

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHFIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Prudhoe

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122340

Headteacher: Mr. A. Sample

Reporting inspector: Mr. David Jones
8197

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 October 2001

Inspection number: 190103

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: Comprehensive

Age range of pupils: 9 -13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Highfield Lane
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Appropriate authority: Northumberland LEA

Name of chair of governors: Yvonne Davies

Date of previous inspection: 23 September 1996

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9002	Derek Aston	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?
18850	Andrew Hodges	Team Inspector	Science	The school's results and achievement
1515	Pauline Simpson	Team Inspector		Equal opportunities
1407	Peter Scott	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
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18854	Malcolm McGregor	Team Inspector	Design and technology	
17233	Glynis Yates	Team Inspector	Physical education	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Highfield is an average sized middle school of 394 pupils aged nine to 13 years on roll. It occupies a purpose-built site in the small town of Prudhoe, near Newcastle. The school's intake comes from a variety of private and local authority housing and includes pupils from small villages and farms. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average and the percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is very low. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is well below the national average and the percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is also below the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Highfield Middle is a very good school with a number of outstanding features. Standards in the National Curriculum tests at age 11, at the end of Key Stage 2 are well above average. In 2000 they placed the school in the top five per cent nationally; the provisional results for 2001 are equally high. Teaching is very good overall with almost all lessons seen satisfactory or better and some four-fifths of lessons graded good or better. Leadership and management are very good and the school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards in the national tests at age 11 in English, mathematics and science;
- The provision for and the progress made by pupils with special educational needs;
- The quality of the school's target setting, monitoring and evaluation of its performance;
- The quality of teaching and learning;
- The progress pupils make at the school;
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development;
- The contribution of the community, the links with parents and partner institutions;
- The strategic use of resources, the pursuit of best value and the effectiveness of the governing body;
- The school's educational direction, shared commitment and capacity to succeed;
- The leadership and management of the headteacher and senior staff.

What could be improved

- The accommodation available for the library, science, aspects of design and technology and for information and communication technology (ICT);
- Aspects of the curriculum, in particular the balance of time allocation in Years 5 to 6, the statutory provision for swimming, the use of ICT to enhance the curriculum and the effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills;
- The opportunities for monitoring and evaluation by subject leaders.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in September 1996; the key issues for action included: improving teaching and assessment, challenge, independent learning opportunities, the monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, the achievement of boys in English, written work across the curriculum in general and the provision for ICT. Significant improvements have been made in all of these areas.

Teaching is now very good. The use of assessment, the provisions of appropriate challenge and opportunities for independent learning are now good, as is the achievement of boys. The development of written work across the curriculum is satisfactory. The provision for ICT has improved significantly, although there is still much to be done.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
End of Key Stage 2 tests	A	A	A*	A

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In 2000 the school won an Excellence in Education award from the Department for Education and Skills DfES, placing its results in the National Tests for pupils at aged 11 in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The performance of pupils in all core subjects exceeded the national average for their age group by the equivalent of 2.4 points, placing them, on average, eight months ahead of pupils of the same age. Based on the figures for the last five years, the trend in the progress made by pupils at the school in all core subjects has been above the national trend.

In comparison with the performance of pupils in similar schools in 2000, the school's performance in all core subjects was well above average. The school's target setting is excellent. The school's performance in the national tests in English was above average, the performance in the mathematics was well above average and the performance in science tests was very high. The unconfirmed results of the school's performance in the 2001 national tests results mirror the school's significant achievement of 2000. The average points scored by pupils in the national tests declined slightly from 29.7 in 2000 to 29.2 in 2001. Within this figure, science and mathematics regressed by one point but English improved by half of one point. The number of boys and girls reaching above the required standard are high, with girls significantly outperforming boys in the 2001 results for reading. The results for writing show a high proportion of pupils achieving the required standard but fewer are reaching the higher level, in line with their ability on entry. This pattern was found in mathematics and science where the slight decline in the subject points score was also attributable to the decline in pupils reaching the higher level.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school are excellent.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Their behaviour is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good.
Attendance	Is very good.

Pupils' attitudes to their work, play and extra-curricular activities are very good. They listen carefully and concentrate well. They are eager to learn and to be taught. This reflects the very good teaching and relationships throughout the school. They work well together in different groupings and individually. Behaviour and discipline are very good and no evidence of bullying was observed. Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly to each other and adults. This creates an environment which supports very effective learning. Pupils with special educational needs show a willingness to learn; they mix well with other pupils and are fully integrated into the day-to-day life of the school. All pupils respond well to the system of awards and certificates for achievements in academic, sporting and social areas, particularly in collecting for charities. Attendance is very good and there is no

unauthorised absence. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are punctual to lessons. The school makes very good provision overall for the personal development of pupils, achieving its aim of building up their self-esteem, confidence and independence, within a secure and stimulating environment.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 –6	Years 7 – 8
Quality of teaching	Very Good	Very 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 seen in English and mathematics in both key stages was good. The quality of teaching in science was very good and often excellent. Teaching is satisfactory in more than nine out of ten lessons. The teaching in more than eight out of ten lessons observed throughout the school was graded good and better. One in three of all lessons were graded very good or excellent; this is a significant increase since the last inspection. Overall the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection; unsatisfactory teaching has almost been eradicated. The improvement in the quality of teaching is clearly linked to the high standards attained by pupils in the national tests.

The quality of teaching and the learning it promotes are very good. It is good in Years 6 and 7 and very good in Years 5 and 8. One lesson in every ten sees teaching of the very highest quality. It is particularly high in Year 8. In Years 5 and 6 the quality of teaching is good in all subjects and very good in mathematics, geography and art. Some excellent teaching was seen in English, mathematics and geography. In Years 7 and 8 the quality of teaching is good in all subjects and very good in science, ICT and art. Some excellent teaching was seen in science, mathematics, art and religious education.

Good attention is paid to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. All pupils in Years 5 and 6 have one lesson each day devoted to improving their literacy skills and one to improving their numeracy skills. The quality of teaching in these dedicated literacy lessons is good, and very good in numeracy lessons. In addition, literacy is also developed across the curriculum and is especially good in science, mathematics, art and music where the teaching of technical language is given a high priority. Numeracy across the curriculum is best in science where pupils are expected to work out averages in their heads, use simple mental computations and be able to use conversion scales but the co-ordination of this across the curriculum is unsatisfactory and greater contributions could be made in many subjects. The teaching and support that pupils with special educational needs receive is very good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of the curriculum is satisfactory, with some limitations in Years 5 and 6.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	On balance the provision is good, with very good provision for pupils' moral and social development and strengths in the spirituality of religious education lessons.
Aspect	Comment

How well the school cares for its pupils	Care for pupils is very good, building self-esteem, confidence and independence within a secure and stimulating environment.
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The school works well in partnership with parents; their views of the school are very positive and there are effective links in place. The quality of information provided for parents, particularly about pupils' progress, is very good.

The quality and range of the curriculum is satisfactory; there are strengths in the provision of French for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and in the 'buddy reading' programme. There are limitations in the balance of time allocation in Years 5 and 6, the lack of the statutory provision for swimming, the use of ICT to enhance the curriculum and the effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills.

The school is very good at promoting moral and social education. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is very good, as is the educational and personal support and guidance available to pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good with many strengths. The clear educational direction, shared commitment and capacity to succeed are excellent.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors' support for and understanding of the school is strong, enabling them to fulfil their responsibilities very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's evaluation of its performance is very good and its target setting is excellent.
The strategic use of resources	The strategic use of resources is very good; financial planning is excellent.

The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. The accommodation available is unsatisfactory with limited facilities for science and, despite considerable efforts by the school, ICT. Textiles and food technology are taught in one room with the shared uses of unsatisfactory work surfaces that do not meet current Health and Safety requirements. On balance the learning resources available in the school are satisfactory. The excellent allocation of financial resources to educational priorities over the last two years has improved the level of teaching resources available in subject areas, but the accommodation and facilities available in the library are unsatisfactory. The excellent strategic use of resources and the application of the principles of best value are only a reflection of the school's aims and values in its work. The excellent induction of staff new to the school and effectiveness of provision for training of new teachers are only one aspect of the excellent way educational priorities are supported through the school's financial planning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• That their child likes school, makes good progress and behaviour is good• Teaching is good with high expectations• The school responds well to parental questions• The school is well led and managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The provision of a greater range of activities outside lessons.

The inspection team agrees with the positive parental comment, finding very strong evidence to support these views. Although parents comment that they would like to see the provision of a greater range of activities outside lessons, the inspection team found that this provision was satisfactory. However, more could be done to inform parents of the extra-curricular opportunities available.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The school takes pupils from the full range of ability, and standards of attainment on entry to the school are broadly in line with national expectations. This is evident from the National Curriculum test results for pupil's aged seven, which the school receives from the feeder schools for English and mathematics and from the Year 4 tests that are also undertaken. Attainment on entry has been rising for the last four years. The attainment of those pupils currently in year 8 was below average when they joined the school and is above average now, having made very good progress during their time in the school. Pupils in year 5, who have recently entered the school, display standards of attainment just above national expectations.
2. Pupils' attainment in the 2000 National tests for 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science is well above the national average when compared with all schools and also when compared with schools that are similar. The school won an Excellence in Education award from the DfES placing its results in the top five per cent of schools nationally.
3. The unconfirmed results for 2001 are very close to the school's significant achievement of 2000. In national tests at age 11 in 2000 the average points scored by pupils was 29.7. In the corresponding tests in 2001 the same average points score had declined slightly to 29.2. Within this figure science and mathematics regressed by one point but English improved by half of one point. The numbers of boys and girls reaching above the required standard are high, with girls significantly outperforming boys in the 2001 results for reading. The results for writing show a high proportion of pupils achieving the required standard but fewer are reaching the higher level; this is in line with their ability on entry. This pattern was found in mathematics and science where the slight decline in the subject points score was also attributable to the decline in pupils reaching the higher level.
4. The results over time show a consistently rising trend for English and mathematics and maintenance of consistently high results in science.
5. The school has worked hard at establishing close links with its feeder first schools, providing more secure information regarding attainment on entry. Similarly, data made available from the high school keeps the school informed about the further progress of the pupils in the National Curriculum tests at age 14 and in GCSE examinations. This has a positive impact on the expectations and achievement in years 7 and 8.
6. Throughout the school, pupils achieve standards that are consistently higher than that expected of pupils aged between 9 and 13 and make good progress in English, mathematics and science. This same level of progress was observed in all other subjects of the National Curriculum and in religious education. All pupils make good progress in literacy, numeracy and in ICT, although the experience of pupils of these areas of the curriculum is very patchy within other subject areas.

7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress in all lessons and also towards achieving their targets in their individual education plans. Pupils who are supported in lessons also make good progress. The learning support assistants focus closely on the pupils they are helping, thus making a considerable contribution to this progress and also to their personal development. In mathematics and science boys and girls are making similar progress but in French girls outperform boys, particularly in the middle ability groups. Girls also outperform boys in writing. However, over the last three years, boys have outperformed girls overall in English at the higher levels.
8. Pupils in all years show above-average numeracy skills when they are required to use them in other subjects. This helps them make progress. In physical education, for example, pupils are encouraged to use estimating and measuring skills to help them improve their performance in athletics. In science and in geography pupils use their knowledge of graphs to illustrate their findings. However, the absence of a whole-school numeracy policy results in limited opportunities for the application of mathematical skills across the curriculum. This means that, despite the present high standards, there is still room for improvement.
9. Pupils in all years show above-average literacy skills. The acquisition of these skills is given a high profile in school and many examples were seen that progress in attaining these skills is good. In the school, many examples of good practice were found in speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum. The work observed in science was identified as a particular strength with a fine example of a concept map on forces, as well as the use of extended writing and the use of technical vocabulary. These strengths were also seen in history and mathematics. The pupils' ability to listen was highlighted as a strength that enhanced their ability to learn in all subjects. Key words are prominently displayed in most rooms and these are used well in lessons. There are very good displays which show extended writing and enhancing the work with ICT. Displays on Charles Darwin, habitats and playground equipment design incorporated writing that showed an awareness of style, audience and purpose. Good progress has been made in literacy since the last inspection.
10. In the last report, inspectors noted that the overall attainment in the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education was generally in line with national expectations. The school has developed this aspect of its work; expectations are high and the improvement in standards is well documented in both the core and foundation subjects. Lesson observations confirm that this improvement is mainly due to the significant improvement in the quality of teaching.
11. It was also reported last time that there was evidence of particularly good attainment in science and some high attainment in music, French and geography. This level of achievement has been maintained and in this inspection evidence of high attainment was also seen in English, mathematics, history, art, design and technology, physical education and in religious education. This represents good progress since the last inspection.
12. The school presents analyses and collates its performance data in an easy-to-understand way. The school has started to use this data to set targets for individual pupils which are both challenging and achievable. Teachers have a clear understanding of these targets and use a wide variety of strategies to achieve them. Planning for the individual needs of all the pupils in the class is one of the strengths

of the teaching within the school and accounts for the high standards that the pupils achieve.

13. The standard of literacy across the curriculum is good. Progress since the last inspection is good. Literacy is now given a high profile in the school as a whole and many examples of good practice were found in speaking and listening, reading and writing across the curriculum. The work observed in science was identified as a particular strength, with a fine example being a flow chart designed to display knowledge on forces.
14. Pupils' ability to listen well was identified as a strength, enhancing their ability to learn across the curriculum. A special characteristic of the school is its "Buddy Reader Scheme" which involves the whole of Year 8 supporting the whole of Year 5 in a paired reading scheme. Although the scheme was observed to include some weaknesses, for instance, on occasion, one buddy has to support two learners, it was adjudged to be an overwhelming success with social as well as academic benefits. It undoubtedly gives reading a high profile and is much liked by pupils in both year groups. Silent reading is a feature of some registration periods but teachers' expectations in this regard are not consistent. If this activity is to continue, the issue of consistent expectations on the part of teachers needs to be addressed as in some cases it is leading to reading being undervalued by pupils.
15. The school's library is well ordered and organised; it is open three lunch-times a week. As the library is effectively a corridor, the fiction stock is kept locked away at other times. Following the removal of dated material stock levels appear low. The need to develop the non-fiction selection has been identified. No ICT exists in the library; the library is entirely book based. Systems are not in place to ensure that children are taught how to use the library. At present the library promotes neither a love of books nor a hunger for learning.
16. The opportunities for using and applying numeracy vary markedly between subject areas. In science, numeracy skills are used widely, for example when converting scales of measurement and mass, calculating average distances and times and drawing line graphs. In design and technology, pupils' knowledge of angles is used in conjunction with work on the computer to help the design process by preparing isometric and orthographic drawings. In French and science, mental tests are used to check understanding.
17. Other subjects, including history, geography, art and music, make occasional use of numeracy in the teaching, whilst none was observed in physical education. Information and communication technology makes good use of pupils' knowledge and understanding of number when handling data for spreadsheet and data analyses. There is a lack of consistency in the use of pupils' numeracy skills in curriculum subjects.
18. Subject departments do not benefit from an agreed school policy for numeracy across the curriculum. This means the opportunities for using and applying numeracy are being missed and transference of knowledge, understanding and skills into new contexts is not serving to support and extend pupils' learning. Generally subject departments make no reference to numeracy in their schemes of work and other documentation. Without a policy, the use of numeracy is uncoordinated and learning experiences are erratic.

19. Teachers are clear about what they want different groups of pupils to learn in each lesson and they generally use assessment well as a means of planning to meet the needs of individual pupils including those with special educational needs. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in their learning as a result of the very good teaching and support provided for individuals by the learning support assistants. The provision for extending higher-attaining pupils, including those who are gifted, is particularly effective in science. In English and mathematics, however, there is a need for greater differentiation in teachers' planning so as to deepen the knowledge and understanding of higher-attaining pupils and develop their learning skills even further.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

20. Pupils' attitudes to their work, play and extra-curricular activities are very good. They listen carefully and concentrate well. They are eager to learn and to be taught. This reflects the very good teaching and relationships throughout the school. There is a positive and confident approach to tasks set, which results in good standards of work in all subjects. Pupils are involved in a wide range of activities and make the most of the opportunities provided. They work well together in different groupings and individually.
21. Behaviour and discipline are very good and no bullying was observed. Pupils are polite, courteous and friendly to each other and to adults. They show patience and tolerance in many situations, for example in the dining room. They are happy to share equipment and to help each other. Relationships are very good among pupils and teachers and this helps to create an environment which supports very effective learning. The number of pupils excluded from school on a temporary basis was below average and no pupils were excluded permanently.
22. Pupils with special educational needs show a willingness to learn; they respond and behave well in lessons and with the very effective support of staff they increase their confidence, self-esteem and ability to contribute significantly to lessons. They mix well with other pupils and are fully integrated into the day-to-day life of the school. All pupils with special educational needs including those identified as having educational and behavioural difficulties display the same interest and involvement in lessons as the other pupils, especially when learning support assistants help them. Pupils with physical difficulties behave in exactly the same way as other pupils. When they work well with others in-group activities, pupils with special educational needs participate to the full, making a good contribution to the findings of their groups. When they work in their own specialist area, they enjoy the lessons, especially when using the computer, and can take responsibility for managing their own learning.
23. Pupils grow in maturity as they progress through the school, carrying out their responsibilities sensibly and thoughtfully, for example when older pupils mentor the reading of younger pupils. They respond well to the system of awards and certificates for achievements in academic, sporting and social areas, particularly in collecting for charities. Attendance is very good and there is no unauthorised absence. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are punctual to lessons.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

24. The quality of teaching and the learning it promotes is very good. It is good in Years 6 and 7 and very good in Years 5 and 8. In one lesson in every ten teaching is of the very highest quality. It is particularly high in Year 8. In a third of all lessons teaching is very good or better, which is a significant increase since the last inspection. This core of very high quality teaching is helping to raise standards and is a significant strength of the school. In only one lesson was the teaching less than satisfactory. This was due to the inappropriate activities and lack of pace and challenge given to the pupils. Overall the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection; unsatisfactory teaching has almost been eradicated.
25. In Years 5 and 6 the quality of teaching is good in all subjects and very good in mathematics, geography and art. Some excellent teaching was seen in English, mathematics and geography. In Years 7 and 8 the quality of teaching is good in all subjects and very good in science, ICT and art. Some excellent teaching was seen in science, mathematics, art and religious education.
26. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of their subject in most areas of the curriculum. This leads to clear learning objectives that are relevant to the stage of learning for different groups of pupils, which in turn leads to secure learning. Skilled teaching in Year 7 mathematics helps pupils to think logically. In science skilled teaching leads to pupils being able to think independently, reason and deduce. Support teachers also have a significant effect on pupils' independent learning. In one history lesson, the teacher's subject knowledge was lacking which led to insufficient opportunities for the pupils to be involved in their learning.
27. Good attention is paid to the development of literacy and numeracy skills. All pupils in Years 5 and 6 have one lesson each day devoted to improving their literacy skills and one to improving their numeracy skills. The quality of teaching in these dedicated literacy lessons is good, and very good in numeracy lessons. In addition, literacy is also developed across the curriculum and is especially good in science, mathematics, art and music, where the teaching of technical language is given a high priority. Numeracy across the curriculum is best in science where pupils are expected to work out averages in their heads, use simple mental computations and be able to use conversion scales.
28. The planning of lessons is very good. In all years lessons usually start with a review of previous work. Teachers use this opportunity to question pupils to determine their level of understanding and to discover any gaps in their knowledge. Teachers are good at modifying plans as a result of this information. In a Year 5 ICT lesson, the teacher had planned the use of the Internet but when the site failed the lesson was quickly adapted to use another program to design gardens, which built on previous knowledge of robot design.
29. Preparation of learning resources in all subject areas is also very good. Teachers use the plenary session at the end of lessons to good effect, reinforcing what has been learnt in the lesson, correcting any misconceptions and indicating what might be happening in the next lesson.

30. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in all years and across all subjects. Teachers make lessons interesting and their management of pupils is very good; this leads to pupils being captivated in their learning and able to stay on task. In a Year 5 English lesson with lower-attaining pupils, the teacher told a story about going on a journey. Using her travel bag she engaged the pupils totally, they became very involved and inquisitive, asking questions and suggesting ideas.
31. The effectiveness of teaching methods and the management of pupils is very good. In a Year 8 religious education lesson about the feeding of the 5000, the teacher captured the interest of her pupils by using role-play and drawing parallels to the division in the crowd at the Newcastle United football ground the previous Saturday. The pupils became totally absorbed in the lesson, which resulted in a very good debate and discussion.
32. Teachers of pupils with special educational needs have very good knowledge and understanding of how these pupils learn. They are able to set work at the right level for their pupils to learn effectively, and match resources to the standards of the pupils. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers are supported in lessons by learning support assistants with whom they work closely to improve the pace of learning for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils with special educational needs learn well at both key stages and in all subjects. Since the last inspection teachers have improved the match of resources and tasks to the standards of the pupils.
33. Teachers generally make good use of the lesson time. Their lessons are well paced and purposeful and efficient use is made of support staff and resources. Some lessons in physical education are curtailed due to the setting up of the hall for lunch-time, but teachers are adept at making the most of the shortened time. The use of homework to extend teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects and good in mathematics, English, science, religious education and geography.
34. The quality and use of ongoing assessment is good, although it does vary across the curriculum. It is strongest in art, music and science. Teachers mark books well and comment on where pupils need to improve. National Curriculum levels are not consistently given to pupils in all subjects but level-related marking is used to standardise assessment practice in each department. Pupils could be given plain language level-related guidance on how to further develop their work. Teachers question pupils well to determine what they know and understand and are able to steer pupils towards making judgements about their own learning and suggest ways in which they can improve. This happens throughout lesson time but is also a strong feature of plenary sessions.

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

35. The quality and range of the curriculum is satisfactory; there are strengths in the provision of French for pupils in Years 5 and 6, and in the 'buddy reading programme. There are limitations in the balance of time allocation in Years 5 and 6, the lack of the statutory provision for swimming, the use of ICT to enhance the curriculum and the effectiveness of strategies for the consistent teaching of numeracy skills.

36. The school curriculum is broad and balanced, covering all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious, personal and social education. It provides pupils with good quality learning opportunities, increasing the amount of specialist teaching as pupils progress through the school. Continuity of learning from first school through to the high school is assured by very good links between the different phases in the local 'pyramid' of schools.
37. Between the ages of nine and 11, the required emphasis is placed on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills benefit from the daily lessons. The curriculum is enhanced by the addition of French in Years 5 and 6 and specialist teaching of art, music, physical education and ICT. Nearly a third of all teaching time in Years 5 and 6 is available for literacy or English, double that available for mathematics and science. With standards in all core subjects well above the national expectations for pupils at age 11, this imbalance is having an unwarranted impact on the remainder of the curriculum. Time for other subjects of the National Curriculum is limited to single periods, which presents problems for technology where opportunities for computer aided design and manufacture are limited. Similarly, time for the use of ICT to enhance the learning in other subjects is limited. Whilst all pupils have a games lesson, the school does not at the present time provide the swimming lessons statutory in Years 5 and 6.
38. From age 11 to 13 the curriculum is typical of a secondary school, pupils being taught all their subjects by specialist teachers, as far as possible. History and geography gain an extra lesson and design and technology is taught in double periods. The result is a more balanced curriculum.
39. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is well organised and effectively promotes pupils' personal and social development, incorporating good guidance on drug misuse. The programme imbues all aspects of pupils' curricular experience with a very strong inclusive dimension. Units that relate to sex education are appropriately cross-referenced with science. The school has made an early start with introducing citizenship into the PSE programme for all pupils.
40. Pupils have separate lessons of ICT in all four years, alternating with PSE. The application of ICT in subject areas is patchy but its use is increasing. The bookings for the computer room indicate that most pupils have one experience of using ICT in another area of the curriculum once a week.
41. ICT is used effectively to enhance teaching and learning in science, English, mathematics, some aspects of design and technology and religious education. However, in the remaining subjects, although ICT is being written into schemes of work, there is insufficient consistency of practice to ensure that all pupils make full statutory use of ICT. In some departments, for example music, there is a need for equipment in order to ensure coverage. The confidence of all teachers needs to be increased by training to the extent that they can plan useful activities and can teach them using computers.
42. Pupils' standards in ICT when they use it in other subjects are average. This is lower than in taught ICT because most subjects do not allow all pupils to use to the full the application of ICT specified in their National Curriculum orders.

43. The organisation of teaching groups and arrangements for the support of pupils with special educational needs are highly effective, enabling them to make very good progress to reach the required standards in the core subjects. Teachers work closely with parents, identifying pupils' needs and setting clear targets to meet them. As part of the strategy, Year 8 pupils listen to Year 5 pupils read on a regular basis. The school ensures that pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum, including those with physical disabilities, who participate as far as possible in physical education. All pupils are included in normal lessons, with very brief withdrawal for specific help. When this occurs, the learning support assistants ensure that they catch up with the others when they re-enter the classroom. Pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in school visits and extra-curricular activities. Provision for the needs of pupils with special educational needs is good. Learning support assistants have good levels of knowledge, as they receive training and hold copies of subject planning documents. Their flexible approach and good relationships increase their effectiveness with pupils.
44. The school has worked hard to establish very good links with the contributory first schools, other middle schools and the local high school, through regular meetings of the local pyramid of schools. The quality of information now becoming available from feeder schools is contributing to the development of the curriculum in a number of areas. Pupil data returned from the high school has been helpful in refining the challenge available in Years 7 and 8 for all pupils. The excellent pupil yearbook made available at a subsidised price to all pupils clearly shows the school's interaction with the community and the role pupils play in this.
45. Extra-curricular activities are good in sport and music but the range of activities does not extend much further. Pupils with special educational needs take a full part in school curricular and extra-curricular activities. The school fields teams in a number of sports and there are regular rehearsals of choirs and instrumental groups leading to public performances. Year 6 pupils visit the Whickham Thorns outdoor pursuit centre and Year 7 pupils have the opportunity for fieldwork in history and geography during the Year 7 residential visit to Ford Castle, and Year 8 visit central Newcastle. Surprisingly, historical sites along Hadrian's wall and the immediate locality are not used for history fieldwork.
46. On balance the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good. There is very good provision for pupils' moral and social development and strengths in the spirituality of religious education lessons. Although there is no policy for developing spirituality across the curriculum, opportunities do arise. A strong feature of lessons in religious education is a time of quiet reflection at the start, aided by the lighting of a candle. In a Year 5 history lesson, pupils reflected on the continuity of human experience over thousands of years. Pupils have an affinity with numbers and number patterns in mathematics that fires their enthusiasm for learning. In art and music pupils gain greater self-awareness, as they develop their appreciation of paintings and instrumental works. The school has a planned programme of assemblies determined by the limited space available. As this programme is not on a daily basis for all pupils, it does not meet the requirements for an act of collective worship.

47. The school is strong on moral education, encouraging pupils to be honest and trustworthy and responsible for their actions. Teachers lead by example, consistently applying these values to the everyday life of the classroom. In some subjects, like religious education and personal and social education, moral issues are discussed on a regular basis. Pupils are encouraged to show concern for others less fortunate than themselves. Each year pupils raise well over £2000 for charities. During the inspection the school launched its appeal for the work of the Barnardo's society and a charity providing Christmas gifts for children in Eastern Europe.
48. There are very good opportunities for social development. Pupils have the chance to serve each other on the team of monitors and house representatives in each class. In many lessons there are opportunities to learn social skills through collaboration with others in small groups. There is a strong sense of community in the school that invites pupils' participation and mutual support. All year 8 pupils are expected to serve as prefects and many of them act as 'buddies' to Year 5 pupils who need help with reading. The social education programme includes citizenship for all pupils, helping them to understand their rights and responsibilities.
49. The taught curriculum ensures satisfactory provision for cultural development but, apart from music, there are few extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to extend their understanding of their own and other cultures. School outings tend to be strong social educational experiences, with pupils engaged in pair and group activities in, for instance, geography rather than cultural, where neither art nor music make a significant contribution.
50. The school teaches pupils to appreciate their own and others' cultural traditions; for example, in English Year 5 and 6 pupils learn about the poetry of the Caribbean and journeys to other lands. In modern foreign languages there is a good range of teaching and learning resources to ensure coverage of non-European cultures. In the library there are shortages of non-fiction books for pupils to find out for themselves about the diversities and richness of other cultures, for example non-western art. Multicultural education comes through in some subjects, notably in religious education, which teaches world religions and their distinctive lifestyles, and in geography through the study of France in Key Stage 3. There are limited opportunities provided to prepare pupils for life in a culturally diverse world.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

51. The school provides very good care and support for pupils. A disciplined yet friendly atmosphere enables a sensitive and reassuring support system to thrive. Teachers know individual pupils very well and show a good understanding of their intellectual, physical and emotional needs. They respond to them in a positive and supportive way. Appropriate policies are in place to cover security and child protection.
52. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress and personal development are good. Records are maintained containing a wide range of assessment and other data, which is used by staff for monitoring and guidance. Targets for academic and personal development are gleaned from the annual report to parents and from form tutors. The homework diary is used to keep parents up to date with targets and progress. Regular team meetings and management reviews evaluate the effectiveness of the school throughout the year. A dedicated pastoral system managed by year leaders focuses on pupils' personal development and provides additional support where required. Learning objectives are stated and work is

provided for different ability groups. Class teachers' monitoring of pupil attainment across the curriculum is very good and this is consistent with evidence of amendments made through increased differentiation to the planned teaching programme.

53. Child protection procedures are good. Since the last inspection all staff have received appropriate training and the school has good links with the support agencies. The school provides a safe and harmonious environment, which makes an effective contribution to the standards pupils achieve. A comprehensive health and safety policy is in place and procedures exist for carrying out risk assessments.
54. The school has very good procedures for promoting discipline and good behaviour. A detailed discipline policy provides information on how to deal with unacceptable behaviour and is implemented consistently throughout the school. Teachers follow a warning system to deter pupils from misbehaving. Monitoring of pupils' individual attendance is of a high standard. Parents are aware of the procedures to follow when, rarely, their children are absent from school. Pupils with special educational needs have an attendance record that is similar to that of other pupils.
55. Teachers know pupils well and are very aware of their needs as a result of the special educational needs co-ordinator's care with individual education plans. These are very good and are written after full consultation with subject teachers. All staff are familiar with, and act on, their clear and useful summaries of pupils' general and subject specific needs. The Code of Practice statutory requirements are complied with in full. The school is forward-looking in that it is already using the draft Code of Practice for 2002. There is good provision for pupils with statements of special educational needs. In accordance with the Code of Practice these are reviewed annually in consultation with pupils' parents and all appropriate outside agencies. Almost all annual reviews are attended by parents. The school's good practice ensures that pupils participate in the process. Induction procedures from feeder schools are very good, and in preparation for transfer to secondary schools a series of transition days are arranged.
56. An impressive feature of the caring nature of the school is the publication of the annual yearbook. This is a complete record of the final year pupils including a photograph and personal statement of each pupil. Teachers, the office manager and caretaker all participate in fund-raising and sponsorship to enable the book to be published at a highly subsidised cost to parents.
57. The school makes very good provision overall for the personal development of pupils, achieving its aim of building up their self-esteem, confidence and independence within a secure and stimulating environment.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

58. Relationships between the school and parents are very good. The response to the questionnaire distributed before the inspection indicated that parents think very highly of the school and they have positive views about their children's progress and the quality of teaching. Parents are also pleased with the behaviour of the pupils, the approachability of the staff, the high expectations set and the way the school is led and managed. Inspection findings also support the parents' positive views of the school.

59. Good use is made of the homework diary and consultation evenings are well attended. Information provided by the school is comprehensive, easy to read and accessible to parents. The annual reports sent home to parents cover all the subjects of the curriculum. They are well written and helpful and contain suggestions about how parents might help their children to improve, as well as setting targets for the pupils. Self-assessment by pupils is also a feature of the reporting system.
60. The parents of those pupils with special educational needs are appropriately included in their child's learning review and are kept well informed. All statutory procedures relating to the special educational needs Code of Practice and the National Curriculum are in place. Parents have ready access to class teachers, who have good communications with the co-ordinator for special needs. This maintains a steady flow of information.
61. There is a very effective Parents and Teachers Association, which organises numerous events each year and has raised significant funds for the school. This committed group of parents makes a strong contribution to the life of the school. Parents were happy with the induction arrangements from the feeder schools and the organisation of transfers to the secondary schools. The very good links with parents enrich pupils' learning experiences. For example, the special educational needs co-ordinator communicates very effectively with parents, keeping them fully involved in pupils' learning and suggesting means of supporting basic skills at home. Almost all parents attend a workshop that shows them how to help their children to learn. In addition, they are in regular contact with the school, with a high level of parental attendance at annual reviews. The school makes full use of assistance from all outside agencies.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. The leadership and management of the headteacher and key staff are very good. The work of the senior management team to ensure clear educational direction is excellent, as is the reflection of the school's aims and values in its work. The whole school has a strong focus on providing a very good education for the pupils. The delegation to and contribution of middle managers is good and the school has already begun to discuss refinements to its effective performance management system.
63. The school's priorities for development, as identified in the school improvement plan, are very good. The actions taken to meet these targets are excellent, as are the strategic allocations of financial resources made by the Headteacher and the governing body to the priorities identified. The effectiveness of the governing body in fulfilling its responsibilities is very good because of the strong working relationship between the chair of governors and the headteacher that keeps governors well informed. The governing body is very good at fulfilling its statutory duties with the only weakness in the limitations placed in the daily act of collective worship by the school's limited hall space. Governors have a very good understanding the school's strengths and weaknesses and consequently they play an important part in shaping the direction of the school. The shared commitment to improvement and capacity to succeed of the school's senior managers and the governing body are excellent.
64. The monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and the effectiveness of the action taken is very good. The school's strategy for appraisal and performance management has been very effective. It has been built on the school's very good

monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching. New staff are able to observe experienced colleagues in the classroom and these senior staff are involved in the programme of monitoring and support. Aligned with these very strong practices, the induction of staff new to the school and effectiveness of provision for the training of new teachers is excellent. Very strong relationships with the University of Newcastle's department of education, which include the headteacher's involvement in the PGCE course, have helped the school to recruit talented new staff. These policies have led to a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The collection and use of assessment data is very good; the school has a strong picture of attainment on entry and uses this well to chart individual and group progress through the school. However, there is room for improvement in the monitoring by subject leaders. Non-specialist staff would benefit from the additional insight and support a closer working relationship with the co-ordinator would bring. An example of this is the improvement in the co-ordination of the teaching of numeracy and ICT across the curriculum that might be sought.

65. The financial efficiency of the school is very strong. The strategic use of resources including specific grants and other funding is excellent. This has enabled the school to build a positive strategic balance from which educational priorities are supported through the school's excellent financial planning. Very good use is made of specific grant aid, it is allocated effectively for its designated purpose. The school makes effective use of new technology to collect and analyse pupil performance data. Consistently seeking value for money in its dealings with suppliers and the local authority, the school has strong relationships with local businesses. Its pursuit of the principles of best value is excellent.
66. An error by the local authority on the admission of pupils to the school for September 2001 forced the school to recruit extra staff and the LEA to install a temporary classroom at short notice. The impact of this error on the school's finances has been significant; resources allocated to further school improvement have had to be diverted. The budget forecast moves into the negative within 18 months and it is only the school's excellent strategic use of resources that provides this limited financial cushion, a facility it will lose due to no fault of its own.
67. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good, with some limitations in the technical support staff available for ICT, science and design and technology. Despite the provision by the local authority of two temporary classrooms, the accommodation available is unsatisfactory. This high performing school only has one science and one ICT room available. The recent refurbishment of the resistant materials room has provided a good facility, but textiles and food technology are taught in one room, with the shared use of unsatisfactory work surfaces that do not meet current Health and Safety requirements. On balance the learning resources available in the school are satisfactory. The excellent allocation of financial resources to educational priorities over the last two years has improved the level of teaching resources available in subject areas but the accommodation and facilities available in the library are unsatisfactory. This cramped area is used as a corridor with books kept in cupboards and no provision for ICT to support learning. A mini-suite of nine computers in the rear corridor is well used but access to ICT is difficult for many teaching groups and the school's ratio of computers to pupils remains below the DfES guidelines, despite considerable efforts by the headteacher and governing body.

68. The school is committed to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all. The school's equal opportunities policy was formulated in 1993 and has not been reviewed since then. It contains few of the key aspects of inclusion good practice that are provided as a matter of everyday experience for its pupils. The school is aware of the need to review its equal opportunities policy as a part of school improvement planning. Good attention is paid to diagnosing the strengths of the school and areas for development as a part of school improvement. The school's values embrace inclusion and its practice promotes the inclusion of all groups of pupils very well. Performance data in English, mathematics and science is evaluated systematically in terms of gender and socio-economic circumstances as a means of informing individual pupils' targets and whole school targets in these core subjects of the curriculum.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- (1) Review the accommodation available for design and technology, science, ICT and the library in the light of the equal opportunities and health and safety issues they raise. (Paragraphs: 64, 67, 84, 103, 116, 114, 157, 66)
- (2) Review the balance of the curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 2, where the double weighting of time allocated to English/literacy (in comparison to mathematics and science) is placing limitations on the development of the foundation subjects, e.g. design and technology, physical education and the use of ICT in all subject areas. (Paragraphs: 35, 37, 49, 76, 112)
- (3) Develop the opportunities for monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum by subject leaders. (Paragraphs: 64, 83, 93)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	105
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	41

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	9	26	43	19	0	1	0
Percentage	9	27	44	19	0	1	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	394
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	35

Special educational needs	Y5– Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	57

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	48	48	96

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	42	48	48
	Girls	45	45	47
	Total	87	93	95
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	91(88)	97(94)	99(96)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	44	41	48
	Girls	45	44	48
	Total	89	85	96
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	93 (89)	89 (88)	100 (98)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	384
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	16.82
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	76

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	85
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Average teaching group size: Y[] – Y[]

Key Stage 2	23.5
Key Stage 3	24

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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	12	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	787669
Total expenditure	736787
Expenditure per pupil	1914
Balance brought forward from previous year	50882
Balance carried forward to next year	9296

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	385
Number of questionnaires returned	155

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	50	8	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	49	3	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	57	6	1	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	64	12	2	2
The teaching is good.	46	50	1	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	28	54	15	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	40	4	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	34	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	24	55	17	3	1
The school is well led and managed.	46	46	4	1	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	53	4	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	39	27	11	8

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

A consistent comment made by the parents who took the trouble to write a personal response was that the school was well led.

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

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

Strengths

- The quality of much of the teaching;
- The quality of relationships in the English classrooms;
- The shared commitment to future progress.

Areas for improvement

- The balance of time and activity in lessons;
- Creating a single vision for both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3;
- Expanding and co-ordinating literacy across the curriculum.

69. The range of attainment on entry to the school is in line with the national average, though the standard of work being achieved by the current Year 5 only five weeks after entry into the school suggests this standard might be rising. Over a five year period, standards in English have improved at a faster rate than nationally. They are well above national expectations and the school's progress has therefore been very good overall. The trend over five years has seen the school's average National Curriculum points score in English well above the national average and above average in comparison to similar schools.
70. Standards are now good in all three Attainment Targets, though writing remains relatively weaker than speaking and listening, and reading. In 2000 all girls achieved national expectations as did better than eight out of ten boys and this is clearly linked to girls' stronger performance in writing than boys. However, over a five year period, boys have improved both their reading and writing levels at a faster rate than girls. The gender gap in achievement has narrowed considerably at this end of the ability spectrum.
71. A comparison focusing on the higher test levels presents the gender comparison in another light because boys have outperformed girls at the higher level in two of the last three years and this contrasts with the national trend. Significantly in 2000 the percentage of pupils achieving the highest level was only "close to the national average" whilst the school's results in mathematics were "well above" and science was "very high".
72. In Years 7 and 8 standards of work in all three Attainment Targets are above national averages, though writing is weaker than speaking and listening, and reading. The school has not to date entered pupils for the voluntary tests from the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA) for those in Years 7 and 8; therefore, judgements are based upon the evidence of work seen during the inspection. Pupils make good progress throughout the school, but there is scope for higher attainment levels to be achieved by the more able.
73. There has been considerable improvement in speaking and listening since the last inspection. Pupils in all years now have ample opportunities to speak formally. Pupils of all abilities are aware of the expectation that they might be required to present their

work to the class and they appear both keen and confident. Reading standards are good. At both Key Stages pupils are encouraged to read whole texts independently. Children all have fiction books that are appropriate to their reading ability but their books are mainly selected from small selections sited in, or outside, classrooms. The department does not ensure that all pupils are regularly taken to the library, or that reading logs are maintained to map pupils' reading journeys. This needs to be rectified.

74. Writing standards are good. There is an emphasis in teaching that ensures that pupils understand the components of successful writing and the need for structure in particular. Pupils are encouraged to write for a wide variety of purposes and the range broadens as the pupils' skills develop. Increasingly in years 7 and 8 they are involved in formal writing and tasks requiring greater sophistication. The display of pupils' writing is of a high standard and instils in pupils a pride in their work. In order to further improve standards there is more scope for shared writing and for the teacher to intervene more at the point of writing. This is particularly true for the majority of classes in years 7 and 8. The first part of lessons needs to be delivered more quickly so that there is time for the teacher to be more actively involved in the drafting process.
75. The standard of teaching in years 5 and 6 was good with only one lesson being less than satisfactory. Most teaching was either excellent or very good. Where teaching was poor the teacher failed to take account of prior learning and lesson outcomes were low. Teaching in years 7 and 8 was also adjudged to be good overall with one very good lesson seen. All lessons were satisfactory or better. Teachers' subject knowledge was always secure. Pupils at the top of the ability range in all year groups would benefit from an increase in the pace of lessons and from an approach that encourages a higher level of creativity and independence. Open-ended tasks are needed so that pupils can show what they understand, know and can do.
76. The departments' schemes of work are derived from the National Literacy Strategy at Key Stage 2 and English at Key Stage 3. However, there is an overemphasis in years 5 and 6 on the basic level requirements with a number of higher attaining groups. Several such sets spent the first twenty-five minutes of their lesson focusing on writing conventions that they had either already mastered, or could have mastered in a much shorter time. As literacy and English account for 27 percent of the curriculum time in the years a greater proportion of higher level work should be required with open-ended tasks available.
77. Whenever pupils were given the opportunity to focus on the higher level work focussing on the whole text they grasped it, developing higher level skills and an enthusiasm for the subject. Some excellent teaching promoted this. In one year 6 lesson aimed at high attaining pupils, the pace was almost breathtaking. Following a brief review of earlier work on connectives, and a demanding and rigorous session focused on use of the semi-colon, the class embarked on shared writing of spells. They were supported by copies of a witches' scene from *Macbeth* and focused on writing rhyme lists, considering rhythm and the number of syllables in words. They discussed tone and extending their vocabulary. A number left the room to use the school's computers which they did appropriately and competently. The children responded positively to the teacher's extremely high expectations and standards were excellent. Throughout, the teacher was challenging and encouraging; humour was ever-present. The classroom was both fun and businesslike.

78. Similarly, good practice existed in some of the lower-attaining groups in Year 5. In one lesson the teacher read to the class about a group of children going on an adventure then brought out a rucksack which contained the belongings she had chosen to take with her on the adventure, including a hat which she put on as she went into role. The children were fascinated and completely entered the world she led them into. There followed discussion about what should be taken and why. Although the children tended to speak briefly, they were confident and the skilled questioning of the teacher was always prompting them to develop their thinking. The lesson ended with the teacher still in role wearing her hat and the children engrossed in language activity aimed at improving their ability to write a play script and use adverbs effectively.
79. In years 7 and 8 lower-attaining pupils were also seen to benefit from teaching of a very high quality. A lesson designed to promote an understanding of newspaper headlines and methods of conveying information had pupils entirely committed to their learning and making very good progress. Key to success were the appropriateness of the task, the enthusiasm of the teacher, the brisk pace and the well-designed learning materials, which included a good story-writing guide.
80. The high quality of the teachers' reading of texts to their classes was a noticeable feature of the department's work. On one occasion an accomplished reading of an extract from Roald Dahl's *Matilda* left year 5 children exclaiming: "It's very good," ... "exciting," ... "I want to read on." From this point, the teacher's careful planning ensured that a well-thought-through sequence of questions promoted a thorough exploration of the characters in the extract. The lesson was very good and achieved its objectives.
81. The department employs a broad range of teaching and learning strategies well. Good use is made of whole class teaching; pupils are well supported in group work, and individually. To further raise standards there needs to be a greater use of ICT, drama, and media. This will broaden the base of appeal.
82. Marking has improved since the last inspection. It continues to be conscientiously undertaken throughout both Key Stages and is encouraging; it is now often sharp and diagnostic with helpful comments to pupils as to what they need to do to improve. There is no an emphasis on making pupils aware of the National Curriculum levels of individual pieces of work and little evidence of a co-ordinated assessment policy consistently informing teaching in all four years.
83. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were very good in years 5 and 6 and good in years 7 and 8. This is a significant improvement on the position reported in the last inspection. Only one instance of unsatisfactory behaviour occurred when a small group of boys at Key Stage 3 was not sufficiently challenged by the task that it was set. Pupils' social and moral development was very well supported across both Key Stages.
84. The standard of management is satisfactory. To function to best advantage a single vision that covers the whole school needs to emerge. Considerable commitment has gone into developing the department. More regular monitoring of the soundly based Key Stage 2 schemes of work is necessary to ensure access to work at the higher levels. Schemes of work at Key Stage 3 exist but are in draft form; the teacher in charge had been in post only five weeks before the inspection. The draft schemes need to be revisited in order to ensure that statutory requirements in ICT are fully addressed.

85. Accommodation is good and teachers have their own rooms. All rooms are extremely well cared for with high quality displays that do much to promote the culture of learning. Book resources are generally adequate, though at Key Stage 3 more non-fiction stimulus material would be beneficial but access to ICT and televisions/media facilities is limited and this places limitations on the development of higher order skills.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

Strengths

- The progress the pupils make and the standards they achieve;
- Pupils' attitudes towards learning in mathematics;
- The quality of teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Constructing and implementing an agreed school policy for using numeracy in all subjects;
- Making greater use of ICT;
- Provision of more opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematics.

86. Standards in mathematics are well above national expectations throughout the school. In 2000, 11-year-old pupils reached a level of attainment in National Curriculum tests which were very high and were in the top five per cent of those obtained by pupils of a similar age nationally. Early indications show that 11 year-old pupils have reached a similar standard in 2001.
87. Evidence from the inspection shows that 13-year-old pupils are reaching standards which are well above national expectations. In the five years since the last inspection, standards have continued to rise. There was a considerable improvement in standards in 1999 when a full review of the work of the department led to the identification of issues for action, which were addressed successfully.
88. The difference in standards reached by all pupils and by those of higher attainment in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 is not as great as it might be, because insufficient or inappropriate extension work is provided for the most able pupils. The lack of difference is small because highest attaining pupils are not stretched sufficiently. Lesson observation evidence confirms the reason for this difference. There are no significant differences in the performance of girls and boys in tests or within the classroom. The high standards being achieved result from the pupils' very positive and mature approach to learning in combination with consistently good teaching. Currently pupils are reaching standards in mathematics which are below those being obtained in science, but which are better than those in English.
89. Overall, new entrants to the school in Year 5 have reached levels of attainment which are broadly in line with national expectations. There is evidence that these levels are rising slowly. The small numbers of mathematically gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress. However, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, continually make very good progress over the four years at the school. This is because the pupils have a strong motivation to learn, they work assiduously with consistent application and interest and they retain knowledge, which they transfer to new areas of learning to increase their understanding. In an excellent lesson, Year 8 pupils made rapid strides in developing their understanding of probability. They

listened with undivided attention to the teacher's briefing before working co-operatively, efficiently and accurately to obtain data relating to the probability of numbers appearing when a pair of dice was thrown. Armed with the data, and guided by skilful teaching, they moved swiftly from the experimental to the theoretical to reach a level of attainment well beyond expectations.

90. The quality of teaching is good with some very good features. Amongst these features is the thoroughness with which the teachers plan their lessons, their effective management of the pupils and the wide range of methods used to assist pupils' learning. Many of the methods have resulted from the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in Year 5 and Year 6 and its extension into the teaching of Year 7 and Year 8.
91. Overall, there are no significant weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics in the school. Teachers use every opportunity to strengthen the pupils' understanding and use of literacy. Pupils are encouraged to speak using extended responses to well-formulated and targeted questions. They are taught the meaning and spellings of words associated with mathematics following which they are expected to use them regularly and appropriately. Meeting this expectation provides pupils with interest and enjoyment and motivates them to use technical language confidently and impressively. The teaching of basic numeracy skills is very good within mathematics lessons but not co-ordinated or consistently reinforced across other subjects
92. In a very good lesson on fractions taught to a class of Year 5 pupils of wide attainment, the teacher planned that by the completion of the lesson all pupils would understand the differences between improper fractions and mixed fractions and how to convert one form to another. The teacher's clear understanding of the subject material, sense of drama and challenge combined to ensure that the pupils' learning was rapid. Her confidence stimulated the pupils who relished the opportunities to use new technical words correctly. By the end of the lesson pupils, including those with special educational needs, understood the differences between denominator and numerator and could apply them correctly when describing the nature of types of fractions.
93. In all lessons observed the quality of learning was good overall. All lessons start with the teacher checking the retention from the previous lesson, displaying the objectives for the lesson and informing pupils of what they are expected to know by the end of the lesson. The pupils effectively use targets based on National Curriculum expectations in both Key Stages. They are derived from the accurate assessment of pupil attainment through regular assessment. The strategies promote pupils' interest in their learning and help them to monitor their own progress towards realistic goals. Information and communication technology is used to extend some aspects of the work on probability, estimation and data handling, but more could be done to enrich this experience.
94. Future developments for the subject have been suitably identified and the recently appointed subject co-ordinator is providing good leadership to meet these whilst continuing to maintain and, where needed, improve the high standards reached in recent years. Central to the successful management of the department is the effective use of monitoring and evaluation of teaching and pupils' attainment. The subject meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum and this is reflected in the well-prepared and informative schemes of work for teaching the subject.

95. Improvement made since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have risen markedly; pupils are making better progress, the quality of teaching has improved and assessment information is now being more effectively used to monitor pupils' progress. The subject is well placed to continue the improvement made since the last inspection.

SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is very good

Strengths

- Individual target setting and assessment that informs overall curriculum development
- Clear lesson preparation that addresses the needs of pupils of all abilities;
- Use of the literacy strategies within everyday teaching and provision of opportunities to show independence;
- Excellent preparation of resources;
- Very good pupils' attitudes to the subject;
- Very good use of learning support assistants;
- Achievement of high standards;
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs;
- A shared commitment to improving the subject.

Areas for improvement

- Monitoring of subject so that good practice is further shared;
- The accommodation and Health and Safety issues regarding the pond;
- Ensuring that day-to-day assessments more effectively influence day-to-day planning.

96. Pupils make very good progress as they move through the school and by the time they reach the end of year 8 attainment is well above the national expectations for pupils of this age. The rate of progress that pupils make increases significantly in year 6 and this is maintained until the pupils leave the school. The overall progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. In 2000 the results for the National Curriculum tests at age 11, for level 4 and above, were well above national averages. This has been the case in previous years. The results for the last few years show a slowly rising trend and are now consistently well above average. The percentage of pupils achieving level 5 has also been consistently well above the national average, also showing an improving trend. In these tests there is no difference in the performance of boys and girls. Teacher assessments for science at the end of Year 6 show a similar pattern to those of the tests. Pupils' performance is also well above average when compared with pupils from similar schools.

97. At the end of Year 6, attainment is higher than that which could be expected for this age group. Pupils can describe the changes of state a material goes through when it is heated or cooled, use circuit symbols to describe an electrical circuit and give an explanation of why bulbs are brighter in a parallel circuit. They demonstrate very good practical skills, observe accurately and use equipment safely. They can identify when a test is fair and are able to carry one out. They are starting to make predictions that are based on scientific theories, for example ideas about how particles move and how this can be used to explain the process of dissolving. They show a good background knowledge when answering questions, but are a little less accurate with the way in which they use scientific terminology within their writing.

98. At the end of Year 8, attainment is much higher than that which could be expected for this age group. Pupils can give clear reasons as to why woodlice prefer damp and dark conditions and how dandelions become adapted to changes in their habitat. They can give a clear explanation of how to speed up the process of dissolving by using smaller-sized materials which increase the surface area in contact with the water. They also show very good practical skills, can recognise and control the most important variable in an investigation and give good verbal responses to questions. The production of extended written answers to questions improves as pupils move through the school and recent work on the life and work of Charles Darwin is evidence of this.
99. The progress of pupils in lessons overall is very good. Clear lesson preparation that addresses the needs of pupils of all abilities is a consistent strength of departmental practice. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school in science is average. By the end of Year 6 progress was judged to be above average and by the end of Year 8 it was judged to be well above average. No difference was detected in lessons between the progress of boys and girls and the progress of higher attaining pupils is also very good because they are presented with challenging work. The progress of pupils with special educational needs was consistently very good in all classes because of the strength of teaching and the quality of the use made of learning support assistants. When the quality of lesson planning and the use of assessment to inform classroom practice is considered, it is no surprise that the attainment of all pupils remains in the top ten per cent of schools in England.
100. The quality of pupils' response is very good and shows improvement as the pupils move through the school. Pupils are always very well behaved. They always show great concentration, always work safely and successfully carry out the tasks given to them. Pupils show great interest in their work and can be relied upon to work in a co-operative way. When the occasion arises, they also show that they are capable of working independently and are always courteous to each other and to adults.
101. There is no unsatisfactory teaching of science. The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent, with the majority of lessons being judged good in both key stages. In Years 4 to 6, half of the lessons were judged to be satisfactory with the other half of the lessons being good or very good. In Years 7 and 8, over half the lessons seen were judged to be very good or excellent. The best teaching seen came in lessons that were very well planned and had clear lesson objectives which were shared clearly with the pupils. The quality of teaching is high because staff have very good subject knowledge, are skilled classroom managers and are enthusiastic. In science lessons literacy and numeracy skills were used well and the learning was enhanced by the strategic use of ICT. The impact of teaching upon standards of pupil attainment is very good.
102. The quality of subject leadership is very good. The co-ordinator monitors, guides and supports the teaching and the work in science effectively. The system for monitoring the effectiveness of the subject throughout the school has been well developed in the past but this is in need of review to ensure that the good practice of the department is effectively shared. This included a complete analysis of pupils' performance, leading to target setting for individuals and the very effective informing of teaching and curriculum developments. The school's good work on the use of assessment data in the core subjects has been developed from this strong base. The system for ensuring that feedback to pupils and parents is constructive in helping pupils to improve their performance is very well developed. The liaison between the school and others

supports the work of the subject. The subject fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.

103. The present scheme of work is satisfactory and is constantly reviewed to ensure enrichment. The schemes of work particularly highlight the opportunities for enhancing the teaching of science with ICT. Many good examples were seen of this being used and the subject meets the statutory requirements in this area. The quality of learning resources is good but their quantity is barely adequate to service the present curriculum. As the school becomes larger, the present level of resources will become a limiting factor on pupils making progress. Resources are particularly strained in the larger Year 5, although they are very efficiently used and very well maintained. The outdoor resources for the teaching of environmental science are good but the pond needs to be fenced to reduce the risk of accidents. Many science lessons take place outside the laboratory environment due to a lack of accommodation. This situation is starting to affect the standards that pupils achieve, particularly at the higher levels.
104. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. High standards have been maintained with pupils continuing to make good or very good progress. The quality of teaching has improved and assessment information is effectively used. If the significant limitations in accommodation are addressed the subject will be well placed to maintain the high standards it has achieved in recent years.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Excellence in assessment;
- Relationships and enthusiasm;
- High level of teacher expertise.

Areas for improvement

- The inadequate teaching space for art which limits access to 3-D work and larger scale work;
- The lack of art-specific ICT software

105. Art is good; it is rapidly becoming a significant strength of the school, with the pursuit of excellence balanced by access for all. All the issues at the last inspection have been fully resolved. Assessment in art is excellent, especially in the area of clear criteria to define attainment target levels; the system compares very favourably with anything seen nationally.
106. In 2001, National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 6 were well above average and almost all pupils reached the nationally expected level with a significant number of pupils working a year above national and almost all pupils attaining the end of key stage expectations. Attainment in work and lessons seen in Years 5 and 6 is at the national average and above the national average in Years 7 and 8. The inspection period was early in October and pupils' developing skills were already providing a firm base for further improvement in all year groups.

107. Skills seen included very good tonal gradation and control in monochrome work in a surrealist style from all pupils in Year 8, with some work showing fluidity and movement. In a year 8 lesson developing work on surrealism and Dali, pupils were fascinated and paid rapt attention. Observational skills and attention to detail were of a high standard. Very good control of pastels was observed in a Year 6 class, showing acute and detailed observation – the visual representation of the structure of the three peppers from one boy was excellent. Pupils of all abilities have full access to the curriculum, and the focus on individual development ensures that not only do those with special needs attain well, but those showing higher levels of ability are stretched. In all lessons pupils' use of subject vocabulary was good and consistently developed, particularly for the most able and those with special educational needs.
108. Teaching and learning are both very good at both Key Stages. The new head of art is both an expert and an enthusiast. A fascination with and passion for art is being caught almost like an infectious disease. The characteristics of this good teaching are good planning and preparation are linked to clear shared target setting, based on intensive and focused feedback to individuals. Overall targets are refined as individual ones, and excellent relationships linked to efficiency of organisation and management. Very good links are drawn with mainstream art, and the work of other pupils is used well. Pupils learn by listening and analysis, by observation and by experimentation that is both supported and challenged by the teacher.
109. Pupils' attitudes are good in Years 5 and 6, and excellent in Years 7 and 8. They are enthusiastic and positive with a real sense of enjoyment linked to commitment and hard work. They work within a common framework but show independence in their application of the techniques being used. Display is used well to both celebrate and inspire and pupils in all year groups are proud to show visitors the quality of their own work on display.
110. The new subject co-ordinator has been in post for less than half a term. The present curriculum is under constant development. It is broad and balanced, but 3-D work and larger scale art is impossible because of space constraints. A policy for a programme of gallery visits is in place, but not yet implemented. At the moment ICT in art is research based, but art-specific software has been prioritised. Leadership in art is excellent – almost charismatic, and the headteacher has a clear vision of the role of the arts in the school. Assessment in art is excellent, both in principle and practice. It is very clear what different attainment target levels look like, and there are examples of high, average and lower standard work for each topic to act as comparators. The new co-ordinator is looking to extend this into pupil self-assessment.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall the quality of provision is good.

Strengths

- Teaching, particularly teachers' specialist knowledge;
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject;
- The range of opportunities provided that includes food and textiles;
- Systems for assessment and recording.

Areas for improvement

- Opportunities to use ICT particularly for computer aided design (CAD) and control;
- Accommodation for food and textiles work;
- Curriculum time in Years 5 and 6, and the development of work with mechanisms.

111. Since the last inspection the head of department, in conjunction with the teacher in charge of food and textiles, has improved the assessment systems throughout the school. Accommodation in the resistant materials area has been completely refurbished and is now of a high standard. A clear scheme of work is in place and there is good guidance for non-specialist staff in Years 5 and 6.
112. Attainment in Years 5 and 6 is in line with expectations. Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with a mixed range of experiences, skills and knowledge. In the presence of effective specialist and class teaching, boys and girls make good progress over the key stage developing their practical making skills. Their knowledge of a range of materials and processes that includes food and textiles is developed appropriately. In Year 5, pupils are taught in classrooms, and in Year 6 they learn to work with specialist teachers in the practical rooms. They learn to apply a structure to their work and can make simple diagrams and plans to explain their ideas. They can devise simple plans of action and modify their ideas as work progresses in order to make improvements. They can, for example, use card and other materials to model a range of playground equipment, or use card and plastic to design and make a nametag for a bag. They are encouraged to use and develop their literacy skills to write about and describe their work.
113. Time for design and technology activities in Years 5 and 6 is limited to one lesson of fifty or fifty-five minutes per week, which is not enough to cover adequately work on mechanisms and control, including the use of ICT. Some pupils, particularly those with computers at home, can make use of ICT to support their work but, for most, there are limited opportunities and standards here are weaker.
114. Attainment by the end of Year 8 is in line with expectations. Boys and girls can work confidently and safely with a range of materials, tools and equipment. They develop their practical skills through using plastics, wood, card, electronics, textiles and food. They learn to identify simple electrical components and can use them to assemble circuits such as a flashing light or buzzer. Current Year 7 pupils had made good progress to date with their soldering and construction of a simple switch as part of their work in electronics. They can use patterns and templates to develop their designs using fabric and learn to handle food products safely. In a Year 8 textiles lesson boys and girls were applying their practical knowledge and skills, using sewing machines, to practise the construction techniques required to assemble a fabric bag. They had in many cases created their own paper patterns to assist in cutting out their fabric. Their knowledge of the properties and characteristics of a range of textiles

was sound and each pupil had made use of ICT to design and print a front cover for their folder and develop ideas for the decoration of their bag. They learn some of the conventions of formal drawing and illustration methods and can use these, together with notes and diagrams, to plan their work. The reinforcement of numeracy skills at all appropriate opportunities is satisfactory. Design skills are for many pupils a weaker aspect of their practical work. Pupils in both Key Stages with special educational needs are given very good verbal and practical support that enables them to make similar progress to other pupils, particularly in their practical making.

115. The department is well led with good day-to-day management of the department and informal but effective monitoring of subject provision. The co-ordinator is also responsible for ICT and has begun developing its use within the department. The specialist teachers use their skills effectively to plan and ensure that class teachers in Year 5 are given good guidance and support so that pupils make good progress, building upon their previous work.
116. Lessons are well managed and pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and learn well as a result. When given opportunities to work together, they co-operate very well and discuss their ideas, showing respect for the opinions of others. Year 6 pupils, for example, worked in pairs exchanging and refining their ideas for an electronic board game. The systems for assessment are now more effective and are applied across both key stages. Good use is made of project feedback sheets that assess work to the National Curriculum levels and provide good quality written comments for pupils on how to improve.
117. The accommodation for food and textiles is in urgent need of modernisation and improvement to ensure that healthy and safe working conditions can be provided, particularly for work with food. In contrast, the materials workshop is of a very good quality, having just been refurbished with new furniture and machinery. The co-ordinator has good links with the local upper school, which enhance curriculum provision. Through special funding, the school benefits from additional specialist control technology teaching and use of a technology classroom trailer for two lessons per week.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

Strengths

- The leadership of the subject specialist;
- The use of ICT in Year 8;
- The standards attained in both key stages.

Areas for improvement

- The development of subject skills in Year 7;
- The use of local fieldwork.

118. Standards in geography are above national expectations throughout the school. Evidence from pupils' work shows that standards are in line with expectations on entry in Year 5. Pupils in Year 6 are working at comparable levels to the high standards they attained in English, mathematics and science and this is above the national expectations for pupils aged 11. Evidence from pupils' books indicates that the least able pupils in both Key Stages 2 and 3 were working at least as well as in

mathematics and science and pupils with special educational needs were well supported. Pupils in Year 8 when they leave the school produce work which is at least in line with national expectations and often above.

119. Standards of achievement as seen in pupils' books in Years 5 and 6 compare well with the best work they complete in the core subjects. Pupils with special educational needs are consistently challenged and there is evidence that differentiated tasks are made available that have a good match to pupils' needs. The higher attaining pupils produce work which is at least in line with the best work they produce in the most successful of the core subjects, science. Gifted and talented pupils in Year 8 are clearly provided with work that accesses the highest National Curriculum levels, providing them with consistent challenge.
120. Standards of achievement as seen in lessons in Year 7 are in some instances below what many in the groups are capable of because there is insufficient emphasis on the development of geographical skills. More emphasis on the analysis of map and photographic information would provide a better focus for literacy development. However, standards of attainment seen in pupils' books in Year 7 are noticeably higher where the impact of well-planned case study material provides challenge to all abilities. In Year 8 standards are often above what pupils produce in other curriculum areas and above the standards expected for the age group, because pupils are consistently encouraged to think analytically.
121. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen during the inspection and two thirds of the lessons seen were graded very good or excellent. The significant strengths in the quality of teaching were well-planned lessons with challenging questioning implemented with vision and pace. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils were given the challenge of annotating an oblique aerial photograph of the school. As part of a series of lessons focussing on the local area, pupils were able to orientate their base maps to help identify key features of the town. Challenging small group support by the class teacher ensured the correct use of subject vocabulary and the development of map skills and analysis. Pupils showed good orientation skills and knowledge of the local area, many commented that they were looking forward to using the computers, as they were keen to complete this task using PowerPoint to help them improve their explanations and presentation.
122. Excellent whole class questioning in a Year 6 lesson was developed from a three-dimensional river Tyne catchment area wall map that had been previously produced using textiles. Careful questioning developed from the teacher's very good command of subject knowledge focused on the correct use of physical geography language and the improvement of pupils' local knowledge. Lessons in Year 8 made very good use of the small suite of computers available outside the classroom. Pupils used Excel to produce a spreadsheet analysis of factors identified as significant to the spread of foot-and-mouth disease. Very good classroom management allowed half of the pupils to use the eight computers available, whilst the rest of the class used other resources. In a subsequent lesson, the arrangement was reversed, ensuring that all pupils had access to the limited ICT resources available.

123. The leadership of the department is very good. Well-planned schemes of work include good opportunities for the use of ICT. Fieldwork is a consistent feature of the experience offered to all pupils in both key stages although the impact of the foot-and-mouth epidemic has restricted access to this area of the curriculum.
124. Good progress has been made in geography since the last inspection. The attainment and the progress of all pupils remain good. Pupils' attitude to learning is very good in all years, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, with even the least dynamic lessons part of a soundly planned unit of work. The use of ICT has improved significantly since the last inspection; the statutory requirements for its use are now built into the schemes of work for all pupils and good use is made of the limited facilities available. Assessment and recording now inform curriculum and lesson planning and there is good exemplar material to help with standardisation. The range of resources available is now satisfactory.
125. Pupils' achievement in geography has improved due to the efforts made in updating the scheme of work, the development of enquiry-based teaching and the extension of practice to include the use of ICT.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Clear lesson planning to meet objectives;
- Feedback to pupils through high quality marking and oral comment;
- Challenge to pupils of all abilities;
- Contribution to extended writing in Years 7 and 8;
- Good assessment practice including liaison with the local pyramid to ensure progression throughout statutory education.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that all pupils use ICT to enhance teaching and learning in history, in accordance with the National Curriculum orders for history;
- Monitor and share good practice across year groups among a very large number of teachers;
- Plan for contribution to numeracy;
- Make greater use of the historically rich local environment to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding.

126. Standards of attainment are above national expectations at the end of Year 6 and in Year 8. In Years 5 and 6, pupils of all abilities quickly achieve understanding of the historical situations that they study. The most able can relate historical situations to the attitudes and behaviour of the peoples that they study. Children with special educational needs can identify some features of past lives from the information provided.
127. By Year 8, well-focused teaching, with a high level of pupil involvement and challenge, above average attainment is consistently demonstrated most pupils can classify causes of change, and higher-attaining pupils understand that some of the causes have their roots in complex situations. When higher attaining pupils are

allowed to research using the Internet, they can identify useful sites and use them to good effect. Pupils with special educational needs can understand the motives of people involved in great events, but in some lessons they are confined to simple matching and sequencing exercises that do little to extend their historical understanding.

128. Achievement in history is satisfactory, with pupils maintaining their above average attainment throughout their time in the school. Achievement is higher in knowledge and understanding of historical situations and changes than in ability to evaluate and use historical sources.
129. Teaching is good in almost all lessons. As a result of carefully targeted tasks for pupils of different abilities, they usually learn well. They know how well they are working and what they need to do in order to improve, as a result of good oral feedback and thorough marking in books. The majority of lessons involve pupils in whole-class and group decision-making opportunities that enhance their understanding. In such lessons pupils are required to listen to information without having to make use of it. In only one lesson was the teaching less than satisfactory. This was due to the inappropriate activities and lack of pace and challenge given to the pupils.
130. Throughout the school, pupils can use historical sources but they are not taught to evaluate them sufficiently in order to identify their accuracy or utility. Pupils' learning is therefore usually good, but there is inconsistency of experience as a result of different teaching styles. In the weakest lesson overlong teacher explanations allowed too little time for pupil involvement and challenges and consequently pupil outcomes were low.
131. Pupils enjoy most history lessons. During the inspection, good planning with objectives made clear to the pupils enabled them to understand the purpose of activities and their place in the series of lessons. Pupils are interested in the way of life of people in the past, about which they are prepared to offer their views. Teachers contribute to this by planning lessons to offer a variety of experiences that involve pupils in their own learning. In Year 6 on life in Victorian times, a successful lesson started from pupils' personal experience, giving them a starting point that attracted their interest and enabled them to understand the task. A year 5 class looking at the lives of the Celts were engaged by the idea that some of the activities they were studying had developed over 40,000 years previously, starting with people who were more skilled in survival than any of the people in the area today. The department does, however, miss several opportunities to use the local area to illustrate historical situations by referring pupils to the rich heritage of the area from pre-Roman times to the 19th century. For example, Chedworth Roman villa (in southern England) is studied in detail, but there is only passing reference to the world renowned Hadrian's Wall in the scheme of work and little reference to Prudhoe castle.
132. Throughout the history curriculum teachers make a good contribution to raising pupils' standards of literacy and speech. They encourage pupils to answer in sentences, to write accurately and to develop the ability to write an historical argument. In the classes seen, teachers required pupils to give reasoned oral responses rather than one-word answers.
133. History is used as a context for some of the work in Years 6 and 7 ICT, with pupils building files on Tudor monarchs and medieval castles. There are too few

instances, however, of pupils having their statutory entitlement to enhance their historical learning by using ICT in history to analyse sources, organise their thinking, examine statistical data, and research using Internet or CD-ROM. Although some opportunities are suggested in the scheme of work little evidence of application was found; this is not monitored to ensure equality of access or secure meeting of statutory requirements.

134. There is good practice in assessment, in that the department formally assesses the attainment of pupils at the end of each unit of work, and moderates the results internally to ensure accuracy. There is good liaison with local middle and high schools. The department provides good information for the high school, to ensure that the pupils make steady progress in the next phase of schooling.
135. Improvement since the last inspection in history is satisfactory. The department has addressed the planning of cross-curricular issues such as citizenship and ICT in the schemes of work, and so is now ready to implement these arrangements. In the area of site visits, the provision has declined since that reported at the last inspection. The limitations in the leadership of the subject become noticeable in the lack of use of the area's world-renowned historic past and the need to ensure that all staff are properly prepared to deliver the range of appropriate activities that enable pupils to meet historical objectives. This includes the use of ICT to enhance learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Standard of attainment in ICT, particularly when pupils combine information from a variety of sources;
- The department's use of relevant contexts learned by pupils in other subjects as a vehicle for teaching ICT;
- Good progression when ICT is taught as a separate subject;
- Very good support by teachers, and challenge to pupils at all levels of ability;
- Marking and assessment.

Areas for improvement

- Coverage of aspects of data logging and computer-aided design;
- Secure coverage of statutory provision for the use of ICT, to enhance learning across the curriculum;
- The provision of technical support.

136. Standards of attainment in ICT are good, with pupils working above national expectation at the end of Year 6 and on leaving the school in Year 8. Standards have improved since the last inspection, with the majority of pupils able to work in a variety of contexts after they have learned a process. The highest attaining pupils in Year 6 show clear awareness of the intended audience when they design information pamphlets. Pupils with special educational needs can, with some help, use a range of processes in order to generate and present their work, especially with the help of learning support assistants. By Year 8 pupils using variables in procedures to draw shapes on screen are independently designing a range of complex patterns.
137. Pupils of all year groups achieve very well in ICT in the light of their ability. In the five-week sessions that alternate with PSHE lessons, they learn a great deal about the

area of study, with the most able working independently in a very short time. Such pupils build on their ability to combine skills in order to exploit their understanding in a wide range of contexts. The majority of pupils acquire sufficient independence to enable them to use ICT effectively to enhance their learning of other subjects. Less able pupils and those with special educational needs can use straightforward applications to enhance their basic skills and to learn about other subjects.

138. Throughout the ICT course, very good teaching helps pupils to learn very well. After a short, teacher-directed practice of a procedure at the start of a lesson, most pupils in all years have sufficient confidence to develop their own ideas independently. The teacher gives well-judged support to those pupils who struggle with the initial task. At the same time, he provides a range of challenges to the more able who, therefore, extend their awareness of the potential of the information and communication technology that they are using. This is possible because of the teacher's very good knowledge of the strengths and learning difficulties of the individual pupils, based on observations in the classroom. He reacts quickly to the pupils' responses, recapping with individuals or groups when it becomes clear that they are having problems with a task.
139. Learning is usually very good in ICT lessons. Pupils' interest is engaged because they are able to apply what they have learned in the context of their other work. For example, a Year 6 class was seen during the inspection producing multimedia presentations of the lives of Tudor monarchs, related to the topic they are studying in history. Teaching of ICT that has a positive impact on the development of pupils' literacy, requiring them to use a range of written sources, for example web sites and library books, as sources for their research.
140. Pupils have a good knowledge of their own capability and what they need to do in order to improve. The teacher gives excellent feedback at all times. He does so by marking written work, commenting orally on pupils' actions in class and through end of unit assessment slips listing the individuals' attainment, along with how they can improve. Reports to parents include targets for improvement. These areas have much improved since the last inspection.
141. The scheme of work has been greatly improved since the last inspection, although the five-week modules in which it is taught break continuity, bringing about a need to revisit prior learning at the start of every group of lessons. It is possible, however, to work in smaller groups as a result of this arrangement, giving pupils more individual attention which speeds up their pace of learning. The ICT course achieves full coverage in communication skills such as word-processing, desktop publishing and multimedia presentations. Pupils learn during the course to handle and analyse statistical data, and to control movement on screen. The school's shortage of specialist equipment for control technology and data logging makes it difficult to teach these aspects of the course in depth. In such areas, therefore, standards of attainment are not as high as in others. The school does, however, use a range of equipment such as a digital camera, scanner and data projector to enable pupils to learn and to carry out most of the curriculum to a high level.
142. The department has improved its level of equipment greatly since the last inspection, although the pupil to computer ratio is still below national average for secondary schools. Almost every classroom now has its own computer linked to the network, with a bank of eight in the Year 5 and Year 6 area. Almost all computers are linked to the Internet, and the school has provided a filter against inappropriate use. The new network room has high quality equipment and a good range of software.

143. The ICT teacher delivers the subjects to all pupils and therefore there is no monitoring of other teaching staff required. However, he is too heavily involved in routine maintenance of hardware and software because there is no technician on site to deal with problems as they arise or to respond to staff requests for software to be loaded. This limits his ability to co-ordinate the use of ICT in other subject areas and secure coverage of statutory provision for the use of ICT, to enhance learning across the curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

Strengths

- Information and communication technology is used effectively to enhance teaching and learning in science, English, geography and in some aspects of mathematics, design and technology and religious education.

Areas for improvement

- In the remaining subjects, although ICT is being written into schemes of work, there is insufficient consistency of practice to ensure that all pupils make full statutory use of ICT;
- In some departments, for example music, there is a need for equipment in order to ensure coverage;
- The confidence of all teachers needs to be increased by training to the extent that they can plan useful activities and can teach them using computers.

144. Pupils' standards in ICT when they use it in other subjects are average. This is lower than in the taught ICT course because most subjects do not allow all pupils to use to the full the application of ICT specified in their National Curriculum orders. During the week of the inspection, very few lessons were seen where non-specialist staff used ICT to support the curriculum area they were delivering.

145. Some pupils were observed using computers to good effect in their classrooms. For example, pupils with learning difficulties enhanced their literacy through word matching exercises; reinforcement software was used in French. There were several good uses in design and technology, mathematics, history, English and science. In one year 8 lesson using the mini suite of eight PCs for geography, pupils using spreadsheets to analyse the causes of the local foot-and-mouth outbreak were moving more rapidly to higher level analysis than those using other resources. This was used as a teaching point by the teacher to raise the awareness of the way pupils could develop their work. There were some missed opportunities, for example in mathematics, English and history, where access to ICT accommodation was difficult to book. At present, however, several teachers are not sufficiently confident users of computers, and are deterred by what they perceive to be the unreliability of the network. As a result, pupils' experience is inconsistent across year groups. The school has already reacted to deficiencies in staff training, and staff are being trained at present.

146. The headteacher and senior management have placed high priority on the implementation of the use of ICT across the curriculum, and are monitoring the extent to which it appears in schemes of work. Heads of department need to complete this revision and then to ensure that the use of ICT does enhance all pupils' learning, rather than simply cause their work to be better presented.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Individual assessment and target setting;
- Good provision in Years 5 and 6;
- Opportunities for individual learning;
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject;
- Good teaching.

Areas for improvement

- Statutory requirements for ICT;
- The rationalisation of the schemes of work in line with curriculum 2000.

147. Unusually, the school offers pupils two hours of specialist taught French per week during Years 5 and 6. By the end of Year 6, pupils have received an excellent grounding in their learning and standards are good. The majority of pupils have reached a level that might be expected of a middle ability pupil at the end of year 7, many can speak about themselves with some fluency and the more able consistently use the correct tense.

148. This grounding is successfully built on during Years 7 and 8. Pupils' writing skills benefit from the early introduction of the language. By the end of year 8 standards are above average; pupils can manipulate the language and are developing confidence in using the perfect tense. Given that pupils' overall attainment at entry is around the national average and achievement in French by the time they leave is substantially above average, their progress overall is very good. However, boys are achieving significantly less well than girls, particularly in the middle ability range.

149. Pupils achieve so well because the teaching is good. It is delivered by a variety of established members of staff and a new, well-trained specialist. Teachers' command of French is good; lessons are generally lively with good use of the target language. Staff reflect on their practice to ensure they take on new ideas which they share effectively. Teaching is at its most effective when pupils are actively learning. For example, a lower attaining year 7 class was engaged in practising the time in pairs using plastic mini-clocks to help them. All pupils are provided with flash and conversation cards, colour-coded by year group, and spend a lot of time practising these questions in pairs. Pupils in a high-attaining Year 7 group were able to initiate speech and talk about themselves. Almost all the group were maintaining detailed conversation with good pronunciation with a variety of partners for more than 20 minutes, with little teacher intervention.

150. Pupils both understand and use French with confidence. At lunch times, pupils are encouraged to take out readers and magazines, and have sessions using a French computer program or in a tape recording booth where they respond well to aural prompt. All these unsupervised activities to increase individual exposure to the language are very popular among pupils, who show considerable maturity when taking part.
151. Pupils' attitudes to learning both inside and outside the classroom are very good. They are made aware of their levels of attainment through frequent assessments linked to National Curriculum levels. They are equally aware of what they need to do to improve because teachers talk to individual pupils regularly about the levels they are working at and targets for improvement. Non-teaching assistants are given tapes and other materials to help them support individual pupils withdrawn from the lesson. Teaching is less effective when pupils are required to listen passively either to the teacher or, more often, to individual pairs of pupils performing in front of the whole group. Pupils are divided into four groups on the basis of prior attainment in Years 7 and 8, and this has a positive effect on their learning. However, high-attaining groups are populated predominantly by girls.
152. The department is well led: it has built on the good inspection it received four years ago and has made progress in tackling the areas identified for development. Assessment and target setting are now strengths in the department and the most able pupils are being challenged. There are opportunities for pupils to speak, and these will increase as good practice is shared in the department. A French specific ICT package has been integrated into the scheme of work, but it does not meet the statutory curriculum requirements. There is currently little use of word processing and no evidence of use of the Internet or email to enhance teaching and learning. While documentation is in place, there is a need to rationalise the Scheme of Work so that ICT, assessment opportunities, resources, materials and teaching activities are properly integrated. There is currently no analysis of attainment across successive year groups, therefore trends in performance between groups of pupils cannot be monitored.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

Strengths

- Enthusiasm for and enjoyment in music at all levels;
- Pupils' attitudes and responses.

Areas for improvement

- Further develop extra-curricular activities;
- Develop a broad basis for the development of singing;
- Develop composition work fully;
- Improve the development of assessment to inform the curriculum.

153. Music is a traditional strength of the school; it is being totally redeveloped under the new head of department, and developments are already very promising. The headteacher has a powerful vision for the importance and development of music across the school.

154. In 2000, the National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 6 showed one-third of pupils working above national expectations and nine out of ten pupils meeting the end of key stage expectations. No lessons could be seen in Years 5 and 6 during the inspection period. Attainment at the end of Year 8 is in line with the national average. Within classes, attainment is variable, and while some pupils are able to make aural links between symbol and sound in staff notation work, others fail to do so. A sense of pulse and rhythm is unreliable, but at its best in group work – and this aspect is being worked on.
155. Pupils enjoyed singing, but the pitch is generally too low, encouraging poor vocal technique. In a year 8 lesson, one able boy was composing an extended melody, which effectively used imitation and echo. Pupils generally have full equality of access to music, but the focus on staff notation is easier for those receiving instrumental lessons – nearly a fifth of the school. Those with special needs receive good support, and achieve well, and abler pupils are given extension tasks to match their abilities. Teaching and learning styles are fully inclusive. There is a good programme of extra-curricular music involving nearly half the pupils in the school, which extends musical opportunities.
156. Teaching is good, and is based on the communication of enthusiasm. Teaching is characterised by good planning and preparation, with clear targets being set. Relationships are very good indeed, and pupils share teacher enthusiasm. There was teaching by exposition, example and technical development. Feedback within the lessons used pupils' own work, aural awareness, and trial and error. Above all, pupils were learning the link between fun, fulfilment and hard work. There is no doubt that the teacher is very skilful and has a high level of expertise.
157. Pupils' response is good. Attitudes are positive, and pupils are bubbly and enthusiastic. There is a working noise, but pupils behave in a socially responsible way, being aware of the needs of others in the same room in terms of sound interference. They accept both individual and corporate responsibility for their work, and will each other to succeed.
158. The accommodation, which is dual-purpose, is overcrowded and inflexible, and not ideal for singing, having a low ceiling and limited access to fresh air. The current curriculum is firmly based on two published schemes, but the reality does not always show this. It needs intensive development to reflect the skills and interests of the teacher and the needs of this particular school. ICT in music is research based at the moment although a range of software purchases have been prioritised that will provide resources for the development of composition. Although there is a firm foundation already established for assessment, that, too, needs to develop alongside the curriculum, and criteria for success and linked self-assessment by the pupils need to be established for each topic. The only limitation in terms of leadership is a lack of confidence, but the potential for excellence is very high, based on excellent relationships and a passion for music-making with children.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is satisfactory.

Strengths

- Teaching, especially the expectations teachers have of their pupils;
- Pupils' attitudes to physical education;
- The quality of the immediate feedback that pupils receive;
- The range of extra-curricular opportunities which the subject promotes.

Areas for improvement

- To ensure statutory requirements are met In Years 5 and 6 by providing swimming activities and water safety;
- To make better use of assessment level data to track pupils' progress through the four years in the school;
- To involve pupils more in evaluating their own and others' work and to be able to suggest ways to get better.

159. Since the last inspection, the joint subject leaders have improved the curriculum and assessment strategies and have improved teaching, so that learning outcomes are identified and are better used to ensure that all pupils make sufficient progress. Judgements are based on the observation of lessons and extra-curricular work in gymnastics and games activities.
160. Attainment at both key stages is in line with national expectations. Pupils enter the school with a variety of experiences and with differing degrees of knowledge, skills and understanding. The school quickly builds on these experiences with good opportunities for pupils to acquire new skills and consolidate those they already know. Standards in Year 8 are highest, with pupils achieving above expectations. Pupils with individual needs are achieving standards in some cases higher than would be expected, due to the programme of teaching and learning they receive.
161. In Year 5 netball and rugby, pupils are able to demonstrate satisfactory basic handling skills and are beginning to understand that different situations need a different passing response. A small number have already gained the difficult skill of controlled footwork and are able to demonstrate it to others. They know how to restart the game if the play is stopped, and have a basic understanding of attack and defence. In rugby, pupils can run with the ball and are beginning to use the dodge and side step to beat an opponent.
162. In gymnastics, standards are in line with expectations for the beginning of the year. All pupils know and understand safety rules and can lift, carry, place and use apparatus safely. Many pupils can use the basic skills of travel, jump and roll, and are beginning to compose sequences that they can remember and repeat accurately. Linking movements fluently still needs to be refined by some pupils. A small number of boys can take their weight on their hands whilst upside down.
163. In a Year 6 gymnastics lesson, pupils are able to compose sequences, drawing on skills they have learnt before and are acquiring this year. They can practise known work in order to improve and can talk about what they have done. The least able boys struggle to plan a sequence, heavily relying on the input of others around them; they lack control of movement and have not mastered some of the simple actions such as jumping and landing.

164. In the Year 7 gymnastics lessons seen, pupils were working on the theme of 'balance.' The majority of pupils are working in line with expectations, showing good shape and tension in the body. Pupils work effectively in pairs and groups to compose a sequence. Boys can plan their work, but lack the quality of body control that the girls demonstrate so well. Knowledge and understanding of balance is good. Pupils know about shape and tension and how a balance is kept still.
165. In Year 8, standards are above expectations in gymnastics. Pupils can demonstrate a variety of existing skills and can perform actions with increasing control and quality. Their sequences for flight in fives are complex and show elements of previous work such as matching, mirroring and symmetry. Performance is good and most pupils show good levels of body management and control. Pupils can suggest ways to get better. In a netball lesson the most able girls in Year 8 were working well above the national expectation. They show excellent passing and ball handling skills and have a high understanding of the rules and conventions of the game. Their knowledge and application of positional and tactical play is also very good.
166. These standards are brought about by the good or very good teaching which pupils receive during physical education lessons and extra-curricular activities. Planning at all levels and for all groups of pupils is very good. Learning objectives are always clear, leading to pupils knowing what is expected of them. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject. They accurately observe what pupils do and give high quality feedback to help them to improve. Health and safety matters are well taught. Teachers know their pupils well and their achievements both in school and beyond. Relationships are very good and teachers are able to set high expectations which pupils respond to and respect. The vast majority of pupils are very well behaved; they work well together, are co-operative and helpful and show empathy for one another's achievements and efforts. Participation rates are high, standard of kit is excellent and pupils always come to lessons well equipped and ready to work. Pupils like physical education.
167. The department is well led by the joint subject leaders. Day-to-day management is good. At the moment the programme in Years 5 and 6 does not provide swimming, but the other curriculum opportunities are good. The areas of experience provide a relevant programme for the pupils' interests, the facilities of the school and the expertise of the teachers. The opportunities for pupils to take part in extended and extra-curricular activities are good. All year 6 pupils have the chance to go to a local adventure centre for the day to experience such things as climbing and skiing. Regular 'house activities' take place and the school enters local fixtures, sports festivals and competitions. The links with outside agencies and clubs also provide a route for pupils to extend their physical education and sport beyond the school. Strategies for monitoring and assessing the impact of the curriculum and teaching on pupils' learning and progress are good. More use now needs to be made of the information recorded about pupils' attainment. Teachers need to analyse end of year and end of key stage levels, to determine what needs to be done to improve the attainment of individuals and particular groups of pupils. The subject is well placed to continue to improve.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is good.

Strengths

- There is very good leadership and management of the subject, characterised by detailed planning of courses and thorough monitoring and support for teaching;
- Good teaching is linking religious ideas and practices to pupils' own experience through role-play, discussion and the examination of religious artefacts;
- Assessment procedures are thorough and standardised by reference to a portfolio of pupils' work;
- Lessons are distinctive by starting with the opportunity for spiritual reflection.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to support pupils' learning in the subject needs developing;
- There is scope for enriching the curriculum through speakers and visits.

168. Standards in religious education are good. At age 11 attainment in RE is higher than expected nationally. This represents good achievement on the part of most pupils. Year 6 pupils' written work on church services is detailed and contains their own views, which show an ability to think about the significance of acts of worship. Similarly, in the year 6 lessons seen pupils showed good understanding of the importance of religious artefacts, explaining the symbolism of objects such as baptismal clothes and candles, crucifixes and rosary beads. Pupils who had brought in artefacts presented them well, explaining the family background to them. Lower attaining pupils are achieving satisfactory standards of written work, using prompt sheets and writing frames to guide them.
169. At age 13 standards are above average and pupils make good progress in the subject. The Year 8 assignments on the work of charities are of a high standard, showing thorough research and good organisation of information, using ICT. More capable pupils finish with a considered evaluation of the work of the charity and some suggestions for improvement, but others find such judgements difficult. In a lesson on the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, Year 8 pupils showed good oral ability in their role-play and discussion of likely views of different groups of people in the crowd. Similarly, in imaginative writing around the miracle, their work shows a high degree of insight. The same skills were evident in Year 7's preliminary work on the twelve disciples. Pupils were able to produce thoughtful applications for the role of a disciple, after discussion of the qualities needed in a follower of Jesus. Pupils in a lower set needed to be given more stimulus material to guide them in writing relevant applications.
170. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the overall standards that pupils are achieving in the subject, rising above the average standard reported then. Consistently good teaching and improved procedures for assessing pupils' performance in RE have been mainly responsible for the rise in standards. Continuity in the teaching team is difficult to achieve but the highly effective co-ordination of the teaching is maintaining above average standards of work.
171. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Detailed preparation through long- and medium-term plans down to lesson plans ensures common instruction to a good standard. In the odd lesson, better use could be made of time by a sharper focus on the lesson objectives, to get to the main point. Teachers make effective use

of a variety of methods that engage pupils actively in learning, such as discussion, role-play and opportunities to find information for themselves and present it in class. As a result, pupils are confident about expressing their views and are learning well. Spiritual awareness is well developed through a time of reflection at the start of lessons and by relating the subject matter to pupils' own experience. Teachers set a good range of written assignments to develop literacy and their comments on work indicate clearly how pupils can improve. Attention is paid to the needs of pupils at different levels but the quality and range of information sheets and worksheets could be improved by pooling resources and using ICT to enhance their presentation. Teachers enjoy good working relationships with their pupils, managing their learning efficiently and promoting good work habits.

172. The standard of leadership and management in religious education is very good, enabling non-specialist teachers to use their teaching skills to best effect in the subject. Professional standards of support, monitoring and evaluation of teaching are in place and there are opportunities for colleagues to observe the co-ordinator's lessons. There are very good procedures for assessing pupils' progress in the subject and for identifying levels of attainment in line with National Curriculum subjects. Provision meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. A basic amount of ICT is included in the schemes of work but its use is underdeveloped. Similarly, there is scope for enriching the curriculum through a regular programme of visits and visitors, linked to topics being studied in class.