of "Bobby Shaftoe" and "What shall we do with the drunken sailor?" in one lesson. The singing was pleasant and tuneful, consonants were clearly enunciated and vowel sounds were well formed. All practical lessons have parts

arranged for them, which extend the more able musicians and enable the less able to be successful. Those who take individual instrumental lessons, some being up to Associated Board Grade 5 standard, extend their improvisation skills in curricular activities. Pupils having special educational needs successfully play less demanding parts, with less complicated notation to contend with and they achieve very well.

159. Pupils make very good progress, both within lessons, and across each year. Carefully structured, progressive programmes of study enable pupils to gradually acquire new skills. These are constantly re-visited, in order to ensure that pupils retain and develop these skills. The music co-ordinator has very high expectations of pupils of all ability, and pupils know that she expects them to do their best, and progress on every occasion. Practical lessons always include group or whole-class performances which demonstrate the progress made. It is very good practice that those who take extra instrumental lessons are expected to use them in class ensemble work. This develops their improvisation skills, and adds extra quality and variety to class performances. Most pupils have well developed aural skills, which enable them to learn and memorise new music very quickly, contributing to the rate of progress made.

160. The quality of teaching is very good, and has a number of excellent features. Lessons are very carefully planned. Provision is made for tasks enabling pupils of all abilities to be successful. It also ensures that pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress in line with their peers. The music co-ordinator is very experienced, and with this experience, chooses music and topics having appeal to the pupils, and attracting their interest. Lessons always have an atmosphere of industry and enjoyment. They always have a fast pace of development, and are finely balanced between different activities. The work pupils undertake is continually assessed. Pupils are always challenged and are expected to improve themselves.

161. Overall, pupils have very good attitudes to music in the school, both within lessons and through the willingness of pupils to participate in extra-curricular activities. In lessons, pupils respect the instruments they use, collecting and returning them with great care. They concentrate very hard at all times, being fully involved in both group and whole-class activities. Time is never wasted. Pupils demonstrate much self-control. They appear to particularly enjoy singing.

162. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. There is a greater provision, and take-up, of opportunities to learn instruments with visiting instrumental teachers. Extra-curricular provision has been extended. The use of ICT is in the process of being developed. Thorough systems of assessment and target setting have been established.

163. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The school has a reputation in the community for the quality of its music, and this is largely due to the inspiration and dedication of the music co-ordinator. The department gives excellent value to the school, through the well above standards achieved by the pupils, and through the contribution it makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils. This is exemplified by the way in which pupils' awareness is raised of their own local heritage through the study and performance of Northumbrian folk songs. Visiting instrumental teachers are of a high quality. They contribute positively to the music department by giving the music co-ordinator their support, and by having high expectations of the pupils. Some of them successfully direct music ensembles in the school, and lead music performances by groups of pupils in assemblies.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall the quality of provision for physical education is good.

Strengths

- Pupils attain above average standards.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good, and sometimes very good in the lower school, leading to good learning overall.
- The attitudes of pupils in all lessons are very good. They work hard, and behave very well, thus helping to provide a very good atmosphere for learning.

Areas for Improvement

- A system is needed to ensure the formal, regular and systematic monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.
- The subject development plan is imprecise, and does not have sufficient focus on how stated aims will be achieved.

164. Standards of attainment are above average at the end of Year 6, and at the end of Year 8. Based on the prior attainment of pupils, this represents good achievement by pupils in Year 6, and satisfactory achievement by pupils in Years 7 and 8. The reduction in the rate of progress is partly explained by teacher absence, but clearly demonstrates the need for more well-planned and structured teaching.

165. In the work seen in the inspection, pupils' standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. Pupils' overall achievement in relation to their standards on entry to the school at age nine is good. This is due in the main to the quality of teaching which is consistently good or very good in Years 5 and 6. For example, an all girls group in Year 6 learned to exchange relay batons with growing accuracy and regularity. All pupils have a sound understanding of how and why to warm up before exercise and can name the muscles and joints they are stretching. Teachers pay particular attention to ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to succeed at their own level. The positive attitude of pupils in lessons is a significant contributing factor to the quality of their learning. They respond with trust and ambition to the challenges set by their teachers and are usually rewarded with success.

166. In the work seen in the inspection, pupils' standards at the end of Year 8 are above average. Their achievement is satisfactory, but the rate of progress is not as high as that found in Years 5 and 6 because teachers' planning is not as effective and pupils are slower in their acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding as a result, particularly in games. There are no significant differences between boys and girls in their achievement over time, or progress in lessons. In some of the lessons seen, pupils demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in a range of physical skills. For example, a large mixed group of pupils learned to execute both triple jump and shot putt techniques correctly and safely. Many pupils have good levels of general athletic ability, but they have not acquired particular skills to enable them to partake effectively in some of the major games. All lessons are actively inclusive of all groups of pupils, over the full range of abilities. Pupils with special educational needs are supported in an unobtrusive manner, and make appropriate progress, achieving satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. In the best lessons, pupils are able to observe and evaluate their performances against set criteria, and this encourages good learning. Pupils of all ages are confident in expressing their views when asked, knowing that they will receive a tolerant and understanding hearing from both teachers and their peers. The progress made by pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory, in common with their peers.

167. During the inspection, the quality of teaching was good or better in the very large majority of lessons and led to good learning. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and make the learning objectives clear at the beginning of every lesson. Allied to clear explanations and good demonstrations this ensures that good learning takes place. Teachers have high levels of expectation of their pupils and challenge them to improve consistently. They have good personal relationships with the children, which supports very good classroom management, with teachers able to provide a variety of teaching methods to match different learning needs. All teachers seek to maintain a brisk pace throughout lessons, and work hard to raise levels of pupil self esteem. Where teaching is not satisfactory, learning objectives are not clear, there is insufficient activity for the majority of pupils, and opportunities for pupils to discuss and analyse their own and others work are lacking.

168. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good throughout Years 5 to 8. They are enthusiastic, well behaved and co-operative, and demonstrate a real enjoyment of the subject. They are attentive, listening carefully to instruction and focusing closely on demonstrations. Their capacity to sustain concentration is good. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to work independently and collaboratively. They are given many opportunities to take responsibility and to undertake supportive roles with their peers and they respond enthusiastically and positively.

169. Leadership and management of the department are good. The teaching staff make a complementary team who support each other well. The subject leader is fully committed to continuous improvement. Schemes of work are developing well, and are consistent in style, and meet the requirements of the National Curriculum for the subject. Regular moderated assessments of pupils' performance relate to the schemes of work, and these assessments are used to inform curriculum development, and the planning of teaching. Pupils are aware of their expected levels of attainment. Priorities for development are clear, but the department development plan lacks specific detail on success criteria and monitoring procedures. The head of department is unable to plan or carry out the systematic monitoring of teaching due to the structure of the school timetable and management arrangements. The qualifications of teachers are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. A very good range of extra-curricular activities, both open access for personal interest, and for higher level performers, provide ample opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their skills. Participation rates are very high. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The indoor dual-purpose space is appropriate for younger pupils, but limits effective learning for older pupils because of its size. The outdoor grassed areas are well kept and are appropriate for a school of this size, and there are good but unfenced hard play areas. The changing accommodation is adequate. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Areas requiring improvement, and not requiring capital expenditure, have been addressed, and strengths have been maintained.