

INSPECTION REPORT

NORTH DENES MIDDLE SCHOOL

Great Yarmouth

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 120973

Headteacher: Mrs N Heywood

Reporting inspector: Mr G D Timms
21038

Dates of inspection: 19-22 March 2001

Inspection number: 193225

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle, deemed primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	8 - 12
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P. Hollis
Date of previous inspection:	17 March 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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21038	Mr G Timms	Registered inspector	Mathematics	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve? The school's results and pupils' standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9505	Mr D Haynes	Lay inspector		Pupils attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Finance and efficiency
23453	Mrs C Cressey	Team inspector	English Special educational needs in the special needs unit (including national survey required by OFSTED) English as an additional language	
30000	Mr J F Tresadern	Team inspector	Information and communications technology Geography History	Equal opportunities
22788	Ms S West	Team inspector	Music Design and technology Religious education	(spiritual, moral, social and cultural development)
20869	Mrs E Olney	Team inspector	Modern language (French)	
12900	Mrs L Short	Team inspector	Physical education Art and design	
21552	Mr B McAlpine	Registered inspector	Science Special educational needs in the main school (including national survey required by OFSTED)	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

North Denes Middle School serves an area of largely local authority housing. The school takes pupils from the ages of 8 to 12 and is smaller than the average school of this type nationally. There are 264 boys and girls on roll including 20 pupils who attend the learning support centre. Pupils in the main school are taught in single age classes of mixed ability, although for some subjects they are grouped by prior attainment within the class. In mathematics, the year groups are set into attainment groups. Attainment on entry varies from year to year but is generally below average. Pupils in the learning support centre are taught in two mixed-age classes.

The immediate locality has greater than average levels of social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, 38 per cent, is well above average. One hundred and seven pupils in the main school, 44 per cent, have special educational needs. This very large proportion is double that of a typical school. Nearly all of the pupils with special needs in the main school have trouble with literacy and numeracy, including dyslexia. A small number have emotional and behavioural difficulties; one or two have coordination difficulties. Two pupils in the main school have statements of special needs; this is fewer than is typically found in a school of this size and type. All of the pupils in the unit have statements of special educational needs. One pupil speaks English as an additional language. The school's current priorities are appropriately based around improving the quality of teaching and raising standards. As part of a national enquiry, the inspection of this school, one of a large sample, included a detailed inspection of its provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school is part of an Education Action Zone.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education but has significant weaknesses in the standards attained by pupils and inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. The leadership is good and the management of the school is growing in effectiveness. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a good grasp of where the weaknesses lie and what needs to be done to improve. Given the low standards attained by most pupils, the school provides unsatisfactory value for money; however, from a very low position two years ago, the school has turned the corner and is now making significant improvements.

What the school does well

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide a clear educational direction to the work of the school and have identified strengths and prioritised weaknesses well.
- The provision for pupils in the learning support centre is very good.
- The school has successfully improved pupils' behaviour and there is an improved ethos within the school.
- The provision for pupils' moral development is good.
- The school provides a very caring environment where pupils are well looked after and supported.

What could be improved

- Standards in English, mathematics, science, information and communications technology, art and design, and design and technology are too low.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs in the main school is unsatisfactory.
- The planning does not meet the curricular needs of high and low attaining pupils.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent and too much is unsatisfactory.
- The subject leaders do not have enough involvement in monitoring standards and in tracking individual pupils' progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997, when serious weaknesses were found in standards, teaching and the curriculum. Since then there have been many changes in the staff and a great deal of work has been done to improve the curricular provision to make it more suitable for the ages of the pupils and more in line with the National Curriculum. Pupil's behaviour and attitudes have improved greatly. In addition, the literacy and numeracy strategies have been introduced and the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved. The issues raised at the last inspection have been largely addressed, although some, such as that concerning assessment, have been overtaken by events and are in need of re-addressing. Overall, the improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	E	E	E	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	E	E	E	D	
Science	E*	E*	E	C	

Although not evident in the table above, the overall performance of the school, as measured by test results, has improved steadily since the last inspection. However, not enough pupils reach the higher levels and this is why the average point scores reflected in the table above show well below average attainment. When all three subjects are taken together, the school has improved its results at a similar rate to that found nationally. Viewed separately, the improvement in mathematics and in science has been at a faster rate than that found nationally. Improvement in English is less evident and, in this subject, the gap between the national standards and the school has widened.

The standard of current work among twelve-year-old pupils is lower than it should be and is well below average in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design and design and technology. In geography, history, music, physical education, religious education, and French, standards are broadly in line with those expected. The low standards are partly due to the very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The standard of current work among eleven-year-old pupils is still well below average in the core subjects of English, mathematics, and science. The changes to the curriculum and the improvements in the quality of teaching made within the past two years are clearly reflected in the work of the majority of the pupils in Years 4 and 5, where standards are improving. They have yet to work through the school and show in the test results among eleven-year-olds in Year 6 or the work of the oldest pupils in Year 7.

The long-term achievement of the oldest pupils in English and mathematics is unsatisfactory and has not enabled them to catch up on national expectations or achieve the standards of which many are capable. The achievements of the younger pupils are better. Over the past four years, girls' performance in particular has been poor. When compared with schools that have pupils from similar backgrounds, the standards are still below average in English and mathematics, but broadly in line with the average in science. The school has set appropriately challenging targets in English and mathematics for 2001 and 2002.

In the learning support centre, the high quality support from teachers and learning support assistants enables pupils to make satisfactory and often good progress. In some aspects of English, mathematics, and science, very specific teaching in the unit enables some pupils to reach standards that are similar to those expected nationally. In the main school, the provision for pupils with special needs is not meeting the needs of those without statements and they are falling further behind. The two pupils in the main school with statements are receiving appropriate support and make satisfactory progress in relation to the difficulties they face.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Attitudes to school vary among individuals but have improved overall compared to the previous inspection.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. The school has worked hard to improve behaviour in school and this is beginning to have a positive effect on learning.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Pupils are beginning to take advantage of the responsibilities offered to them.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. Attendance is below the national average, and unauthorised absence is above average.

The headteacher and staff have worked hard to create a productive ethos where the pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are now satisfactory. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection and this has been effectively brought about partly through the introduction of good lessons where pupils are able to discuss issues with each other and with their teacher. During lessons, pupils concentrate well and show enthusiasm especially when the quality of teaching is good and the lessons are interesting and challenging. Behaviour around the school and in the playground can be noisy and at times a little boisterous but at no time during the inspection was any bullying or other oppressive or inappropriate behaviour seen. The rate of exclusion is high; correction procedures have been followed. Personal, social and health education features strongly as a taught subject and in assemblies.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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 provided is satisfactory overall and has improved since the last inspection. However, there are serious inconsistencies in the teaching and some significant weaknesses as well as major strengths. Continued improvement in teaching is, appropriately, a major school priority. Currently, 87 per cent of the teaching is satisfactory or better and 46 per cent is good or better. These proportions are lower than typically found. The proportion of teaching that is very good or better, 21 per cent, has increased significantly since the last inspection and is almost double the amount usually found; this proportion includes 6 per cent that is excellent. The teaching in mathematics is good overall. The teaching in English is satisfactory but not enough priority is given to writing. Numeracy skills are better taught than literacy skills. Nearly all teachers had at least one lesson that was very good or excellent. A small number of teachers had more than one unsatisfactory lesson, and some that were poor, and nearly one quarter of the teaching in Year 7 is unsatisfactory.

The pockets of unsatisfactory and poor teaching are a significant weakness. In too many lessons, teachers do not plan tasks that are adequately matched to the learning needs of pupils with lower than average or higher than average attainment. The quality of teaching that pupils with special educational needs receive in the main school is, with a few exceptions, unsatisfactory and there has been no improvement since the previous inspection. In contrast, the quality of teaching of pupils in the learning support unit is very good with some excellent features.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	All subjects of the National Curriculum, plus religious education, are taught. Written policies and schemes of work are in place for all subjects except music and art. The curriculum is, however, too narrow and not always relevant to learning needs and this makes the quality and range unsatisfactory overall.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The provision in the Learning Support Centre is very good. In the main school, the provision is satisfactory for pupils with statements but is unsatisfactory for those without statements.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. The provision for pupils' moral development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. The school cares for the pupils well but there are shortcomings in the monitoring of pupils' progress.

The school provides satisfactory level of information for parents but the links between school and home are not strong and need to be improved. The school recognises this and tries to encourage parents to attend events such as workshops and open evenings. The school has started to offer a good range of extra-curricular activities. The weaknesses in the curriculum are the lack of careful planning to provide a satisfactory curriculum for the lower and higher attaining pupils in the main school. Although the school cares for its pupils well, the procedures for assessing the pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. However, the system being introduced in mathematics provides a good model for further development in other subjects. Individual pupils' progress is not tracked effectively and the use of assessment information to guide curricular planning is under developed. The school has recognised this and work on improving progress tracking has recently been carried out.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The leadership shown by the headteacher and deputy headteacher is strong and is providing a very clear, appropriate educational direction to the work of the school. Good priority is being given to raising standards and improving teaching. The capacity for continued improvement under the current leadership is good. The leadership and management shown by other key staff, many of whom are very new to the school, is too variable and needs to improve quickly. On balance, leadership and management in the school overall are satisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governors fulfil their statutory duties well and have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory and improving. Recent work on analysing assessment data and tests results is beginning to give teachers a clearer picture of strengths and weaknesses in their teaching.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Money has been used appropriately for educational priorities, and the membership of the education action zone is helping with the raising of standards in reading through the extra support offered.

The hard work put in by the headteacher since the last inspection, and by the deputy headteacher since his appointment, has helped the school to turn the corner and begin to improve. The headteacher has worked extremely hard to alter teaching styles and curriculum planning into a model more appropriate for the ages of the pupils. This has taken a great deal of energy and time. The many staff changes have made it difficult to create a regular and purposeful senior management team that can share the workload. The school has good, appropriate aims and objectives and these are now established in the day-to-day life of the school. Over the past two years, with support from the local authority, the school has targeted the weaknesses evident at the last inspection and has now reached a point where the fruits of earlier work are beginning to show and the systems are in place to enable this improvement to continue.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children make good progress. • The school expects children to work hard, achieve their best and helps them mature and learn to be responsible. • The teaching is good. • The children like school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They want the school to work more closely with them. • They would like more information about how their child is getting on. • The provision of homework is inconsistent. • A significant minority feel the school is not well led and managed.

Sixteen parents attended a meeting with the inspectors prior to the inspection and 71 returned questionnaires giving their opinions about the work of the school. The evidence of the inspection shows that although some of the teaching is good there are weaknesses and too many children do not make the progress of which they are capable. The team agree with the parents other positive views. The school does need to work more closely with parents, provide better information about its work and make the homework provision more consistent. However, the team disagrees with the parents' view about leadership and management; the school is satisfactorily led and the management shows clear signs of improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Standards among twelve-year-old pupils are well below average in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design and design and technology. In geography, history, music, physical education, religious education, and French, standards are broadly in line with those expected. The low standards evident are partly due to the very high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. Standards among eleven year old pupils are also well below average in the core subjects and follow the same pattern of strengths and weaknesses in non-core subjects as found among twelve-year-olds. The changes to the curriculum and the improvements in the quality of teaching have yet to have an effect on standards in Years 6 and 7 but are clearly reflected in the standard of current work among the majority of the pupils in Years 4 and 5.

2. The pupils' attainment is well below average when they start at the school. The achievement of the oldest pupils in English and mathematics, which measures progress against their attainment at the age of seven, and against tests carried out in Year 3, has been unsatisfactory. It has not been sufficient for standards to catch up on those of a typical school or for the pupils to achieve the standards of which many are capable. In mathematics, for example, only half of the present Year 7 made the expected progress through their junior years, with only eight per cent exceeding expectations. This is unsatisfactory and reflects the ineffectiveness of teaching in past years. Achievement in mathematics in Year 4, the nine-year-olds, and in Year 5, is beginning to show improvement, reflecting the increased effectiveness of teaching in these year groups. Over the past four years, girls have performed poorly. This is opposite to the national picture, where girls usually outperform boys. The particularly poor performance of girls is partly due to the low aspirations and self-esteem amongst some girls but it was found that in a few lessons the boys were involved more by the teacher through questioning, probably for behaviour management reasons.

3. The results of the national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2000 show that the standards in English, mathematics, and science were well below the national average. The results, albeit very low, were an improvement in mathematics and science where, in recent years, standards have been in the lowest five per cent of schools nationally. In science, the proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level was almost in line with the average. However, in all three subjects not enough pupils attained the higher levels. When compared with schools that have pupils from similar backgrounds, the standards are below, rather than well below, average in English and mathematics, and broadly in line with the average in science.

4. Evidence that the school is improving is provided by the steady increase in test results over time. Since 1996, taking all three subjects together, the school has improved at a similar rate to that found nationally. In mathematics and in science the improvement has been at a faster rate than the national one. In English, the improvement is less evident and the gap between the national standards and the school has widened. This is due to low skills in speaking and listening and, especially, very low standards in writing. Reading skills are much closer to average. The improvements in the standard of current work are due to the recent improvements in teaching; the introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy; the improved curriculum; and the rise in standards of behaviour, which now enables most lessons to proceed with minimum disruption. In addition, reading standards have been helped by the extra support provided by the Education Action Zone.

5. In the learning support centre, the high quality support from teachers and learning support assistants enables pupils with special educational needs to make satisfactory and often good progress against the targets set for them in their individual education plans. In some aspects of English, mathematics and science, very focused teaching enables the pupils to reach standards that are similar to those expected nationally. For example, in an excellent science lesson Year 4 and 5 pupils were developing a sound understanding of how materials can be separated. Their work indicated they were working confidently within the expected Level 4.

6. The substantial majority of pupils with special needs in the main school are one or more years behind national expectations in literacy and numeracy, with a significant proportion being two or more years behind. Their problems with literacy affect their attainment in other subjects. Very few of the pupils without statements are making the progress they should and are falling further behind national expectations because the support they receive is insufficiently directed towards meeting specific needs. Where support is well organised, such as the catch-up programme that is staffed and run by a well trained assistant and funded by the Educational Action Zone, the twenty pupils involved demonstrate that they can make quick progress. Very few pupils make enough progress to be removed from the special needs register and too many pupils remain at the same assessment stage for more than a year. The two pupils in the main school with statements, however, are receiving appropriate support and make satisfactory progress in relation to the difficulties they face.

7. Attainment in speaking and listening is well below average. Listening skills are slightly better than speaking skills but many pupils find it difficult to listen to each other and their teachers. A majority of pupils have underdeveloped skills of

speaking and listening. When reading aloud, pupils are encouraged to read with clarity and expression but these skills are not highlighted in general conversation or when answering questions. At the end of Year 7, attainment in reading is below average. However, a number of initiatives are raising reading standards and younger pupils in Years 4 and 5 are attaining standards that are close to the national average. By the age of twelve, pupils are becoming confident readers of a range of texts. Books are usually well matched to pupils' attainment and interest levels and chosen to reflect different cultures and to interest boys and girls. Pupils show a developing understanding of different writers' styles and they understand plot, setting and characterisation. Pupils that are more able make subtle deductions and inferences from their reading. Less able pupils use a range of strategies to help them recognise unfamiliar words, such as letter patterns and sounds or reading round the word to place it in context. Attainment in writing is well below average. The development of writing is inconsistent and a significant number of pupils take insufficient pride in the presentation of their work. The amount of written work produced in some classes is insufficient. Although pupils' work is often interesting they do not analyse their work sufficiently to ensure that sentences are correctly structured or punctuation is used accurately and effectively. Although the conventions of grammar, punctuation, and spelling are taught through the literacy strategy, these skills are not transferred sufficiently well to pupils' independent writing. Simple punctuation is often missing and commas, apostrophes, speech marks, question marks and exclamation marks are not used to a satisfactory standard.

8. In mathematics, although the majority of pupils' knowledge is close to expectations, their ability to apply knowledge and to recall and use it quickly and accurately in mental and oral work is well below what it should be. By the age of eleven, only the higher attaining pupils have a good ability to manipulate figures mentally. They are comfortable using positive and negative numbers in calculations and can perform good mental calculations involving metric units of measure and decimals. The middle attaining pupils are able to convert imperial to metric measures using a recipe and can reduce the proportions to create a recipe for one person rather than four. The lower attainers can use calculators accurately to multiply large numbers and they are developing a sound ability to estimate around the possible answer. The mental work of middle attaining pupils and the large number of low attaining pupils is less accurate and slower than it should be for their age, due to the lack of previous experiences with this type of activity. In Year 5, most pupils have a secure grasp of multiplication tables. They can double amounts of money accurately and use the decimal point correctly. Year 4 pupils demonstrate a sound ability to calculate using partitioning of numbers into tens and units. Mentally they use doubling and knowledge of the 2, 5 and 10 times tables to work out answers quickly. They demonstrate a sound understanding of place value when working out multiplication problems. However, less able pupils are not able to recall the value of coins without prompting.

9. In science, the majority of twelve-year-old pupils have an appropriate knowledge of each of the attainment targets in the National Curriculum programme of study but their ability to apply their knowledge to investigations and experiments is less well developed. In life processes and living things, the majority know about ecosystems and microhabitats and that animals adapt to specific habitats. In physical processes, they have a satisfactory knowledge for their age of the solar system, the phases of the moon and the orbit of planets around the sun. With investigative science, they can carry out basic classifications of rocks and understand that experimentation usually requires the control of some variables in order to investigate changes in others. Very few pupils are yet at the stage when they can with total independence identify the key factors to be considered in an investigation or conduct a series of experiments, using measurement with appropriate precision.

10. Standards in ICT are below average for the majority of eleven-year-olds and twelve-year-olds. This is due largely to difficulties experienced by the school in securing reliable hardware, resource limitations, lack of Internet access and the high turnover of staff, all of which has resulted in pupils' not having the benefit of the full curriculum in the past. Therefore, while pupils acquire skills in word processing and graphics, control and modelling, simulations, multimedia packages and data handling, these aspects have not been taught in sufficient depth. Even so, standards are higher than at the last inspection and improvement since that time is satisfactory. In Year 7, pupils are developing their basic skills in word processing, graphics, databases and spreadsheets ready for transfer to the senior school. The names and functions of basic keys are known. They can load and find programs, folders and files, amend, print and save their work. Their knowledge of control and modelling is limited due to a lack of hardware. Year 6 pupils use spreadsheets to calculate total weekly costs of newspapers by entering data in cells, using the correct rows and columns and then to set up the formula. In religious education, pupils' standards of work reach expected levels in both key stages. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. The headteacher and staff have created a productive ethos where the pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are now satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils are keen to enter school and settle quickly into the daily routine without undue intervention from the class teacher. During lessons, pupils concentrate well and show enthusiasm especially when the quality of teaching is good and the lessons are interesting and challenging.

12. The school has worked hard to improve attitudes and behaviour and the overall standard of behaviour is now satisfactory, with the behaviour of the majority of pupils being good. In lessons, where the teaching is of good quality and conducted at a brisk pace, pupils' behaviour and attitude to learning is good. Behaviour around the school and in the

playground can be noisy and at times a little boisterous but at no time during the inspection was any bullying or other oppressive or inappropriate behaviour observed. Pupils' ability to work well together is satisfactory. They can form cooperative groups and work equally well in groupings dictated by the class teacher. The majority of pupils show respect to adults; for example, they will open doors and offer a courteous greeting, but there remains a small number of pupils especially in the older year groups whose behaviour still falls below the good standard exhibited by the majority of pupils. There have been 26 exclusions involving 15 pupils during the reporting period, as the school has focused on improving pupils' behaviour. This is a reduction on the excessively high level found in the last inspection and has proved successful in creating a more harmonious atmosphere. The school now has a clear vision of acceptable standards of behaviour and uses exclusion more judiciously as part of the strategy to improve standards.

13. Personal, social and health education features strongly, as a taught subject and in assemblies. The autumn term has a structured programme that deals effectively with many aspects of personal relationships. This includes considering individuals' differences and their feelings and beliefs. Pupils show a good understanding of these points, which were clearly demonstrated in a Year 7 lesson when discussing the issues surrounding refugees. These themes are reinforced at regular assemblies throughout the year. Pupils have the opportunity to become prefects, buddies, and sit as a class representative on the newly formed school council. To raise the status of these positions, the school should ensure that these pupils' are adequately monitored and supported in their roles and that the running of the school council is not too tightly controlled by adults. Attendance at 93.1 per cent is unsatisfactory and over one percent below the national average. Unauthorised absence at 2.6 per cent is very high. The school is aware of the situation and has policies in place to improve the situation.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. There is a higher than average proportion of unsatisfactory teaching throughout the school. The teaching has improved since the last inspection when only 82 per cent of the teaching was satisfactory. Currently, 87 per cent of the teaching is satisfactory or better and 46 per cent is good or better. In addition, the proportion of teaching that is very good or better has also improved since the last inspection. Twenty-one per cent is very good or better, with 6 per cent that is excellent. The majority of the teachers had at least one lesson that was very good or excellent and this illustrates the inconsistencies amongst the teaching skills and methods. For example, the teaching in mathematics is good overall. This has been brought about through good guidance from the subject coordinator, the additional structure to lessons provided by the National Numeracy Strategy, improvements to the teachers' own skills and expertise and a genuine and consistent desire among all staff to raise standards.

15. In Year 7, 77 per cent of the teaching is satisfactory or better and 23 per cent is good or better. In the junior classes, 91 per cent of the teaching is satisfactory or better and over half is good or better. The teaching is generally stronger in Years 4 and 5 but there are strengths and weaknesses throughout the school.

16. These figures indicate that, although there has been improvement since the last inspection, there are still significant weaknesses in the quality of the teaching that need to be addressed. These have not been helped by the difficulty the school has had in replacing staff who have left. A number of teachers have expectations of their pupils that are too low and are not active enough in raising the pupils' often low aspirations and self-esteem. In too many lessons, teachers do not plan tasks that are appropriate enough for different pupils' prior attainment or ability. This is especially true for those with special educational needs in the mainstream classes, and for those higher attaining pupils, who are too often not sufficiently challenged by the work provided. The deployment of learning support assistants does not always make best use of their time, although when they are working with pupils their support often has a positive impact and enables pupils to make sound progress and to take an effective part in the lesson.

17. The quality of teaching that pupils with special educational needs receive in the main school is, with a few exceptions, unsatisfactory and there has been no improvement since the previous inspection. Although class teachers write the individual education plans for pupils with special needs, these are of mixed quality and often unsatisfactory and are insufficiently used when planning lessons. Class assistants, who provide much of the close support for special needs pupils, are often poorly briefed by teachers about the purpose of activities in advance of lessons and this leads to considerable inefficiency in the use of their valuable time. The pupils' books too often contain incomplete work. In lessons, pupils with special needs are rarely given work that is at a different level to the other pupils and it is at times too difficult. Additional literacy support is provided during the literacy hour but this does not consistently follow the national guidance and is not as tightly organised as it should be to teach phonics and word level skills. On the other hand, the two pupils with statements in the main school receive satisfactory teaching. Support from learning assistants for these pupils is sufficient and good use is made of information and communications technology to extend their learning in other subjects.

18. The quality of teaching of pupils in the learning support centre is very good with some excellent features. Individual education plans are very detailed and precisely reflect the needs identified in pupils' statements. Plans accurately include

strategies for supporting pupils' progress towards their stated targets. Observations, comments, questions and marking are used very effectively to assess pupils' progress and targets are constantly reviewed and modified to move learning on. All staff, including non-teaching staff, are familiar with the targets set in individual education plans and work within lessons is very well matched to the pupil's individual needs. Individual programmes are devised for reading and writing enabling pupils to progress at their own rate. Pupils respond very positively to the high expectations the adults have of them. Positive behaviour is reinforced through praise and rewards and pupils have clear rules to show them what is acceptable. This has a very positive effect on their rate of learning and the standards of work they produce. Staff have very successful strategies to manage challenging behaviour. An excellent knowledge of individual pupils ensures that behavioural difficulties are handled fairly and consistently. In one high quality lesson, a pupil's obvious difficulties in controlling her temper were skilfully handled by the teacher. Her actions immediately took the child's anger away, leaving the pupil with self-esteem intact and a potentially volatile situation was avoided. Such teaching instils confidence and assists pupils in settling to their tasks and achieving a feeling of success and self esteem. In a minority of lessons, the teaching of the older pupils in the centre does not ensure effective learning. In these circumstances, tasks are not well differentiated; pupils are confused and unclear about the purpose; and management strategies to control unacceptable behaviour are too negative.

19. Where there is very good and excellent teaching throughout the school, it is characterised by good relationships with the pupils and where lively and exciting teaching, using humour as well as knowledge and expertise, creates a very effective ethos for learning. In an excellent science lesson, for example, the teacher used her very effective relationship with the class, together with well-resourced and very well-paced teaching, to create very clear improvements in pupils' understanding of circuits and conductivity. The lesson was planned well and in good detail, the learning support assistant effectively deployed and the teacher brought the learning together at the end of the lesson, superbly drawing together all of the learning objectives she had intended. A number of teachers use the beginnings of lessons effectively, with good questioning skills, to revise and consolidate prior learning before beginning the new work. Good use is made of individual's expertise in some subjects, for example, through teachers swapping classes to take lessons they have personal expertise in. For example, in Year 7, one teacher takes both classes for dance and for French and this is very effective in ensuring her expertise is used to best effect with all pupils. In Year 6, the physical education expertise of one teacher is used effectively.

20. In many lessons, well-paced and planned teaching, together with effective handling of pupils, especially those more difficult to manage, resulted in good learning. For example, in geography the teacher's good subject knowledge led to some effective teaching about rain forests and how economic decisions have an impact on environments. Good teachers patiently and carefully explained tasks, leaving pupils in no doubt as to the aims of the lessons. The display of learning objectives helped pupils understand what they were to learn, but these objectives are not always discussed with pupils, and on occasion are merely descriptions of activities rather than true learning objectives. The National Numeracy Strategy has been effectively introduced throughout the school, and this is having a very positive effect on standards as well as teaching. However, the National Literacy Strategy has been less effectively introduced and the impact on standards, especially in writing, has been less clear.

21. In a number of good lessons, the teachers had clearly adjusted their lessons planning to take account of earlier lessons and the learning made. This showed that there is some good assessment of learning and that it is used in planning future work. However, this is not reflected in the marking, which too often does not make clear to pupils what they have done well, or what they need to do to improve. Not all teachers insist on good presentation of pupils' work, or that they show enough pride in their books. Homework provision is inconsistent, although there are some good examples of homework being effectively linked to class work.

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

22. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement in the curriculum provided by the school, although there are still areas requiring further development if the school is to provide a satisfactory curriculum relevant to the needs of all pupils. The school's curriculum includes all subjects of the national curriculum and religious education but is insufficiently broadly based and is narrow in terms of curriculum enrichment. There are concerns, for example, in aspects of the English curriculum that the range of work does not meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those with special educational needs in mainstream classes. At the time of the last inspection, the school did not have policies and schemes of work for all subjects. This has improved and now there is a whole school curriculum plan, which provides an overview of provision in each year group and across the school. This encompasses all subjects except music and art and design, which still require policies and schemes of work to be completed and implemented in order to meet statutory requirements in these subjects. Since the last inspection a detailed policy and scheme of work for information and communication technology has been implemented so the requirements for that subject are now fully met.

23. The taught week, which in the last inspection was below that recommended by the Department of Education and Employment, has been extended and is now above the recommended minimum. An appropriate allocation of time is now given

to all subjects to provide a better balance of subjects across the teaching week. The school has modified the time for teaching the non-core subjects, without losing the integrity of these subjects, in order to provide for teaching the literacy and numeracy strategies. The implementation of the numeracy strategy has had a positive impact on standards in mathematics but aspects of the literacy curriculum lack challenge. Personal and social education permeates the work of the school and has a very positive impact on promoting good behaviour and developing positive relationships between pupils. Health and sex education are taught appropriately and the school involves local police in helping to make the pupils aware of the dangers of drugs misuse.

24. The school does not sufficiently ensure equality of access to the curriculum for all pupils. For the last two years girls' standards of attainment in English, mathematics and science tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have been much lower than that of boys. In lessons, teachers frequently involve boys more than girls, for example, by targeting boys to answer questions more frequently than the girls in the class. Lessons are not always building on pupils' prior learning.

25. The school has started to offer a good range of extra-curricular activities and these are beginning to be well supported by the children. The activities include a school choir, drama, recorders, calligraphy and a gardening club that is run by a school governor. There remains more scope for improving the provision of and encouraging the participation in extra-curricular activities. The provision for extra-curricular activities is similar to that in most schools and includes provision for sport and music as well as opportunities for pupils to develop reading and computer skills to a higher level. The school makes satisfactory use of planned visits to places in the local and more distant community to enhance pupils' curricular experience. Links are maintained with other schools and colleges in the area and these have a positive impact on the school's provision. For example, the school has worked closely with the high school in developing the Year 7 curriculum to ensure curriculum coverage and promote smooth transition for pupils.

26. The curriculum in the learning support centre is very good. Pupils take a full part in the life of the school sharing PE lessons with their peers, attending assemblies and sharing the main school's playtimes and lunch times. This has a positive impact on pupils' personal and social skills. In all subjects, the staff have imaginatively adapted the National Curriculum to meet the needs of pupils with significant and complex learning needs. Excellent planning ensures that pupils cover the same work as their peers in the main school. Tasks are imaginative and materials are adapted well to interest pupils. The centre's stimulating and challenging curriculum is reflected in the high quality of display in classrooms. Such displays are very purposeful and mirror the staff's aim to provide pupils with a meaningful and worthwhile curriculum. Statutory requirements in relation to the pupils' statements are carried out rigorously. This very good provision has a positive impact on the pupils' progress. Statements are implemented fully and imaginative support enables such pupils to have full access to the whole curriculum.

27. The curriculum for pupils with special needs in the main school is not intended to be significantly different from the other pupils but a lack of coordination in the use of support staff sometimes leads to them having unequal access. In a science lesson, for example, one pupil spent the entire lesson working on literacy skills and missed all of the scientific knowledge, and this is unsatisfactory. Individual education plans are now written for all pupils on the special needs register and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. The overall quality of individual education plans, however, is variable. Too many of the individual plans for pupils without statements are imprecisely worded and contain targets where progress towards achieving them cannot be easily measured. In many plans, it is not clear what, specifically, is to be learnt; precisely how much additional support is to be provided and when; or which particular resources are to be used. Unless precision is there, the child's ability to learn cannot be properly assessed. The individual plans are regularly reviewed but evaluations of the progress made are too generalised. Lesson plans and the teaching in the main school do not make adequate provision for pupils with special needs and this is why their progress is insufficient for them to catch up on national expectations. The provision in the main school for pupils with statements is consistent with that specified in their statements and requirements are met.

28. Overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. The basis of this provision is to be found by the care and commitment of the headteacher and her staff. Provision for the spiritual development of the pupils is satisfactory. Most of the school assemblies have a clear spiritual dimension with hymns and prayers. There is a planned programme of assembly themes for each term. In addition to religious topics, the assemblies deal with social and moral issues. In an assembly during the inspection, taped music and the singing of the school choir were used to good effect to create a calm and reflective atmosphere. Prayers are linked to the theme of the assembly. The pupils have been actively involved in discussion about caring acts and they listened thoughtfully to the prayer and were forthright in voicing their collective 'Amen' at its close. The walls in most classrooms are covered in well-presented and informative displays that are spiritually inspiring. Some lessons also contained spiritual dimensions as in one art lesson where two pupils were amazed that their colour mix had produced 'gold'! While in a music lesson, some pupils responded maturely, commenting that they had 'become lost' in the music that they were listening to. Religious education contributes to spiritual development as a significant part of its curriculum although this is often not planned.

29. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. The school has made good progress in improving behaviour and has placed a lot of emphasis upon its moral base. Assemblies and personal, social and health education sessions are used to promote awareness and sensitivity to the needs of others. They also promote self esteem and good behaviour based upon self-discipline. In one assembly, the pupils were made aware of the iniquitous and illogical basis of racism when a teacher used eye colour to divide them into 'good' pupils and 'also-rans'. Some pupils saw the nonsense of this and laughed at it, others were affronted and indignant. There are special assemblies to celebrate achievement. Behaviour is good during most lessons and misbehaviour is generally dealt with in a firm but positive manner. In this, the class teachers are often well supported by the teaching assistants. Pupils are generally polite around the school.

30. Provision for pupils' social development is satisfactory. In many lessons, the pupils have the opportunity to work cooperatively. They have been able to participate in producing their own rules for classroom conduct through the development of class contracts. Pupils are encouraged to participate in charitable activities such as 'Red Nose Day'. Social development is also fostered through personal and social education, circle time and the school council. For example, the attitudes of people towards refugees in Great Yarmouth and the United Kingdom were the focus of one social education lesson. The school council meeting observed discussed several issues. These included ideas for more fund raising for charity, the new school toilet block approved by the governors, at the request of the pupils and a proposal that eating packed lunches outside should be allowed.

31. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The curriculum for religious education makes a strong contribution through the study of world faiths to knowledge, understanding and respect for other cultures. Experiences through attending local events such as an Islamic Day and a Multicultural Day give pupils further insights into other cultures. While some pupils have made visits to a local maritime museum, to an Elizabethan house and to an exhibition of art about Great Yarmouth and the fishing industry, cultural links with the local community in terms of involvement with people is not well developed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school offers a good level of care to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, and there are good arrangements for child protection. The headteacher is the nominated teacher for child protection. She is experienced in her role and knows the pupils well, judging correctly when to involve outside agencies. The awareness of the majority of other teaching and non-teaching staff is satisfactory. They are aware of their role but lack any formal awareness training. First aid provision is good with a dedicated medical room and a certificated learning support assistant available at all times. This assistant has also had training in listening skills should pupils call for emotional support. Attention to health and safety is satisfactory. The school caretaker and cleaners maintain a high standard of cleanliness this creates a safe learning environment and instils high values in the pupils. There was no evidence of graffiti or malicious damage and aspects of maintenance are attended to promptly.

33. The low level of attendance is unsatisfactory and the school has a policy in place to improve the situation. A good aspect is that the attendance of particular pupils is monitored daily by the class teacher and members of the office and senior teaching staff. Should the need arise, outside agencies are immediately involved. Overall, however, the procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are unsatisfactory. Registers are manually maintained and are kept in the classrooms all day and not returned to the school office. Latecomers must attend the office for registration, creating unnecessary paperwork. Senior staff scan registers visually for patterns of poor attendance, involving the education welfare officer when required. No statistical analysis is carried out to focus attention on the small number of pupils who adversely affect the school's attendance.

34. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good and have proved to be effective. Parents and long serving non-teaching staff recognise the improvements made since the last inspection. A system of rewards and sanctions is in place with all teaching and non-teaching staff involved. One stage of the procedure involves pupils making their own assessment of their actions and the impact on others while another stage includes formal parental contact. The improvement in behaviour has meant that procedures to address bullying or other oppressive behaviour are now seldom applied. Good records are maintained and certificates awarded. There is still too much over-boisterous play at lunchtime.

35. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Formal communication about pupils' progress is made through the annual report and the parents' evenings. Pupils with a special education need and taught in the learning support centre are very well monitored and supported, however monitoring and support for pupils with special education needs in the main school is not to the same high standard. Learning support assistants in the main school have a number of different start and finish times that makes communication with teachers regarding individual pupils difficult, and their contribution to assessing a pupil's performance and attainment at an individual level is limited. Overall, the procedures for assessing pupils' progress are not satisfactory and the use of this information to guide curricular planning is under developed. However, the arrangements recently introduced in mathematics provide a good role model for other areas to follow, giving a planned and timetabled series of assessments to track pupils' progress.

36. In the learning support centre, very high quality teacher assessments are used to monitor the progress and attainment of pupils. Individual records are carefully kept identifying future needs and informing teachers of the next stage of learning. Pupils are involved in their own reviews giving them ownership of their targets and knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses. The staff's support for pupils with special educational needs ensures that most pupils make good progress and many successfully achieve their specific learning objectives, which enables them to move on at a good rate. The school has appropriate links with outside agencies and keeps parents well informed throughout the process.

37. Pupils with special educational needs in the main school are rigorously identified, in part through the satisfactory use of standardised tests and this is good practice. The systems for tracking and quantifying the progress of special needs pupils are, however, underdeveloped and communication between those who teach such pupils is insufficient. All of the pupils who receive daily teaching of reading as part of the catch-up programme, for example, are on the special needs register. The catch-up teacher had not been informed of this fact. The catch-up provision is not identified on pupils' individual plans nor are the precise individual records that are maintained by the catch-up teacher shared with class teachers or the special needs leader, and this is unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

38. The school has tried to improve its partnership with parents but little progress has been made and it remains less well developed than is typically found. The parents' views of the school as expressed in the parents' questionnaire are poor compared to the typical school, with a significant minority tending to, or strongly disagreeing with the statements, especially those about homework and the way the school works with and provides information for parents. However, it is also clear that the school finds it difficult to get a significant minority of the parents involved positively in their children's education.

39. Parents state that their children enjoy school, are expected to work hard and that they are making good progress. A home/school agreement is in place and all parents are provided with an annual report that summarises well their child's school year. Parents with children in the learning support centres are very well supported with regular meetings and high quality information that enables regular reviews of their child's individual education plan. The quality of information provided for the majority of parents is only satisfactory. Parents expressed dissatisfaction with the school's approach to homework describing it as inconsistent. Inspection supports the parents' views in these respects.

40. The school issues a newsletter each half term that gives brief details of past and forthcoming events along with important dates. Little detail is provided of year group topic work or specific areas where parents could assist their children either in school or at home. Good practice is evident in a recently introduced leaflet that contains appropriate information about the mathematics targets set for pupils each year. No parents were seen meeting teachers either at the start or end of the teaching day, which is unusual. The school has difficulty filling the positions of parent governor and there are currently two such vacancies on the governing body. There is a mistaken perception amongst parents that they would not be welcome in school, though one parent governor assists in class on a regular basis and runs an extra-curricular club.

41. There is no parent teacher or 'friends' association for the school and attendance at education events organised by the school is reported to be poor. Social events are reported to be better attended. The school has introduced parent workshops where parents and children can work together in a learning environment that enables parents to experience modern teaching techniques. A very good example was seen of one of these sessions with a Year 4 class. Attendance at such workshops is encouraging and comments made by parents present were very positive. The workshops are attracting parents in to the school within a non-threatening and informal environment. The school needs to continue to develop initiatives in this difficult area that attract and encourage parents and members of the wider family to take part in school life.

42. In the learning support centre, links with parents are very good. The importance of working with parents as partners is apparent in the range of very effective strategies staff use to keep parents fully involved in their children's progress. For example, home/school books and certificates provide an effective link between home and school. Parents are kept informed of their child's strengths and weaknesses and celebration of successes can be shared. Parents have the opportunity to make useful observations of their child's learning at home to enhance their progress.

43. Parents of pupils with special educational needs but without statements in the main school are insufficiently involved as partners in the education process and this is unsatisfactory. A letter informs them that their child has been placed on the register but parents of pupils at the first and second assessment stages are not regularly invited to review meetings and records rarely identify their views or the dates of meetings when their views were sought.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The good leadership shown by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has created a very clear educational direction for the work of the school. They have ensured that throughout the necessary recent changes to the curriculum, teaching styles and staff changes that there has been a correct focus on the raising of standards in the basic skills and the expectations of the levels of attainment that the pupils are capable of achieving. Since the last inspection, the headteacher has worked extremely hard to alter teaching styles and curriculum planning into a model more appropriate for the ages of the pupils. This has taken a great deal of energy and time, and the changes to staffing have made it difficult to create a regular and purposeful senior management team that can share the load of making the important changes that are needed in the school. The present team is now settled, but very new, and more effective, and there has been steady improvement recently in most aspects of the school's work, although standards are still below where they should be and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is too high.

45. The school has a good, appropriate set of aims and objectives and these are evident in the day-to-day life of the school. The targets set by the school, for academic improvement and in other aspects of the school's work, such as improving the quality of teaching, are appropriately challenging. Over the past two years, with support from the local authority, the school has worked hard to target the weaknesses evident at the last inspection, and has now reached a point where clear improvement is evident and the systems are in place to enable this improvement to continue.

46. The deputy headteacher has begun to analyse the school's test data in more detail to enable teachers to have clearer information about those aspects of their teaching that are successful and those that do not result in sufficient progress. This work is still at an early stage but is already proving useful in identifying those parts of previous tests that pupils performed less successfully. This work has not yet been extended to the individual tracking of pupils to show the gains in learning they make but this is planned for the future, especially in mathematics.

47. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been good over the last four years. Through the headteacher's efforts, supported by the local authority, coupled with the deputy headteacher and some input from the governing body and subject leaders, clear evidence exists of improvements in the quality of teaching and in the development of a more appropriate curriculum. However, the subject coordinators need to continue with the planned training and be provided with more time to undertake this role. Good models for this exist in the work of the co-ordinators of mathematics, religious education and ICT. The appraisal of teachers has been carried out correctly in the past, and regular professional development meetings have been held with the headteacher. The introduction of performance management has been correctly done and promises to lead to further, more effective, professional discussions about teaching methods and styles. The induction of new teachers to the school, of which there have been a significant number since the last inspection, has been well handled and effective.

48. The governing body is very supportive of the work of the school. Governors have become more involved in the work of the school recently and they effectively carry out their statutory duties. One governor, in particular, spends a lot of time and effort helping the school, through lessons and extra curricular activities. The governing body meets regularly and is now being provided with more detailed information about attainment and progress. This is helping governors have a clearer view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but most governors need to develop a more consistent pattern of visits to the school in order to become more familiar with its day-to-day work. The school finds it difficult to recruit governors and at present the governing body needs two parent governors to complete its complement.

49. The school development plan is a very effective tool for prioritising the important areas for development. The school has produced a very good set of appropriate priorities for its future development, and these are well set out with good, detailed action plans and appropriate success criteria. Although these actions have been costed, there has been little involvement of governors in the production of the plan, and in the setting of budgets. The overall financial management and administration of the school is satisfactory and educational priorities are to the forefront in deciding spending. However, the governors rely too heavily on the school monitoring and reporting on spending and are not active enough in assisting the decision making process.

50. There is insufficient leadership and management of the special educational needs provision in the main school. The documented policy for special needs is out of date, in need of revision, and is not entirely consistent with current practice. The monitoring of individual education plans has lapsed and there is no monitoring of the provision through observation of teaching or the checking of samples of pupils' work and this is unsatisfactory. The systems for communicating information about pupils with special needs are underdeveloped. Classroom and learning support assistants are insufficiently briefed, although training in additional literacy support has been provided for the permanent assistants. Statutory requirements in respect of pupils with statements are met. The special educational needs coordinator has one day a week to manage the provision and this is insufficient given the large number of pupils with special needs. Strategic planning for special educational needs in the main school is poor. There is no priority for improvement identified in the school development plan and the coordinator's individual action plan does not include all relevant issues for improvement. All of the money received

for special needs in the main school through specific grants and in the general budget is spent on the provision but, given the shortcomings, value for money is unsatisfactory.

51. The special educational needs coordinator in the learning support centre provides very good leadership to ensure that resources are efficiently and effectively targeted at pupils with the greatest needs. Planning is carefully monitored to ensure that pupils receive a high quality curriculum. However, a lack of time does not allow the obvious skills of the coordinator to be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Administrative procedures for special educational needs are very good and comply with statutory requirements.

52. Equal opportunities have a high priority in the school. The theme of one good assembly held during the inspection was 'racism'. A challenging situation was created to bring the illogical basis of ideas about racial superiority to the attention of the pupils. There is evidence from the results of national tests that the performance of boys is better than the performance of girls. The school has yet to address this issue. However, there is no gender bias in the activities offered to pupils, although in some lessons boys tended to be more outspoken and willing to answer questions. All pupils have full access to the curriculum, except where there is special provision through individual education plans. All pupils have full access to educational visits and extra-curricular activities. However, during morning and lunchtime breaks both the senior and lower school playgrounds are dominated by very boisterous and highly competitive games of football. This results in both areas being difficult environments for pupils who require less energetic forms of relaxation. The provision of books and artefacts to support the learning of pupils about other cultures and to counter stereotypes is underdeveloped. Pupils are being satisfactorily equipped to live in a multicultural society through subject teaching, for example in religious education and geography, through assemblies, and by visits to multicultural events. In this respect leadership and management is satisfactory.

53. The school benefits from its accommodation in a number of ways. There is a large playing field, appropriate hard play areas and a separate dining room. In addition, the school has specialist art and design, and design and technology rooms, which the staff make use of whenever possible. In addition, there are smaller rooms used for group work and the extra sets in mathematics. There is a good library and a newly opened computer suite, which is yet to be fully operational but is already having a positive effect on standards. However, resources in physical education are poor, in both quantity and quality. There are not enough resources in art and design to enable pupils to experience a wide enough range of media and materials and the science resources are also insufficient for all classes who need them. Resources in mathematics, music and religious education have improved since the last inspection and are now good. The staffing levels are adequate.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. The school has been through a number of important staffing changes over the past few years, as the management has attempted, largely successfully, to introduce new ways of working and new styles of teaching into the school. In order for the improvements that have been made to be built on and for the school to build on the very good teaching and learning that exists in places, the governing body, headteacher and staff need to address the following issues, which they have recognised as priorities.

□ **Key issue 1:** improve standards in English, mathematics, science, information and communications technology, art and design, and design and technology through improving the quality of teaching, in the first instance, to a level that is consistent with a typical school by:

- eradicating quickly the unsatisfactory and poor teaching;
- further training in teaching methods and organisational strategies appropriate for the ages of the pupils, especially in writing;
- matching the work correctly to the pupils' learning needs and prior attainment; and identifying learning objectives in the planning that are specific to pupils at different attainment levels;
- effective and efficient deployment of the learning support assistants;
- raising teachers' expectations of how much the pupils can achieve.

(Paragraphs 1-9, 14-16, 21, 56 - 83)

□ **Key issue 2:** raise the quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs in the main school by:

- providing training for all teachers in writing individual education plans and, especially, in using them effectively when planning all aspects of work for pupils with special educational needs;
- working effectively with parents of pupils with special educational needs and treating them as partners in the education process;
- increasing the amount and the effectiveness of the monitoring of the provision undertaken by the special needs leader and by senior management.

(Paragraphs 6, 17, 27)

□ **Key issue 3:** increase the effectiveness of subject leaders by:

- providing appropriate training in monitoring and self-evaluation, concentrating on the use of performance data; scrutiny of samples of children's work; and lesson observations;
- increasing leaders' involvement in monitoring of teaching and learning; in the identification of strengths and weaknesses; and in the remedying of weaknesses;
- the development of improved assessment of pupils' progress in their subjects and the improved tracking of individual pupils' progress against their previous learning.

(Paragraphs 47, 50)

55. In addition, the governing body should consider including the following less important issues in their action plan:

- Improving the marking of pupils' work and making the provision of homework more consistent and more effectively used to consolidate the learning in lessons.

(Paragraph 21)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	81
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	15	25	41	11	1	1

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)	264
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	99

Special educational needs, including the Learning Support Centre

	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22
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	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	23
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.3
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.6
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
	2000	31	35	66

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	16	18	26
	Girls	19	18	26
	Total	35	36	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	53 (53)	55 (45)	79 (43)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	19	19
	Girls	21	24	25
	Total	38	43	44
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	59 (44)	67 (47)	69 (43)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	263
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	26	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)	14.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.2
Average class size	26.4

Education support staff: Y4 – Y7

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	265

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
	£
Total income	604 002
Total expenditure	586 388
Expenditure per pupil	2 196
Balance brought forward from previous year	71 253
Balance carried forward to next year	88 867

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	264
Number of questionnaires returned	71

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	55	34	7	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	41	51	4	1	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	49	14	7	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	39	23	18	4
The teaching is good.	29	53	4	3	11
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	43	22	12	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	36	15	3	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	35	52	7	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	14	38	27	10	11
The school is well led and managed.	19	39	19	12	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	31	48	12	4	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	42	19	12	8

Other issues raised by parents

Parents were concerned about the high turnover of staff over recent years, but they feel that the school has improved since the last inspection.

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

ENGLISH

56. The 2000 national test results showed the performance of pupils at the age of eleven to be well below the national average and below the performance of pupils in similar schools. Standards achieved by twelve-year-olds are well below the national average. However, the standards in Years 4 and 5 are moving close to the national average. Boys do better than girls in English throughout the school, reflecting the low self esteem many girls have. Standards are lower than those reported at the last inspection. However, over the last three years the overall trend has been one of improvement. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are set to dip again in the 2001 national tests. This is due in part to pupils' level of attainment on entry and the large number of pupils with special educational needs in the year group.

57. There are many factors hampering the school's performance in national tests and the low standards pupils reach, particularly in Years 6 and 7. They include, low attainment on entry, a high level of staff turnover, difficulties in recruiting teachers, high sickness levels, until recently an inappropriate secondary curriculum and teaching styles, and weaknesses in teachers' subject knowledge. In Years 6 and 7, the very high number of pupils with special educational needs is also an important factor in lowering standards. However, although many of these factors are beyond the school's control, the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and some continued weaknesses in the curriculum are the most significant in limiting pupil progress and standards of attainment.

58. Areas of significant concern in the teaching and learning have already been recognised by the school and the school development plan reflects this well. Literacy is beginning to have a higher priority throughout the curriculum. The school is beginning to implement a range of local and national strategies including additional literacy, booster classes, and the Education Action Zone 'Catch-up' scheme. In most classes the literacy strategy is being implemented well and is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Other strategies are not fully implemented and staff are unclear about their purpose. For example, the additional literacy scheme is only implemented in part and the impact is lost, resulting in pupils not gaining the full benefits of a well-structured and rigorous scheme. There is a lack of rigour and some confusion in the identification of pupils who are included in the 'Catch-up' reading initiative. As a result, although the school is moving in the right direction and has made some improvements in the teaching and learning in English, pupils are still not making the progress they are capable of and standards are still not good enough when compared to the national average.

59. The large numbers of pupils with special educational needs in the main school make insufficient progress because individual education plans do not provide sufficient detail to improve pupils' learning. As a result tasks are often not well matched to individual pupil needs and support staff are not sufficiently briefed to enable them to provide specific and focused support. Pupils in the Learning Support Centre make good progress and often very good progress in developing their literacy skills. The curriculum is very well planned to ensure pupils have access to the full range of learning opportunities. Well-structured individual programmes ensure that pupils are systematically taught the skills of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Focused teaching encourages pupils to transfer these skills to their independent writing and pupils are given strategies to help them become independent writers. Because of high quality teaching and support within lessons, many pupils are working competently within the expected levels, particularly in speaking, listening and writing.

60. Attainment in speaking and listening is well below average. Listening skills are slightly better than speaking skills but many pupils find it difficult to listen to each other and their teachers. Pupils are confident with adults and most show an appropriate understanding of formal language when greeting visitors. However, a majority of pupils have underdeveloped speaking and listening skills. When reading aloud pupils are encouraged to read with clarity and expression but these skills are not highlighted in general conversation or when answering questions. Overall insufficient emphasis is placed on speaking and listening within lessons and teacher's planning rarely refers to these aspects of the subject. There are missed opportunities to encourage pupils to express themselves thoughtfully and clearly. Inaccurate sentence structures go unchecked and the strategies pupils are taught in their written work are not always transferred to their spoken English. There are insufficient opportunities for role-play and discussion and this is one reason why pupils do not make the progress they are capable of in speaking and listening.

61. By the end of Year 7, attainment in reading is below average. However, a number of initiatives are having a positive impact on reading standards and pupils lower down the school in Years 4 and 5 are attaining standards that are close to the national average. The library is very well stocked with a range of high quality fiction and non-fiction books. Pupils are encouraged to use the library throughout the day and they can often be seen choosing and reading books before school or during break times. The quiet reading time each afternoon provides quality time when pupils read in groups or to other adults. Paired reading between Years 4 and 7 provides good opportunities for the younger pupils to read to an audience. By the age of twelve pupils are becoming confident readers of a range of texts. Books are usually well matched to pupils' attainment and

interest levels and chosen to reflect different cultures and to interest boys and girls. There are, however, occasions when pupils who have free choice, choose books which are too easy and do not provide them with sufficient challenge to move their reading skills on. Pupils show a developing understanding of different writers' styles and prefer particular authors such as JK Rowling and Roald Dahl. They understand plot, setting and characterisation and pupils that are more able make subtle deductions and inferences from their reading. Less able pupils use a range of strategies to help them recognise unfamiliar words, such as letter patterns and sounds or reading round the word to place it in context. Although pupils understand the use of dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses and encyclopaedias, they do not have sufficient opportunities to apply these skills in independent research. Reading books go home regularly and parents and carers are encouraged to hear their children read and record their progress. When this occurs, it has a positive effect on the pupils' reading skills and progress.

62. Attainment in writing is well below average. The development of writing is inconsistent and a significant number of pupils take insufficient pride in the presentation of their work. The amount of written work produced in some classes is insufficient. Pupils do not reach the levels of writing competence they should. Pupils write for a variety of purposes and recognise different genres such as romance, humour and adventure. Year 6 pupils have written their own moving accounts of the life of a Victorian child. Their work shows a very sensitive understanding of the horrors of poverty and cruelty. Pupils in Year 7 are beginning to organise their writing into chapters as they write their own 'book' about a 'Haunted House'. Pupils use their writing skills in other subjects, such as religious education, history and science. Although pupils' work is often interesting they do not analyse their work sufficiently to ensure that sentences are correctly structured or punctuation is used accurately and effectively. Although the conventions of grammar, punctuation, and spelling are taught through the literacy strategy, these skills are not transferred sufficiently well to pupils' independent writing. Simple punctuation is often missing and commas, apostrophes, speech marks, question marks and exclamation marks are not used to a satisfactory standard. Staff do not remind pupils of the importance of ensuring a high standard of written work and as a result pupils do not reach the expected level of attainment for their ages.

63. Pupils enjoy English lessons and standards of behaviour are usually good. Most pupils show favourable attitudes to learning and enjoy positive relationships with their teachers. When teaching is good or better pupils are very eager to learn, stay on task and show good levels of independence and concentration, and this has a positive effect on the standards of work they produce.

64. The quality of teaching is variable ranging from some that is excellent in the Learning Support Centre to some that is poor in the main school. During the inspection, teaching in Years 4 and 5 was never less than satisfactory and, in Year 4, was consistently good. Teaching in Years 6 and 7 was mainly satisfactory with some weaknesses in Year 6. However, a scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' work indicates that the quality of teaching is not consistently good enough to raise pupils' standards of attainment to enable them to reach the national average. Medium term plans are satisfactory but weekly planning, particularly for the pupils with special needs, is often unsatisfactory. It does not match the individual stated needs in the education plans and targets are too general. Most teachers share the learning objectives with the pupils and ensure that pupils are very clear about what it is they are expected to learn. Some teachers share with pupils the targets they need to reach the next National Curriculum level. However, these are often too general and are not sufficiently focused on individual needs. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are not given a sufficiently high priority. There are inconsistencies in the expectations of presentation of work and in the quality of marking. There are times when pupils' work is not marked and the marking rarely includes comments that help pupils improve their work. Where teaching is good or better, for example in Years 4, 5 and the Learning Support Centre, challenging questions and comments extend pupils' thinking. Learning is exciting as pupils and teachers together explore new vocabulary, check out ideas and make links with previous learning. A strength of the teaching is the effective management of pupils' behaviour which minimises interruptions to teaching and learning. Staff in Years 4 and 5 use music to set a quiet and calm working atmosphere. Relationships are very good and teachers use humour well to develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Support staff are not used effectively to give additional help to designated individuals and groups of pupils. Their skills are not used sufficiently well to enhance the learning opportunities for pupils.

65. Assessment and record keeping are in their early stages. National Curriculum tests and a wide range of other school tests and assessments are used to identify areas for whole school development and identify individual pupils' attainment. However, as yet the information is used insufficiently to plan for individual needs and there are inconsistencies in the recording of pupils' progress. For example, there are classes where there is no formal recording of pupils' reading progress. In others, comments are unhelpful in identifying weaknesses and moving learning on. The monitoring of lessons and planning by the coordinator, a local authority consultant and the headteacher is having a very positive impact on the quality of the teaching and learning. Although the school has a distance to go to bring standards closer to the national average they are very aware of the strategies needed and have made considerable progress in a short space of time and in very difficult circumstances created by the staffing situation.

MATHEMATICS

66. In the 2000 national tests, the eleven-year-old pupils attained standards that were well below those expected nationally. The pupils who leave the school at the end of Year 7 also have standards well below those expected for their ages. This is true for numeracy and for shape, space and measure and data handling. A below average proportion of pupils reached the expected level and a well below average proportion reached the high levels. Evidence from the inspection supports these results and the present Year 6 are unlikely to attain a higher standard, as indicated by their prior attainment. However, although still well below average, these results do demonstrate good improvement since the last inspection, and the capacity for the standards to improve further is also good. Results have improved over the last four years and at a much faster rate than that found nationally.

67. When they are compared to pupils in similar schools, the results show that attainment is below average. However the school has a high proportion of pupils with SEN and this has a negative effect on the test results. For example, among last year's eleven-year-olds, over 30 per cent were on the special needs register. Pupils' achievement, which demonstrates how they have improved over time, is unsatisfactory and pupils have not made satisfactory improvement during their time in the school. For example, of the present Year 7 only half of the pupils made the expected progress throughout the junior years (one of which, year 3, is not taught in this school), with only eight per cent exceeding expectations.

68. Boys attain higher standards than girls, which mirrors the national picture. The school has set appropriately challenging targets for the next two years, moving attainment from 55 per cent attaining or exceed the expected national level in 2000 to getting 70 per cent by 2002. In addition, the school aims to improve the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels from 12 per cent to 27 per cent.

69. By the time they leave the school, Year 7 pupils can use letters to stand for variables in a variety of calculations. They know the meaning of brackets and that a number attached to a letter refers to a multiplication calculation. The pupils are aware of their progress, can explain how in the previous term they undertook simple substitution, and have now developed skills in the use of brackets and equations that are more complex.

70. By the age of eleven, only the higher attaining pupils have a good ability to manipulate figures mentally. They are comfortable using positive and negative numbers in calculations and can perform good mental calculations involving metric units of measure and decimals. The middle attaining pupils are able to convert imperial to metric measures using a recipe and can reduce the proportions to create a recipe for one person rather than four. Pupils have an unsatisfactory level of skill in mentally working out problems being especially insecure with decimals and tenths. The lower attainers can use calculators accurately to multiply large numbers and they are developing a sound ability to estimate around the possible answer. Again, their mental work is less accurate and slower than it should be for their age, due to the lack of previous experiences with this type of activity.

71. In Year 5, most pupils have a secure grasp of multiplication tables. They can double amounts of money accurately and use the decimal point correctly. Higher attaining pupils can link fractions and percentages well and are able to estimate possible answers accurately before calculating. Lower attainers can use money in a variety of calculations and can add four figure numbers to make given totals, demonstrating a confidence with large figures. Displays show that pupils can use spreadsheets in information and communications technology to devise formulae to record football scores or the number of videos sold in a shop. Year 4 pupils demonstrate a sound ability to calculate using partitioning of numbers into tens and units. Mentally they use doubling and knowledge of the 2, 5 and 10 times tables to work out answers quickly. They demonstrate a sound understanding of place value when working out multiplication problems. Pupils with special educational needs in the learning support centres follow an appropriately modified curriculum. For example, Year 4 and 5 pupils are able to recognise coins and their values, and record sums using pound and penny signs. They can add simple amounts accurately. However, less able pupils are not able to recall the value of coins without prompting.

72. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate an enjoyment of the subject. This includes the mental sessions when they are keen to answer and the expression on their faces demonstrates concentration and the active working out of answers. Pupils are well behaved in lessons but do not have the habit of treating their exercise books with pride and care, too many of which are defaced with drawings and writing, and the presentation of their work is too often unsatisfactory. However, they are pleased when their work is correct and support each other when giving answers orally.

73. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. The National Numeracy Strategy has been effectively introduced and has helped give structure to lessons and to improve the pace with which teachers question and pupils work on tasks. In all years, pupils are grouped by prior attainment. This enables teachers to plan for a smaller range of abilities and to focus their teaching more accurately. However, the tasks given to individuals and groups within the sets are not always matched to their prior attainment closely enough to provide sufficient challenge for all pupils. Learning objectives are set and displayed for pupils, but they are not always discussed by teachers and do not always have meaning for the pupils. A good focus is placed

on encouraging pupils to explain how they have carried out a calculation, especially mentally and this consolidates their knowledge and understanding well. The recent introduction of a new policy and scheme with additional guidelines for teachers has also helped focus teaching on appropriate targets and levels of skill. The use of numeracy in other subjects such as science and geography is evident but not identified as a specific target for lessons. For example, good use of data handling skills in science has been made in creating graphs of different surfaces and the forces that affect movement. Although some good homework is given, its use is inconsistent and does not build sufficiently on previous work as pupils get older.

74. The school runs a mathematics club, open to all pupils in the school. This involves them staying one night a week and taking part in a variety of activities. For example, they play a range of mathematical games and are set challenging puzzles by the teacher. Others use the computer suite to develop and extend their control skills using software that enables them to draw complex mathematical shapes. The club is devising an Internet website that will carry puzzles and activities that the pupils have devised and solved. Although the take up for the club is limited at present, there are a good proportion of girls and its popularity is set to increase as standards continue to rise and more pupils become interested in mathematical activities.

75. The coordinator has worked very hard to create the new scheme and policy. This includes a good system for the planning of assessments, which will enable the better tracking of individual pupils' progress in future. There is still a need to develop the analysis of data from the range of tests and assessments now carried out, to enable teachers to have useful information that will inform their teaching and enable them to plan appropriate lessons with work matched effectively to pupils' abilities and prior attainment. The coordinator has devised a practical file for each teacher that contains appropriate information about key objectives for lessons, and planning and assessment guidance. Parents are provided with targets for the term for their child. This is intended to improve the home/school links and enable parents to take a more active role in helping their child at home. Senior staff have monitored the subject, and the co-ordinator has taken part in some joint observations of lessons with an adviser, to help improve his own skills in making effective and supportive assessments of other's work. The leader recognises the need to extend this monitoring role into areas such as looking at pupils' work. Resources have been improved and are now good. The numeracy link governor is very keen and has monitored work in the subject and reported to the full governing body. This has been effective in raising the profile of the subject among the governors.

SCIENCE

76. The standard of current work among the twelve-year-old pupils is well below average. Even so, about 80 per cent of them are attaining standards that are in line with the national expectation for their age. This proportion is typical of most schools and a big improvement since the last inspection. Very few pupils exceed expectations and this is much worse than the national picture. The lack of high attainment drags down the overall standards. The long-term achievement of the pupils is just satisfactory; about 70 per cent of them increase their attainment by the expected national amounts. More than one quarter of the pupils make less progress than might be expected. In particular, pupils who do well in the tests at age seven in the lower schools rarely make the progress that they should and this shows that the pupils that are more able are underachieving. Many of the pupils with special educational needs struggle, especially with the recording of investigations, and their progress is not as good as it should be.

77. There are no statutory national tests for the oldest pupils. The results of the 2000 national tests for eleven-year-olds were well below the national average but were broadly the same as similar schools. The comparison with similar schools shows that the educational value added is broadly satisfactory. The proportion attaining or exceeding the expected national standard, 79 per cent, was just below the national average but the proportion who exceeded expectations was less than half the typical proportion nationally. The results have improved significantly over the past five years and are catching up on other schools. The 2000 results show that boys are doing almost as well as boys nationally but the girls as a group are nearly one year behind and this should be remedied.

78. There are no statutory targets in this subject and none set by the school. The pupils' work and performance in lessons indicates that barely 70 per cent are on course to attain the expected national level by the end of the year. This is fewer than last year and reflects the considerable proportion of pupils with special educational needs in Year 6 this year.

79. The twelve-year-old pupils whose attainment is at expected levels, about 80 per cent, have an appropriate knowledge of each of the attainment targets in the National Curriculum programme of study. In life processes and living things, for example, they know about ecosystems and microhabitats and that animals adapt to specific habitats. They are able to describe the main functions of various human organs and have an appropriate knowledge of human reproduction. In physical processes, they have a satisfactory knowledge for their age of the solar system, the phases of the moon and the orbit of planets around the sun. With investigative science, they can carry out basic classifications of rocks and understand that experimentation usually requires the control of some variables in order to investigate changes in others. Very few pupils are yet at the stage when they can with total independence identify the key factors to be considered in an investigation or conduct a series of experiments, using measurement with appropriate precision.

80. Nearly all of the teaching is satisfactory and is meeting the learning needs of the majority of pupils. There is a small amount of good teaching, and isolated examples of excellent teaching, but the amount of good or better teaching is much less than is typical nationally. There are also isolated instances of unsatisfactory teaching. The bulk of the teaching is meeting the learning needs of pupils with average ability but is not stretching the pupils that are more able or supporting adequately those who are less able and this is why standards are not higher. Nevertheless, the teaching now is better than when last inspected.

81. In an excellent lesson in Year 4, the teacher's subject knowledge, explanations and questioning skills were of a high order and were used efficiently and effectively to captivate the pupils' interest and engage their minds in extensive problem solving using knowledge of electrical circuits. The pupils worked in pairs and handled the materials to make circuits. This allowed pupils at all levels of ability to work productively and practically. By the end of the lesson, more than 90 per cent of the pupils were able to test accurately the conductivity of a range of materials and draw appropriate conclusions from their experiments.

82. Where teaching is satisfactory, there is an emphasis on direct teaching to the whole class, which is good practice, but the amount of time spent using this particular method is too great compared to the limited opportunities pupils have in these lessons for practical work. What is taught directly using verbal methods is appropriate and pupils gain knowledge but they are not always well motivated by this method and do not learn as quickly as they should. In Year 7, too much time is given to pupils copying information from the blackboard instead of composing writing or devising their own charts, tables, and diagrams. Insufficient use is made of teacher demonstration. Homework is given inconsistently and the amount is often very low. The unsatisfactory teaching reflects insufficient subject expertise, leading to teaching methods that place too much reliance on talk and not enough on practical activity, especially with pupils whose low attainment and special needs makes learning through wholly verbal means a struggle.

83. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection. Good use is made of nationally prepared schemes and curricular guidance. The amount of time given to the subject is consistent with recommendations. The medium term planning is of satisfactory quality and used appropriately to achieve curricular comparability between classes with pupils of the same age. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The leader has been in post for a year and a half and has rightly concentrated on long term curriculum planning. He has recently begun to monitor work samples and this good practice is already beginning to support the improvement of the subject. No checking of the teaching through observation has yet taken place, which is unsatisfactory, and this shortcoming is preventing the sharing of good practice and is slowing the pace of improvement in teaching. Assessment of pupils is based on curricular targets, which is good practice, but the curricular targets are not linked to assessment levels and this is preventing the development of systems for tracking the progress of pupils. Resources are satisfactory but not enough use is made of information technology to support learning in the subject.

ART AND DESIGN

84. During the inspection, it was only possible to observe three lessons. Other evidence was gained from looking at displays, scrutinising pupils' work and sketch-books, and talking to teachers and pupils. There was little evidence of three-dimensional work. Evidence indicates that pupils' work is well below average at the age of eleven and the age of twelve. Standards have deteriorated since the last inspection. In some measure this is due to the high turnover of staff in recent years, which has resulted in no permanent art leader being appointed, and in the need for the school to focus its attention on more important aspects of the teaching and curriculum.

85. Many teachers lack a clear knowledge and understanding of the development of artistic skills. There is no up to date scheme of work to support them and they have not yet had sufficient guidance to deliver the new government initiatives for art and design effectively. Consequently, skills are not taught with any continuity. Pupils have limited experience in a wide variety of media such as pastel, charcoal, pencil or paint and the standards of work are low. Work on display indicates that skills are not taught progressively through year groups and across key stages. For example, colour mixing in paint in Year 7 showed little improvement on a similar exercise in Year 4. Although pupils study a range of artists such as Lowry, Picasso and Klee they often copy work and do not always have a sound understanding of the techniques and various styles these artists use. However, pupils studying at the work of Hokusai had looked carefully at his use of colour in 'The Wave' and at how it gives the impression of movement, strength and depth. Art is sometimes used to good effect as a cross-curricular activity as, for example, in the pictures forming an historical time line in Year 6. Pupils who attend the calligraphy club are attempting the difficult uncial style of writing and are achieving praiseworthy results.

86. There is no permanent coordinator for the subject and consequently satisfactory teaching is not yet assured. Art and design is not seen as a vehicle to develop and enhance the whole curriculum. Although a workshop has been held for teachers to guide them in early skills this has yet to lead to improvements in pupils' work. Furthermore, there is no portfolio of work to exemplify good practice. Assessment procedures are not in place to help raise standards or to give teachers a clear understanding of pupils' prior knowledge, experiences or attainment

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

87. Six lessons were seen during the inspection, five in the junior classes and one in Year 7. Other evidence was gained from looking at displays, scrutinising pupils' work and teachers' planning and talking to pupils and teachers. Although there were pleasing examples of work early in the key stage, overall the range of work is limited so that by the age of eleven the standard of pupils' work is not as high as expected. At the age of twelve pupils' work is also well below standard. Standards have deteriorated since the last inspection when they were satisfactory and woodworking skills were thought to be good. As with other non-core subjects this is partly due to the high turnover of staff in recent years and to the re-addressing the curriculum to give it a more appropriate primary focus.

88. Although the majority of teaching seen was satisfactory, there was limited evidence of written work where pupils had recorded processes or detailed evaluation. Also, where teachers had not adhered to the requirements of the National Curriculum, lessons lost a technology focus and skills were not developed. This was evident in a lesson where pupils were making box models of the rainforest. Although pupils were thoroughly enjoying their work and were consolidating much geographical and economic knowledge, they had a limited understanding of sufficient basic technology skills to cut, fold and join materials suitably. Procedures were not thought out logically and many guessed at dimensions. Similarly in Year 7, pupils had not had sufficient opportunities to build a bank of skills upon which they could call when set tasks. Also, as strict routines and boundaries had not been set, pupils cut haphazardly wasting materials, used inappropriate fixatives and neglected to clear away at the end of the lesson. In Year 4, however, new procedures are being introduced and these are having a positive effect on pupils' knowledge and understanding and on the standards of written work. Designs are well presented and clearly labelled, tasks and methods of construction are clearly explained, and work is evaluated. Teachers ensure that skills are built upon as, for example, where pupils have looked at ways of joining art straws and making 90-degree angles. They have evaluated which way is best before moving on to make art straw constructions. In a cross-curricular activity, many pupils have made masks for the Hindu festival of Holi. Some of these are well constructed and imaginatively depict the various characters.

89. Although new to the post, the coordinator has completed a curriculum audit and has produced a detailed policy and draft scheme of work to guide and support teachers. These have already had a positive impact on standards in Year 4 and ensure a sound basis for work as pupils' progress through the school. Assessment procedures are being developed and these too are on trial in Year 4. The school is fortunate to have a splendid design and technology room with suitable resources and teachers are beginning to use this to good effect.

GEOGRAPHY

90. Standards at the ages eleven and twelve are broadly in line with national expectations and are better than those found at the last inspection. Very few pupils are set to exceed national expectations and geographical enquiry, comparison and explanation are not developed in sufficient depth. However, attitudes to the subject and aspects of the teaching of skills have improved and there has been limited improvement in the study of places. The teaching effectively develops the learning of boys and girls equally but the higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils with special educational needs are supported appropriately and make good progress.

91. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress up to the age of eleven years and in Year 7. In Year 4, pupils learn to use large-scale maps of the school and the local area. They know how to find places in an atlas and they learn to use knowledge of the needs of early settlements to select appropriate sites. In Year 5, pupils describe the weather and climates in different parts of the world. A particularly good lesson showed how pupils achieve well when they are challenged. They researched information on changes occurring in the Amazonian rainforest and went on to consider the impact of them and to express their own feelings and concerns. In addition to the study of river features in Year 6, pupils begin to be able to interpret Ordnance Survey maps. In a lesson developing their map skills, the pupils learned well as they acquired the skill to use contours to interpret relief through steps that were carefully sequenced by the teacher. They used good resources and practised their skills under the close watch of the teacher, receiving help as soon as it was needed. In Year 7, pupils further develop their skills to use Ordnance Survey maps. They have an appropriate knowledge of latitude and longitude. They can describe the structure of the Earth and can explain the major features and characteristics of earthquakes and volcanoes using labelled diagrams. However, there are differences in the standards attained between parallel classes.

92. The quality of teaching is good overall. Where it is successful, teachers use good subject knowledge to plan lessons in detail and this provides clear direction to the lesson, good pace and good quality questioning. These ensure a sense of purpose for the pupils and challenge their abilities. In a Year 4 lesson on the use of coordinates, the teacher used good subject knowledge and crisp questioning, to lead the pupils from a problem their initial level of skills would enable them to solve, to

one they could not answer. The challenge engaged the children and they continued with the lesson, keen to find out how they could respond successfully. Where teaching is less effective, explanation and tasks are not matched to the differing needs of the pupils and they are placed in situations where they do not have sufficient understanding to be able to progress in their learning. Alternatively they do not progress because the tasks do not require pupils to compare findings, explain outcomes or apply knowledge and understanding, and there is insufficient challenge to move their learning on.

93. As found in the previous inspection, curriculum planning and assessment are underdeveloped. Staff and staffing problems have continued to have a detrimental impact on coordination of the subject. Resources are just adequate. There has been little staff development in the subject recently. However, a new policy and revised scheme of work have been produced and the leader is clear about remedying identified weaknesses. There is no system for assessment to track the progress of individual pupils.

HISTORY

94. Standards at the ages of eleven and twelve years are broadly in line with national expectations and are similar to those found at the last inspection. However, very few pupils are set to exceed national expectations. Higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils with special educational needs are supported appropriately and make sound progress. It was only possible to observe three lessons and so judgements are based on these lessons along with information gathered from the scrutiny of pupils' work, discussions with staff and from planning documents.

95. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress up to the age of eleven years and in Year 7. Throughout the school, they make good progress in understanding the chronology of events. However, resources are limited. Most are secondary sources in printed form and there are insufficient artefacts and primary source materials. Pupils therefore make only limited progress in developing skills in historical interpretation and enquiry.

96. In Year 4, the pupils can describe many aspects of life in Roman Britain and can use maps and diagrams to help illustrate their work. They understand how archaeological remains can help to provide evidence of what buildings, settlements and burials were like in Anglo-Saxon Britain. In Year 5, pupils record their knowledge of key features of the way of life at the time of the Tudors. Pupils are asked to make individual responses to the work set and this allows them to demonstrate different levels of attainment. In Year 6, pupils have appropriate understanding of life in Victorian times and of some famous Victorians. They also learn about Ancient Greece. In a good lesson with special educational needs pupils, the children were keen to tell how decorations on pots gave good clues to various aspects of life in Ancient Greece. In Year 7, pupils used contemporary illustrations to find out about pastimes in Medieval Britain.

97. The quality of teaching in the few lessons seen was satisfactory. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are engaged with the past at the very outset of the lesson and are led into activities that challenge them to interpret the past as well as just learn facts. This offers opportunities for all pupils to exercise their thinking skills and for higher attaining pupils to be challenged. In a Year 7 lesson, the pupils found the coloured medieval illustrations shown by the teacher to be intriguing and amusing. They were asked to describe what they could see and then to consider how they might be seeing the past through modern eyes. In the same lesson, the teacher held attention by directing some questions at pupils who appeared to be inattentive. Teaching is also effective where pupils can gain personal experience of life at certain times in the past. This has been provided through residential courses for pupils to experience life as it was in Victorian times and in the Second World War. Where teaching is less effective, tasks are not sufficiently differentiated, are repetitive and lack pace. This results in pupils losing attention, failing to respond to the teacher's attempts to develop the lesson and in some cases misbehaving.

98. The leader is keen to have a more positive influence upon the subject. As found at the last inspection, staffing has continued to be a problem. A new policy and scheme of work is now in place, but there is a lack of detailed guidance on short term planning to support staff in areas of weakness such as historical interpretation and enquiry. A shortage of resources is also a problem in teaching these aspects of history. There has been very limited staff development in the subject and there is no assessment system to track the progress of individual pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

99. Standards are well below average for the majority of eleven-year-olds and twelve-year-olds. This is due largely to difficulties experienced by the school in securing reliable hardware, resource limitations, lack of Internet access, and the high turnover of staff, all of which have resulted in pupils not having the benefit of the full curriculum in the past. Therefore, although pupils acquire skills in word processing and graphics, control and modelling, simulations, multimedia packages and data handling, these aspects have not been taught in sufficient depth. Even so, standards are higher than at the last inspection and improvement since that time is satisfactory. The curriculum has been revised and direct teaching to whole

classes takes place in the recently opened computer suite. This has enough computers to enable most pupils to work in pairs. The teaching is effectively leading to boys and girls developing knowledge equally. High attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged. Pupils with special educational needs and low attaining pupils are supported appropriately and make sound progress.

100. In Year 7, pupils are developing their basic skills in word processing, graphics, databases and spreadsheets ready for transfer to the senior school. The names and functions of basic keys are known. They can load and find programs, folders and files, amend, print and save their work. Their knowledge of control and modelling is limited due to a lack of hardware. In a satisfactory Year 6 lesson, the principles of spreadsheets were rehearsed at the start, highlighting their usefulness. Then the pupils went on to use the spreadsheet to calculate total weekly costs of newspapers by entering data in cells, using the correct rows and columns and then to set up the formula.

101. In a good Year 5 lesson pupils rehearsed and developed their word processing skills. Text developed in a literacy lesson by obtaining information from non-fiction sources and written as paragraphs was brought to the lesson. This was used to practise the creation of text, to centre and underline titles, to change text alignment and to save text using the toolbar and menu commands. Year 4 pupils can combine graphics with text, use musical software to develop musical composition, use simulations to explore options, enter data onto a database and use a spreadsheet. In a very good Year 4 lesson the pupils accessed LOGO from the desktop, which they learned to repeat successfully. In addition, all Year 4 pupils have attended a week's residential course where they used the Internet and e-mail.

102. The quality of teaching overall is very good. Where teaching is excellent and very good, teachers have a detailed knowledge of the pupils and match the pace of the lesson and the level of explanation and challenge to the needs of the pupils very well. Good lesson plans show good knowledge of the appropriate ideas and skills. Teachers ask questions that effectively move the children's learning on. Pertinent support ensures that pupils work purposefully and stay on task. Where teaching is less successful, less care is taken during the early stages of the lesson to ensure that all the pupils are secure in performing the basic tasks necessary to get the activity under way. Because of this, the pupils experience a variety of problems that create difficulties for the teacher in maintaining a good pace. This results in the children's learning not moving forward quickly enough.

103. The subject is well led and managed. The leader is very experienced and leads through the example of his teaching. He is using his experience and subject expertise to develop the subject knowledge and skills of the staff as well as the pupils. This is being done through the provision of well-planned and detailed booklets that guide the teaching of lessons. He also observes lessons every week and makes use of other experienced colleagues to support staff who need help. A policy and scheme of work are in place. A system for assessing and tracking the progress of pupils has been planned but is not yet in operation throughout the school. Current resources are inadequate but there are firm plans in place to remedy the deficiencies. The school is not yet linked to the Internet or networked and there are insufficient resources for control. Plans exist to purchase a scanner and more software. While use is made of information and communications technology in literacy, numeracy and science, the subject is not yet used fully to support the other subjects in the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

104. The pupils in Year 7 receive one lesson of French each week. One teacher with good personal expertise teaches the two classes. She follows a curriculum agreed among the local middle schools, which prepares pupils adequately for secondary school. The overall standards have been maintained at a satisfactory level since the last inspection.

105. During the inspection, it was only possible to observe one lesson. This consisted of good teaching and learning and clearly enabled pupils to build on their previous experience of using the language. Although the pupils were noisy moving from one room to another, and were slow to settle, once the lesson started they were involved, interested and joined in the activities provided well. The teacher uses her subject knowledge and expertise effectively and with humour to gain pupils' interest. The lesson began with a good oral 'Simon Says' type activity that required pupils to listen carefully and respond quickly. Overall, the pupils are attaining a satisfactory understanding of a variety of vocabulary and they try hard to speak using an appropriate accent. They know a number of basic phrases, days of the week and numbers to 30. Scrutiny of their written work shows a growing development of the correct use of gender and tenses and understanding of the lives of ordinary French people.

106. The lesson was well planned, with the oral work leading appropriately into the textbook activities. The lesson had good pace and the teacher kept all pupils on task and involved effectively. For example, one oral task required pairs of pupils to speak together and the teacher gave an appropriate length of time to ensure that the pupils were focused on completing the work. The teaching also had an appropriate emphasis on the rhythm of the language, which supported pupils' attempts to speak correctly.

MUSIC

107. On addition to the lessons observed, evidence was gained by listening to singing in assembly, scrutinising pupils' work and talking to teachers and pupils. No evidence was available for pupils in Year 7 and so no judgement can be made for standards here. Overall, by the age of eleven, standards reach those expected for pupils' ages in singing and performance. The standard of musical appreciation in the one lesson heard in Year 6 was very good. The standards in music at the last inspection have not been maintained. However, this is mostly because of considerable disruption caused by changes in staffing and the loss of a teacher with specific expertise in the subject.

108. Although no teacher has any particular musical expertise, in all the lessons seen the quality of teaching was always good and in one lesson was excellent. Teachers had planned well and had clear learning objectives that took into account the needs of pupils as well as the requirements of the National Curriculum. Consequently, pupils enjoyed the lessons and persevered. This was noticeable in lessons in Year 5, where pupils were playing a glockenspiel to pick out the tune 'Doh Rah Me', and to accompany a round of 'London's Burning' in four parts. They played gently and listened carefully to the sound they were making. When singing unaccompanied in assembly, pupils have clear diction and a sense of phrasing and are aware of dynamics and pitch. Because of the enthusiasm of their part-time teacher, the 'a capella' group particularly enjoy performance and sing two part songs from Africa very effectively. At the end of the key stage some pupils particularly enjoy listening to classical music. This is because of the teacher's own love of music and because he has taken great care to select pieces of music which are evocative and have a good story. By very good probing questions, he sensitively encourages pupils to express ideas and emotions. Building on pupils' own suggestions, he enlarges on Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture explaining Napoleon's war and the retreat from Russia. Pupils are fascinated and relate the music to the sound of horses' hooves and guns and recognise bells of victory. They then effectively compare the music of Swan Lake, which they have discussed previously, to the 1812 Overture, explaining similarities and differences. Almost all pupils express pleasure and satisfaction at the end of the lesson. This is because of the good relationships between teacher and pupils and because all their answers and ideas were valued.

109. There is no leader for music. Although there is a new music policy, there is no scheme of work to guide teachers. Some teachers follow commercial programmes and some the new national guidance. Consequently, there is no consistent approach to ensure continuity or progression of skills.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

110. During the inspection, lessons mostly involved games or dance. The pupils in Year 6 also had swimming instruction. The overall level of attainment is satisfactory and has been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are very effectively included in lessons and they make good progress.

111. Year 7 pupils were observed being introduced to some dance activities. It is clear that their dance experience has been limited in the past. However, the teacher's enthusiasm, expertise and good relationship with the pupils enabled some good progress to be made. The work is based on pupils mirroring the movements of their partners. This is then built on by increasing the group size to four and then eight. The standard of movement created is below that expected given the pupils' ages, but appropriate given their previous experience. The pupils enjoy the activities and join in enthusiastically, although most are unwilling to share their work by showing it to the class. This improves as the lessons develop.

112. By the age of eleven, pupils have developed some good ball handling skills. In a games lesson, the teachers' personal expertise in coaching rugby skills extended pupils' learning to a level where they needed to work together better and to learn to send and receive accurate passes. Their learning would have been more effectively developed through smaller group teaching and there were no opportunities for pupils to play small side games. However, the teacher, supported by another teacher and classroom assistants, made good use of space by limiting the area within which pupils had to work.

113. In Year 5, a productive games session enabled pupils to develop their hockey, football and netball skills. Over the term, all pupils experience all three sports and learn a variety of ball skills and techniques for playing the games. In netball, pupils practise a variety of passes and learn to receive the ball and to shoot more accurately. In hockey, pupils practise stick skills, dribbling the ball and learning to keep the ball close and under control. They have a good opportunity to practise and then use the skills in team challenges and competitive activities. In football, pupils practise passing and running skills, before moving on to heading the ball, which they do to a satisfactory level of skill.

114. The teaching in the subject is good in both key stages. There is an appropriate focus on improving and teaching basic skills, and the management of pupils is effective in enabling them to all take an appropriate part in lessons. Good use is made

of the range of accommodation; teachers use the hard play areas as well as the extensive field and a local high school pool for swimming. Opportunities are given for pupils to observe others and to evaluate each other's performance, before improving on their own. However, teachers do not usually provide enough of a warm up session, and pupils are not very aware of the effects of exercise on their bodies. At times, teachers practise the necessary skills that are part of the scheme, but they do not do enough coaching of how the skill can be improved and developed. For example, in Year 5 pupils had the opportunity to head balls but with no coaching input from the teachers about how to do so correctly and effectively.

115. A strength of the subject is the way support staff enable the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, including those from the Learning Support Centre, enabling them to take a full part in activities. This results in good progress being made by these pupils, on a social as well as a physical level. Resources are unsatisfactory and in need of improvement and replacement. A lot of them are very old and of poor quality and quantity. Other resources are inappropriate. For example, the balls used for football on the field are too light and the pupils in netball had to hold hoops up for shooting practice, as not enough other resources were available. The member of staff standing in for the seconded leader has a good awareness of the weaknesses in the subject. For example, he is working to get grids marked on the field to enable more effective management of lessons and a wider range of activities to be made available. There is not enough detailed guidance in the scheme of work to enable non-specialist teachers to prepare and plan fully effective lessons.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

116. Four lessons of religious education were observed during the inspection period, two in each key stage. Other evidence was gained from looking at displays and scrutinising pupils' work and teachers' planning. Overall, pupils' standards of work reach expected levels in both key stages. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

117. Teachers have taken note of the long-term plan provided for them and have ensured that they have knowledge and understanding of the world faiths included in the locally agreed syllabus. In Year 4, interesting strategies have been used to present Hindu and Christian facts and stories. Consequently, pupils' workbooks contain a wide variety of pictures, drawings, and directed and independent writing. All their work is neat and well presented. When marking work, teachers have made constructive comments to clarify principles and facts. Work is sometimes cross-curricular, for example in design and technology pupils have made masks depicting characters of the Hindu Holi festival. They have then enjoyed using these to enact the story in a special assembly. A suitable variety of work is covered in each year group and the other prescribed faiths of Islam and Judaism are studied. However, the work becomes progressively more prescriptive and pupils do not have as many opportunities to write independently or to express thoughts freely on paper.

118. In Year 7, although the content is appropriate, most work in books is brief and often left unfinished. Moreover work is carelessly presented and does not indicate high expectation of standards from either pupils or teachers. However, in the two lessons seen in Year 7 the majority of pupils were interested, concentrated on the tasks presented to them and many gave thoughtful answers and comment. They were able to compare and contrast two excerpts of accounts of the Nativity, one from Luke's Gospel, and one a supposed newspaper article and identified innuendo and hidden meaning.

119. The management of religious education is very good and its profile has been raised. The leader is new to the post and has no specialist knowledge. Consequently she is well aware of her colleagues needs and has worked hard to eradicate problems and give them sound support. A policy and long-term overview have been put in place to guide them. Each teacher has been given a file containing comprehensive ideas of teaching strategies, factual knowledge and suggested assessment procedures. Planning is monitored to ensure a continuous and progressive programme of study and the co-ordinator attends year group meetings whenever possible. Resources have been replenished and suitable artefacts are available to exemplify the practices and beliefs of each world faith.