

INSPECTION REPORT

LADYSMITH MIDDLE SCHOOL

EXETER

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113081

Headteacher: Christine Wilday

Reporting inspector: Paul Baxter
25217

Dates of inspection: 5-9 June 2000

Inspection number: 190669

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 primary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 8-12

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Pretoria Road
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Devon

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Norman Shiel

Date of previous inspection: December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Paul Baxter	Registered inspector	Modern Foreign Languages Religious education	The school's results and achievements. How well is the school led and managed?
Kenneth Parsons	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Tony Green	Team inspector	History Physical education Science	How well are pupils taught?
Jackie Johnson	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Geography	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
David Langton	Team inspector	English Music	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Equal opportunities Art Design and technology Information technology	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a large urban middle school serving the community of Heavitree and adjoining areas, close to the centre of the city of Exeter. It has 459 full-time pupils, of whom 227 are boys and 232 are girls. Most pupils come from the immediate vicinity of the school but a significant number come from other areas of the city; overall the area served by the school contains a mixture of private and local authority housing and is broadly average in socio-economic terms. At present there are 109 pupils with special educational needs and this is similar to the national average. Four pupils have statements for their special educational needs and this is below the number found nationally. Two pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds and come from homes where English is an additional language and this is low in relation to the number found nationally. Approximately 10 per cent of the pupils are registered as eligible for free school meals and this is close to the national average. Most pupils transfer from the adjacent first school at the age of nine, but a sizeable proportion transfers from other local schools. Taken together, the pupils' attainments on entry are broadly similar to those found nationally amongst pupils of this age.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ladysmith Middle is a successful school. It has maintained its commitment to improving pupils' achievement effectively even though there is an increased proportion of pupils with specific behavioural and emotional needs now attending the school. By deploying and utilising the expertise and experience of staff effectively and by promoting a team approach to management, the headteacher, ably supported by senior colleagues and governors, has secured improving standards of teaching and learning across the school. National Literacy and Numeracy strategies have been implemented successfully and there has been an increasing and effective emphasis on practical investigation in science. These developments are ensuring that the school's determination to provide a wide curriculum, not only enriches the pupils' experiences, but is also effective in raising standards. Despite its large size the school continues to maintain a warm and secure corporate spirit and to provide good value for money.

What the school does well

- In response to the high proportion of good teaching, most pupils achieve well, both academically and socially, in relation to their prior attainment as they move through the school.
- The pupils are taught a good curriculum that is enriched by an excellent range and quality of extra-curricular clubs and visits; they attain good standards in English, religious education, art, history, music and physical education by the time they leave the school.
- The pupils learn well from each other; very good relationships enrich the learning and are a strength of the school.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and all pupils, including higher attainers, are taught and learn well.
- Provision for the pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- Senior managers are very effective in managing the funds made available; staffing, accommodation and learning resources are very good overall and are used to maximum advantage in supporting the pupils' learning.
- The headteacher maintains a strong educational direction; and there is a very strong commitment to improvement and pupils' achievement.

What could be improved

- The quality of the presentation of the pupils' work is not good enough.
- The quality of the teachers' marking is unsatisfactory.
- Although the assessments of pupils' work are used well to inform planning in English, mathematics and science, they are not used to best effect in other subjects.
- Current approaches to recording and reporting the pupils' absences and the information supplied to parents about the school's provision for disabled pupils do not meet the statutory requirements.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

As at the time of its previous inspection in December 1996 Ladysmith Middle continues to be a good school with strong leadership. Significant improvements to the planned curriculum, particularly the implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies, to the the co-ordination of subjects, especially of English, mathematics and science and to the ways in which the provision for all pupils, across the range of prior attainments, has been matched closely and successfully to their particular needs. Compared to the previous inspection, the percentage of good teaching has increased and in response, a greater proportion of pupils are now making good progress. Standards have improved significantly in English, mathematics, science and physical education, and they have generally been maintained well in all other subjects, except in art, where partly due to less curriculum time being devoted to the subject standards have slipped from well above average to above average. Overall there has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is well placed to continue this in the future.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
English	B	C	C	D
Mathematics	D	C	D	D
Science	E	D	C	C

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

The results obtained by 11 year old pupils in last year's National Curriculum tests generally reflected the increasing proportion of pupils with special educational and behavioural needs in the school. They also indicated the impact of improved teaching in science. Comparisons with the performance of pupils in similar schools in English and mathematics represent hard judgements, whilst they bear due regard to the proportion of pupils registered as eligible for free school meals they do not fully reflect the percentage of pupils' with specific learning needs. Taking the pupils' performance over the period 1996 to 1999 shows stronger standards in English and mathematics, with the pupils' performance being close to the national average for their age group. In response to the strong focus on numeracy and literacy, inspection now shows that the school is set to achieve the targets set for this year. Most pupils aged 11 are on course to attain standards which are above those expected for pupils of this age in English, art, history, music and physical education. The pupils' skills in conducting investigations in science are also above expectation. Standards in all other subjects, match those expected nationally for pupils of this age. The standards attained by the Year 7 pupils, in their first year of Key Stage 3, are above the standard reached by pupils of this age in English, religious education art, history, music and physical education. Standards in all other subjects, match those normally attained by pupils in this age group. In response to a high proportion of good teaching most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and higher attainers, are now making good progress as they move through the school.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils come to school happily and show good attitudes to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good overall.
Personal development and relationships	Very strong relationships. Pupils accept responsibility willingly and show good personal development.
Attendance	Satisfactory, meets the national average.

Most pupils naturally behave well and apply themselves diligently in lessons. However a significant minority of pupils are helped by caring staff to maintain good behaviour and positive attitudes.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5 years	Aged 5-7 years	aged 7-11 years
Lessons seen overall	N/A	N/A	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 is a strength of the school. It was good overall, and was satisfactory or better in 98 per cent of the lessons observed. It was excellent in 3 per cent, it was very good in 11 per cent, it was good in 58 per cent and it was good or better in almost three-quarters of the lessons observed. The teaching is satisfactory overall in information technology, in mathematics and geography in Year 7 and in French in Key Stage 2. Teaching in all other subjects, including English, science and religious education is good. Literacy and numeracy are taught well. The teachers' knowledge of subjects, their management of the pupils' behaviour and their use of questioning to challenge all pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher attainers, are significant strengths. The large proportion of good teaching is enabling most pupils to build well on their previous learning in many subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good overall. It is strengthened by an excellent range of after-school clubs and visits and by the teaching of French.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very effective in meeting the particular needs of individual pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good overall.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall, very strong support for the pupils' moral and social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Generally satisfactory, with strong pastoral care, but weaknesses in the monitoring of attendance.

The staff of the school provide strong personal support for the pupils, every pupil is known well and has their contribution valued. The school promotes a good partnership with parents and parents expressed very strong appreciation of the school. This mutual support enriches the pupils' learning successfully.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good overall; strong personal leadership of the headteacher and senior managers ensures a very clear educational direction. Together they have promoted good provision and a successful team approach to the management of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall, the governing body has a good understanding of the needs of the school and uses its experience and expertise well to support staff. The statutory requirements of recording absences and of informing parents of the provision for disabled pupils are not fully met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Targets for improvement are evaluated and prioritised very carefully in a detailed development plan. Improved standards in English and the support given to individual pupils clearly show this.
The strategic use of resources	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are very good overall and they are used very effectively to enrich the pupils' learning.

Other strengths of the leadership and management of the school include the strong team spirit and the effective sharing of management responsibilities, for example, by leadership of year groups and of subjects. Governors and staff demonstrate a very good commitment to improvement and share a strong capacity to succeed. Principles of best value are applied well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school, behave well and make good progress. • The teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. • They would feel comfortable about approaching school with questions or a problem. • The school's expectations that pupils will work hard and achieve their best and become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of work that the pupils are given to do at home. • The range of activities provided outside lessons. • The information given about how pupils are getting on.

The inspectors fully support the parents' positive views. Homework is given regularly, in accordance with the school's policy and government guidelines, and is appropriate. The school provides good information about how pupils are progressing in annual reports and at meetings with parents. Inspectors consider that the school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 Last year's National Curriculum tests and teachers' assessments for 11 year-olds showed that the pupils' attainments were in line with the national average in English and science, but they were below the national average in mathematics overall. In all three subjects, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 5 standard was close to that found nationally, indicating that potentially higher attaining pupils were challenged effectively. Taking the results over the four years 1996 to 1999 together, shows that overall the pupils' attainment was close to that found nationally. There was little difference in the performance of boys compared to girls in English and science over this period, but contrary to the national trend, in mathematics, the boys significantly outperformed the girls. Compared with the performance of pupils in similar schools the results in 1999 were below average in English and mathematics and average in science. These comparisons are hard judgements in this context as they are based on the number of pupils receiving free school meals and they take little account of the increasing number of pupils with emotional and behavioural needs now attending the school.

2 Inspection evidence shows that, taken together, the children's attainments on entry match those found nationally, reflecting the wide range of attainments and backgrounds. Standards in writing and numeracy are generally less well developed compared to the pupils' reading and speaking and listening skills. In response to good teaching and a strong emphasis on numeracy and literacy, most pupils achieve well, in relation to their prior attainment, as they move through the school. Inspection shows that, at the end of Key Stage 2, the pupils' attainments are above the national expectation in English overall and are now higher than the average standards found at the time of the last inspection. Standards in reading and in speaking and listening are above expectation whereas standards in writing are in line with expectation, reflecting to a certain extent the lower starting point in this aspect. The pupils attain standards which are above those achieved nationally by pupils of this age in art, history, music and physical education. The pupils' skills in conducting investigations are also above expectation. Standards in all other subjects, including mathematics, science, information technology and religious education match those expected nationally for pupils of this age.

3 Inspection shows that the standards attained by pupils in Year 7, in the first year of Key Stage 3, are above the standards normally reached by pupils of this age in English, religious education, art, history, music and physical education. Standards in all other subjects, including mathematics, science and information technology match the standards normally attained by pupils in this age group. At the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7, compared to the previous inspection, in response to increasingly strong teaching and improved curriculum planning, standards have improved significantly in English, mathematics, science and physical education. They have generally been maintained well in most other subjects, except in art, where partly due to less time being devoted to the subject, standards have slipped from well above average to above average. Taking all the subjects together, the standard is higher than the average standard identified at the end of this key stage during the last inspection.

4 Most pupils make good progress over time in Key Stage 2 and in Year 7. The teachers' strong focus on literacy and numeracy, their good use of questioning, their effective challenging of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher

attainers and their good use of learning resources and classroom assistants, are promoting the pupils' learning successfully. Consequently boys and girls are achieving equally successfully at the end of each key stage. Pupils with special educational needs receive sensitive support and make good progress towards the literacy, numeracy or behavioural targets set for them in their individual educational plans.

5 Observations of lessons across the school show that good teaching and sensitive but rigorous management of the pupils' behaviour are supporting the pupils' positive attitudes and very good relationships, and these are helping to raise expectations and to raise standards. The pupils' improving reading and number skills support their research and learning in other subjects, but the use of information technology across the curriculum, to support learning, except for pupils with special educational needs, is limited and this is restricting the pupils' presentational skills.

6 Despite an increased proportion of pupils with learning difficulties, particularly emotional and behavioural needs, the school has set challenging targets, in English and mathematics, for pupils to attain by the end of Key Stage 2 this year. The headteacher and senior managers have set a clear educational direction, promote good teaching and learning and have emphasised the careful implementation of the National Literacy and Numeracy strategies successfully. Consequently an increased number of pupils are on course to achieve the targets set.

7 The pupils' improving skills in numeracy are utilised well and developed further in other subjects. For example, in Year 6 science lessons, when measuring the temperatures needed to sustain the growth of microbes or when measuring temperature change and its impact on liquids. The pupils' literacy skills are promoted satisfactorily across the school. Good examples were seen in history lessons in Year 5 when the pupils were writing about why Henry VIII should marry and in religious education lessons where the pupils compared the work of the gospel writers. Throughout the school teachers insist that pupils learn and use appropriate technical language in subjects such as art, design and technology and music, for example, and this widens their understanding beneficially. However, although a few teachers stress the importance of neat presentation, particularly of written work, and use marking effectively to help the pupils to improve, insufficient emphasis is placed on these areas of the pupils' learning. As a result, handwriting is insufficiently developed, writing in other subjects does not contribute as much as it might to improving the pupils' literacy skills and ways of improving their work are not fully explained to the pupils. These weaknesses restrict the pupils' progress. Nevertheless, standards are rising and an increasing number of pupils are making improved progress and are attaining higher levels overall.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8 The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are good overall and have been maintained well since the last inspection. Pupils have a good attitude to work and this has a positive effect on attainment and progress. Most pupils consistently show interest in their work during whole class discussions, group work and when working individually across the range of subjects. In a Year 6 physical education lesson, for example, pupils responded with enthusiasm to the variety of activities set by the teacher. Pupils work well together. In science they are motivated by the idea of formulating a fair test to find out what attracts insects to particular flowers and listen carefully to each others suggestions. Pupils feel comfortable with each other and are happy to perform in front of each other, as in the Year 5 lessons, where pupils devised their own rap poems about school, and presented them to the rest of the class. Pupils across the full range of prior

attainments maintain concentration well, whether it be higher attaining pupils in Year 6, working on percentages in mathematics, or a group of lower attaining pupils in Year 6, composing a piece of work on 'How To Look After Your Teeth' in a literacy lesson.

9 Pupils show very good levels of interest in school life and a very good involvement in school activities. Pupils put forward ideas and points of view with appropriate confidence in lessons and approach written and practical work positively. Completed work is discussed and shared with the teacher with pleasure. Pupils show that they can take responsibility for their own learning and even the youngest pupils are capable of demonstrating a good level of initiative. All pupils produce independent homework on a topic each term, and show good initiative during extra-curricular activities. Pupils in the football team for example, wrote to parents about a forthcoming important match and asked for their support and attendance, and pupils in Year 7 are planning and producing a Year 7 'Year Book'.

10 Behaviour is good overall and the good standard noted in the last inspection has been maintained. During lessons pupils are polite and treat each other, and adults, with respect. Pupils enter and leave assemblies quietly and behaviour in assemblies is very good regardless of who is leading the assembly, headteacher or pupils. Movement around the school is calm. Behaviour in the playground is good, although a few incidents of inappropriate 'play fighting' are evident. There is a happy atmosphere during break and lunch times both in the dining room and outside. When on school visits, pupils do not let themselves or the school down. Members of the outside community praise their behaviour. Pupils use the school facilities with care and there is no evidence of litter or vandalism.

11 Pupils with special educational needs respond well in class and when withdrawn for specific focused help. They answer appropriate questions in whole class sessions with reasonable confidence and work hard at individual tasks. They are successfully integrated into classes and collaborate well with fellow pupils across the range of subjects. Pupils with behavioural problems respond positively to the strategies employed by class teachers and support assistants.

12 Relationships with peers and other adults are very good, as they were at the last inspection. All staff are positive role models and all pupils reflect the respect they are shown. They work well together in groups whether these be of mixed ability, mixed age or whole school and all contributions are welcomed at whatever level, as for example, in the Year 6 class assembly based on conservation of the environment and resources. Most pupils show a very strong regard for the feelings and values of others.

13 The personal development of pupils is good. Pupils are involved in a number of ways helping with the day to day management of the school and are encouraged to feel a sense of responsibility for the community and its environment. This is established effectively in classrooms where pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for clearing up their own work area. Pupils in Years 6 and 7 take on wider responsibilities related to the school community and, for example, are involved in taking parents of potential new pupils around the school and answering their questions. Older pupils have a caring approach to the younger pupils. Pupils in Year 7, for example, help Year 4 pupils with their reading skills and a small number of older pupils help other pupils with special educational needs during computer time at the beginning of each morning.

14 In general pupils have good social skills and an appropriate awareness of the achievements of others. All pupils are given opportunities to meet new and challenging experiences and problem solving activities, for example, through residential courses at Wembworthy and 'Pixies Holt' on Dartmoor. A Year 6 activity week also helps to support

the pupils' good social skills. Attendance at the excellent range of clubs offered by the school is good.

15 The attendance by pupils at the school is sound, with the number of reported absences broadly in line with the national average for a school of this type. Within these figures, holidays in term time represent a significant element of total absences. The level of recorded unauthorised absences is very low, a reflection of the way parents support the school's efforts to minimise them. There are no specific groups of pupils with poor records of attendance. The vast majority of pupils arrive on time, allowing an efficient start to the school day. Attendance was judged to be better at the time of the last inspection.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16 The overall quality of teaching is good at both key stages. Across the school as a whole 98 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory or better. 97 per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better at Key Stage 2 and 70 per cent good or better. Four per cent of lessons are excellent. Two per cent of lessons are unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 3 all lessons are satisfactory or better with 65 per cent of lessons being good or better. There has been an overall improvement in teaching since the previous inspection when no lessons were judged to be excellent.

17 There is a very close link between the quality of teaching and the quality of pupils' learning. In lessons where the teaching is good and very good, pupils learn effectively and make good and, at times, very good progress. In the excellent lessons pupils' learning is also excellent. In both key stages, pupils are engaged in tasks presented, concentrate well, produce work of good quality, and respond well to the teachers' good standards of knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Where teachers' explanations contain an exciting element, pupils listen attentively. In the excellent lessons the teachers share with the pupils very clear and precise objectives for each part of the lesson, so that they know exactly what they should be learning and improving at each stage. For example, in the excellent Year 6 physical education lesson observed, the teacher demonstrated his own high level of skills with a racket and ball which challenged and motivated the pupils to try hard and do as well. Such appropriate challenge was also evident in many other lessons. For example, in a Year 5 science lesson about the major parts of a flower, the teacher's questioning and enthusiasm for the subject challenged pupils to think about, and work out for themselves, the function of each part of the plant. In a Year 5 English lesson, about the possessive apostrophe, the lively manner of the teacher and the good use of resources, including the over head projector, helped pupils develop their understanding in an interesting way.

18 Many teachers make good use of the start of lessons to recap previous work and outline the learning intentions for the lesson. The majority of teachers display the learning intentions most beneficially so that pupils can refer back to them. However, this is not done in all classes. The last parts of many of the lessons are also used well as a time to recap what has been learnt and to outline the next lesson. A good example of this was observed in a Year 7 science lesson on magnetism. The teacher ended the lesson by explaining what would be done next time so that pupils could begin to think about the next stage of their learning.

19 Teaching is generally good in each year group. In the very small number of lessons that are unsatisfactory pupils do not understand the tasks set and the management of the class is weak. As a direct consequence, there is no purposeful teaching of skills and hence time is not used effectively. Where teaching is satisfactory but not good, it is often because

of the slow pace of lessons and a lack of activities to match all ability groups. For example, in a Year 7 geography lesson, pupils became bored because of a lack of pace and some exhibited off task behaviour.

20 At both key stages the majority of teachers and classroom assistants manage the pupils well. Relationships are very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers use encouragement and praise to good effect. They value the pupils' ideas and, as a result, pupils are eager to contribute and ready to learn from their mistakes. The quality of relationships has a very positive impact upon learning. For example, in an excellent Year 4 English lesson observed the very good relationships between the class teacher, classroom assistant and pupils led to an atmosphere of mutual respect and hard work.

21 The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and the quality of the provision has been maintained well since the last inspection. Pupils are very well supported when withdrawn from class for individual or small group work. In one-to-one situations pupils receive very effective focused support, well enhanced by the use of information technology, related to their individual educational plans. When receiving small group support, as for example, in Year 6 for literacy, the quality of teaching is very good. Here a group of challenging pupils, working with the teacher, successfully completed an informative piece of writing on 'How to Look After Your Teeth'. In whole class situations, the provision for pupils is mainly good and is often very good. In Years 6 and 7 pupils are taught in classes based on their prior attainment for literacy and numeracy and here the pupils' activities are well matched to their needs.

22 Groups of pupils in Years 4 and 5 also receive good support for literacy and numeracy in several lessons and this is provided by effective support from an extra teacher. When no extra support is available, class teachers ensure that good support is maintained. During a geography lesson in Year 5, for example, the teacher had prepared suitable tasks related to the topic of rivers for the variety of pupils within the class and this promoted the learning of all pupils. In general teachers support pupils with special educational needs effectively, but provision is not always recorded in teachers' planning. Communication between class teachers, support assistants and the co-ordinator for special educational needs is very good and ensures that pupils receive appropriate support.

23 Teachers' planning is good for literacy, religious education, design and technology and art and satisfactory for all other subjects. Weekly planning for subjects, other than English, mathematics and science, is often activity based and does not give sufficient attention to clear learning outcomes which teachers can then use for assessment opportunities.

24 During lessons, teachers assess pupils' by good questioning strategies, which explore the depth of pupils' knowledge, and understanding and consolidate learning. Most teachers keep notes of pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science but the recording of pupils' performance in other subjects is not well developed. Most teachers provide effective oral feedback to the pupils, about the quality of the work but the quality of the teachers' written marking of books is often unsatisfactory. Few teachers write comments in pupils' books, which will inform them of their progress and of their strengths and areas for development. Where teachers do not assess pupils' performance systematically, plans do not cater for pupils' individual learning needs. At both key stages, good use is made of homework.

25 In Year 7, specialist teaching occurs for music. Pupils are grouped in classes based on prior attainment for literacy and numeracy in Years 6 and 7 and once a week in Year 5

for numeracy. Extra withdrawal support for lower attaining pupils and those with additional learning needs also occurs every day in Years 4 and 5. The headteacher takes a weekly literacy class for the higher attaining pupils.

26 The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and the National Numeracy Strategy has provided a clear structure for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. The teaching of literacy is good at both key stages and all pupils have individual targets for English. The teaching of numeracy is good in Key Stage 2 and sound in Key Stage 3. Teaching is good in almost all other subjects. The teaching of science, religious education, art, design and technology, history, music and physical education is good in both key stages. The teaching of geography is good in Key Stage 2 and sound in Key Stage 3. The teaching of information technology is satisfactory in both key stages but there are shortcomings because computers are under-used and some teachers lack confidence in teaching the subject. The teaching of the basic skills of handwriting and presentation is unsatisfactory. Teachers do not always model good handwriting and presentation in their own writing on flip charts, the whiteboards or in pupils' books. Expectations of pupils' presentation, handwriting and correct spellings are unsatisfactory. There is no whole school style of handwriting and no coherent approach as to whether pupils should use pencil, felt-tipped pen, roll nib pen or fountain pen and information technology is not used to full advantage in supporting the presentation of pupils' work.

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

27 The curriculum provided by the school is good, and meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. It follows the guidelines for religious education in the locally Agreed Syllabus. It is broader than average, well balanced, and extended through the timetabled teaching across the school of French, drama, and library skills, and a planned, annual "theme week" for each year when topics such as creative arts and "Exeter during the Blitz" can be explored. Subject time allocations have been well considered. It meets the aims of the school and the requirements of the National Curriculum. (There is currently no regular provision for the teaching of swimming, but this is due to circumstances beyond the school's control. Specific swimming has been provided for Year 4 pupils this year and regular swimming will be resumed next term.) The school makes good provision for pupils' personal and health education, sex education, and drugs awareness. During the inspection week all Year 6 pupils were addressed by the local police on the dangers of drugs abuse.

28 The school's implementation of the numeracy strategy is good and is continuing to be developed. The implementation of the literacy strategy is very good. The literacy hour is fully in place, and very well planned. The school recognises that this has done much to raise standards. There is good awareness of literacy and numeracy across the school, with specific vocabulary being targeted, for example in the music, science and mathematics lessons observed. The school has introduced a number of innovations to the curriculum which have effectively raised standards. For instance, pupils in Years 6 and 7 are placed in classes based on their prior attainments for literacy and numeracy. Additional support has been provided for higher attaining pupils, and for lower attainers, which raises their attainment and accelerates progress. "Booster classes" have been well used after school. Weaknesses in standards in Year 5 are being successfully addressed through the provision of additional teaching in small groups.

29 Pupils with special educational needs have access to all areas of the curriculum and this is well matched to their needs. They have access to all extra-curricular activities and

provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

30 Extra-curricular arrangements are excellent. The school provides a very wide range of lunch-time and after school activities, cultural, practical and physical. Matches are played against other schools, choir and orchestra perform and compete in local attractions, additional learning classes and a homework club for older pupils are held after school. During the week of the inspection there were over twenty different activity groups taking place, with good provision for pupils of all ages. These activities are well supported by a significant number of staff and pupils. There is a wide range of planned day visits and visitors, with trips to places of historic, scientific, geographical and religious interest, and a week's residential trip for every year group to places ranging from Dartmoor to Paris. These activities enrich the quality of the pupils' learning considerably and are a strength of the school. The school is indeed fortunate to have teachers so dedicated to their pupils as to give up their time so generously. Parental assistance enables all pupils to have access to the library during the lunch hour.

31 The curriculum provides effectively for all its pupils. Higher attainers are identified and taught appropriately, pupils with special educational needs are very well supported, and good provision is made for the very few pupils in the school for whom English is a second language. A good level of equality of opportunity is reflected across the school, within the classrooms and from teachers as role models. The school is fortunate to have a similar number of male and female teachers on the staff, a factor contributing positively to boys' and girls' interests, attitudes and conduct. Withdrawal of pupils from lessons for literacy support or for music lessons is kept to a minimum, and the school arranges where possible for instrumental lessons to centre around morning break and lunchtimes. Funding is set aside to ensure that all pupils are enabled to attend and benefit from educational visits.

32 Links with the local community are satisfactory. Police and fire service personnel regularly visit the school and pupils attend a local course on danger awareness. Plans are in place, in partnership with the First school and local senior schools to arrange for the local community to have access to, and tuition on the school's computers. There are good links with the local teacher training colleges. During the inspection week a student was able to give very good support to a pupil for whom English is an additional language. The school makes good use of the local environment for visits to places of educational interest, such as the local synagogue, and library. Pupils have access to the internet and 'e-mail' weather data to a school in Surrey. However, there are no close links with local business. Links with partner schools are good. There is regular contact with the first school, co-ordinators meet to discuss aspects of continuity and progress across the curriculum, and there are good links with those senior schools to which the school sends pupils.

33 The school makes good provision for the pupils' personal development. Pupils leave the school with an above-average maturity and sense of responsibility. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good, largely due to the high standards and the good example set by the all teachers. Since the last inspection the school has maintained its provision for the pupils' personal development well.

34 The provision for the pupils' spiritual development is good. Assemblies are often very uplifting and involving. The themes, moments of reflection, prayers and exuberant singing all contribute to a family feeling, despite the very large size of the school. On several occasions, lessons such as art or science produce in the pupils a sense of the appreciation of nature or human achievement. In other lessons, the teachers' appreciation of the pupils' ideas and values also adds a spiritual dimension.

35 Moral development is very good. The management of behaviour is unobtrusive and consistent. All adults teach clearly the difference between right and wrong. Even pupils with particular behavioural problems respond well. The school has a very good policy on personal, social and moral development (PSM). The whole school and class assemblies are based on weekly themes concerned with religious, moral, social and environmental issues. Often, the themes are continued productively through classroom discussion. These provide pupils with a realistic moral framework to which they can relate easily. Pupils are taught how their behaviour can affect others. Personal and more intimate issues are addressed effectively in appropriate settings. Teachers are sensitive to the children's needs and values.

36 Social development is also very good. The school provides many opportunities, both in the curriculum and outside it, in which pupils can exercise responsibility and care for each other. Teachers cover issues such as drugs, health and physical development in science lessons and in 'circle' time or special 'PSM' lessons. The many extra-curricular activities enable pupils to socialise with different age children and adults. The recent visit to Paris combined parents, teachers and pupils. The school choir and drama productions mix talented pupils with talented teachers, whilst sports fixtures and field trips take the pupils into the local community and further afield. The support that the school provides for pupils with special educational needs or behavioural difficulties is very good. Pupils engage very well with minorities, whether it be one of colour, country or religion.

37 The school's provision for the pupils' cultural development is good overall. A range of different cultures is explored in art, music, history, geography and religious education. Pupils experience local culture in visits to museums and galleries. A recent art trip, enabled pupils to look at the work of local landscape artists, both past and present. The school is weaker in its coverage of the multicultural aspects of Britain. Pupils recently visited a local synagogue as part of a study of different faiths. However, the school does not have a planned programme, which would enable pupils to see how society is made up of a range of cultures and influences. The school sometimes misses opportunities.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38 The school has a strong sense of community. It provides an emotionally secure environment within which pupils can feel respected and valued as individuals. Staff are caring and supportive, providing both personal and academic help when pupils need it. Outside professionals, such as the school nurse, are used well to support the school's own provision.

39 There are satisfactory procedures for ensuring the care and welfare of pupils. Steps have been taken to ensure that the school provides a safe environment, with regular risk assessments carried out. Currently, the hall which is used for outside lettings lacks illuminated signs. The required routine safety tests and procedures are in place. Safe practice was seen in all lessons observed during the inspection.

40 Staff are aware of their responsibilities under local child protection guidelines, there are appropriate procedures and links with social services. The school has adequate monitoring and recording procedures in place. Children are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own well-being and safety through the school's effective PSM programme. The procedures to monitor and promote regular attendance by pupils are unsatisfactory. Not all registers are being completed fully and they are not being monitored sufficiently by management. The governors have not ensured that the registers meet legal

requirements. However, there are sufficient procedures in place to ensure that parents are aware of the importance of children coming to school on a regular basis.

41 The school's measures to encourage discipline and behaviour are good. The school's management of behaviour policy places great emphasis on the encouragement of acceptable standards of behaviour, and its success is a reflection of the good practice of the staff and the positive relationships they have with pupils. These aspects are rightly emphasised in the school's policy. However, the policy also highlights the need for clear arrangements for the imposition of sanctions, record keeping and appeals. In practice it does not in fact provide a clear framework in these areas. Overall, a more detailed policy which gives teachers a secure framework to work within would benefit the school. For example, there is no mention of circumstances or at which stage parents will be approached or exclusion considered. The school has a sound policy to deal with bullying.

42 Teachers generally know their pupils well as individuals and support them appropriately. The school makes effective use of external tests to track pupils' development. The teachers' knowledge of the pupils' academic attainment is used to make sure the teaching of pupils is based on their prior attainment in English and mathematics, and helps improve standards. In English, targets specific to individual pupils are used to encourage them to address areas of relative weakness, and in some lessons they have these in front of them as a reminder of what to concentrate on. In many classes, written reports to parents include perceptive comments and further targets for improvement and these aid the pupils' progress. Pupils have their own record of achievement which contains details of both academic and personal development.

43 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall. They are good in English, mathematics and science, but they are less effectively developed in all other subjects and especially in the formal assessment of skills in physical education, music and information technology. On entry all pupils are given tests in reading, spelling, mathematics and a standardised non-verbal reasoning test, which enables pupils requiring additional literacy support to be identified. The optional National Curriculum tests are applied to other year groups and individual collections of pupils' work are kept, as records of their achievement, though except in the core subjects these are not levelled against national criteria. Higher attaining and gifted and talented pupils are also identified and provided with some additional attention, for example, in the teaching of small groups on a weekly basis, and the learning of musical instruments. Reading and spelling are tested formally at the end of each year, in addition to regular weekly assessments. One piece of reading and writing is assessed each term and individual targets then set. All pupils have their individual target cards. There are literacy targets set for all classes, and key learning objectives in mathematics.

44 The individual educational plans of pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory and well-matched target setting to meet the needs of individual pupils is improving. They are well monitored, reviewed regularly and are updated appropriately. The early identification and assessment of pupils is carried out efficiently. Regular tests are completed and samples of pupils' work are kept to track progress. Other assessment of pupils' progress follows the same practices employed for mainstream pupils.

45 The quality of teachers' day-to-day assessment is variable in quality and is satisfactory overall. In most classes well-chosen lesson objectives are displayed and shared with the pupils. Pupils are assessed on how well they have achieved these objectives, and this helps teachers plan future work to match the learning needs of all pupils. This is particularly well done in English and mathematics, but there is less provision

in other subjects, and such assessment is inconsistent. Planning does not always ensure that work is appropriate for pupils of all abilities. In one of the best lessons observed, the teacher worked with a group of pupils, assessing their performance, and recording results on their individual target sheets and this aided the pupils' learning. Teachers' written marking is also inconsistent. Some display marking guidelines in their classrooms, but not all, and the quality of the teachers' marking in the pupils' books is very variable. It is often unsatisfactory with sometimes no more than a cursory tick. Marking is not being used sufficiently to take subjects forward. Although teachers discuss the pupils' work usefully with individual pupils, in general the procedures for checking the quality of pupils' written work and their pride in presentation are insufficient.

46 Analysis of test scores is good, and continues to improve with the introduction of a new information technology program for recording data. Good use is made of information in mathematics and English, to place pupils in classes based on prior attainment, plan future work and set targets for individual pupils and every class. For example, the school has identified a weakness in writing and has taken effective measures to raise standards in this area. Analysis of assessment data enables the school to make predictions and set, and revise targets, for example, in English and mathematics. Pupils may move between the classes created on the basis of the pupils' prior attainment during the year, as a result of the assessment of their performance. Good use is made of the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum assessments to inform future planning for Year 7. Planning ensures that pupils build steadily and progressively on their previous learning and pupils' files and records of achievement move up with them at the start of each new academic year.

47 The school has generally maintained the standard of its provision for pupils' welfare since the last inspection, although the attendance procedures are now less efficient.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

48 Parents generally hold very positive views of the school. Virtually all the parents who responded to the questionnaire think it is well led and that teaching is good. Children are seen to like school, and to behave well. Parents think the school helps their children to become mature and responsible, and they themselves feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem. A limited minority of parents would like to see the school providing more information about how their child is getting on or are dissatisfied with the amount of homework provided. A minority do not believe that the school provides an interesting range of activities outside of lessons, an opinion not shared by the inspection team who find that the provision at Ladysmith Middle School is excellent in comparison with similar schools.

49 The school generally provides good information for parents, through informative newsletters. However, the governors provide insufficient information about provision for disabled pupils in their annual report to parents.

50 The school makes good arrangements to involve parents of pupils with special educational needs in the assessment and review of progress related to pupils' individual educational plans. As well as the formal arrangements, parents are invited to attend an informal coffee morning each term when related topics of interest can be discussed. Normal day-to-day concerns are dealt with effectively and parents are kept fully informed.

51 The school works hard to maintain and develop a constructive partnership with parents, and the links parents have with the school are good. Most of them assist their children's learning through their support of homework. Parents of pupils with special

educational needs are involved well in the reviews of progress. The vast majority of parents have signed the home-school agreement. A number of parents help in school on a voluntary basis, whilst others assist with school trips. The parent, teacher and friends' association organises beneficial social and fund-raising events. A useful innovation since the last inspection has been the 'Home-School Book' and this is helping to improve the benefit derived from pupils work at home.

52 The quality of the school's partnership with parents has generally been maintained well since the last inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53 The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher, staff and governors have given close and effective attention to the issues identified by the previous inspection and have further developed the strong personal support of individual pupils also identified. Even though there has been a continuing increase in pupils with emotional and behavioural needs attending the school, with secure guidance from the headteacher and senior managers, teachers have raised the level of challenge offered to all pupils including potentially higher attainers and standards have risen.

54 The headteacher provides good leadership and has played a key role in establishing a clear vision for the future which is fully shared by everyone at the school. The experienced headteacher and deputy headteacher ably supported by an equally experienced senior colleague have promoted a successful corporate approach to the management of the school. Their empowerment of key stage leaders and of subject co-ordinators has mobilised and channelled the abundant expertise of staff and has strengthened the day-to-day administration and development of this large school. The successful implementation of National Literacy and Numeracy strategies and the adoption of effective procedures to support the significant numbers of pupils with behavioural needs are clear examples of the advantages of this approach to management.

55 The governors use their expertise and considerable experience well and support senior managers effectively in maintaining a broad curriculum and in the raising of standards. Through the detailed reports of the headteacher, visits to the school and through information from the community, the governing body, led by an astute chairman, generally has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They consider the development of the school closely and are particularly successful, through their committees, in ensuring the efficient use of resources to aid pupils' learning. The management of the school is less successful in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met. For example, daily records of pupils' absence are not kept in full accordance with statutory procedures. Also insufficient information is provided about the school's admittance and provision for pupils with disabilities, within the governors' annual report to parents.

56 Teaching is monitored well and evaluated by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and by senior co-ordinators and this has led to continued refinement and improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced and the proportion of good lessons has been increased. The good mechanisms of staff support promoted by the headteacher and senior colleagues have helped to raise the teachers' confidence and expertise. For example, well-focused induction and appointment of new staff and supportive professional development led by the headteacher have improved the quality of teachers' planning. Universal good practice, such as challenging questioning and establishing good links with the pupils' previous experience, have enriched the pupils' learning.

57 The leadership and planning of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have also been improved since the last inspection. Under the direction and support of year group leaders, teachers and support staff plan together as teams and this is the strength in the planning process. The autonomy delegated to each year group sustains a rich curriculum enhanced by termly themes, special events and visits, and also ensures the effective use of available resources to support pupils' learning.

58 The aims of the school are shared by the whole school community and are clearly addressed in the day-to-day work of the school. Although the school's increasing focus on raising academic standards is visible in the good quality teaching and in the challenging targets for pupils' attainment, it is not reflected in the balance between values and achievement in the published aims. This needs to be reviewed if standards are to be raised further.

59 The school development plan is a detailed and well-constructed document, which plots the future improvement of the school most effectively. It was recognised as such by the last internal audit of the school in 1998, which also identified strong procedures to support financial management. Since that time, and with beneficial advice from the local education authority, both the development plan and systems to support the strategic and financial management of the school have been strengthened and are now very good. Information from co-ordinators' subject reviews input into the plans, clear and appropriate priorities are identified, future actions focus effectively on raising pupils' attainment and bear close adherence to the finances available. Very good financial control supports this successful approach to school improvement and this has been very effective in helping pupils, across a wide range of prior attainments, to achieve the realistic targets set for their achievement. Specific grants for pupils with special educational needs, for literacy and numeracy and additional grants for staff development and to improve resources, are all used very effectively.

60 Encouraged by senior managers, all staff value the pupils' efforts, promote positive attitudes and ensure the equal opportunity of all pupils. Daily acts of collective worship are often moving and very special occasions, which enrich the very good relationships and fully comply with the statutory requirements. The school and governing body have set up an effective structure to ensure that the special educational needs of pupils are met. The governing body is well informed about any changes in the provision. The two co-ordinators for special educational needs are very well organised and oversee the provision for pupils with special educational needs efficiently. Sufficient monitoring of teaching has taken place to ensure that pupils' tasks are appropriate across the range of subjects. Class teachers are appropriately involved in the writing of the pupils' individual educational plans and their review. Effective links are maintained with the first and secondary schools and with outside agencies. Support staff are deployed well in order to provide maximum support for pupils. Resource material is good and is well organised, and information technology is used very effectively to support individual pupils.

61 The school is very well staffed and teaching and support staff meet the pupils' needs successfully. The accommodation has been significantly improved since the last inspection, with the addition of an excellent purpose-built teaching block for Year 4 pupils. Resources for learning have been steadily improved and are good overall. Several classrooms are enriched by attractive displays, which celebrate and promote pupils' work but generally there is scope to improve the contribution which display can make to pupils' learning. The school's outdoor areas, such as the large field and quiet sitting areas enrich the resources and learning environment available. Generally, most resources are used well

to support the pupils' learning, the only exception being information technology which, except for pupils with special educational needs, is not used to full advantage in enriching the pupils' learning across the curriculum.

62 Experienced senior managers and governors consider "best value" carefully and match expenditure closely to pupils' needs. The pupils' attainment is also evaluated with care to ensure that provision is having a positive effect. In consideration of the quality of education provided, the standards achieved and the good progress that the pupils make, inspection shows that the school continues to provide good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63 In order to continue the successful development of the school and to bring all aspects of the pupils' achievements to the same standard, the headteacher, senior managers and governors should:

- 1 Take steps to improve the quality of the presentation of pupils' work (in their books) to enrich the quality of their learning by: (paras. 7,24,26,45,61,69,72,79,87,114)
 - reviewing the purpose and place of the pupils' recorded work, as an integral part of the

learning objectives;

- *raising teachers' and pupils' expectations of the quality to be achieved and establishing agreed approaches to styles of handwriting, use of pens and forms of presentation, including the use of information technology;
 - improving the quality of teachers' marking so that pupils are more aware of the steps needed to improve their work so that teachers can make greater use of these assessments to inform their planning.
- 2 *Further develop the use of assessments of pupils' work in subjects other than English, mathematics and science in order to inform curriculum planning and to set future learning targets for individual pupils across the range of subjects, particularly in information technology. (paras. 24,43,45,114)
- 3 More precisely record and report authorised and unauthorised absences in the class registers and ensure that parents are fully informed of the school's provision for pupils with disabilities in the governors' annual report to parents. (paras. 40,49,55)
- 64 In the context of the school's many strengths, the following aspect for improvement should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:
- promote more specifically the wider cultural development of the pupils so that they are better prepared for a life in a multi-cultural society. (paras. 37,120,126,132)

*Issues already identified for improvement within the school's development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	110
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	11	58	26	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	459
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	47

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	109

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

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	9

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.9
National comparative data	5.4

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	70	51	121

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	49	46	52
	Girls	40	32	42
	Total	89	78	94
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74	64	78
	National	70	69	78

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	50	49	54
	Girls	42	32	44
	Total	92	81	98
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76	67	82
	National	68	69	75

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	401
Any other minority ethnic group	7

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	3	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y4 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22.6
Average class size	28.7

Education support staff: Y4 – Y7

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	158

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	801351
Total expenditure	796536
Expenditure per pupil	1641
Balance brought forward from previous year	18840
Balance carried forward to next year	23655

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	460
Number of questionnaires returned	159

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	47	1	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	40	57	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	30	61	5	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	55	16	1	1
The teaching is good.	40	56	0	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	54	10	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	39	6	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	52	43	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	32	58	7	1	1
The school is well led and managed.	49	46	1	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	58	2	0	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	52	12	1	9

Other issues raised by parents

The vast majority of parents who communicated their views to the inspection team expressed the view that Ladysmith Middle is a good school. They appreciate the work of the teachers and the positive relationships between home and school.

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

ENGLISH

65 Standards of attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2, and in Year 7, are above the national average overall. This is an improvement on standards at the time of the last inspection, and is an improvement on the standards shown in the end of Key Stage 2 tests for 1999, when standards were broadly in line with the national average for all schools, but below the national average in comparison with similar schools. This is due largely to the good progress made in writing, which is now broadly in line with the national average, having previously been below. Over the last three years the performance of boys and girls has exceeded the national average. The implementation of the literacy hour and improved training for teachers, which has given greater subject confidence, have raised expectations. The establishing of classes based on the pupils' prior attainment in Year 6 has contributed positively to the raising of standards, as has the introduction of booster classes and the provision of extended writing lessons. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, are making good progress in almost two-thirds of the lessons observed. This is an improvement on the previous inspection report.

66 Attainment in speaking and listening is above the national average. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are good across the school, and by Year 6 most pupils are articulate speakers, confidently engaging visiting adults in conversation. Their standards of speaking indicate higher levels of ability than shown in their written work. Pupils discussed school life confidently and coherently with the inspectors. Teachers include opportunities for discussion in both pairs and small groups, and all pupils are good listeners, both to their teachers and to one another. They increasingly use a wider vocabulary, and are more selective in their choice of words. Drama lessons, assemblies and circle time provide further opportunities to develop such skills. During the inspection a Year 6 class led a very good assembly on caring for the environment, with well-spoken, clear diction, well projected to the back of the assembly hall. This aspect of the subject contributes positively to pupils' social and moral development.

67 Attainment in reading is above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7. Standards of reading identified during the inspection from the sample of readers heard, and the results of the 1999 standardised tests confirm this judgement. The school works hard to promote reading. During the week of the inspection all Year 4 pupils received the last of their three books bought through the "Reading is Fundamental" initiative, involving local and national sponsors. They had earlier visited Exeter library and a local bookstore to select their choices. Pupils spoken to had found the experience very helpful, one commenting "My reading got much better". Daily reading time is provided for Years 4 and 5, when they first come in to school, and all classes have a regular weekly library period when books can be exchanged and retrieval skills learned. A Year 4 pupil, reading to an inspector, was able to explain what a syllable and a "blurb" were. All pupils know how to access information from the library, using "Where's that Book?" and higher up the school pupils are familiar with the Dewey referencing system. Year 6 pupils working independently in the library were observed using their research skills effectively to compose a class encyclopaedia of animals. Pupils keep records of their reading progress, and write regular book reviews, and teachers assess progress through hearing individuals and groups read. Books are taken home regularly, but parents' involvement is variable.

68 Pupils' attainment in writing at the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 is now broadly in line with national averages having been below in the 1999 standardised tests. Pupils are

now writing in a variety of genres, including personal, descriptive, creative and explanatory writing. They are encouraged to re-draft their work. Poetry is well used to develop writing, and a lower ability set of Year 7 pupils was observed writing sonnets, after the style of Keats. In some lessons an over-reliance on worksheets inhibits the development of pupils' writing skills. Due attention is paid to grammar and punctuation, and Year 5 pupils were observed learning the correct use of the possessive apostrophe when applied to plurals, and understood the terms "third person" and "passive voice". Standards of spelling are satisfactory. The school has adopted a new commercial scheme which is effectively helping to raise standards. All pupils receive weekly spellings, appropriate for their abilities, to learn as homework, and are tested on these. The literacy hour is now fully implemented, teachers are more confident with teaching writing as a result of training, and the school has made a very positive effort to raise standards, mostly through the provision of a weekly extended writing session. This was seen to be very effective in a Year 4 class, where pupils of below average ability were observed writing at length, in paragraphs, with explanatory writing about a situation from their whole class reader "Flow", by Pippa Goodhart.

69 The presentation of work and the quality of handwriting in this class were of a high standard, but elsewhere in most classes, and across the whole curriculum, pupils show little pride in the presentation of their written work. Handwriting skills are taught, but pupils do not apply them sufficiently in their written work. Very basic principles such as neatly underlined headings, joined handwriting, keeping to the printed lines, and the correct use of margins are often neglected or ignored. In some classes pupils are allowed to draw in exercise books and on covers, some write in pencil, biro, fountain-pen or fibre tip pen. A number lack guidance on how to hold a pen correctly, or how to best position themselves to the paper. This is an issue for whole school development. The quality of the displays of pupils' work around the school is also very variable, with some good examples in Years 4 and 6, and some weaker examples in Year 7, overall it is satisfactory.

70 Pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall in both key stages. They are sometimes very good and on one occasion, where all pupils were very well focussed and took great pains with their written efforts, they were judged excellent. Where unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour were observed, this was due mostly to poor class management skills. In lessons involving written work in exercise books, however, few pupils show good attitudes towards pride in the presentation of their work. In the literacy hour pupils generally work well independently when teachers are occupied with other groups. The greater majority of pupils show enthusiasm for their lessons and are good listeners.

71 Teaching standards are good overall across the school. They are often very good, and on two occasions, in Key Stage 2, teaching was judged to be excellent. In almost every case, good teaching was matched by good learning. This is an improvement on the standards of teaching noted in the last inspection, when most of the teaching in Key Stage 2 was satisfactory. All teachers, including those in Year 7 have received in-service training for the delivery of the literacy hour, and this has been most beneficial in helping to raise standards. Teachers are more confident, plan in greater detail, manage their pupils well, and make good use of the structured time available. These strengths have a beneficial impact on the pupils' learning. For example, the teachers share their lesson intentions and lesson plans with the pupils, consequently the pupils know what is expected of them and respond well. Teachers make good use of question and answer sessions to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. There is a lively pace to most lessons, and high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, but the teaching of basic skills of presentation are lacking. Following a recent visit from the County literacy adviser, more over-head projectors and flip-charts have been introduced. These resources are very well used by teachers to enhance the quality of the pupils' learning.

72 Teachers' marking is variable, and does not always show pupils where they have gone wrong, nor how to improve. Teachers make good use of, and work well with classroom assistants to ensure that pupils of all abilities receive due attention and make equally good progress.

73 The subject is very well led. The co-ordinator has worked very hard to implement the literacy hour successfully, including the giving of demonstration lessons, and this has had a very positive impact on pupils' learning. She has a good grasp of the subject and its future needs. Literacy leaders have been established for each year group. Assessment of the pupils' work is good, both formally through regular standardised testing, and more informally in day-to-day lessons. Assessment data is used well to inform future planning, which is very detailed and in some sets provides for further division of ability groups. Assessment data is used to predict likely levels of future achievement and to set and adjust targets appropriately. Where there is need, this is identified and provision made, for example in the additional teaching provided for lower attaining pupils in Year 5, as well as the booster classes which supported forty pupils after school, for higher attainers in Year 6 and for improving boys' reading. Year 4 pupils have benefited from the additional literacy strategy support, and eight pupils are being tracked in order to measure progress. Provision for drama is good, with a well-planned scheme of work which supports other subjects appropriately.

74 The co-ordinator has been able to monitor literacy lessons, by year groups, as have the head teacher and the governor assigned to literacy. This ensures a consistency of approach to teaching and learning. The school library is an excellent resource, well stocked and well used. There has been a recent audit of stocks by the local authority's library service and the new co-ordinator for the library has identified where additional books are required. Each year group is allocated a lunch-break when the library is available for their use. Only a limited amount of work using information technology was seen during the inspection. Computers are not used to best effect in raising the standard of presentation of pupils' work and the work scrutiny revealed few examples of pupils enriching their ideas using computers. Evidence shows, however, that computers are used satisfactorily to support research using encyclopaedia software. The school has a large hall, with a stage, enabling numerous dramatic productions to be performed, of which parents speak highly. During the inspection week all Year 7 pupils had just started rehearsals for "Jack" - their final, leavers' production.

MATHEMATICS

75 The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 is in line with national expectations and similar to that noted in the previous inspection report. Last year's National Curriculum test results indicated that the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 was below the national average and below the results of pupils in similar schools. However, taken over four years, the school's test results were close to those expected nationally, although these results also showed that boys perform better than girls and are about a half a term's work ahead. Inspection shows that this difference is not evident in the quality of the pupils' work, but in some classes, particularly towards the top end of the school the higher confidence of boys in whole class question and answer sessions is evident. The school has established the National Numeracy Strategy and introduced a number of other initiatives in order to try to improve the pupils' attainment. These are already having a positive impact on the pupils' knowledge, understanding and confidence.

76 Pupils in Year 6 are now being taught in classes based on the pupils' prior

attainment. This strategy has been followed effectively for the last four years in Year 7. In Years 4 and 5, groups of pupils are withdrawn from some lessons for extra support. The least attaining pupils have benefited from this and at the time of the inspection, the group of pupils above this level was being usefully targeted. The standard of the work of the lower average and least able pupils is showing positive improvement. During these lessons class teachers are working with reduced numbers of pupils and consequently the quality of other pupils' learning is good overall. Pupils with special educational needs receive very effective support and also make good progress. The pupils' competence in numeracy is enhanced well in other curriculum areas, for example, through the use of measuring temperatures related to the conditions of growth for microbes in science and data analysis related to diets in food technology.

77 The quality of teaching is good. It ranges from unsatisfactory to very good in Key Stage 2 but in the majority of lessons it is good. In Year 7 the range is satisfactory to good and in the majority of lessons it is satisfactory. Less effective elements of teaching include the weaker management of the pupils' behaviour in lessons which otherwise are satisfactory overall. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers generally display sound, often good knowledge of the subject. They plan suitable interesting activities that will provide challenge for pupils across the range of prior attainments, as for example, in the Year 4 lessons related to perimeter and area. However, in some lessons teachers are unsure about where an investigation can lead and opportunities to further enhance learning and promote pupils' enthusiasm are missed. In a small number of lessons teachers provide insufficient guidance to pupils and this limits the pupils' understanding of the tasks set, and further help frequently has to be given.

78 Most lessons start effectively at a brisk pace with a mental mathematics session. In the best lessons this consisted of a 'quick fire' question and answer session where pupils were required to calculate mentally. For example, in Year 6, pupils doubled and halved two digit numbers, calculated percentages and in other lessons pupils speculated about passengers entering and leaving a bus. These sessions developed the pupils' numeracy skills and teacher promoted a rapport which promoted good learning.

79 Teachers plan lessons satisfactorily and most lesson plans contain clear learning objectives. In several lessons, teachers reinforced these well with the pupils by displaying them at the front of classrooms and referring to them in the discussions at the end of sessions, thus enhancing pupils' self knowledge. Lessons across the school are well organised and contain an appropriate proportion of teacher input and a good variety of pupil tasks. Together with the good pace of lessons, these help to maintain the pupils' levels of concentration. Teachers use a good variety of resources that are effective in supporting learning. This includes, for example, in Year 4, the use of an overhead projector on which pupils indicate shapes which have areas of six square units, or a home-made probability line on which pupils hang words that relate to probability in appropriate positions after discussion in Year 5. Teachers use a good range of mathematical language and expect pupils to respond in kind and show good attention to detail by using correct units of measurement, when answering questions for example and this enhances the pupils' literacy skills. Teachers use white-boards, less consistently or effectively, to record instructions or to set out examples. In less effective lessons these strategies are under-utilised and in some, work that is recorded does not provide a good model for pupils. Consequently, some pupils who are unsure of their task cannot help themselves by looking at information on the board and a substantial amount of pupils' written work is inadequately presented and this restricts their learning.

80 In general, most teachers have high expectations of their pupils with respect to their

behaviour. Pupils are dealt with sensitively and firmly and most teachers have a range of methods at their disposal for guiding pupils through lessons and encouraging their good response. Relationships within the classroom are very good. Pupils know they are valued and therefore feel secure in answering questions in whole class sessions and pupils in general are able to accept constructive criticism as part of their learning process. For example in Year 7, pupils felt confident enough to disagree with each other when the teacher asked if it is possible to give the perimeter of a rectangle if the area is known. The teachers' questioning of pupils is clear and the pupils' strengths and weaknesses are well known. Pupils are supported sensitively and well in whole class situations and when they are working individually or in small groups. The teachers' marking of pupils written work, however is less helpful in enhancing learning and is more variable in quality.

81 The curriculum complies with national guidelines and the National Numeracy Strategy is soundly established. The subject co-ordinator provides good leadership. She is well organised and monitors the teaching effectively throughout the school. Assessment procedures are good and these are well used in forward planning. Liaison and planning between teachers who are responsible for a common year group are effective. Homework supports learning satisfactorily; however, information technology is not used to best effect in this subject. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are good and enrich the quality of the pupils' learning.

SCIENCE

82 The results of the 1999 National Curriculum tests show that pupils' attainment was in line with the national average and in line when compared to schools with a similar intake. When the levels actually achieved are examined, the number of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 standard or above in tests is slightly below the national average and the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 standard or above is slightly above the national average. For the four years from 1996 to 1999 the trend has been of steady improvement. Over this four year period boys and girls have performed equally well. Inspection evidence indicates that by the end of the Key Stage 2, and Year 7, pupils are continuing to achieve standards which are in line with national expectations with little difference between the performance of boys and girls. However, standards in the practical and investigative aspects of science are above expectations. This represents an improvement on the judgements of the previous inspection report, which found standards to be in line with national expectations.

83 Pupils are acquiring sound scientific knowledge and prompted by the teachers, are developing their understanding and good skills in the practical work. By the end of Key Stage 2, and Year 7, pupils plan a "fair test" and predict the outcomes of their investigations with confidence. For example, as part of their work on materials, Year 6 pupils plan and carry out experiments to separate solids from liquids and experiments to study the decaying properties of materials and foods. Year 7 pupils plan and carry out experiments to test for the acidic and alkaline properties of rocks and plants. In both key stages, pupils use charts and graphs in a variety of ways to record their results and test their hypothesis. For example, Year 4 pupils plot the temperature of cups of water when placed in different parts of the school. Year 5 chart materials that have been tested for conductivity and Year 6 chart results of taste tests. Teachers ensure that activities are carried out with due regard for safety.

84 In their study of life processes, when questioned by the teachers, pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 can identify the major organs of the body and main parts of a flowering plant. Year 5 pupils were observed studying lilies under a magnifying glass and were able

to locate, name and describe the functions of the stamen, stigma, petal and pistil. By the end of Year 7, pupils can explain the positions and functions of the inner organs of the body, such as the heart and lungs. They know about the relationship between plants taking in carbon dioxide and giving out oxygen and humans breathing out carbon dioxide and taking in oxygen. Following discussions sensitively led by the teacher, Year 6 pupils have a good understanding of the harmful effects of drugs. They maturely discuss the differences between legal and illegal drugs, which is reinforced by a talk given by an officer from the local police force.

85 When studying materials, pupils can sort by colour, texture and hardness. They can record their results in the form of simple charts. By the end of Year 7, pupils can sort materials by their conductivity.

86 In their work on physical processes, Year 4 pupils can compare the distance that a toy vehicle travels down varying degrees of slope. Year 5 pupils design quiz boards which light up when a circuit is completed provided that the right answer is given. Year 7 pupils have a sound understanding of the solar system and are able to talk about the effect of gravity on objects. In a Year 7 lesson observed, pupils experimented effectively with magnets and their properties in order to make a magnet of their own.

87 The quality of teaching at both key stages is good. In a quarter of lessons teaching is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Resources are used well. Support teachers are given good guidance and make a positive impact on the subject. A very good example was observed of a support teacher helping a group of pupils with specific learning difficulties describe and draw parts of a flower, which resulted in very good progress, by the pupils. Long-term and medium-term planning ensures coverage of the programmes of study but weekly and daily planning does not always show the specific learning outcomes. Daily assessment is good and good use is made of regular assessments to track pupils' progress. Marking of pupils' work is not consistent throughout the school and does not always inform pupils of their progress or the next stage of development. Work in exercise books is poorly presented in many classes with teachers not enforcing a cursive style of handwriting and the correct spelling of important words. A number of teachers do not model good presentation when they write or draw diagrams on a white board or flip chart.

88 Pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, make good progress because of the good quality of teaching. At both key stages, pupils' response to learning is good. They are enthusiastic about science, particularly when there is a practical and investigative component to the lesson. They are eager to share their knowledge and understanding with each other. They are co-operative in group-work and want to learn more. Boys and girls work well together and make similar progress. The progress of pupils at both key stages is good. From Year 4, pupils develop a good understanding of hypothesising, carrying out of a "fair test" and making conclusions. For example, Year 4 pupils were observed planning an experiment to test whether woodlice prefer to live in a light or dark environment. Careful attention was given to fair testing and to predicting what would happen. They also considered the health and safety of the woodlice.

89 The co-ordinator provides good leadership. She has good subject knowledge and has a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the subject. However, she does not have time to monitor work in the classrooms or to work along side colleagues. The subject is well resourced. The central pond and wild area, the formal garden at the front of the school and the large field all contribute well to the subject. The previous inspection report highlighted the need to review the storage arrangements of

chemicals. This has been addressed and they are now securely under lock and key. However, some chemicals are old and no longer used and are not necessary to have on the premises. Good use is made of local and residential visits. For example, pupils visit the Sidmouth Observatory, the Bristol Exploratory, Slapton Sands and Wembworthy. Work in science makes a satisfactory contribution to numeracy but is not always planned for. The use of information technology is underdeveloped. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop numeracy and information technology and has targeted these for future development. Although science has not been a high profile subject in recent years, the co-ordinator has ensured that standards have gradually improved since the previous inspection report.

ART

90 The pupils' achievements in art are above those normally attained by pupils of this age in Key Stage 2 and in year 7. The pupils learn a good range of techniques in different media such as painting, drawing, collage, printing and construction. The pupils' knowledge and understanding of pictorial composition, space and perspective in pictures are very good for their age. Pupils develop a sophisticated approach to representation in a variety of styles, usually derived from the study of different artists. In Year 6, for instance, pupils create expressive masks based on the Rio de Janeiro carnival. In Year 7 the pupils' paintings show a well above average ability to convey dramatic ideas in compositions including figures; work by Goya being used as a stimulus. In response to the good teaching most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress as they move through the school.

91 Pupils achieve these ideas, understanding and skills so well through the school because the majority of teaching is good, and sometimes very good. In one lesson, the pupils made good progress because the teacher planned the lesson carefully. She included revision, reinforcement of skills and based the development of pupils' understanding on work they had done previously. In one very good Year 7 lesson, it was evident that the teacher had very high expectations. Because the teacher had organised the project and the resources and materials very well, pupils in this large class were able to plan and organise their own work for the session, make on-going decisions, evaluate their work and discuss it with each other and the teacher. They were using quite a complex printing process and were able to make aesthetic decisions much in advance of most pupils of their age. As in the majority of the lessons, less able pupils were helped by the teacher to achieve simpler objectives. The teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm for art are good. They base their lessons on some very detailed project ideas by the art co-ordinator. Occasionally, teachers will take an over-academic approach, or use the visual aids rather superficially. In these cases some of the more enjoyable aspects of art can be lost. Nevertheless, the pupils generally work with interest and determination to solve the problems and make a success of the tasks.

92 Because the teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour, the pupils develop a mature approach. Lessons are relaxed and enjoyed by the pupils and the teachers. Relationships are very friendly and pupils respect each other's ideas and opinions. Pupils behave well.

93 The art curriculum provided is broad, balanced and enriched by visits, field trips, visiting artists, and 'art weeks' and along with the healthy budget shows the high value the school places on the arts.

94 The previous inspection found the pupils' attainments in art to be "well above

national expectations", with work of, ". . .outstanding quality produced by pupils of all years". The school has found this exceptional standard impossible to maintain, given the increased curriculum time now allocated to literacy and numeracy. Nevertheless, standards are still above average. Pupils of all ages continue to produce very good work in many areas. There have not been the continual innovations and developments needed to keep the subject in a prime position. The range of media has been reduced, clay work has temporarily ceased (although the school has invested in a new kiln, yet to be installed) and there is a tendency to point to past successes. The display of pupils' art work, whilst satisfactory in some areas is unsatisfactory in Year 7. Although it performs its instructional function, it fails to inspire or celebrate the pupils' achievement. The co-ordinator for art enjoys a large classroom but this is disappointingly dull. Work is displayed unimaginatively. The storage space is very generous but it is not well used to look after pupils' work.

95 The co-ordinator is hard-working, enthusiastic and effective; the teachers are committed and demand high standards and art has a high priority in the life of the school.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

96 Attainment matches that expected of pupils of this age in Key Stage 2 and in Year 7. Pupils have a good understanding of mechanisms through the study and disassembly of real artefacts and the design of simple systems in a range of materials. During the inspection Year 6 pupils were exploring the design and construction of different types of drum, prior to designing their own. They used technical language when describing the various mechanisms involved and recorded their findings objectively and this also enriched and extended their literacy skills. Folders of work show that pupils can plan out their ideas using labelled diagrams and say clearly how designs could be improved. Year 7 pupils design and make baseball caps, using hand stitching. They can measure and cut carefully using pattern pieces and such activities also extend their numeracy skills. Most pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.

97 The majority of teaching and learning is good. Pupils make good progress in lessons because teachers plan the lessons carefully and explain the tasks clearly. They have high expectations of work and behaviour and enable the pupils to work independently. Teachers have a good understanding of the curriculum and in the best lessons, take care to give pupils work which is challenging and matched to their prior attainment. Pupils with special needs are often given special help by a well-briefed classroom assistant. The co-ordinator works closely with year group co-ordinators to ensure that the topics are linked to work in other curriculum areas such as history or music.

98 Pupils enjoy designing and making things. They learn excitedly and discuss ideas with each other. They are happy to co-operate or collaborate and can work on their own initiative. In one Year 4 lesson, higher attaining pupils raced ahead, working at their own pace because the teacher had given them appropriate instructions. Behaviour is good and this adds to the relaxed but busy atmosphere in class.

99 After a period in which there was no leader for the subject, the new and enthusiastic co-ordinator has brought the subject back on stream with good leadership, clear aims and objectives, well matched to those of the school as a whole. Despite the constraints imposed by the emphasis on the core subjects, the curriculum is good. It covers the key elements of the National Curriculum and provides pupils with imaginative, relevant experiences. The school has good accommodation, appropriate to the subject, including a cookery room for food technology.

100 Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the pupils' standards of attainment and is well placed to help pupils achieve above average standards in the future.

GEOGRAPHY

101 The standards attained by pupils in Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 are in line with those reached nationally by pupils of these ages, and most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. The standards noted in the last inspection have been maintained despite the extra curriculum time allocated to the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies. Most pupils develop an appropriate understanding of the environment and of man's impact on the natural landscape. Their knowledge of the locality is good and most pupils acquire sound mapping skills.

102 The quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good and is good overall. The teachers' planning is sound and includes clear learning objectives. Teachers communicate these efficiently to the pupils and in the most effective lessons they are displayed at the front of the classroom and referred to during and at the end of lessons to help pupils to assess their learning. Lessons are well structured and build effectively on pupils' previous knowledge. In a Year 4 lesson, for example, the pupils successfully noted and assessed features on a map of Godstone having previously done a similar exercise on the local, known area of Heavitree. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and written work shows that pupils of different prior attainment gain an appropriate knowledge of the aspects covered. However, the teachers' expectations of the standard of presentation of written work varies, as does the quality of teachers' marking of pupils' work. This is not always constructive in helping the learner to make further progress. In the most successful lessons teachers provide tasks well matched to pupils' needs.

103 In a Year 5 lesson, on rivers and how they change the landscape, higher attaining pupils composed a role play around the building of a new factory on a river bank, and considered at a mature level how various people in the local community would react. Teachers support lower attaining pupils well so that they understand the tasks set. The teachers' planned use of resources has effective results in the classroom. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils examined a clear plastic cuboid shaped container filled with pink water and estimated, and then found out, how many litres of water it contained, before going on to estimate how much water they use in an average day. This allowed the pupils to gain a good understanding of the enormous quantity of water used for domestic purposes. Teachers' questioning of pupils is good and encourages them to consider options and make predictions. In Year 7, for example, pupils are asked to consider what happens to rainwater when it falls on different surfaces. They consider and predict the outcomes perceptively before watching the experiments set up outside the classroom. Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils within the classroom are very good and ensure that all pupils respond positively in whole class question and answer sessions and know that their contributions will be valued. Effective teaching has engendered the pupils' positive and inquiring interest in the world around them. Pupils talk about the subject with enthusiasm.

104 The curriculum is broad and balanced and supported well by outside visits. The subject co-ordinator is competent and enthusiastic and this has ensured that the curriculum provision is reviewed and kept up to date with recent developments. The curriculum for pupils in Year 7 has been agreed after consultation with the local secondary school in order to ensure continuous learning for the pupils. Assessment procedures are still at a basic level but new procedures are being considered. The role of the co-ordinator does not

include the observation of teaching in the classroom. There was little evidence of the pupils' learning being supported by regular use of information technology.

HISTORY

105 During the inspection week, lessons were only observed in Year 5. Therefore, judgements are based on the small number of lessons observed, scrutiny of pupils' work, discussion with pupils and teachers and photographic evidence.

106 In Key Stage 2 and Year 7, pupils attain standards that are above those normally achieved by pupils of this age and most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. This is similar to the judgements of the previous inspection report. In Year 4, pupils study the key features of the life and times of the Ancient Egyptians. They know about Egyptian gods and religious beliefs, the importance of the Nile, the social structure and styles of pyramids. Year 5 pupils study The Ancient Greeks and Tudor life. They use a variety of sources to find out about Greek culture and investigate and interpret the reasons why Henry VIII re-married. Year 6 know about Britain since the 1930s and the effect of the blitz on the City of Exeter and compare changes in social and cultural life from 1930 to the present day. Year 7 pupils know about life in ancient Rome and the key events in Medieval England. In all year groups, good use is made of time lines for each topic. By the end of Key Stage 2, and Year 7, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied and are developing a good sense of chronology. They are developing good investigative and research skills because of the opportunities given to research in the school library and to research for homework.

107 In both key stages, pupils' progress is good. Their response to learning is good. In one Year 5 class observed the response of the pupils was very good. Pupils are stimulated by the topics and themes covered and want to learn more. In a Year 5 lesson about the reasons why Henry VIII married six times, pupils were eager to ask questions about the subject, and worked well together in their groups on a challenging investigation and interpretation task to give their reasons. Pupils relate well to each other and to the class teachers and co-operate well.

108 The quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 2. No lessons were observed in Key Stage 3, but other inspection evidence which includes a scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with staff and pupils, indicates that teaching is good in this key stage. Teachers have good subject knowledge and an enthusiasm for the topics taught, which motivates and encourages pupils. Questioning is used well to extend learning. At the end of each lesson time is generally used effectively to recap and reinforce learning. In a good Year 5 lesson observed about Henry VIII the teacher had good expectations. The lesson was well prepared and good use was made of the resources. This stimulated the pupils in their writing. Throughout the school, planning does not always make specific reference to differentiated activities for pupils with specific learning difficulties or the more able pupils. For some teachers, planning is based on activities rather than learning outcomes. Work in exercise books is poorly presented in many classes with teachers not enforcing a cursive style of handwriting and the correct spelling of important words. In some classes, pupils' start their work from the back of the exercise book, which has been turned upside down. This results in the margin on each page being on the right hand side rather than the left. This causes confusion for some pupils. The quality of marking has declined since the previous report and often does not inform pupils of their progress or areas for development.

109 Work in the subject makes a good contribution to the development of literacy through the various forms of written, discussion and research work. For example, pupils in

Year 4 write about the story of Osiris. Year 5 write books about Tudor Exeter, Year 6 research and write about family trees and Year 7 describe the events of the Battle of Hastings. Skills in numeracy are developed through the use of time lines and dates but it is not specifically planned for.

110 The co-ordinator provides good leadership. She has a good understanding of the strengths and areas of development for the subject. She monitors pupils' work and teachers' planning. However, she has limited opportunities to monitor teaching or to work alongside colleagues. As mentioned in the previous inspection report, assessment is underdeveloped. There is no collection of pupils' annotated work to show the standards expected and to support teachers in their assessment of pupils' progress and no tracking of standards to see how the pupils' skills are developing. Resources are good but there are a limited number of artefacts. Good use is made of local visits. For example, Year 4 pupils visit the local museum as part of their Egyptian topic, Year 5 visit the local area to look at Tudor buildings, Year 6 look at local post war architecture and Year 7 visit Okehampton Castle. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The use of information technology to support the subject is underdeveloped and has declined since the previous inspection report. However, pupils make good use of information technology at home to produce homework assignments. Good use is made of homework. Very good examples were observed in Year 4 and Year 5 where pupils had produced books at home about the Egyptians and the Tudors. Many pupils had word processed their work and researched information from a CD-ROM or the Internet.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

111 The standards that the pupils attain at the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 are in line with national expectations. Nearly all pupils learn to use the tools provided by the computer to search for information; to enter, sort and analyse data; to type and edit text and to manipulate computer models. For instance, Year 6 pupils can use up-to-date software to search the Internet for help with their science project or to explore aspects of 'Third World' development in geography. Year 7 pupils can use a spreadsheet to analyse the nutritional content of food for a technology project. Most pupils have a sound understanding of other uses for the computer, including: sensing and monitoring external events, such as weather or sound; controlling machines; painting pictures or producing newspapers.

112 Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good features which ensure that pupils always make progress during the lessons. In the better lessons, the pupils are well-prepared before entering the computer suite. This is important, because the computer suite is cramped and pupils always have to share a computer during the whole class lessons. Also, the lines of sight are not good and the room lacks a focal point, large screen or whiteboard. The teachers spend time productively discussing the value and potential of using computers and they focus on developing the pupils' skills effectively. These methods are successful in promoting the pupils' positive attitudes. The pupils are best served with individual instruction sheets tailored to their needs, to which they can refer during the session. Teachers do not always provide these, so have to speak the instructions and constantly check to ensure that everyone is keeping up. In some lessons, teachers pin up hand written instructions on top of already confusing displays. Due to the good understanding of the National Curriculum by the ICT co-ordinator, there is planned progression in the work provided and it is usually pitched at an appropriate level. There are usually opportunities which stretch the higher attainers but not all teachers provide work for the slower learners during whole class sessions. Pupils with special educational needs are very well served with extra classes in the computer suite and one-to-one teaching on the

library or class computers, to help with reading or mathematics. Other aspects of the teaching and provision also limit the pupils' progress. The general classroom computers are not used all the time and very little work was being done on these machines during the inspection. Teachers miss opportunities to reinforce or continue work begun in the computer suite. Work done in the computer room is rarely printed out for use in the classroom. Classroom displays and collections of pupils' work are not enhanced, for instance, by printouts of pupils' written work in English or French.

113 Pupils enjoy ICT and are good at taking the initiative. They use the equipment confidently and safely. There were no instances of inappropriate behaviour or misuse of the software. Pupils are determined to do well and work hard and this helps them to make satisfactory progress. Despite being crammed together relationships are very good and pupils happily co-operate or work in pairs. It was a real pleasure to watch a class of pupils so obviously excited by their efforts to sustain the population of an African village by the (virtual!) management of its water resources.

114 Because of the lack of a simple, consistent system for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainments in ICT, the school is not capitalising on this enthusiasm to raise attainment. Most teachers make use of ICT to enhance learning across the curriculum but some areas, such as sensing, monitoring and control are insufficiently planned. The school has an average number of computers for a school of this size. However, the decision to retain older non-standard computers, whilst admirable from an enthusiast's point of view, causes problems of continuity and technical support. Other decisions, such as those concerned with printers and printouts, also cause problems. Only one or two examples of pupils' work were on display. The school does not keep a collection of examples of pupils' work in ICT. A few teachers do keep such collections, in history, for example, with reports and class newspapers effectively produced using a word-processor.

115 Since the last inspection, expectations in ICT have changed, due to new initiatives. The school has maintained standards of attainment overall and has improved attainment in some areas, such as communications through 'e-mail' and the Internet. The school has spent grants for new equipment appropriately, due to the expertise of the co-ordinator, although the decision on the location of the main computer suite appears to have drawbacks which restrict access. Development of the subject is insufficiently based on involving all staff in promoting the pupils' achievement, through assessment of attainment and the sharing of good practice in teaching.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

116 Pupils are taught French throughout the school, from Year 4 to Year 7. During the inspection at least one lesson was observed within each year group. Improving the pace of learning was identified as an issue by the previous inspection in 1996. This aspect has partially been addressed, specifically in Year 7 where pupils derive greater benefit from the specialist teaching provided. By improving the curriculum and by raising colleagues' expertise, co-ordinators have improved the provision since the last inspection. Generally most pupils in Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 attain standards appropriate for their age. Pupils in Year 7 show more confidence when speaking in French and are developing accents which more closely resemble conventional French. Pupils in Key Stage 2 have a basic reserve of key expressions but need prompting by the teachers before they feel able to respond effectively.

117 As at the time of the last inspection, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 make variable progress, reflecting the limited time allocated to learning the subject. Pupils learn how to

count to 100, list the days of the week and months of the year and can respond appropriately in French to questions about their brothers and sisters. Generally, bearing in mind that French is an addition to the National Curriculum, progress for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher attainers, is satisfactory overall in the lessons observed. In response to higher teachers' expectations and to more rigorously planned and taught experiences, pupils in Year 7 make more significant gains in their learning and achieve appropriately in relation to their prior attainment. Pupils identify different fruits and vegetables when questioned by the teacher in French and respond with good expression and by using meaningful phrases. Observations of lessons in Year 7 shows that a significant minority of pupils are now making good progress in response to the teacher's focused questioning and well-planned activities.

118 Pupils bring good positive attitudes to the subject and teachers generally seek to promote this by planning practical tasks and games. They are genuinely interested in both the language and the culture. They are eager to learn, but show signs of frustration when work is not stimulating or interesting enough. For example in a lesson in Year 5 the pupils soon lost interest in studying numbers. In most lessons, however, pupils enjoy sharing each others' attempts at correct pronunciation and whilst several pupils lack confidence most pupils, particularly in Year 7, relish the challenge of speaking in a different language.

119 None of the teachers who teach French would consider themselves to be specialists, but a few have a degree of talent and most teach what they know satisfactorily. Planning is carefully based on published schemes and the teaching builds, albeit slowly, on the pupils' prior knowledge. All teachers seek to conduct lessons as much as possible in French and several achieve a good degree of fluency and expression and accuracy in accent and intonation. This stimulates the pupils and challenges them effectively to improve their oral skills. For example, in a lesson in Year 7, the teacher effectively questioned the pupils about their favourite foods and drinks and extended the pupils' skills in responding to questions in French. Most teachers show a good awareness of the pupils' prior attainment and match work carefully to challenge them at suitable level. For example, in a lesson in Year 4, the teacher promoted light hearted competition amongst groups of pupils and this increased the pupils' confidence in replying to questions about their brothers and sisters in French. Overall teaching is satisfactory and for this reason, the subject co-ordinators are planning to develop more specialist teaching in Year 7 to achieve higher standards.

120 The curriculum is planned appropriately using published schemes and the co-ordinators are trialling new materials to raise standards. The curriculum in Year 7 meets the requirements of the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum. Teachers make effective use of audio-visual aids such as sound recordings made by fluent French speakers but generally the subject lacks the enrichment that examples of French art, music and culture could provide. Overall, whilst the subject does enrich the curriculum provided, work could make a greater contribution to the pupils' cultural development and learning in French could be much more fun and stimulating. In this context the work does not always match the stated aim that French should be 'exciting and stimulating'. The scrutiny of the pupils' work presented in books, shows variation in quality. There are examples of well-presented cartoon 'bubble-writing' to illustrate key phrases. On several other occasions work is untidy, however, although the quality of work is satisfactory overall. Marking is not used to best effect in assessing the pupils' progress. The co-ordinators are aware of this and are seeking to raise the status of the subject through the school and are planning to increase the time allocated in Year 7 in order to raise standards. They have worked hard to improve colleagues' expertise and confidence in the subject and overall they provide satisfactory leadership.

121 French makes a useful contribution to the pupils' social, moral and cultural experience, by enhancing their sensitivity to another culture and by promoting group activity. This is well supported by regular residential visits to France. Restricted by a lack of suitable software, information technology is not used to enrich pupils' learning in the subject. Discussions make a limited contribution to the pupils' progress in literacy by raising the pupils' confidence in oral work and by increasing their awareness of different words and language structure.

MUSIC

122 The previous inspection judged standards of attainment to be above the national expectation at both the end of Key Stage 2 and in Key Stage 3. These high standards have been maintained, and the progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. The pupils' singing is of a high standard, and in school assemblies and in a Year 7 singing practice observed, pupils' awareness of pitch, dynamics and tempo contributed to good quality vocalisation, with very clear diction, pleasing harmonies, and good holding of notes to the end of lines. Pupils have a good sense of rhythm, and most sing in tune.

123 Teaching in both key stages is good. The school is fortunate in having a number of teachers with musical qualifications or experience, and makes good use of this expertise by arranging timetables so that those with musical knowledge can take classes of less musical colleagues. Teachers are good at injecting enthusiasm into pupils, and choosing appropriately stimulating material. Music lessons are an enjoyable experience; this contributes to the quality of the pupils' learning, which is good. Year 4 pupils listening to a tape of "Ma Vltava" by Smetana appreciated the connections with water, and the teacher made good links to the pupils' learning of literacy through identifying and emphasising adjectives, such as "gushing, crashing", before pupils composed their own graphic scores for four instruments. Year 7 pupils identified a variety of instruments from the score of "Oliver", before composing music of their own to match given lyrics. Provision for both attainment targets in music is a strength of teachers' lesson planning. In a year 7 singing practice over a hundred pupils gave a spirited unison rendering of a rap song "Rock around the Dock", being seen for the first time, and quickly learning the tune. Teachers' planning is sound but does not always provide for pupils across the range of prior attainments, and the provision for the assessment of pupils is under-developed, as is the use of information technology to support the subject.

124 Pupils bring good attitudes to their music lessons, and behaviour is good overall. Pupils are keen to learn and sing with enthusiasm, which is further enhanced by the spirited leadership of the teachers. Pupils work well together in pairs and small groups. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are good. Pupils handle instruments with care.

125 Extra-curricular provision for music is very good. The school provides an orchestra, choir, recorder groups, and occasionally a band. There are regular concerts and dramatic, musical productions, such as "Jack", for which Year 7 are currently rehearsing. Pupils perform in local competitions, at the Devon Show, and in the East Devon proms. Over fifty pupils, almost all girls, were observed in a choir practice where one of the reasons for the high quality singing and learning was a successful "double act" between the music and drama co-ordinators, working together very effectively, with instrumental accompaniment from another teacher and pupils. The choir demonstrated a good range of singing, in mood and tempo, from the quietly evocative "Why are there so many songs about rainbows?" to the more spirited "We're all going on a summer holiday". Two recorder groups of different

levels of ability were practising during the inspection week, to a high standard. Teachers support for these additional activities, and their willingness to give up their time so freely, is most commendable.

126 Music contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual, social, cultural and multi-cultural development. The scheme of work, reinforced by classroom displays, covers music from all over the world, including Indian, African, West Indian, and medieval, but generally the visual awareness of music, in classrooms and around the school is limited. There are good cross-curricular links with geography, history and design and technology. The subject co-ordinator is well qualified and has a good grasp of the subject. Her leadership is good. She has an overview of teachers' planning but insufficient time to monitor the subject delivery within the classroom. Over eighty pupils learn to play a wide variety of instruments through the Devon County music service. Pupils sit Associated Board exams up to grade four, and the skills and knowledge of these pupils greatly enhances the learning in class lessons. The school positively seeks out pupils of talent when they join in year 4, and encourages them to learn an instrument. An orchestra of eighteen pupils gave a talented rendering of "Eye Level", with violins, clarinets, flute, drums, percussion, saxophone, and trumpet all playing in close harmony. School assemblies contribute to pupils' musical awareness with the playing of identified composers' music as pupils enter and depart. Parents speak highly of the quality of annual concerts and the Christmas production, which involves every pupil. There was little evidence of information technology being used to enrich work in the subject. The school's accommodation, with its large hall and stage, and a specialist music room, together with the good range of well-used resources contribute positively to the overall standards achieved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127 Standards in Key Stage 2, and in Year 7, are above those normally achieved by pupils in these age groups. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, when attainment was judged to be generally in line with the national expectations. The majority of pupils are able to perform with suppleness, control and with safety, a range of basic tasks such as throwing, balancing and travelling in a variety of ways and directions. They demonstrate good control when linking actions together. By the end of Year 6 they have good bat and ball skills. By the end of Year 7 pupils show good skills and control when developing a sequence of movements in dance. Pupils use their imagination well to express ideas, feelings and moods with appropriate movement. In a Year 7 dance lesson, pupils were observed working in groups to practise and perform a dance sequence on the theme of 'strength'. The high quality movements were enhanced by the use of appropriate music, which set the tone for the final performance. Pupils can discuss their work, and that of others, in order to refine and improve.

128 Teaching in both key stages is good and in a seventh of lessons it was very good or better. In one lesson observed, taken by the co-ordinator, teaching was excellent. This is an improvement since the previous report where a small number of lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. Teachers have good subject knowledge and set a good example to pupils by dressing appropriately and leading by example. Lessons are well planned and include the essential elements of warming up and cooling down. However, pupils are not always given the opportunities to discuss and refine their work with each other and with the class teacher. There is no school wide system of assessment, which can track pupils' skills development and help support planning. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can attain and manage the pupils well. Where teaching is very good or excellent, there is obvious enthusiasm by the teacher and a very good knowledge of techniques, which enables the teacher to intervene and move individual pupils' learning to a higher level.

129 Lessons are well paced and the activities set are challenging. In the excellent lesson observed, the teacher continually challenged the pupils to improve their bat and ball skills in tennis by demonstrating his own high level of skills. This encouraged all pupils to try harder and to match his capability or do better. The progress of all pupils in the lesson, including those with special educational needs, was also excellent as they rose to the challenges set. The teacher also used pupils' own skills as teaching points. One talented pupil was able to use the edge of the racket to keep the ball in the air for a long period. This was used as a teaching point to show the skill required and was immediately attempted by many in the class. The teacher ensured that pupils could use different size balls and rackets in order to match their confidence and skill. A lower attaining pupil was, therefore, able to control the ball in the air and on the ground with as much success as the higher attaining pupils. Overall, most pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress as they move through the school in response to the good teaching.

130 Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good. They are enthusiastic and respond well to activities and show enjoyment in lessons. They can work well individually, in pairs and in groups and when given the opportunity to evaluate each other they do so effectively. In a Year 7 dance lesson pupils offered constructive criticism and supportive comments about each other's dance sequence. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated and involved in physical education lessons. All pupils wear appropriate dress and, for safety, do not wear jewellery. Pupils wearing stud earrings ensure that they are taped over.

131 The co-ordinator is an excellent role model for the teaching of the subject and provides good leadership. He has a good awareness of the strengths and areas for development and monitors planning. However, he has little time to observe lessons or to work alongside colleagues and this restricts his positive leadership across the school. The school benefits from a large gymnasium for indoor games, a large field and a sufficiently spacious hard play area. Swimming lessons have not taken place this year because of the public pool normally used has been closed for refurbishment. However, swimming will commence once again from September 2000. There is a good range of equipment to support the subject. Teachers and parents generously give up their time to run an excellent range of extra curricular activities. They include football, netball, basketball, hockey, gymnastics, athletics and badminton, mini-rugby and tag rugby. Residential visits include sailing, walking, orienteering, canoeing and rock climbing. The school has been successful in a number of inter-school tournaments. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

132 Inspection shows that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with the expectations of the locally Agreed Syllabus in all strands of the subject. The work of pupils in Year 7, in their first year in Key Stage 3, show that the pupils have extended their understanding of religious belief and practice well and attain standards which are above those normally expected of pupils of this age. Inspection evidence, particularly observations of good quality teaching, show that overtime most pupils build systematically on their previous learning and achieve well in relation to their prior attainment, in most strands of the subject, as they move through the school. Pupils with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils also make good progress and all are challenged well by the consistent emphasis on involving pupils in their learning through good questioning. As a

result of more frequent opportunities to discuss and to write expressively about their feelings and ideas, pupils in Year 7 achieve a greater awareness of the impact of religious belief on people's lives.

133 The scrutiny of the pupils' work revealed significant variations in the quality of presentation and content and generally shows that pupils are capable of achieving higher standards in their written work in the subject. Pupils in Year 4 study Judaism and write at an appropriate level about the life of Moses. Occasionally good quality work is evident, in the pupils' illustrations of ancient scrolls, for example. Pupils in Year 5, renew their studies of Christianity and complete informative descriptions of Jesus entering Jerusalem which generally show average skills and understanding. In addition they begin studies of Hinduism and extend their awareness of other religions satisfactorily. In Year 6, pupils revisit Judaism and Christianity and consider religious festivals and ceremonies at a deeper level and extend their knowledge of belief and practice appropriately. Much of the work remains descriptive, however, and there are few examples of pupils expressing their own ideas to widen their understanding. Although only a limited amount of work was available in Year 7 it was clear that the teachers encourage the pupils to consider their own response to the beliefs and customs of others on a more regular basis. This enables many pupils to attain an above average level of thinking and consideration of religious values, for example, by exploring their reaction to studies based on the 'Five Pillars of Islam'. Overall, the scrutiny reveals that pupils are learning effectively across an appropriately broad curriculum.

134 Observations of lessons reveal a more positive picture of pupils enjoying the subject, working successfully together and learning well in response to good quality teaching. Inspection shows that teachers have good knowledge of the subject and use questioning well to establish links with previous work and with the pupils' prior knowledge to introduce new topics and to build on pupils' previous learning. For example in Year 6, teachers usefully explored the pupils' own values of what is right and of what is wrong and developed these ideas well to introduce a unit of work based on the life of Doctor Martin Luther King. This raised the pupils' interest and stimulated their learning successfully. Evidence from such lessons indicates that there is an increasing and beneficial emphasis on pupils exploring their own ideas in classes within Key Stage 2. As yet, this is not fully exploited by providing opportunities for pupils to continue to develop their own thoughts by writing expressively about colour prejudice, for example.

135 A high proportion of the teaching in Year 7 is good, however, for the teachers do take time to explore the pupils' observations and teachers of these older pupils encourage debate and discussion more readily than colleagues elsewhere in the school. For example, teachers feel confident to explore the pupils' ideas of what heaven might be like and take time to discuss the pupils' own reaction to the Bible account of Christ's Ascension. Their confidence in the pupils is not misplaced for all respond respectfully showing their above average awareness that belief is a personal issue to be respected.

136 Teachers in Years 4 and 5 show a good awareness of the needs and level of skill and knowledge of the pupils in their classes and use this effectively to focus questions appropriately to extend the pupils' understanding. For example, in Year 5, teachers encourage the pupils to compare and contrast the gospel writers' different accounts of 'The feeding of the five thousand' and this broadens the pupils' knowledge effectively. In lessons in Year 4, the teachers link art work successfully with religious ideas and challenge the pupils to draw pictures to illustrate the creation of the world. Across the school, teachers emphasise discussion usefully to involve and motivate the pupils. Teachers know their pupils well and in this context assess the pupils' responses effectively on a day to day

basis. In turn, the pupils show interest in the subject, offer ideas readily and work well in groups, sharing observations and learning well from each other.

137 Teachers make only limited use of religious artefacts, although Bibles were seen to be used productively on several occasions. The teachers do not make sufficient use of marking both to assess the quality of the pupils' work or to identify ways of improvement to the pupils. This is a weakness that is restricting the achievement of the pupils and the unsatisfactory presentation of a significant proportion of the written work detracts from the pupils' otherwise positive attitudes towards the subject and further limits their progress, particularly in using and extending their literacy skills.

138 The school's curriculum, scheme of work and policy are based securely on the locally Agreed Syllabus. It is planned effectively to assist pupils in making continuous progress across the key stages and it complies with the statutory requirements.

139 The co-ordinator manages the subjects satisfactorily in terms of monitoring teachers' plans, ensuring an appropriate emphasis on the subject across the school and in maintaining an adequate supply of resources to support learning. In these regards, the subject has improved since the previous inspection and the co-ordinator is seeking to encourage colleagues to make more use of the religious artefacts now held by the school. The co-ordinator is planning to widen the cross-curricular impact of the subject and to update the scheme of work in line with newly developed local and national guidance. The co-ordinator usefully gathers together samples of pupils' work and overall assessment in the subject is satisfactory. At this time however, the co-ordinator has limited opportunity to monitor the quality of teaching and the standards attained by the pupils across the school and this is restricting the further development of the subject.