

INSPECTION REPORT

DOWNSBROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL

Worthing

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 125894

Headteacher: Mr. Stuart Lee

Reporting inspector: Robert Greatrex
19924

Dates of inspection: 28th February - 3rd March, 2000

Inspection number: 193073
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 to 12

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Penfold Road
Worthing
West Sussex

Postcode: BN14 8PH

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. A. L Gordon

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

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|-------------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Robert Greatrex | Registered inspector | Science | The characteristics and effectiveness of the school |
| | | Information technology | The school's results and pupils' achievements |
| | | | Leadership and management |
| | | | Key Issues for action |
| Michael Freeman | Lay inspector | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development |
| | | | Pupils' welfare, health and safety |
| | | | Partnership with parents and carers |
| Brenda Barnard | Team inspector | Music | Quality and range of opportunities for learning |
| | | Equality of opportunity | |
| | | Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | |
| Jean Hayes | Team inspector | Mathematics | |
| | | Art | |
| | | Design and technology | |
| Graham Johnson | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages | |
| Tom Smith | Team inspector | Geography | |
| | | Physical education | |
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| Jeanne Strickland | Team inspector | English | Teaching and learning |
| | | Religious education | |
| | | History | |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school serves a mixed area. The school has 515 boys and girls on roll, from 8 to 12 years of age, and is bigger than most middle schools. The pupils' attainment on entry to the school covers a wide range but is a little below average overall. The school has 127 pupils identified as having special educational needs, a figure that is above the national average. Of these pupils, 11 have statements of special educational need. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic groups.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Downsbrook Middle School cares for its pupils well. Standards in English, mathematics and science are below average, although improving at a similar rate to most schools nationally. Teaching is satisfactory. Priorities identified for improvement by the headteacher, governors and staff are the right ones, but in important areas progress towards meeting them is too slow. Overall, the school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching of basic skills is good, and specialist teaching is used effectively in subjects such as science and information technology.
- Pupils' moral and social development is good.
- The school successfully encourages pupils to think for themselves and use their initiative.
- Pupils' attitudes to school, their behaviour, personal development and relationships are good.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is good.

What could be improved

- Standards are not high enough, particularly those of girls and pupils of high attainment levels.
- Teaching and learning are not monitored sufficiently and this leads to inconsistencies in the curriculum given to pupils.
- Assessment is not used enough, either to track pupils' progress or plan future work.
- Assemblies are not in general spiritually uplifting and are rarely special occasions.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress overall in dealing with the key issues and other areas for development identified when it was last inspected, in January 1997.

Provision for information technology and art is much better, and standards in both are much higher. Teaching time has been increased and this is beneficial to pupils' progress. Pupils are now better prepared for life in a multicultural society. The governing body is more involved in looking for value for money. In a limited number of areas directly involved in classwork, such as special educational needs, their involvement is also good. In subjects generally this is not yet the case. Improvements in assessment are satisfactory, but more needs to be done to use this information as a planning tool. More remains to be done in monitoring subjects, other than English and mathematics. Co-ordinators now draw up longer term plans for their subjects. Even so, they know too little about what is happening in classrooms to enable them to recognise where improvements need to be made.

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 | D | D | D | E |
| mathematics | D | D | E | E |
| science | C | D | D | E |

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level in the national tests for eleven-year-olds is very close to that found in most schools in English and science, although still well below in mathematics. The table above awards points for the different levels. As so few pupils reach higher levels, less points are gained. Consequently the table shows results are below average and, in mathematics in 1999, well below average. Using an identical formula, when results are compared with similar schools, they are well below average. There are two main reasons why results are below the national average. The school is not catering sufficiently for the needs of girls or for pupils with high attainment levels. Results are improving at about the same rate as they are in most other schools.

In 1999, the school exceeded the target set for English and reached the target set for mathematics. The targets for the next two years are challenging and, if reached, will represent a significant improvement in standards. To achieve them the needs of girls and pupils of high attainment levels generally will need to be better met.

Standards in literacy and numeracy are improving, largely because of the effort the school is placing on this priority. Standards in information technology are satisfactory and good in younger classes. The computer suite is beneficial. Standards in religious education are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus, largely because insufficient emphasis is given to the religious aspects in the topic-based approach. In other subjects, standards are satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Pupils' attitudes are positive; they show interest and enthusiasm, particularly when lessons are stimulating. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | The vast majority of pupils behave well in class and move around a difficult site in a calm and orderly manner. One or two pupils misbehave in the playground or when leaving the school site at the end of the day. |
| Personal development and relationships | Pupils are very keen to take responsibility and often show initiative. They generally respect one another and work together well. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory; punctuality is good but unauthorised absence is relatively high despite the school's attempts to discourage it. |

The school is very effective in promoting positive attitudes, good behaviour and pupils' personal development. Relationships between pupils, and between staff and pupils, are good. Much has been done to establish a caring ethos within a system where rules, rewards and sanctions are clear and pupils know what is and is not acceptable.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | aged 8-11 years | aged 12 years |
|----------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Satisfactory | Satisfactory |

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 was satisfactory or better in nine lessons in every ten observed, and good in almost half. One in ten was unsatisfactory, but no poor teaching was observed. This is much better than when the school was last inspected, when one fifth of lessons were judged unsatisfactory. Although teaching is better now, the proportion of very good teaching seen was low. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs, by both specialist teachers and learning support assistants, is good. The literacy hour and daily mathematics lesson have been introduced successfully and both are generally taught to a satisfactory or good level.

Teaching is most effective when it involves use of teachers' specialist knowledge, for example in science or information technology. Some teachers use questions well to challenge pupils to think more deeply and make better progress. Others do not, and pupils with high attainment levels in particular do not make the progress they should. Tasks given in lessons often lack sufficient challenge for pupils with high attainment levels, or stimulation to invoke pupils' interest generally.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | The curriculum provision is satisfactory overall. Teachers plan closely together in their year groups for literacy and numeracy, and this is beneficial. In other subjects many do not, and inconsistencies result as expertise and experience are not shared sufficiently. Extra-curricular activities, visitors and visits do much to enrich the curriculum. |
| Provision for pupils with special educational needs | |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory, and these pupils make progress similar to other pupils. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Personal development is satisfactory overall. Moral and social development are good. Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory and much improved since the last inspection. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is unsatisfactory. In few assemblies or lessons is spiritual development promoted. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | The health, safety and well-being of pupils is promoted well. All staff work hard on the large site to provide a good level of care. |

Statutory requirements are met in all subjects. Staff know the pupils very well. Although academic progress is monitored more closely recently, more needs to be done. Pupils' individual progress is not monitored closely enough, so teachers do not have the information to enable them to see that all pupils are reaching the levels expected of them, and at the expected rate.

The school has good links with parents, and has recently appointed a teacher to liaise more closely with home. This is appropriate. Written communication with parents is much improved, the prospectus and governors' annual report are of an excellent standard.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher provides a clear direction for the school, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and other senior staff. Staff work well together, particularly in their year group teams. However, although the school has a good idea where its strengths and weaknesses lie, more needs to be done to rectify weaknesses and raise standards. |
| How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities | The governing body uses the expertise of individual governors to maximum benefit and manages itself and the school effectively. Some areas, such as special educational needs, are monitored well. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Standards are monitored by analysing national test results. Other systems are inadequate and not enough use is made of the information gathered. The school has no baseline assessment with which to check pupils' levels when they first join, nor check their subsequent progress. |
| The strategic use of resources | Financial planning is good. Clear boundaries are set and everyone knows their roles and responsibilities. Funds are allocated to meet the needs and priorities of the school development plan. |

The school management has correctly identified areas that need improving, but the rate of change needs to be quicker. The school looks for value for money and uses some of the principles of best value. The school has sufficient staff and good use is made of specialists. Accommodation is of generous size, although the school layout is not helpful to teaching or learning. The library is attractive, welcoming and, with the well-equipped specialist rooms, well used. Resources are good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations of their children are high. • Progress at school is good. • Their children like school. • They feel comfortable raising problems or asking questions. • Teaching is good. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are not well informed about the progress their children are making. • Amounts of homework vary too much. • The school does not work closely with them. • Pupils' behaviour is not good. |

The parents generally feel the school gives a good education. They are appreciative of the extra-curricular activities offered. Inspection findings are that progress is satisfactory, not good. Expectations of pupils with high attainment levels, and of girls, are not high enough. Inspectors judged behaviour good overall. In as much as parents' concerns refer to times out of class such as when pupils go home from school, inspectors agree that more could be done.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Although the majority of pupils are reaching the level expected by eleven years of age, standards overall are below average. There are two main reasons. Firstly, whilst the vast majority of pupils are achieving the level they are expected to, very few pupils are exceeding it. This lowers the overall average. Secondly, compared with national trends, girls are doing worse than in most other schools. Standards in English, mathematics and science have fallen since the last inspection, when they were generally described as average or above. However, the national test results immediately before and after that inspection were below average.

2. In the national tests for eleven year olds in 1999, results were slightly below the national average in English and science, and well below in mathematics. When comparisons are made to similar schools, standards are well below average. The proportion of pupils achieving a higher level was well below the national average in all three subjects. Boys do better than girls when their results are compared with national averages. Taken over the last four years, boys' performance has been similar to the national average in English and science, but girls' performance has been below average in both subjects. In mathematics, where both do relatively badly, girls continue to do significantly worse than boys.

3. Over the last four years, the school has improved at a rate broadly similar to the national trend. In English, there has been steady improvement year-on-year. In mathematics, there has been slightly slower but consistent improvement. In science, where pupils have achieved higher levels overall, the levels dipped in 1997 and 1998 before improving again in 1999 when many of the pupils received specialist teaching in Year 6.

4. There are no national assessments of pupils' standards when they join the school in Year 4. Nor does the school currently identify methodically the strengths and weaknesses of these pupils. Consequently it is not possible to make such a definitive judgement. However, the information that is available and the evidence of the inspection suggest that attainment when pupils enter the school is of a wide range but a little below average overall.

5. The school exceeded the target set in English in 1999 and achieved that set in mathematics. Targets set for the next two years are challenging, particularly in the proportion of pupils expected to achieve higher than average levels. If these targets are achieved, they will represent a significant improvement in standards. In setting the targets, it has been recognised by the school that staff need more training in raising girls' attainment levels, and plans are in hand to do this. There has not been, however, similar recognition of training needs to enable staff to fully meet the needs of pupils with high attainment levels.

6. The judgements of the inspection are that, by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 7, pupils' reach levels of achievement below those expected in English and mathematics. In science, due largely to the very good specialist teaching they receive in that year, pupils make good progress and reach the expected level.

7. Standards of literacy are improving. Although progress in reading is satisfactory overall, in writing it is not. All elements of the literacy hour are in place and teaching is often of a good standard. In the guided reading section of the literacy hour, comprehension and vocabulary develop well. The good library provision is used well and reading and research skills benefit. Pupils learn the tools of writing, such as punctuation and spelling systems, satisfactorily. However, the skills of drafting and structuring longer pieces of writing for a variety of purposes are relatively weaker.

8. Standards of numeracy are low but improving. The three-part lesson is fully in place, although the work chosen is more suited to pupils' needs in discussion and mental mathematics work than in written activities. The latter do not reinforce or extend pupils number skills sufficiently. The needs of all ability levels are met more effectively than in many other subjects because classes are rearranged so that pupils learn with others of similar attainment levels. This generally leads to quicker learning. Despite the improvements, many pupils are still unsure of themselves when using and applying mathematics because their understanding of mathematical concepts is shaky.

9. Standards in science vary through the school. Generally they are average or better when pupils are taught by specialists or by teachers with particular knowledge and skill in the subject. Throughout the school there is good emphasis on practical work, but too little of this is investigation. Only in Year 7 do pupils consistently have sufficient opportunity to evaluate their results, draw conclusions, and consider how this changes their current scientific understanding. Standards in information technology are satisfactory in Year 7, and good elsewhere in the school. The many improvements in the subject since the last inspection have led to good progress through demanding and relevant tasks. Standards in religious education are below those expected, largely because lessons are not planned with a clear religious focus so pupils' learning is less. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in all other subjects, although an overall judgement was not possible in physical education.

10. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. They generally make good progress when given individual or group support by special needs' teachers or learning support assistants. At other times, progress is satisfactory. Much of what they do is useful, but their progress in some activities is not monitored sufficiently. When this happens, their next piece of work is not closely matched to their needs or targets in their individual education plans.

11. The small proportion of pupils for whom English is an additional language generally make progress similar to that of other pupils. Where these pupils have specific needs, they are met effectively.

12. Nine parents in every ten who responded to the questionnaire feel that their children are making good progress at school. Most feel girls do better than boys. They are appreciative of the extra classes held on Saturday mornings, when their children are fresh, rather than after school. They feel these help raise their children's attainment levels. Many parents feel there are marked inconsistencies between classes in the same year group, even though the work they are doing is meant to be the same, and that this affects attainment. The inspection findings are that most pupils are currently making satisfactory rather than good progress, and that although girls may be reaching similar levels of attainment to boys in English, this is not the case in other subjects. Furthermore, when girls' levels are compared with other girls nationally, they are much lower. Inspectors agree that different classes in the same year group receive very different curricula, and that this affects pupils' progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. The vast majority of pupils want to come to school and their attitudes to their learning are positive. This view is confirmed by parents, nine out of every ten stating that their children like school. Pupils are attentive in lessons and collaborate well, for example when carrying out practical activities. Most are keen to participate, both in lessons and extra-curricular activities. They approach these activities with a desire to do their best. They use the library well and willingly work independently to plan, research and complete topic and project work to a good standard. They enjoy visits and readily accept their responsibility to the group.

14. Pupils with special educational needs work hard and display positive attitudes to learning. They want to do their best. This is particularly so when they work directly with a special needs' teacher or a learning support assistant. At these times they show a level of confidence that enables them to be more actively involved in their learning than in other class lessons where they do not have this help.

15. Pupils' behaviour is good overall, both in lessons and around the school. Most respond well to the school's arrangements, including the "Code of Conduct". They are usually courteous to all adults and visitors. A few pupils, generally boys, display inappropriate behaviour and cannot concentrate for long periods. A small proportion of these find it difficult to form positive relationships with teachers who teach them infrequently. Pupils generally move around a difficult site in a safe and orderly manner. In the playground, however, there is some boisterous behaviour and on rare occasions individual pupils are ostracised. There have been no permanent exclusions in the last two years. Reasons for the temporary exclusions in the last year were justifiable and procedures followed correctly. Most parents feel that behaviour is improving, and that it is good in lessons. However, at other times, particularly when pupils are leaving the school at the end of the day, they feel it could be better. Inspection findings support both these views.

16. Pupils actively seek out opportunities to show initiative and undertake responsibility. They willingly volunteer to be house captains or school council representatives, and perform these tasks well. The vast majority work diligently, cooperate well, and are polite and helpful to each other and adults. They take pride in their work and show care and respect for the school environment and equipment. They willingly raise funds for local charities and national appeals.

17. Attendance is satisfactory overall, although the proportion of absence for other than legitimate reasons is comparatively high. Registration is carried out efficiently and briskly. Pupils are, with very few exceptions, punctual so that lessons start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

18. The quality of teaching seen was satisfactory or better in nine lessons in every ten observed, and good in almost half. The remaining one in ten lessons seen were unsatisfactory. There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, when one fifth of the lessons were judged unsatisfactory. Although teaching is better now, the proportion of very good teaching seen was low. Four in every five parents who responded to the questionnaire feel that teaching is good.

19. Despite the evident improvement, some of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection remain. For pupils of higher attainment levels particularly, work is not always sufficiently challenging or interesting. In some lessons all pupils would benefit from higher expectations and brisker pace. This is a factor in the relatively low proportion of pupils achieving higher levels in national tests. Nine parents in ten feel that the school has high expectations of their children. In as much as this refers to high expectations that pupils will work hard, inspectors agree. However, the inspection findings are that expectations of what will be achieved are too low for many girls and pupils with high attainment levels.

20. Good lessons were seen in all three core subjects, with some very good teaching in mathematics, science and information technology in lessons taught by teachers with particularly strong subject knowledge. A wide range of teaching quality was seen in geography, and teaching in religious education was weakest. Good lessons were seen in all year groups. The widest range of teaching, from very good to poor, was in Year 4, while in Year 5 there was no unsatisfactory teaching.

21. In the best lessons, there were high levels of interest and active response, generated by the teachers' own enthusiasm and well-used subject knowledge. In a very good science lesson in Year 7, on plant and animal cells, clear explanations and well directed use of microscopes inspired a real sense of curiosity and wonder in pupils. They were enthused and excited by what they were seeing and hearing.

22. Similar lively response was seen in a Year 6 class, discovering new words with Greek roots and how they could make connections and use them. Teaching of this quality provides the challenge and stimulus which all pupils, and particularly those capable of high achievement, need. In many lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are often too low. The pitch and pace of some lessons were directed towards the needs of average and lower attaining pupils and did not recognise the levels of thought and language to which abler pupils can respond. The teaching failed to create any sense of excitement and shared discovery in the learning.

23. Teaching of basic skills is generally effective. Teachers are usually encouraging and in good control of their classes. Their relationships with pupils are friendly and good-humoured. Resources are well used and the classroom environment is stimulating and encourages pupils to want to learn.

24. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally sound, but where teachers have very good specialist knowledge explanations are clearer and pupils learn more quickly. Any difficulties pupils experience are resolved through the guidance these teachers give. The inspection confirms the view of many parents that there are inconsistencies in teaching within year groups, and this is largely due to the varying levels of understanding of the teachers. This is a significant factor in the differing rates of progress of pupils and is an area highlighted at the last inspection which has not been resolved.

25. The teaching of literacy is satisfactory overall. Generally, teachers make good use of the prescribed format. Objectives and tasks are usually carefully explained to pupils. In the most effective lessons, questions are well used to develop and advance pupils' thinking. Year groups plan closely together, and this is beneficial as expertise and experience are shared. There is greater consistency within year groups in literacy than in most other subjects. However, some teachers do not use enough of their own ideas or critical judgements when adapting the framework to the needs of their class. In an unsatisfactory Year 6 lesson, a spelling hour needed a variety of strategies and material that were not detailed in the plan and had not been prepared by the teacher. The teacher

relied too much on low level worksheets and did not encourage good talk about language.

26. The daily mathematics lesson has been successfully introduced and the teaching of number skills is satisfactory overall. Lessons are well-planned, closely following the framework of the National Numeracy Strategy. In many lessons, teachers have the knowledge to use whole class discussions confidently to sharpen pupils' mental recall. This is a real benefit to pupils' learning and sets a positive working ethos for the rest of the lesson. Elsewhere, a comparative weakness occurs in the main teaching activity where the sense of purpose is less and pupils work at a much slower rate.

27. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, both in classes and small groups. This teaching is focused on the targets set in their individual education plans. Class teachers fully consider the needs of these pupils and are aware of their targets. The rate at which pupils increase their understanding and knowledge is satisfactory. Because work is well matched to their attainment levels, and support is good, pupils work consistently and are able to sustain satisfactory levels of concentration. Although staff maintain detailed records, these are generally records of pupils' experience. The impact of teaching and effectiveness of learning are not thoroughly evaluated.

28. The use of support staff is generally very effective. Through good support and guidance, they make a valuable contribution to the progress of pupils. They know when to support and when to step back and allow the pupils to work independently and develop greater concentration and perseverance. During whole class teaching, their effectiveness is more varied. In some lessons their time is well used, but in many others they are given few opportunities to help.

29. Homework is used satisfactorily overall. Pupils are often given holiday assignments that are completed to good standards. For example, a Year 7 project resulted in some carefully researched and recorded investigation. Homework at the end of lessons is more varied in usefulness. Where it is merely completing tasks given in the lesson, the most able pupils are often left with little to do, whilst those who have struggled in the lesson have much more. This was also remarked upon by parents, a number of whom feel this leaves their children with the wrong amount of homework. Where teachers give pupils verbal feedback on homework, such as in Year 7 science, they are left with a clear understanding of what has been achieved and what needs to be concentrated on next.

30. There are weaknesses in planning of subjects other than English and mathematics. In some lessons time is not well used, and the topic framework does not always allow enough depth or range of work in individual subjects. This is particularly noticeable in the teaching of religious education, where lesson plans often lack a clear religious focus.

31. Too little use is made of assessment. In the core subjects, the local authority has provided some excellent models and systems. Where these are used, as in the assessment of reading and writing, they are effective. Evaluations of weekly plans are useful. Overall, however, there is little evidence that assessment is being used sufficiently to check what pupils know and plan future lessons.

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

32. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum for all its pupils, enhanced by good extra-curricular provision. Statutory requirements are met. Pastoral, social, and health education are provided through short topics. Sex education uses the expertise of the school nurse and parents are informed and involved. The national strategies for both literacy and numeracy are well established. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. French is taught in Year 7.

33. The school has responded very well to the last inspection report. Provision for information technology and art are much improved. The teaching time has been increased significantly and the time Years 4, 5 and 6 spend in lessons is very high. The school day has been revised and is an efficient use of time.

34. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum. Although some pupils have additional music tuition, care is taken that they do not miss the same lesson all of the time. Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is good. All pupils are encouraged to take an active part in extra-curricular activities. However, although the school has a policy for able pupils, most plans do not contain levels of work or clear expectations for these pupils. Consequently, many of these pupils do not achieve all they could.

35. A comprehensive set of policies and schemes of work, reflecting the school's aims, usefully support planning. Generally good links are made between subjects, so that new learning in one reinforces what has already been learnt in another. Very occasionally, usually in religious education lessons, the main thrust of the lesson is lost and its objective missed. Termly plans are drawn up by year group teams collectively, as are the weekly plans for literacy and numeracy. Weekly plans for other subjects, however, are largely left to the individual teacher and this is one cause of inconsistency between the provision for different classes.

36. Good overall planning ensures pupils with special educational needs are fully included in the curriculum and pupils benefit from the opportunities to work alongside their peers. On rare and appropriate occasions, these pupils work alone or in small groups and receive good tuition in specific skills which cannot be effectively taught within the classroom. However, individual education plans are too imprecise and targets are not clear enough to be useful when planning tasks for pupils.

37. The school offers a good range of activities outside of the school day including football, netball, athletics, petanque, orchestra, choir, dance and drama. Visitors have included an author-illustrator who worked closely with pupils on their own book designs. Visits are also beneficial, for example residential trips extend the curriculum through activities like orienteering whilst promoting pupils' personal development. Parents at the meeting stated that they were impressed with the quality and quantity of these activities.

38. Provision for personal development is satisfactory overall. The code of conduct promotes good moral development, which overall is a strength. Pupils are given a clear understanding of their responsibilities to the school community, and what they have the right to expect in return. Pupils' social development is good. They are encouraged to co-operate and collaborate in lessons. They are taught to celebrate each other's achievements. Cultural development is promoted much better than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are introduced to music from different countries and of different styles,

the work of artists from overseas is included in lessons and religious education. Some policies, such as that for design and technology, aim to promote ways in which people of different cultural backgrounds, past and present, have enriched civilisation. However, there is no planned provision in lessons for spiritual development. Occasions, such as the wonder pupils feel when they first see an onion cell, are rare and largely confined to lessons where teaching enthuses pupils. Assemblies make little contribution and rarely create a sense of a special occasion. The departure of the staff after notices are announced gives a negative message about the importance and impact that the daily act of collective worship should give. A hymn and prayer feature in most, but not all, assemblies and the present format of year group assemblies is poor.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The school cares well for all its pupils and provides a good support, welfare and guidance system for them. Staff provide a good level of care and teachers know the pupils in their own class well.

40. Good behaviour and better punctuality and attendance are effectively promoted by the various rewards and sanctions, all well explained to pupils and parents. Any bullying is usually dealt with swiftly and effectively and the school has a clear policy in place to deal with rare occurrences of indiscipline

41. Pupils with special educational needs generally benefit from the caring ethos of the school. A good rapport exists between pupils and teachers, resulting in high levels of trust and mutual respect. The vast majority of these pupils with difficulties feel confident to approach staff. In lessons, they are able to ask questions without fear of embarrassment or failure. Support is good and discipline systems are clear and understood by pupils. Teachers and learning support assistants apply these calmly and effectively. However, records and comments in 'Behaviour books' are unduly negative for a significant number of pupils who are thought to need support in this area, and give little encouragement.

42. Procedures for child protection are satisfactory, but not all staff have received the necessary training. The school generally gives good and careful attention to the health, safety and welfare of its pupils. There are good systems in place which are co-ordinated efficiently.

43. The school site is difficult to supervise and a relatively high level of staffing is well deployed to meet this need. However, parents state that at certain times, particularly immediately after school has finished, levels of supervision are insufficient. During the inspection, the planned level of support was regularly reduced because teachers on duty were delayed in their classrooms. The school has no system whereby this is monitored and rectified.

44. The school meets statutory requirements for assessment and some good systems are available through the local education authority. Results of national tests are regularly analysed and, where felt necessary, curriculum changes introduced. Otherwise, insufficient use is made of assessment information to guide curricular planning. Where teachers have systems, such as in music, the use of them is left very much at the discretion of the individual teacher. Where teachers choose not to use them, this goes largely unnoticed and unchecked. The school is beginning to collect and collate more assessment information, and make better use of it. So far, this has been insufficient to identify the needs of pupils, particularly the higher-attainers, and match work closely to their levels or ensure they achieve all of which they are capable. Overall, although plans exist to improve or introduce

some systems, little progress has been made since the last inspection report.

45. Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory overall. Reviews take place regularly and general progress is monitored. However, day-to-day progress is not checked sufficiently nor referenced to the targets in individual education plans. Consequently, the school does not have a clear picture of what pupils have achieved. Again, the school is aware of this and improvements are planned.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Written communication with parents has improved enormously since the last inspection report. The excellent and informative prospectus and annual report of the governing body, coupled with regular and helpful newsletters and advance curricular information, demonstrates how well the school has succeeded in this important area. Parents appreciate this clear and helpful flow of information.

47. The appointment of a home-school liaison teacher is innovative and beginning to make a useful and valued contribution. This may be an appropriate appointment because, although about nine parents in every ten who responded to the questionnaire stated they would feel comfortable raising concerns or problems with the school, less than three-quarters felt the school is working closely with them.

48. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are consulted appropriately during the process of annual review and their views are sought prior to recommendations being made. Day-to-day contacts are generally through the use of home-school books. These rarely give parents sufficiently detailed information of their children's achievements to make them useful. There is therefore little involvement of parents in the day-to-day education of their children.

49. Attendance at the termly parents' meetings is high and parents welcome the clear information and useful advice given to them at these meetings. Annual reports of their children's progress are viewed by parents as equally clear, informative and helpful.

50. Parents are supportive of the school. Several oversee the school library, much appreciated by pupils and staff. The parent and teacher association plays a useful role in organising social and fund-raising events which parents generally support well.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The headteacher, staff, parents and governors share a common commitment to offering the pupils a happy, caring school in which they can achieve their potential. The school's aims and values are reflected in much of its work. However, the educational direction of the school is not clearly focused on raising standards and this is an area for improvement.

52. All key issues from the last inspection have been tackled, although the rate of change in some areas is too slow. Much has been achieved in some areas, for example to improve provision for information technology. Overall, progress is at least satisfactory although more remains to be done in the important areas of monitoring and evaluation, and many assessment procedures are relatively new.

53. The leadership and management are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses. Whilst improvement in the national test results for eleven year old pupils over

the last four years has been broadly in line with the trend of improvement in schools nationally, there are clear weaknesses in areas of the school's results. Generally speaking, these are accurately identified by the school, but too often too little has been done to rectify them. For example, a thorough breakdown of test results in 1997 by the mathematics co-ordinator clearly recognised the need to look at the relatively low proportion of pupils reaching higher levels. Nearly three years later, the same weakness is still apparent.

54. Teamwork, particularly within years, is good. In the key areas of literacy and numeracy much has been achieved. Year groups plan closely together and share ideas. Literacy is developing an effective model whereby a teacher from each year group is their representative on a literacy support group. This is proving effective.

55. The governing body brings much experience to the school. Where governors have expertise, this is used effectively and the structures within the body are efficient. Governors have been instrumental in improvements to many areas including the redesigned parents' booklets. Great care and thought is given to setting the budget. Spending decisions are related closely to the school development plan, an improvement since the last inspection. During the year, the budget is monitored closely and clear terms of reference are in place. Whilst governors look generally for value for money, particularly in premises and resource provision, the principles of best value are not yet fully in place.

56. The governors' committees are increasingly involved in monitoring, an improvement since the last inspection. For example, the curriculum committee reviews and evaluates policies, comments on targets set and met, and makes some evaluation of the school's effectiveness through the use of tests. Much of this is relatively new and too recently in place for its usefulness to be judged. Where the governors have been more active for longer, such as in special educational needs, this is of real benefit.

57. Since the last inspection, governors have begun to hold the school to account for the educational standards it achieves. They have, for example, visited the new information suite to witness their investment in action. Formal monitoring visits are made, to a focus agreed with staff. The governors give much time to the school and are often in evidence, and this enables them to monitor informally but regularly. For example, on parents' evening they use the displays of pupils' work to look at the progress made between year groups.

58. Governors' priorities are the right ones. Assessment needs to be used better, particularly when judging the progress of pupils and the value the school adds. Procedures, such as baseline when pupils first enter the school, are important tools and long overdue. They recognise the need for a clearer focus on meeting the needs of higher-attaining pupils and raising standards generally.

59. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and the standards of learning is insufficient to either identify best practice and share it, or ineffective practice and improve it. This is particularly necessary with such a high proportion of relatively new staff. As a result, different classes in the same year group can receive different teaching and curriculum, resulting in work of very different standards. There has been little improvement since the last inspection.

60. Management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Assessments and reviews are carried out correctly. The governing body effectively monitors the work of the department. Staff are generally used well. However, in some classes with high numbers of these pupils, such as lower sets for mathematics, there are few or no learning support assistants and pupils' learning suffers.

61. Co-ordinators are suitably involved in planning for work in their subjects and there have been some improvements in their roles since the last inspection. For example, portfolios of work have been produced, but only in English do they exemplify National Curriculum levels usefully. Otherwise roles remain limited. In subjects other than English and mathematics, the weekly lesson plans of teachers are not checked. Considerable inconsistencies occur, even when teachers are using the same overall plan. The good levels of expertise and experience of individual teachers in the school is not shared enough. Again, this can often result in pupils in the same year group receiving different activities. Because there is also little monitoring of outcomes, for example by comparing the books of pupils in each class in the year group, this is not identified nor resolved.

62. Teaching staff are generally deployed appropriately. Good use is made of specialists, for example in science and information technology, and these subjects benefit. By ability-grouping pupils for mathematics, teachers and learning support assistants are used more efficiently. At other times, timetabling arrangements are less effective and subjects such as religious education suffer. Newly qualified teachers are given good support and guidance. However, sufficient care is not always given to their deployment.

63. The accommodation is generous in size, although the layout places difficulties on the day-to-day running of the school. The school benefits from good specialist accommodation in subjects such as science and information technology, and this is beneficial to pupils' learning. Outside, playing fields and playground are extensive, although the latter is uneven and difficult to supervise. Plans are in hand to improve the accommodation and, subsequently, the outside. Resources for learning are good overall. Literacy is well resourced and there is a welcoming library. Information technology resources are very good, although classroom-based equipment is generally older and less useful than that in the suite. Resources for creative areas such as art and design and technology are good.

64. About eight in every ten parents who completed the questionnaire expressed themselves satisfied with the leadership and management of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65. The leadership of the school should take a more active role to build upon the progress made in recent years to:

- (1) raise standards of attainment, particularly of girls and pupils of high attainment levels by:
 - identifying in planning the methods and activities to be adopted for these pupils, so as to provide a more challenging and stimulating curriculum;
 - catering for their needs better, particularly through more skilled use of challenging questions
 - more positive reinforcement of the status of high achievement.(Paragraphs: 1, 2, 5, 12, 19, 22, 24, 29, 30, 34, 51, 58, 77, 78, 80, 84, 86, 87, 89, 97, 109, 117, 130, 131, 145)
- (2) improve the quality of the curriculum provided by:
 - monitoring teaching more closely and regularly, so as to identify strengths and share them, and identify weaknesses and eradicate them;
 - monitoring the curriculum outcomes more closely, so as to eradicate inconsistencies between teachers in the same year group.(Paragraphs: 19, 24, 25, 26, 30, 35, 52, 59, 61, 75, 79, 80, 82, 86, 91, 94, 98, 100, 105, 106, 113, 126, 137, 145, 147)
- (3) make better use of assessment to track individual pupils' progress more closely, and use this information to inform planning.
(Paragraphs: 4, 10, 27, 31, 36, 44, 45, 52, 58, 76, 85, 93, 98, 106, 113, 141)
- (4) improve the style, content and atmosphere of assemblies and the focus of religious education lessons.
(Paragraphs: 38, 69)

Other issues which should be considered by the school

The school should also:

- Review the procedures for supervision at the end of the school day.
(Paragraphs: 15, 43)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 84 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 39 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 0 | 7 | 39.5 | 45.5 | 8 | 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 | Y4 – Y7 |
|--|---------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils) | 515 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 52 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

| Special educational needs | Y4 – Y7 |
|---|---------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 11 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 127 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 6 |

| Pupil mobility in the last school year | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 48 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 43 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 5.4 |
| National comparative data | 5.4 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|---------------------------|-----|
| School data | 0.8 |
| 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 | 71 | 60 | 131 |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 45 | 45 | 55 |
| | Girls | 44 | 29 | 43 |
| | Total | 89 | 74 | 98 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 68 (60) | 56 (50) | 75 (66) |
| | National | 70 (65) | 69 (59) | 78 (69) |

| Teachers' Assessments | | English | Mathematics | Science |
|---|----------|---------|-------------|---------|
| Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above | Boys | 47 | 49 | 57 |
| | Girls | 46 | 32 | 43 |
| | Total | 93 | 81 | 100 |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above | School | 71 (64) | 62 (56) | 76 (60) |
| | National | 68 (65) | 69 (65) | 75 (72) |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 2 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 1 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 2 |
| White | 499 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 11 |

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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) | 23.2 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 22 |
| Average class size | 28.6 |

Education support staff: Y4 – Y7

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 10 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 169 |

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 1998/1999 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 787 621 |
| Total expenditure | 777 384 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 1 626 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 16 284 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 26 521 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 530 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 163 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 32 | 57 | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 27 | 63 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 18 | 56 | 13 | 6 | 7 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 20 | 53 | 20 | 6 | 1 |
| The teaching is good. | 30 | 56 | 8 | 1 | 5 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 20 | 42 | 29 | 6 | 2 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 40 | 49 | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 42 | 50 | 6 | 2 | 1 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 22 | 51 | 21 | 4 | 2 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 30 | 52 | 8 | 6 | 4 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 23 | 62 | 11 | 2 | 2 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 33 | 48 | 10 | 4 | 6 |

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

ENGLISH

66. The proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for eleven-year-olds in the 1999 national tests was below the national average. The proportion reaching a higher level was also below the national average. In comparison with similar schools, English results are also below average. Over the last four years, results have improved at a similar rate to the national trend. Girls do better than boys, but again this is in line with the national trend.

67. The evidence of the inspection shows that standards in English overall are close to the national average, both at the end of Key Stage 2, when pupils take the national tests, and at the end of Year 7, when pupils leave the school. However, standards in writing are not yet good enough to ensure better results in the national tests.

68. Attainment in listening is good. Most pupils listen attentively to teachers and to one another when reading or talking in groups. They also listen well in assemblies.

69. Attainment in speaking is satisfactory overall. Skills vary considerably but most pupils are ready to answer and make comments in the shared reading and the plenary sessions of the literacy hour. Clear and confident questions were asked by Year 7 pupils during the talk given by a writer-illustrator. They have fewer opportunities for more extended speaking. The limited use of drama and prepared presentation in both key stages affects the development of higher level oral skills and more imaginative, independent work. This has improved little since the last inspection. Pupils took little part in the assemblies observed, where their role was usually that of passive listeners. When pupils did read out notices or sports results, they were barely audible. Too often in class, reading aloud is done by the teacher and pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop good projection, phrasing and emphasis. The popular drama club shows that many pupils are keen to develop these skills and the annual productions make a valuable contribution to their development.

70. Standards in reading are satisfactory overall. The guided reading section of the literacy hour has developed comprehension skills and vocabulary range, though sometimes opportunities to extend this are missed. Effective support for reading is given to pupils with special educational needs, enabling them to make good progress. Regular class use is made of an attractive and well-stocked school library and reading journals provide evidence of some good work with class readers. Pupils acquire good library skills and learn how to use fiction and non-fiction sections efficiently. Books are taken home regularly by most pupils. They visit other local libraries and sometimes have a visit from a writer. The library hour is well used for independent reading and research and for group reading. A number of older pupils are now keen, independent readers who have books at home and can name and comment on favourite authors. Insufficient emphasis is given to talking about books in some part of the library hour, with recommendations, brief introductions to writers and genres, and extracts carefully presented to stimulate interest. With basic reading competence well established, the school now needs to give more thought to meeting the needs of both the advanced readers and those, particularly boys, who are reluctant readers. The local education authority has provided good systems for recording progress in reading, and records are usually carefully kept.

71. Standards in writing are below average, with insufficient improvement since the last inspection. Good work in the literacy hour has given most pupils a sound understanding of punctuation and spelling systems, tense, person and the use of prefixes and suffixes. Writing exercises are used for practice and testing of these skills. Some good writing has been linked with reading, for example the comparisons between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers undertaken in Year 6, and the work on story plans and endings in Year 7. There is not, however, enough regular sustained or extended writing. Pupils do not write enough longer pieces, or draft and improve their work, or explore more thoroughly in writing some of the ideas generated in the literacy or library lessons. Homework provides more opportunity for writing at length, for example an assignment in Year 7 produced some good research findings.

72. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall at both key stages, with over a third of lessons seen judged as good. These good lessons were seen in every year, but the highest proportion of good teaching was in Year 5. Only two unsatisfactory lessons were seen. In one, very little was accomplished because of inadequate planning and poor class control. In the other, although class management was good, the hour spent on spelling relied heavily on lists and exercises and lacked the elements of discussion and well-informed teacher input.

73. In the best lessons, teachers' confidence and enthusiasm were evident and infectious, and there was lively enjoyment shared by teacher and class. This was seen in a Year 5 class, when pupils were examining the persuasive language of holiday brochures in their shared reading. In good lessons, praise was judicious, but not over-used, and pupils were challenged to think and to venture opinions. In most lessons and in both key stages, teachers' basic subject knowledge was satisfactory but there were some uncertainties. In teaching similes, for instance, teachers knowledge is weak. The choice of a Wilfred Owen war poem for reading with Year 7 pupils as part of their work on war was appropriate and challenging. Even so, not all teachers recognised the need to help pupils read and understand the poem as a whole before using the first verse for hunting images. At the end of an hour spent on the poem, pupils had not really understood the powerful irony of the title and the force of its angry echo in the last verse. Reading and discussion of the poem, to ensure that pupils had understood, was a necessary starting point for the detailed individual work on the language which followed.

74. Since the last inspection, the teaching of English has been modified by the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. As a result, the fragmentation of the English curriculum noted in the last report has been largely remedied. There is now more coherence and direction in the planning of work in English and the requirements of the literacy strategy are being met.

75. Learning support assistants are usually deployed effectively, but they are little used in the whole class teaching of the literacy hours, the first and final sections. Planned teamwork does not yet bring them into these parts of the lesson, which would be of benefit both to the pupils they support and to the class as a whole.

76. Pupils' written work is marked and assessed regularly, though more awareness of National Curriculum levels would be helpful to both pupils and teachers. There is currently no assessment of pupils' attainment or progress in speaking and listening, although plans exist to rectify this. Some good formative marking was seen in some pupils' books, teachers helping pupils towards a clear understanding of what they had achieved and how they could improve their work. Occasionally marking is careless or misleading. Some comments are too brief and bland and tell the pupil nothing about the outcome of the effort

made.

77. The literacy co-ordinator has worked hard to ensure that staff understand the literacy strategy, and to resource it. A good deal of help has been given recently by the local authority adviser. Opportunities to monitor and evaluate work in English are being well used. Priorities for improvement, including improving writing and meeting the needs of higher-attaining pupils, have been correctly identified but not enough has been done to address them.

MATHEMATICS

78. The proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for eleven year olds in the 1999 national tests was well below the national average. The proportion reaching a higher level was also well below the national average. When attainment is compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, it remains well below average. The results achieved by pupils in the school over the last four years have been below average. The results in mathematics were below those achieved in English and science. Girls do not achieve as well as boys. The previous inspection judged attainment to be in line with the national average, although the previous year's national test results had been below average and those that followed the inspection were also below average.

79. This inspection judged standards achieved by the present eleven-year-olds to be below national expectations. The pupils in Year 7 are also achieving below national expectations. There are three main reasons for this small improvement from well below to below average. Firstly, the recent introduction of the numeracy lesson is beginning to have a positive effect on progress. Secondly, setting arrangements, which have been in place for one and a half years, are beneficial and pupils are given work that is broadly matched to their differing abilities. Finally, some individual teachers are particularly able and give clearer explanations and better guidance to their pupils. This expertise, however, is not shared and inconsistencies exist.

80. The three-part mathematics lesson is implemented well. In most classes, the mental introduction is used successfully. The questions are stimulating and taken at a good pace. Teachers promote a satisfactory understanding of the number structure. However, it is stronger in some classes than others with resulting inconsistency in pupils' knowledge. For example, the lower set in Year 6 recall multiplication facts more quickly and accurately than some of the higher sets. Many pupils cannot recall addition and multiplication facts and are still dependent on working out answers. This hampers pupils, for example when learning new concepts. In some classes, the main activity lacks pace and interest, so pupils do not sustain their interest and learning is not as good.

81. Pupils cover a well-graded range of work taken from the key objectives of the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils of higher attainment levels in Year 4 and Year 5 reason logically and are able to express their number investigations in generalised form. Pupils of average ability increase their understanding of numbers by identifying patterns as they practice multiplication and division. Pupils of lower attainment levels explore the properties of shape and learn to exchange tens in addition. Year 6 pupils collect and interpret data in a variety of ways. They understand the reasons for different types of graphs or charts. The higher-attainers can pick out the mean, median and mode within a range of data and use decimals and fractions readily. Higher-attainers in Year 7 extend data handling to make a frequency chart. Other pupils in this year group work competently with imperial and metric measure. Whilst many pupils perform the tasks correctly, when questioned they lack confidence and are not really sure of the concepts nor are they ready with answers.

Number skills are also developed in information technology, science and design and technology. Pupils program robots, estimate distances, handle data, make accurate measurements and reason logically.

82. Teaching of mathematics is satisfactory overall. Most lessons follow the national strategy closely and this gives consistency of method, which promotes learning well. When lesson objectives are shared with pupils there is usually a more purposeful atmosphere and pupils enjoy looking back over what has been achieved. In some classes, the pace is allowed to slacken during written work so learning is less productive. Not enough use is made of using and applying mathematics. This leads to a preponderance of duller bookwork which does little to capture pupils' imagination or give relevant real life situations. At these times pupils are less motivated, a small proportion are apt to misbehave and learning momentum falters. Otherwise, there is good use of time and resources.

83. Learning support assistants are deployed well to support pupils in the lower ability sets, and make a good contribution to their learning. When these sets do not have this support, pupils' learning is less.

84. Setting is generally working well and work is usually matched to pupils' ability, but the higher ability sets in some years do not have the extension work they need. The opportunity to better meet the needs of these pupils, identified as an area of need at the last inspection, is therefore largely lost.

85. Assessment is not used sufficiently. Although assessment procedures are used to recognise overall curriculum needs, their use to monitor each pupil's progress is limited. When targets for improvement are shared with pupils, they have a clearer sense of what needs to be done and can participate more fully in their learning. Unfortunately this is not done consistently by all teachers.

86. Whilst co-ordination is good, overall effectiveness is only satisfactory. The new national strategy has been fully implemented, year groups are organised into ability sets and some monitoring takes place. Where priorities for improvement have been identified, they have generally been the right ones. However, progress towards their implementation has been too slow and consequently they have not yet had the desired impact on pupils' standards. Although the school is aware of the gender difference, and plans to encourage a more positive attitude in girls, not enough has been done to resolve it.

SCIENCE

87. The proportion of pupils reaching the level expected for eleven-year-olds in the 1999 national tests was below the national average. The proportion reaching a higher level was well below the national average. When attainment is compared to schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, it is also below average. The results achieved by pupils in the school over the last four years have risen at about the same rate as in other schools nationally, but they have fallen in comparison to those achieved at the time of the last inspection. Whilst boys have done about as well as boys nationally, girls have not.

88. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 7, standards are in line with national expectations. This is much higher, due largely to the very good specialist teaching pupils receive in this year. In other year groups, no direct use is made of the specialist teacher, although advice is given. In one Year 6 class, use is made of another teacher's good knowledge. Where this happens it is beneficial to the rate of pupils' learning both in lessons and through the better feedback they receive. Even so, inspection evidence is that

current standards in Year 6 are well below those in Year 7 and similar to the 1999 test results.

89. In much of pupils' learning there is good emphasis on practical work, and this is an improvement since the last inspection. Generally in younger classes this takes the form of a number of simple experiments to be undertaken during the lesson. This is beneficial to pupils, for example when they explore sound and deepen their understanding of pitch. There are much fewer examples of pupils planning and performing investigations, and so developing their understanding of fair testing. Furthermore, although sufficient time and emphasis is given to the consideration of results and drawing of conclusions in Year 7, so that pupils develop a good scientific understanding of what has happened, in many other classes this is not the case. Younger classes in particular leave some investigations incomplete, or draw only very simple conclusions. Partly as a result, by the time they are in Year 6, pupils often show limited scientific knowledge when they are making predictions at the start of these activities.

90. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is very good when lessons are taught by the specialist, generally good when taught by teachers with good knowledge and understanding, and satisfactory at other times. In a Year 4 experiment, the teacher asked questions that required pupils to consider their results and use their existing knowledge well. Follow up questions often provoked pupils to further thought. In the lessons observed, only the specialist teacher, was seen to inspire pupils to recognise the wonders of nature they discover through their experiments.

91. Use of language skills is satisfactory overall. Pupils use useful methods such as note-taking, but the quality of their written work varies greatly, largely responding to the expectations of the teacher. Where pupils of lower attainment levels are expected to use information sheets, the sheets are either simplified or the pupils helped. Some teachers make very good use of plenaries to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills. In a Year 4 lesson on sound, each group was expected to explain what they had done, what they had found out, and suggest some scientific reasons. Most thought carefully about what they would say, and gave their reasons clearly. Number skills are practised to a satisfactory level in many activities, for example when Year 5 pupils measure volume. There is very little use of information technology in science lessons, although there is some very good occasional use of the suite to record results and present them in different ways that help pupils to draw conclusions.

92. The organisation of science varies between year groups, and has an impact upon pupils' learning. The specialist facility and technician's effective support are beneficial to pupils' learning in Year 7, generally the only year in which either are used. Other classes are taught in general classrooms and time in lessons is occasionally lost because the equipment needed is not immediately to hand. Where classes have double periods of science, rather than two single ones, more work is done.

93. Where assessment information is already available, such as from the national tests, it is used to identify areas of weakness in the curriculum, make changes and draw this to the attention of the relevant teachers. However, too little is currently done to track pupils through the school.

94. Management of science is very good within the constraints placed upon it. Although advice and support are given, the co-ordinator has too little knowledge of outcomes in the school to be fully effective, for example to train teachers in specific areas, or modify the curriculum. Within the school, the expertise of specific teachers and skill of the technician are under-utilised.

ART

95. Current standards are satisfactory. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection when they were judged below the national expectation. By the end of Year 6, pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are well developed in all aspects of the subject. Pupils in Year 7 extend their knowledge, understanding and skills at a suitably mature level.

96. Year 4 pupils enhance their drawing skills well through close observation of objects such as peppers. They handle tools competently to make their sketches into a printing block. With this they produce some good quality prints. By good reference to Karl Blossfeldt's work, they are encouraged to record fine detail. Year 5 pupils study a range of abstract art and are able to discuss some of the main differences from traditional paintings. Year 6 construct dioramas containing animals. They develop this work well by focusing on the skin patterns which they use in various ways, for example using a spotted design to illustrate the frame of the leopard diorama. Some good design examples are made into stained glass windows to illustrate the new millennium. Satisfactory three-dimensional work is seen in varied clay masks which take their inspiration from the Ancient Greeks. Year 7 produce sensitive watercolours of river scenes. They have used the technique of colour bands of pastel wash for the background successfully. The compositions, which show some original thought, are also well done. Monet paintings are used to inspire the pupils.

97. Teaching of art is satisfactory throughout the school, promoting both art appreciation and artistic achievement successfully. Pupils know exactly how to go about their craft where there is a competent demonstration or explanation by the teacher. Teachers use sketchbooks well to develop projects and have good appreciation of the importance of drawing skills in other aspects of art. The best work is produced where the teacher has high expectations and suggests improvements and developments to pupils' work. In other classes, whatever pupils offer is accepted, even when this is rushed or careless. Consequently, pupils achieve less.

98. The curriculum is satisfactory. Pupils are gaining good skills and knowledge, partly due to the thorough scheme of work and good resources. The scheme of work is very thorough and helpful to teachers and is a good improvement since the last inspection. It should result in good teaching and standards. However, teaching is not monitored closely and assessment is not routinely used to enable pupils' learning to be tracked. Consequently, this is not the case.

99. Art makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils closely observe the natural world, work competently within rules and in groups and explore artwork from a good variety of cultures.

100. Art is well led but effectiveness is limited. Since the last inspection, when art was a key issue, much good work has been begun. However, the action plan made following the last inspection has yet to be completed. Although the co-ordinator has good knowledge and expertise, there has been very limited opportunity to share it. Short term plans are not monitored or teaching observed. As a consequence, the information needed to improve the

subject is not available.

101. The school has produced a useful display policy. Pupils' work is attractively displayed throughout the school, celebrating achievement, demonstrating what can be done, and providing a stimulating and attractive working environment. These displays are appreciated by pupils, parents and visitors.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

102. It was only possible to observe two lessons in design and technology during the inspection because of timetable arrangements for the teaching of the subject. Evidence was also gathered from an analysis of pupils' work, including displays, discussions with staff and pupils, and scrutiny of teachers' plans.

103. Standards are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and above national expectations by the end of Year 7, largely because of better teaching. The good practice of designing, evaluating and modifying products is at the heart of work in the subject.

104. Pupils in Year 4 use a simple wooden construction with reinforced corners to make a chassis on which to mount a cardboard cart. A good standard is seen in the finish of their work. Year 5 pupils have taken great care in the design, construction and finish of their fabric bags that they have designed and made for specific purposes, such as to hold their toiletries on a forthcoming residential visit. This is a good example of a real life project and some good design ideas are incorporated. Year 6 pupils invent questions and penalties and design routes for a board game based upon those of Ancient Greece. Year 7 pupils persevere to design and complete books for younger pupils, involving successful pop-up mechanisms. They are able to show their emerging products to a visiting author and hear of real life book production.

105. Teaching of design and technology is satisfactory. Teachers good knowledge of the subject has a positive impact on pupils' learning. In some instances, routines are well established which allow the teacher to focus on individuals needing guidance. Good use is made of resources. Where teaching is less effective, this is largely the result of poor short-term plans which merely list things to do and contain no assessment details and few teaching points. Pupils generally show good levels of interest, concentration and effort due to the lively projects provided.

106. Co-ordination is limited. A good folder of work samples has been started which gives teachers a clearer idea of standards. Otherwise there is insufficient assessment or monitoring in the subject, giving little information on which to plan improvements and hampering the direction of the subject and spread of the most effective practice. Plans for a specialist area are appropriate but not a prerequisite to improvements.

GEOGRAPHY

107. Current standards in geography are satisfactory overall.

108. Older pupils have made detailed studies of several rivers of the world. Their starting point was a practical study of a local river. Building on this direct learning, they extended their research to include rivers such as the Nile and the Rhine. In looking at these they considered the formation of features, such as meanders, flood plains and the process of deposition as well as formation of waterfalls.

109. Younger pupils have also made practical studies of local places, such as Arundel. However, the content of these studies shows little acquired geographical skill. Answers are mainly in response to direct questions and little use is made of geographical skills or enquiry. Results obtained from such fieldwork are not well used within the classroom to further pupils' knowledge or understanding of the area under investigation.

110. Language skills are effectively reinforced in some classes, for example in Year 4, when pupils develop note-taking skills by focusing on the essential information contained within sources such as a video. Number skills are not well used within the subject, nor do pupils have the opportunity to further their knowledge through the regular use of information technology. Some of the younger pupils in Year 5 conducted a survey of the weather and through this extended their geographical vocabulary well to include terms such as 'temperature' and 'meteorological'.

111. Curriculum planning offers pupils the opportunities to study a good range of world features, events and concepts. Some teachers are very skilful in weaving these demands into carefully chosen topics. Pupils are well served by this approach.

112. Because of timetabling arrangements, too little teaching was observed to enable an overall judgement. However, there is great variation in the quality of teaching. For example, in two classes in the same year group using similar lesson plans, teaching ranged from good to poor. In the good lesson, the teacher was enthusiastic and expected much from the pupils. The teacher used the pupils' experiences, such as visits to Sweden and Greece, to bring the lesson to life. In such a context weather took on meaning, as pupils explained to their classmates just what it meant to be either very hot or very cold and how they would have to dress accordingly. By the end of the lesson, pupils fully understood the difference between weather and climate. In the poor lesson, control was poor. Consequently pupils misbehaved, paid little attention and learnt less. Consequently little learning took place.

113. Co-ordination is largely ineffective. There is insufficient monitoring of the subject, either of teaching standards or outcomes. This results in variable quality between classes and what they achieve. Although planning of the curriculum is satisfactory this lack of monitoring means that the school cannot be sure that all pupils receive a balanced curriculum. Samples of work are maintained, but these are not representative of the range of work which pupils achieve. Teachers, therefore, have no guide against which they can compare work within their own classes.

HISTORY

114. Standards in history are satisfactory in both key stages. History is generally well served by the topic-based planning of work, particularly in Key Stage 3, where the historical aspects of the chosen themes feature strongly in lessons and display. Study units are well planned, with careful attention to key elements, resources, and cross-curricular links.

115. In Key Stage 2, pupils' awareness of chronology is developed satisfactorily. They show understanding of the ways in which past periods can be represented differently, the nature of evidence and its interpretation, and something of causes, effects and change.

116. In a good lesson in Year 4, with Ancient Egypt as their topic, pupils were studying hieroglyphs. They showed keen interest in a well-chosen video clip on the subject and on the making of papyrus. The teacher challenged them to think and to recall what they had learned previously and they were able to describe the work of scribes and to mention the Rosetta Stone. They were eagerly looking forward to their planned visit to the British Museum to see the Stone and other artefacts and treasures.

117. Lessons were also observed in Year 6 where the topic was Ancient Greece. In one class, pupils showed that they understood the difference between primary and secondary sources of information and the variation possible in the content of secondary sources. They made good use of books and other material to find out about the aspect of Greek life which they had chosen, for example using CD-ROM independently to research the Olympic Games. In discussion, they displayed a good range of previous learning. In a parallel class, the pace of work and the level of response were less brisk and pupils needed rather more varied material and challenge than they were offered. Praise was used to encourage, but more demanding teaching and probing questions would have provided a better stimulus to learning.

118. In Year 7, where the unit of study is Mediaeval Realms, no lessons on this topic were seen. Some interesting historical study was, however, being done as background to some of the work in English on texts relating to the First World War. Pupils had done some research over half term, and some careful work was evident in the folders they brought to class in the following week.

119. The co-ordinator has planned an interesting curriculum. Schemes of work are well prepared and very good use is made of outside resources for historical study. Pupils' work in each year group is enriched by presentations on various subjects including Tudor dance. Visits, such as the Year 5 study of Tudor buildings, also contribute and pupils gain much from the opportunity to study firsthand.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

120. Standards in information technology are satisfactory in Year 7. Elsewhere in the school, standards are good and, in the youngest year groups, very good. The provision for information technology has been greatly improved by the resourcing of a computer suite and employment of a specialist teacher with good levels of knowledge and understanding and good teaching skills. The differences in standards between the year groups is largely because this improvement has come about relatively recently and the older pupils did not have this provision when they first joined the school. Consequently, there are some small gaps in their knowledge and in some areas of information technology they are working at the same level as younger pupils. Overall, this is an improvement since the last inspection.

121. Year 4 pupils exhibit good mouse control, so that they are able to include details such as belts and collars in their graphics drawings of people. They understand and use tool bars and icons to switch between different effects. In Year 5, pupils fed the birds a variety of foods, recorded their preferences and presented this information in various graphs. They made some comparisons, aided by the clarity of presentation afforded by use of information technology. They have continued to develop their understanding of icons and can use autosum correctly when creating spreadsheets. Pupils in Year 6 use word processing skills well when writing their own curriculum vitae, illustrated with carefully-constructed self portraits. They have a satisfactory understanding of how the internet can be used to find information. Year 7 pupils also use information technology for relevant activities, such as to create a chart of their monthly expenditure. In this way they gain good understanding of the advantages of information technology. A group of pupils publish an interesting school newspaper.

122. Lesson planning is good. The need for better planning, highlighted in the last report, has been achieved. Pupils develop good levels of skill and competence, whilst information technology is used to support work in other subjects effectively. In Year 6, for example, pupils learn to direct movements on the screen to draw patterns and borders as part of their study of Ancient Greece.

123. There is very good progression and continuity within and across year groups, a significant improvement since the last inspection. This is largely because a specialist teacher plans, teaches and evaluates all information technology lessons. There remains a comparative weakness, however, in the use made of information technology by the other teachers to support their lessons. In many classes and lessons, computers are rarely used.

124. The quality of the teaching in information technology lessons is consistently good and often very good. The teacher's knowledge of the subject is particularly beneficial to pupils. When they have difficulties they are given clear and accurate guidance. Tasks are imaginative, relevant and interesting to pupils. The resources available are used very effectively. During a very clear explanation of a new task, the pupils learnt very quickly because the teacher used a large screen on which they could all follow her step-by-step instructions very easily. They gained much from the teaching they received. Pupils' understanding is helped by information booklets, each giving the right amount of information balanced with activity. Teaching is occasionally less effective when the teacher works alone. At these times the needs of the whole class can mean that explanations to groups are too brief, because of the need to move onto the next group quickly.

125. Literacy is used well and the skills of drafting and re-drafting are emphasised. Pupils follow instructions well and collaborate fully, such as when they are discussing the distances and directions to programme a floor robot. At these times they demonstrate satisfactory number skills, for example recognising when it goes about half distance that the number they programmed needs to be doubled. They use number well in spreadsheets and make simple deductions from data they collect and handle.

126. Management is very efficient. The co-ordinator makes very good use of the equipment available in the suite and constantly searches for ways to improve the subject. When other staff work alongside the co-ordinator, they benefit from her expertise and skill. The co-ordinator has little influence over what happens in other lessons. At these times, tasks are very much left to the individual teacher and there is little cohesion to the curriculum. Although plans are in hand, little is currently done to assess pupils' progress and identify strengths and weaknesses in the subject. This is an important next step.

127. The school's response to the previous inspection report has been excellent.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

128. Standards in French are in line with those expected nationally by the end of Year 7. There has been a decline in standards since the time of the last inspection, when attainment was well above the national expectation. This is largely because the subject is now no longer taught at Year 6; pupils therefore have less time to build on previously acquired knowledge and skills.

129. Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills. They offer a range of accurate responses to questions about themselves, their family, and their preferences in food and drink. They practise simple conversations relevant and useful in everyday life, such as when shopping in France. Many are beginning to understand how the language is constructed by adapting the structures and vocabulary they have learnt to form new sentences. The highest attaining pupils write simple letters about themselves and their interests with few mistakes, and gain confidence in speaking, listening and writing.

130. Pupils learn at a satisfactory rate overall. Learning is good at the beginning of lessons when the teacher provides a strong lead, practising previously learnt vocabulary and introducing new words. Pupils listen closely to the teacher and when other pupils speak. They are generally enthusiastic at the prospect of learning a foreign language. They speak confidently, though some are more reluctant to read aloud. The pace of learning slows when pupils spend too long drawing and labelling. Whilst the progress of a few of the higher-attaining pupils is very good because they are sometimes set additional work, pupils generally are not offered different tasks that match their different attainment levels. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because the teacher ensures that they work at their level.

131. The teaching of French is satisfactory overall. It is good in class discussions, when the teacher's good knowledge of language and culture provides a useful model for the pupils. The range of vocabulary and sentence constructions used are suitably matched to pupils' understanding, and conversations move at a brisk pace. There is a clear expectation that pupils will respond in complete sentences. The level of correction is generally appropriate, although persistent mistakes in pronunciation are sometimes left unchecked. When pupils are required to draw, colour and label illustrations of the new vocabulary they have learnt, teaching is less effective because tasks are superficial. Lessons often end with a good summary and appropriate revision of what has been learnt. Homework is generally appropriate, work is thoroughly marked and the teacher has a good understanding of pupils' strengths and weaknesses.

132. The scheme of work is appropriate. In the course of their work, pupils acquire a good knowledge of French culture which enables them to make meaningful comparisons between their own lives and those of French children. This is enhanced by an annual residential visit. Pupils' attainment and progress are monitored through regular tests. Resources for the subject are good; there is a specialist room with lively displays of pupils' work and information about France. There is a suitable range of readers and textbooks for use when pupils have acquired basic speaking and reading skills. The teacher makes good use of artefacts to enhance pupils' understanding of French life.

MUSIC

133. Standards in music are satisfactory. The school has a number of talented musicians on its staff who are able to teach the subject with confidence.

134. The youngest pupils are able to clap simple and complex rhythms and change on cue between singing, shouting speaking, whispering and miming. They learn to use graphic scoring choosing symbolic cards to create a four bar piece which they interpret effectively. Pupils are acquiring a musical vocabulary such as the names of notes, dynamics, pitch. They know and understand tonic, sub dominant and dominant in a major scale, which some can use comfortably. They sing songs from different eras and cultures including soul and blues. They listen appreciatively to a good range of music from different parts of the world, such as Swiss yodelling and Mongolian mouth music. They learn to improvise and add percussion parts to a song as well as singing in rounds. In Year 5, pupils perform a football chant but found it difficult to identify when texture thickens. Year 7 pupils demonstrated their ability to sing in the scale of C and accompany it with the hand jive. They learn to improvise on a piece of music using tuned percussion. Pupils demonstrate their skills regularly in assemblies, playing piano, flute and violin. The choir and orchestra perform to a good standard during assemblies and concerts.

135. The quality of teaching is good and this is an improvement in consistency since the last inspection, although the very good teaching then is no longer evident. Teachers know their subject well and the school has arranged for pupils to be taught by specialist teachers in almost all classes. Teachers confidently play several instruments, sing and demonstrate breathing techniques. Teaching is most effective where the pace is brisk and the time is well used to provide a range of learning experiences. Material is carefully chosen to interest and motivate. The inappropriate behaviour of a small number of pupils in some classes, found at the time of the last inspection, has not been resolved.

136. The school's scheme of work shows good progression. Planning is clear and there is a good balance between performing, composing, listening and appraising. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers generally assess and keep records of pupil progress and these are handed to the receiving teacher. All pupils have a music folder in which to keep their written work.

137. Co-ordination is satisfactory overall but there is little methodical development. Progress is monitored through informal chats with other teachers. If the units to be taught are not covered during the school year it is accepted practice for them to be missed and this can result in gaps in pupils' knowledge. Useful records, using audio cassettes, are kept of each year group's work along with their assessment sheets. The school keeps similar records of the choir. Staff work well together to offer pupils a good range of extra-curricular music activities.

138. Accommodation is good. The specialist room and small practice rooms are used well. There is an adequate number and range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments and sufficient technology for use with cassettes and CDs, although no computer-based work was seen during the inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

139. During the course of this inspection only indoor lessons were observed. In these standards were high, both in teaching and in the effort and levels of performance of the pupils. This was the outcome of good teaching and sustained effort on the part of the pupils. Teaching of the subject was good overall. Better lessons were those taught by physical education specialists. These invariably were the more technical lessons, such as gymnastics. Features common to all lessons were the good organisation of pupils and the demand for high standards in both behaviour and performance. Consequently pupils were enthusiastic and produced well thought out movements. Pupils were set the challenge of using apparatus to create simple routines. Working very effectively and co-operatively as groups, pupils devised routines which embodied contrasting or mirrored movements. The teachers were very critical of their own performance and this high level of self-evaluation resulted in higher standards of teaching. Although all lessons had good features, the better lessons were those where the teachers successfully enabled the pupils to engage their mind with their movement. Sequences, in gymnastics for example, were built up using the process of evaluation. Individual movements were examined and the question 'How can this be improved?' was constantly asked. Pupils responded to these challenges with very carefully planned and executed sequences.

140. The curriculum encourages pupils to good levels of fitness and physical expression. The philosophy of inclusion and encouragement ensures that all pupils feel valued at whatever level they achieve. A wide range of well-attended extra-curricular activities, often resulting in a series of very successful school teams, enriches the curriculum.

141. While there are no significant weaknesses in the overall provision, the current level of recording of progress does not build a clear picture of the levels which individual pupils attain. Teachers are consequently left to fall back upon subjective opinion that progress occurs. There were no significant areas for development resulting from the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

142. Standards in religious education are below those expected by the locally agreed syllabus. This represents a decline since the last inspection when standards, though variable, were judged mostly sound and in line with expectations.

143. Evidence from written work and from lesson observation indicates that the range and depth of content do not fully meet requirements. Although there are some examples of good work in some years and classes, pupils' knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other religions are variable and do not represent a clear line of development through the four years of study.

144. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory overall. The integration of religious education into the topic- based curriculum demands careful planning. Under the topic heading "Hooked on Books" pupils in Year 7 were to look at the Torah as part of their study of sacred books. They were not given an adequate introduction or context. They knew, and learned, very little about Judaism and their interest and curiosity were not aroused. This is a similar picture to that when the school was last inspected, when links with topic work were tenuous and contrived, and lessons had little clear religious focus.

145. In a lesson in Year 4, a demonstration of food from biblical lands provided an interesting starting point, but there was little, apart from the story of unleavened bread, to link the lesson with the religious education syllabus. In a Year 6 lesson, the initial shared reading from the Acts of the Apostles was laboured, but the lesson began to spark some real interest when the teacher introduced questions of belief and conflict, tolerance of and hostility to other faiths. Unfortunately, this promising line of enquiry and discussion was not pursued and the class spent the remainder of the lesson writing peace messages on paper doves. This activity led to a long queue of pupils seeking help from the teacher, with time wasted and behaviour slackening.

146. A good Year 5 lesson on the story of Moses made a valuable link between the two attainment targets of the Agreed Syllabus, knowledge and understanding of religion and exploration of life experiences. After considering Moses' plight, pupils were encouraged to explore some of their own experiences of facing frightening or challenging decisions. They showed sound knowledge of the story and were alert and interested in response to the teacher's own lively approach. The inclusion of a simple but effective drama exercise stimulated further thought and discussion. This lesson showed that both learning and enjoyment are achieved when pupils are actively involved in the lesson and challenged to think.

147. At present there is no clear direction to the subject. Monitoring, to ensure that all teachers feel confident about good planning, and enthusiastic in their approach to teaching, is not undertaken. Written work in religious education is not always kept separate, even in the eldest year group. Pupils have little opportunity to look back over what they have written and learnt, or teachers to check the progress made through the year. There is no policy or regular practice in the assessment of religious education.