

INSPECTION REPORT

THE DUKES MIDDLE SCHOOL

Alnwick, Northumberland

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122353

Headteacher: Mr D W Gleadall

Reporting inspector: Joan K Arnold
2408

Dates of inspection: 30 April – 4 May 2001

Inspection number: 193756

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Hope House Lane
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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P T Deakin

Date of previous inspection: April 1997

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2408	Joan K Arnold	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it?
				The school's results and pupils' achievements
				How well are pupils taught?
				How well is the school led and managed?
				What should the school do to improve further?
11072	Shirley Elomari	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?
2796	Sue Bardwell	Team inspector	History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
15048	Peter Lacey	Team inspector	Mathematics	
20368	Sue Macintosh	Team inspector	English	
23920	Steve Lockwood	Team inspector	Science	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Duke's County Middle School is a smaller than average school with 263 pupils on roll, aged between 9 and 13. Numbers of boys and girls are even overall but there are marked differences in each successive year group, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Drawing its pupils from the central and western parts of the market town of Alnwick and from a few outlying villages, it is a popular school with increasing numbers and a fairly stable population. Pupils enter the school aged nine with attainment that is broadly average with the most recent intake being above average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at 18% is broadly in line with the national average but is a figure that has fallen sharply in 2000. Twenty-six pupils (below the national average) have special educational needs of whom four have statements (in line with the national average). There are no pupils with English as an additional language, only two pupils who have other than white UK backgrounds and no refugee or traveller children.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a school where pupils attain average standards and show satisfactory achievement. With the exception of information and communication technology this is as a result of generally good teaching in all subjects so that pupils learn well and make satisfactory progress. Pupils' standards and progress are prevented from being better by some weaknesses in aspects of teaching and a lack of coherence in teachers' long-term planning. The capable, pragmatic and responsive leadership of the headteacher, supported by an energetic deputy headteacher and a well-informed governing body, has established a secure and caring environment in which relationships flourish but there is insufficient focus on raising standards and improving pupils' progress. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- achieves a significant proportion of high quality teaching;
- promotes very good moral development and excellent relationships between pupils and pupils and between pupils and teachers;
- inculcates very good standards of behaviour in its pupils;
- nurtures pupils with very good attitudes, social and moral awareness and respect;
- achieves very high standards in mathematics and French;
- controls the day-to-day running of the school, financial management and administration effectively.

What could be improved

- the impetus, focus and pace of improvement;
- the school's overall plan, systems and procedures for making improvements;
- assessment and the use of data to help pupils make progress;
- the management and co-ordination of subjects;
- aspects of teaching and the way the school shares good practice;
- standards in information and communication technology and its use in other subjects across the school.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The Duke's school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards in most subjects have been maintained or improved and the quality of teaching is better. However, there has not been sufficient concerted action to raise standards further. There has been satisfactory progress on three out of the six issues in its last inspection. Curriculum and lesson plans are more effective, there is more challenge for the more able pupils and spiritual development is now good. Although a start has been made, progress on developing the collection, analysis and use of data, improving development planning and improving pupils' skills and their application in information and communication technology has not been at a fast enough rate. There remains crucial development still to be done if the school is to achieve the standards of which its pupils are capable.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	D	A	C	C
Mathematics	D	C	A	A
Science	D	C	E	E

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Standards for pupils aged 11, based on national tests, are average in English and well above average in mathematics when compared to performance nationally and in similar schools. In science they are well below average. Despite fluctuation from year to year, standards are improving in English. In mathematics they are improving at a faster rate than nationally. The deteriorating standards in science are as a result of staffing difficulties, which are now being addressed. The school is well placed to achieve its targets, which are realistic but unambitious. During the inspection, standards showed strengths in mathematics and French in all years and in art and design in Key Stage 3. Standards are average in all other areas with the exception of information and communication technology where standards are below average. Both boys and girls and more able pupils make satisfactory progress and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. When they leave the school aged 13, pupils attain standards that overall, are in line with those expected for their age.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good: pupils come well prepared to learn and talk positively about their school experience.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: pupils are polite and friendly. They work willingly and diligently in lessons and act sensibly and responsibly at other times.
Personal development and relationships	Very good: pupils show respect and consideration, both to other pupils and to adults. The good programme of personal, health and social education and the many extra-curricular activities help them to grow into mature and responsible young people.
Attendance	Good: pupils arrive promptly and there is very little absence.

Relationships throughout the school are excellent and are a real strength of its work. Opportunities for pupils to take on responsibility are limited. Opportunities for pupils to work independently and to undertake research are underdeveloped.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 9 - 11 years	aged 11-13 years
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	Good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching is satisfactory or better in 92% of lessons seen of which 65% is good or better. It was very good or better in 11 lessons (14%) and only unsatisfactory in 6 lessons out of the 75 observed (8%). Teaching is consistently good in Years 7 and 8 but more variable in Years 5 and 6 reversing the judgement in the last inspection. However, there are examples of strengths in the teaching of pupils of all ages in most subjects with the exception of information and communication technology, where teaching is weakest. Teaching is satisfactory or better in English, mathematics and science. Literacy and numeracy are taught effectively and features of the strategies are being integrated into the teaching approaches for the older pupils. The way teachers manage pupils' behaviour is a strength resulting in good learning within lessons. Improved lesson planning and sensitive support ensures that the needs of all pupils are met. However, there remain weaknesses in the way teachers identify, share and reflect on key learning in lessons, the way they challenge pupils to attain higher standards and the way that teachers' specialist skills are used across the school. The result is that pupils' progress from Year 5 through to Year 8, although satisfactory, is not as good as it should be.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good: pupils experience a wide range of worthwhile activities both within the timetabled day and during lunchtime activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: these pupils receive sensitive and well-targeted support within lessons. This allows them full access to the curriculum.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good: there are many activities across the curriculum in which pupils are able to develop their understanding of moral, social and cultural issues. They also have good opportunities to reflect deeply about their feelings and emotions in a spiritual way.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well: staff have pupils' welfare and interests as central to their work. Pupils feel safe and well supported and there are appropriate child-protection strategies in place.

The school supports pupils' academic progress less effectively than their personal development. It could do more to inform parents about the work their children do and how well they achieve. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are not sufficiently detailed and have not yet been developed specifically for gifted and talented pupils. Provision for personal, health and social education, careers in Year 8, French in Year 6 and lunchtime activities are strengths. There are relative weaknesses in information and communication technology and in systematically developing pupils' experience in geography and history. Health and safety procedures need formalising.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Unsatisfactory but with considerable strengths: the headteacher leads the school capably, responsively and pragmatically. However, he has been diverted from the strategic management of improving standards by his temporary role co-ordinating mathematics. He fosters a good team spirit amongst the staff who support him well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Unsatisfactory: governors are well informed, do many things well but are not sufficiently focused on improving standards and raising levels of attainment.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory but improving: as yet, staff with responsibilities for co-ordinating subjects, do not have the management time to fulfil their monitoring roles.

Aspect (cont...)	Comment (cont...)
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory: teachers use resources well but limitations in resources particularly in information and communication technology and music result in some standards not being as high as they might be.

Despite staffing difficulties, there are sufficient, well-qualified staff but no technical support is available. Staffing to support pupils with special educational needs is appropriate. Accommodation is inappropriate for some specialist subjects and the school has not maximised the opportunities for using specialist accommodation and staff. Learning resources overall are insufficient. An important strength of the headteacher's leadership and management has been his concentration on improving teaching and learning, which has successfully improved their quality. However, there has been insufficient specific strategic planning for raising pupils' achievement and standards of attainment. The governors have started to consider principles of best value and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like coming to school. • Teaching is good. • Parents are comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour. • The amount of work pupils are given to do at home. • The way the school works with parents. • The leadership and management of the school. • The range of activities provided outside lessons. • Teaching and standards in science.

The inspectors confirm the positive views expressed by the parents. They also found some weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school and the way that the school works with parents. Teaching and standards in science have been unsatisfactory but are now improving rapidly. The inspectors do not agree with parents on the other issues: homework given to pupils is appropriate; the school provides a good range of activities outside lessons and behaviour is very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. By the age of 11, in 2000, pupils at the Duke's Middle School reached standards that were average in English and well above average in mathematics in the national tests. Standards were well below average in science with far fewer pupils than expected achieving Level 5 or beyond. This picture of attainment reflects improving trends in English and mathematics. These suggest that girls and boys are the equivalent of one term in advance of what might be expected for their age. However, the poor results in science mean that pupils are behind by two terms. This provides the reason why, when the three core subjects are compared with schools nationally the Duke's Middle School is only average and when compared with similar schools, it is below average. The school has set realistic targets for future test results, which it will reach safely. However, in the light of the recent test results and the growing amount of data about the improving attainment of pupils when they start at the school, the targets are unambitious because they lack an element of aspiration to improve standards further.
2. Throughout the school, pupils achieve standards that are consistently in line with what is expected of pupils aged between 9 and 13 and make satisfactory progress. In mathematics and French and, for the older pupils, in art and design, standards are even higher and are matched by good progress. Standards are average in all other subjects and progress is satisfactory with the exception of information and communication technology, where standards are below average and progress is unsatisfactory. Standards of literacy and numeracy are satisfactory and pupils use these basic skills profitably in their studies in other subjects, for example, when they write about the work of artists in art and design lessons or discuss how religion affects everyday life in religious education.
3. Relative to pupils' ages, standards are consistently higher in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 2. Boys and girls achieve similarly. Pupils with special educational needs generally achieve well in line with the targets in their individual education plans. This is most marked in relation to the four, statemented pupils, when they are supported by the learning support assistants. They focus closely on these pupils' day-to-day progress and achievement and contribute substantially to their personal development.
4. In the last report, inspectors noted insufficient progress of more able pupils. Since then, the school has not completed all the actions in its action plan, related to the more able pupils. However, the improvements made to curriculum and lesson planning have led to more attention being paid to their needs and more challenging work being planned as part of a strategy for differentiation. This has resulted in more able pupils achieving standards that are more appropriate to their abilities. Nevertheless, there is more to do because by the age of 13, most pupils, including some more able ones are only achieving average standards. For example, only a few of the more able eleven-year-old pupils attained Level 5+ in the recent science national test. Pupils of high ability are not routinely identified or systematically supported to maximise their potential. There is only one individual education plan for a pupil

of high ability and the school has not set out policy to support either the more able or the gifted and talented. Consequently, their progress is not planned and cannot be guaranteed.

5. The overall profile of standards since the last inspection has not changed significantly. However, it reflects the improvement that the school has made in Key Stage 3 in art and design and in mathematics throughout the school. It also shows the decline in standards in science and in music in Key Stage 2, due to staffing difficulties but both these showed signs of improvement during the inspection.
6. Pupils' progress within lessons is better than their progress over time. They make good progress in two thirds of lessons seen, in which teaching was correspondingly good. However, it was clear to inspectors from looking at pupils' work and records, and from talking to them about their work, that pupils' progress is less marked from year to year and from one key stage to the next because of:
 - the variable teaching quality in Key Stage 2;
 - insufficiently coherent curriculum planning across the key stages;
 - unsatisfactory standards and teaching in information and communication technology; and
 - some, more general, weak features of teaching which are not helping pupils to consolidate and extend their learning.
7. These features, in turn, are partly as a result of weaknesses in management that has not focused teachers' attention sufficiently on raising standards. This means that, because pupils both arrive at and leave the school with average attainment, progress overall is no more than satisfactory. Recent data from NFER and optional National Curriculum tests show signs that the good teaching is beginning to lead to better progress over time but it is too soon to make a judgement because the results are not yet conclusive.
8. In English, most pupils show typical levels of knowledge and understanding. In a Year 5 lesson they demonstrated the width of their vocabulary using words like "*traumatised*", "*devastated*" and "*depressed*" to describe wartime evacuees. In Year 7, all pupils are familiar with the story of *Macbeth* and understand that the play can be presented in different ways. In Year 8 they use expressions such as "*dazzling white sands*" and "*lush scenery*" when compiling a holiday advertisement because they understand the purpose of using hyperbole to encourage the reader. In mathematics pupils attain above expected levels so that by Year 8 pupils of average ability can work confidently with fractions, draw and interpret line graphs, bar and pie charts and scatter diagrams and have a basic understanding of percentages. In science, despite the Year 2000 results, pupils achieve satisfactory and sometimes high standards in their lessons because teaching has improved considerably. In Year 8 for example, pupils learn about respiration and investigate the link with circulation. More able pupils know about the link between exercise and pulse rate, understand which way the blood circulates and use appropriate terms correctly.
9. Across the other subjects of the curriculum, standards and progress are above average in French. Pupils benefit from the good start they are given in Year 6, learning everyday vocabulary and beginning to construct simple sentences. By Year 8 their writing in French is more extended, in line with what is expected nationally. Standards are also above average in

art and design in Key Stage 3. By Year 8, pupils are confident using paint and pastels and learn to use relevant technical vocabulary when studying the work of well-known artists, for example “*figurative*”, “*expressionist*” and “*limited palette*”. Pupils are less confident working in three dimensions because they have less experience of doing so. In music standards of singing are particularly high with pupils being able to sing in several parts. They acquire a good general musical knowledge through the listening they do but have fewer opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding through performing and composing activities. In personal, health and social education, pupils achieve well and develop their communications skills through discussion and debate. For example, in one Year 6 personal, health and social education lesson on environmental pollution, pupils were able to identify different aspects of pollution and were able to discuss and consider their implications, developing thoughtful and logical arguments.

10. Standards are at least in line with national expectations in history, geography, design and technology and physical education for pupils of all ages. They are also in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. The only subject where standards are below average overall is in information and communication technology. This was a key issue in the last report. Whilst pupils’ attainment in the timetabled information and communication technology lessons is in line with what is expected nationally and some individual pupils perform satisfactorily overall, most pupils do not reach an appropriate level in their use of information and communication technology across the range of subjects they study. This is because they are not provided with sufficient opportunities to apply and practise their skills in different and interesting contexts and are not introduced to a satisfactory range of applications.
11. Pupils show average literacy skills. Eleven-year-old pupils listen well. Most express themselves well in formal and informal contexts. They read at a level that is typical for their age. Their writing is also average for their age. Less able writers make progress over the year but are still not consistent in their use of punctuation, making frequent spelling errors, with little variety of sentence structures. Most pupils’ handwriting is joined, neat and well presented. By the age of 13, pupils develop their speaking and listening skills well. Most of these pupils are able and fluent readers. Their writing skills are well developed and demonstrate the ability to write for wide range of purposes.
12. Pupils in all years show above-average numeracy skills when they are required to use them in other subjects. This helps them make progress. In physical education, for example, pupils are encouraged to use estimating and measuring skills to help them improve their performance in athletics. In science and in geography, pupils use their knowledge of graphs to illustrate their findings. However, the absence of a whole-school numeracy policy results in limited opportunities for the application of mathematical skills across the curriculum. This means that most pupils are not making as much progress with their mathematical learning as they might.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Almost without exception, pupils' attitudes to the school and to the opportunities it provides are very good. This is because of the positive atmosphere and climate for learning that have been established by the headteacher and staff of the school. Pupils are keen to come to school, willing to learn and arrive well prepared for their work. They participate with enthusiasm and often with enjoyment in lessons and other activities. Large numbers of pupils take part in the interesting programme of extra-curricular activities, most of which take place at lunchtime so that pupils who travel by bus may attend. Pupils respond positively to the many opportunities that they have to go on trips, for example to the theatre, art galleries and places of interest such as the Globe Theatre in London. They also benefit from a number of visitors into school. For example, during the inspection, a group of local residents came into school to talk to Year 5 pupils about their wartime memories and experiences. The pupils greatly enjoyed this and it made a significant contribution to their learning and to their personal development. Throughout the school, pupils' very positive attitudes towards learning contribute well to their achievement.
14. Behaviour in the lessons observed during the inspection was very good overall. This is as a result of the good teaching. In thirty-nine of the seventy-five lessons seen behaviour was good, in sixteen it was very good and in eight lessons, behaviour was judged to be exemplary. This is a very high proportion. In only one lesson was behaviour unsatisfactory. Almost all pupils are diligent and industrious. Pupils with special educational needs share the positive attitudes that pervade the school. The very good quality of the behaviour in lessons enables pupils to concentrate on their work without disruption and helps all pupils to learn well.
15. The level of exclusions in the school is low, with only three fixed-term exclusions during the last full academic year. This aspect of the school is well managed. Behaviour around the school at breaks and lunchtimes is very good. Pupils are polite and friendly. Almost all pupils show a high level of awareness of the needs of others and give help willingly. For example, they hold doors open for others, take care on the stairways and are observant of others when running outside. They talk confidently with each other, with teachers and with other adults alike. Pupils are respectful of property. Bags are left safely in the corridors and books and other resources are well cared for. There is very little litter and no evidence of graffiti. Just prior to the inspection the school suffered some vandalism to the greenhouses. Pupils were very upset about this but sensibly got on with clearing up and redressing the damage done to their plants.
16. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. They are a real strength of the school's work and are a tribute to the leadership and management of the school. Pupils' relationships with staff are excellent and based on high levels of mutual respect. Relationships between pupils are also excellent. They share resources well and listen very well to teachers and to their peers. They are confident to ask questions in lessons, both to find out more and when they do not understand fully. Almost all pupils show a high level of awareness of the feelings, values and beliefs of others. For example, in a Year 5 art and design lesson where a pupil asked to borrow something and was refused, another pupil immediately offered the item.

They are aware of the impact of their words and deeds on others and this contributes to the low incidence of bullying and to the purposeful, pleasant atmosphere.

17. Pupils are keen and willing to take responsibility, when they are given the opportunity to do so. They help to give out and collect equipment and tidy the classrooms. A group of Year 8 pupils act as librarians and undertake the role conscientiously. Every class presents a class assembly and this provides a range of opportunities to take responsibility, for example, by writing the script and organising the activities. Pupils respond very positively to the occasional opportunities provided in lessons for group work, discussion and role-play. They work very well together in pairs or small groups and support one another very well. However, the opportunities for these kinds of activities are limited. In particular, opportunities for pupils to work independently and to undertake research tasks are not well developed in all subjects. This is partly due to the limited access to information and communication technology such as computers. Opportunities for pupils to contribute to decisions about what happens to them at school, for example, through a school or year council are also lacking.
18. Attendance was broadly in line with the national average in 1999-2000. However, the registers indicate that attendance in the current academic year is good. Almost all absence is related to illness or to local circumstances. Levels of unauthorised absence are consistently below the national average. Pupils usually arrive on time in the morning and when lateness does occur it is almost always linked to late buses. Lessons begin promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. Overall teaching at the Duke's Middle School is good with some strengths but also with some common weaknesses. It has improved significantly since the last inspection. In this inspection in just over nine out of ten lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory or better and it was good or better in over two out of every three lessons. It is satisfactory in Key Stage 2 and good in Key Stage 3, which reverses the judgement in the last inspection, in which teaching was found to be better in Key Stage 2. Teaching is best in mathematics, geography, history, physical education, French, personal, health and social education and special educational needs because it is consistently good across both key stages. There is also good teaching for pupils in Key Stage 3 in English, science, design and technology, music and art and design. Otherwise teaching is satisfactory except in information and communication technology, where teaching is unsatisfactory.
20. The strengths in the teaching of pupils of all ages can be seen in:
 - teachers' good management of behaviour;
 - the way in which teachers motivate and interest the pupils;
 - the recent planning and its greater attention to learning objectives;
 - the good support for pupils with special educational needs;
 - the effective teaching of literacy.
21. All these strengths provide a solid base of good teaching resulting in pupils displaying positive attitudes, working hard and behaving well. This constructive learning ethos enables pupils to learn and make satisfactory and often good progress in lessons.

22. Nevertheless, there are important weaknesses and inconsistencies that prevent teaching and learning from being very good and excellent. Pupils enter the Duke's Middle School aged nine with attainment that is in line with the national average and, for pupils in the current Year 5, above it. Almost without exception pupils benefit from satisfactory and good teaching. However, by the time they reach the end of Year 8, aged thirteen, their overall attainment is still average because although there is good progress *within* lessons it does not build up into sufficient progress *across time*. The principal reasons for this are:
- variability in teaching in Key Stage 2, often because of teachers' lack of specialist subject knowledge;
 - teachers not having a precise plan for what each pupil should learn from the work they do, and setting them clear targets for their learning;
 - too much tightly controlled learning that slows the pace of lessons and limits what pupils are able to learn for themselves;
 - not enough time for pupils to consider their learning at the end of lessons; and
 - unsatisfactory teaching of the use and application of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
23. One of the key strengths of the teaching at the Duke's Middle School is the way in which teachers manage pupils and so very good behaviour is the rule. Teachers successfully establish an atmosphere of concentration and endeavour, in which pupils can get on with their work. In one Year 7 science lesson for example, the teacher's very good relationship with the pupils and her relaxed but firm approach encouraged pupils to be well behaved and attentive. She expected them to be totally involved in the various activities and, as a result, pupils were alert, very willing to contribute ideas to the class discussion and were able to absorb and consolidate the learning.
24. However, in some lessons, teachers control and direct the activities too tightly, guiding pupils step by step. Whilst this supports the less able pupils, it results in other pupils waiting for instructions before starting the next task so the faster workers and more able pupils often mark time. In one Year 7 mathematics lesson, pupils were learning how to draw cubes and cuboids. They tackled each drawing one at a time, waiting for the teacher to tell them when to start the next one so the pupils who finished quickly were left doing nothing and made less progress as a result.
25. Often, teachers do not capitalise on the good behaviour that exists to plan more adventurous activities. In the lessons where teachers *do* assume good behaviour and plan more challenging activities, that allow pupils more control, learning is much more evident and pupils' progress more rapid. This was particularly evident in a Year 8 history lesson about different claims to land in nineteenth century North America. Behaviour was not an issue. Pupils worked collaboratively in groups. They took initiative, sharing ideas, extracting information critically from different sources and responding positively when the teacher intervened to challenge them to think more deeply about the impact of different events and "*think beyond the obvious*". He skilfully used pupils' responses and extended their thinking by questions such as "*Tell us why you made that decision*" and "*Does anyone disagree? Why?*" This prompted the use of higher order thinking skills and showed pupils how to do better.

26. A similar strength and an improvement since the last inspection, is the way that teachers interest and motivate pupils with varied activities. In a Year 6 design and technology lesson, pupils were energised by the teacher's introduction to investigate different ways to make a pattern for a glove puppet. This inspired them to work from notes and a diagram to make a prototype before making the actual puppet. This experience helped them learn about the prototype process and the need for planning, trial and amendment before mass manufacture. In history, a key feature of the teacher's approach is to bring in current news items to make the work more relevant and interesting. For example, in the lesson on North America described in paragraph 25, he brought a cutting about Prince Charles' recent visit to Canada and the award of an Indian name. Many lessons contain imaginative activities, often not only aimed at particular learning but also providing opportunities for creativity, cultural development and spiritual reflection. In a Year 7 art and design lesson on the use of line and colour to express emotion, pupils worked quickly to draw their reactions to the physical sensation of handling objects in a 'feelie' box. The drawings, on large sheets of paper, had a boldness and immediacy, which they were then able to relate to the work of some twentieth century artists. This teaching strategy gave pupils a direct, physical experience, which led to increased knowledge and understanding: teaching from the inside out rather than the outside in.
27. Teachers' planning as a whole has benefited from the whole-school development of a common framework for planning lessons in Key Stage 3. This approach has capitalised on the three-part structure of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, emphasises matching work to each pupil's capability and includes setting explicit objectives for what is to be learned in each lesson. This improvement has resulted in much more focused learning and better progress in most lessons in Years 7 and 8. However, in some lessons, in both key stages, learning is not so apparent because the objectives are expressed as 'things to do' rather than 'what is to be learnt.' Sometimes the planning for learning is quite clear on paper but it is simply not made clear to the pupils so they do not know why they are doing the task or how to improve. This was true in a Year 6 art and design lesson in which pupils were planning a picture about *The Rain Forest*. The teacher spent a considerable time explaining the geographical features that pupils might include in their pictures and very little on the art learning objectives, which were about planning overall shapes and perspective. Consequently, the pupils worked hard at completing their pictures but learnt little about planning and perspective. In Key Stage 2, the common approach, that is adopted in Key Stage 3, is not being used. This means that the impact of lesson planning on pupils' learning is more variable because it does not ensure that teachers plan for the differing needs of pupils.
28. Teachers are now usually planning their lessons to include a final plenary session to summarise the learning that has taken place. In practice this is not used sufficiently for pupils to reflect on their learning, to recognise it and to absorb it. One reason is that teachers do not plan enough time for it or sometimes they do not keep track of the time or pace tasks sufficiently so activities over-run. This means that although progress is typically good, opportunities for pupils to deepen their understanding and to assimilate their learning at the end of the lesson are lost.

29. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have had a positive influence on all the teaching across the curriculum. In many lessons, teachers emphasise key words, for example in history and science and teaching pupils spelling in a Year 7 mathematics lesson helped them remember and use the terms to describe different three-dimensional shapes accurately. Pupils in a Year 6 physical education lesson were given practice in estimating skills when they were asked to consider how far they could run in three seconds from a sprint start. Timing their own efforts, they quickly realised that they had estimated very badly and began to gauge the distance more accurately for their second attempts. Pupils in history and religious education are helped to write more effectively by teachers suggesting writing frames and displaying new vocabulary on the walls in many classrooms.
30. Teachers plan useful homework to consolidate the learning that has taken place in the lessons such as reading and learning spellings in Years 5 and 6. Teachers also use homework to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding and to develop their skills. For example, in art in Years 7 and 8, pupils experiment in their sketchbooks to practise different techniques. Sometimes, research tasks are given as homework but this aspect of independent learning is under-used.
31. Teachers' use of ongoing assessment in lessons is satisfactory overall. In some subjects, this aspect of teaching is used to very good effect to help pupils improve their work and to help teachers plan new work, which stretches pupils further. In English, pupils in Year 8 know their National Curriculum levels because they are shown how each piece of work relates to them, where they are placed and what they need to do to improve. In French, the teacher makes frequent assessments and modifies her teaching plans to accommodate the weaknesses in pupils' skills and understanding. In physical education, pupils are challenged to improve against their own previous best performances, which are methodically measured and recorded by the teachers. These good practices are not shared and are not used consistently in all subjects because subject coordinators have insufficient management time. Currently, teachers do not use data sufficiently to plan future work. This is another consequence of the lack of management time for subject coordinators. However, this aspect of leadership and management is improving because the governors and the headteacher have made it a priority in the school's approach to performance management.
32. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 benefit from the expertise of specialist staff. These teachers' have a marked impact on the quality of pupils' learning because they give good explanation, anticipate difficulties and respond in more depth to pupils' questions and problems. A good example of this was in a Year 7 music lesson in which the pupils quickly became involved in singing together as a class and responded very positively to the demands which the teacher made on them. He treated them as he would a choir and used his professional experience to help them achieve a higher standard. The pupils were not merely singing, they were learning to be singers. In consequence, pupils talked about their respect for their music teacher "*as a musician*".
33. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are mainly taught by their class teachers, with some specialist teaching in French and music. This has its benefits because the teachers know the pupils well and pupils are comfortable with the classroom routines. The main disadvantages are that the

younger pupils do not benefit from the subject expertise that exists in the school, neither do they have access to some of the specialist accommodation, for example in art and design and science. This limits their progress. Occasionally, mostly in Key Stage 2, teachers' lack of subject knowledge leads to pupils becoming confused. This was true in some information and communication technology lessons, in which teachers made elementary mistakes on conventions and the purpose of the activities was not explained clearly. In these lessons, learning was confused and pupils did not make sufficient progress. Overall, the school does not make sufficient use of teachers' subject expertise, particularly in Key Stage 2 where its absence sometimes slows learning. This is a consequence of most subject coordinators having insufficient time to observe teaching in Key Stage 2, to identify and rectify weaknesses and to share good practice.

34. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. The four pupils with formal statements of educational need learn well when the learning support assistants work with them in lessons. Their progress is not as marked when this support is unavailable. Class teachers plan to provide for pupils with special educational needs by preparing activities matched to their need. Although all teachers do give close attention and support to these pupils, the impact of teaching on these pupils' learning is not being maximised. This is because there is no system for setting detailed learning targets related to the different subjects, so the pupils know how they are expected to improve. There is some evidence of more able pupils being challenged to a greater extent than at the time of the previous report but the school has not yet provided individual education plans for them or for all the gifted and talented pupils.

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

35. The curriculum is relevant and suitably varied for pupils of all ages and abilities. It is relevant to all pupils and gives them all equality of access and opportunity. Pupils' learning is enriched by a wide range of worthwhile activities both within and outside the timetabled day.
36. The curriculum of both key stages meets statutory requirements. It fulfils the requirements of the National Curriculum and provides for religious education in accordance with the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are effectively promoted across the curriculum in both key stages. Pupils of all ages benefit from dedicated lessons for library studies and personal, health and social education. Pupils' progress in modern foreign languages is effectively supported by the provision of French from Year 6. The school meets the statutory requirements for the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs.
37. The school provides less than the nationally recommended time for the Key Stage 3 curriculum with morning lessons slightly shorter than those in the afternoon. During the inspection, there was no evidence that these arrangements adversely affected the quality of the curriculum and the standards attained by the pupils, though the school has not monitored their impact over time. In English and mathematics, Year 6 pupils' learning is enhanced by the organisation of pupils into small teaching groups, arranged according to their ability. Pupils' progress is also supported effectively by the provision of "booster classes" for English and

mathematics in Year 6. These arrangements enable teachers to pitch work more appropriately for pupils' differing needs.

38. Curriculum and lesson planning is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. Individual lesson planning now more clearly identifies what pupils should be learning. It also focuses more on meeting the differing needs of pupils and there is more challenge for the most able pupils. For example, the common format for Key Stage 3 lesson planning now ensures that teachers, as a matter of routine, consider different tasks and resources for different groups of pupils. These improvements have been well supported by a programme of professional development for staff.
39. There has been less improvement in planning pupils' learning coherently from Year 5 to 8. Curriculum planning is generally more effective within the key stages than across the key stages. The two Year 5 teachers work together when planning the overall programme of work for their classes and individual lessons. Similarly, the two Year 6 teachers plan together. This process provides pupils of the same year group with similar learning experiences. On the other hand, teachers of Years 5 and 6 do not generally share their planning to ensure pupils' learning is developed from one year to the next. In Key Stage 3, most teaching is organised so that each subject is taught by the specialist subject co-ordinator. This enables them to plan learning over the two years more effectively than their Key Stage 2 colleagues. However, in most subjects, and most acutely in information and communication technology, there is not enough collaborative planning between teachers of both key stages. Also, the role of subject leaders in curriculum planning across both key stages is not generally well established and their impact on structuring the curriculum is therefore restricted. As a result, the curriculum is not sufficiently well planned to help pupils make the best possible progress from Years 5 to 8. This is particularly true in English, geography and history because subject co-ordinators do not have sufficient time to work with the class teachers in Years 5 and 6. For example, the consequences of the long gaps in the pupils' study of geography and history in Key Stage 2 on pupils' progress have not been considered. Exceptionally, the physical education curriculum is particularly well planned by the subject leader to provide pupils with a progressively more challenging programme during their time at the school. Physical education has clear teaching schemes for each year group, which effectively build upon pupils' earlier learning.
40. Teachers generally do not make sufficient use of assessments of pupils' attainment and progress and targets for improvement to support their planning within individual subjects. An exception is in French, where the outcomes of regular tests help the teacher plan the following lessons and map out the longer-term curriculum. With the recent introduction of the optional tests for English, mathematics and science, the school is beginning to use assessment more consistently for planning future work.
41. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. They receive the same curriculum opportunities as other pupils and they generally make good progress. However, their individual education plans contain targets that are too broad to guide teaching in individual subjects as effectively as they might. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are effectively supported by learning support assistants and have full access to the

school's curriculum. Learning support assistants contribute significantly to the continuity of these pupils' learning as they move from Key Stage 2 to 3. Specific provision for gifted and talented pupils is unsatisfactory. There is no formal process for identifying their particular needs and only one very talented pupil has a statement of special educational need.

42. Pupils' learning is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, both during and outside the school day. A large proportion of boys and girls of all abilities and ages take part in lunchtime sports and clubs and benefit from working on challenging and rewarding activities. For example, during the inspection around 15 pupils belonging to the gardening club worked enthusiastically and constructively in the school's environmental garden, learning about the importance of environmental stewardship. Activities undertaken by the drama club enabled about 25 pupils of all ages to collaborate with each other to solve problems and to learn how to support and trust each other.
43. The school provides many worthwhile educational visits to enhance pupils' curriculum and personal experiences. These include skiing and a residential trip to France. Visits to London enable pupils to explore The Tate Modern Art Gallery and the Houses of Parliament. More locally, pupils' art studies benefit from visits to Newcastle's galleries; pupils participated in a Tudor Pageant held at Hulne Priory, extending their knowledge of history, dance, drama and music; regular visits to Alnwick Castle and Hadrian's Wall bring history to life for pupils; the science visit to a local power station helps pupils understand more about energy; and the visit to a Hindu temple enhances pupils' understanding of religion. However, there is currently insufficient fieldwork in geography.
44. The school effectively provides for all pupils' personal and social education. Its personal, health and social education programme is much improved since the last inspection. It makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. The programme is imaginatively and thoughtfully constructed across both key stages and links effectively with the Year 9 programme provided by the school's partner high school. It is well managed and taught effectively. Recent reviews of the programme have ensured there is good, well co-ordinated provision for health, sex and drugs education.
45. Pupils' understanding of citizenship is successfully addressed most significantly when they study *Caring for the Environment* in Year 6, *A Caring Community* in Year 7 and *Rights and Responsibilities* and *National and Local Government* in Year 8. At the time of the last inspection, there was no careers education and guidance. The school has successfully rectified this omission with the inclusion in the Year 8 programme *The Real Game*, an enquiry-based project which enables pupils to explore the realities of working life.
46. The school makes satisfactory use of its local community in its curriculum provision. A number of local people and organisations are effectively involved in supporting pupils' learning. These include local businesses, the press, the church and the Friary. During the inspection, a group of elderly people, some from the neighbouring old people's home, visited the school to be interviewed by Year 5 pupils about their experiences of World War Two. This experience not only enriched pupils' history but also gave them a valuable opportunity to show responsibility and initiative when receiving and interviewing their guests.

47. The school has some constructive relationships with its partner first and high schools, especially in easing the social transition of pupils from one school to another. However, in other respects, links are not strong either for understanding what pupils have learnt by the age of nine or for preparing them for the next step in their education from the age of 13. Information about pupils is exchanged, but not enough of this focuses upon their achievements and curriculum experiences to help the Duke's Middle School to plan pupils' learning effectively. For example, there has been little communication about how different schools have amended their curriculum in response to the National Curriculum revisions of 2000.
48. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good overall and much improved since the last inspection. Collective worship regularly provides pupils with opportunities for reflection and contemplation. It also assists pupils in exploring beliefs and values – both their own and those of others. In some areas of the curriculum, pupils are encouraged to consider spirituality in a meaningful way. For example, in religious education, pupils study a variety of different beliefs and are encouraged to use their studies to consider and reflect upon people's values and their views on life's meaning and purpose. In art and design, pupils are encouraged to explore and understand their own beliefs and responses. This is typified by one pupil's comments about the construction of her two-sided *Public-Private Mask*: "This mask has helped me bring my inner feelings out and for me to understand them." In history, pupils study the spirituality of the Native Americans and learn to respect beliefs often very different to their own. Whilst these examples reveal good quality provision, some subjects still do not identify and exploit opportunities to contribute to this area of pupils' personal development because there is no systematic planning for the provision of spiritual education.
49. Provision for moral education is very good and is a strength of the school. The school creates an ethos, which actively promotes pupils' moral development and fosters very good relationships. Teachers and support staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Staff ensure all pupils are able to distinguish between right and wrong by their shared commitment to the school's moral code and values. Pupils respond positively by showing high standards of personal behaviour. This was particularly well exemplified in pupils' condemnation of the vandalism to their greenhouse by outsiders and their constructive, positive response in speedily repairing the damage, quite independently of any teacher guidance. Pupils have opportunities, both in their lessons and their extra-curricular activities, to consider specific moral issues and the impact of their own behaviour. For example, in personal, health and social education, Year 8 pupils explore bullying and Year 7 pupils learn how to assess and practise positive behaviour. In physical education, pupils learn the importance of respecting different individual performances and the relevance of fairness in their team games.
50. The provision for pupils' social development is generally good. The school places a high priority on establishing very good relations amongst the whole school community. All members are valued and their contributions are regularly recognised and praised. A good example of this was observed in a school assembly held during the inspection. Here the achievements of individual pupils, school teams and the catering staff were all publicly honoured. In extra-curricular activities, pupils often work in groups and pairs, collaborating

sensibly and learning effectively from each other effectively. Pupils are encouraged to care for others through charity work and involvement with the local community. They also show initiative when given the chance, though there are too few opportunities for pupils in this respect. There are also limited opportunities for pupils to show responsibility for their own learning in lessons and to take on responsibility around the school. However, when given the chance, as in the gardening club, they respond very positively and make a valuable contribution to the well being of the school community.

51. Good provision is made for pupils' cultural development. Teachers select topics for pupils to study which help them understand different cultures and how to appreciate and value cultural diversity. In English, for example, pupils' understanding of multi-ethnic Britain is effectively supported by the study of *Across the Barricades*, a novel set in Northern Ireland, and by the visit of Roop Singh, the famous Sikh story teller from Bradford. Displays around the school and in classrooms also help to celebrate the richness of different cultures. This was very well exemplified by the art room's vibrant display of masks from various parts of the world. The extensive and varied programme of visits provides pupils with first-hand cultural experiences. The school also enables pupils to study the traditions of their own area, making good use of local resources.
52. Overall, curriculum provision is good, with some particular strengths, notably the strategies used to promote pupils' personal development. The curriculum is not as dynamic as it might be, as it is not sufficiently monitored to measure its impact on pupils' progress and standards of achievement. Many worthwhile activities are provided for pupils but these are not systematically planned and this leads to some uneven provision.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

53. The school makes satisfactory provision to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety. Personal development is effectively fostered. However, although procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' academic achievement have improved since the previous inspection, they remain unsatisfactory. Information is shared between staff on an informal basis but there is no regular and systematic strategy for discussing and recording pupils' academic achievement with them and for setting them improvement targets to help them make better progress.
54. The welfare of pupils is central to the work of the school. In lessons, teachers pay good attention to safe practice. The school is aware of a number of health and safety issues, mostly relating to the inadequate maintenance of the building over time. The school has worked with outside agencies but without success to prevent the vehicular use of the road through the site as a shortcut. This remains a health and safety issue. Although staff are aware of health and safety issues and report any concerns quickly, the school does not have a formal system for carrying out and recording health and safety audits. Risk assessment procedures are not fully in place. These are weaknesses. Arrangements for first aid and medicines in school are appropriate but parents are only informed of accidents by telephone, not by letter, and contact with parents is not formally recorded. Appropriate procedures are in place for child protection.

55. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are very effective. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils rise to them. Pupils know and understand the code of conduct, which they and their parents are asked to read and sign. The code of conduct provides a clear, strong framework to support good behaviour. Pupils value and are well motivated by the house point and merit system and enjoy gaining the badges. The school's good personal, health and social education programme incorporates work on bullying so that pupils know what to do should it arise. Reported incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that there is always an adult to turn to in time of need. Teachers know their pupils very well and use this knowledge sensitively to guide their pastoral care.
56. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment were a weakness at the time of the previous inspection. Although the school has made some progress recently in this area, work on developing procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and for tracking their progress was slow to start and remain unsatisfactory. The school has only relatively recently started to collect data on pupils' attainment on entry from its feeder schools to use NFER tests and to use the National Curriculum optional tests in Year 5. This means that it is still not in a firm position to identify where pupils start in Year 5 and measure how much progress they make through the school to Year 8. Entry and test data are not yet used effectively to set targets for pupils in Key Stage 2. This results in unambitious targets for pupils' attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 6.
57. The school has a whole-school assessment policy but it is applied differently within and across subjects and between teachers and is not monitored for consistency or effectiveness. In mathematics, for example, the recording of pupils' progress is inconsistent. Some teachers check and track pupils' progress against the objectives from the National Numeracy Strategy while others do not. In some other subjects, ongoing assessment is used positively to track progress and help pupils learn. This is the case in English, French and in Years 7 and 8 in art and design, for example, and is an improvement since the last inspection but these practices have not been shared.
58. Since the previous inspection, the school has made improvements in the way assessment data is used to plan for the progress of differing ability groups in lessons. This aspect of assessment and planning is satisfactory. However, across the school, assessment information is not used effectively to set meaningful learning targets for individual pupils or groups of pupils. In particular, for pupils with special education needs, targets tend to be behavioural rather than academic and are not clear enough about the specific things that pupils need to target in order to improve their work. For all pupils, the school has not devoted sufficient time for the close monitoring and recognition of the progress that each pupil makes. For example, the role of the class teacher or, in Years 7 and 8, the year tutor, does not include specific responsibility for this kind of academic guidance. Individual targets, either for individual subjects or for their overall progress, are not routinely shared with pupils. Pupils are therefore not sufficiently involved in tracking and planning their own progress. Overall, target setting remains too general to be effective in raising standards or planning for progress. This is a key development issue for the school.

59. The school reports pupils' progress to parents in accordance with statutory requirements. Currently, personal, health and social education is not reported. This is not a statutory requirement but to do so is good practice. The school complies fully with the requirements of the national Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs. Annual reviews are held with parents and are complemented by internal reviews held termly. Teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses well and use this knowledge to guide personal development effectively.
60. Measures to promote the importance of regular attendance and good punctuality are effective. Attendance is consistently in line with the national average. The school has appropriate procedures in place to monitor attendance and punctuality and any unexplained absences are followed up promptly. Almost all parents comply with the school's expectations for reporting absence.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

61. Most parents are supportive of the school. A good number (parents of approximately one third of the pupils in the school), returned the questionnaire and a small number attended the parents' meeting. The views expressed by parents were predominantly positive. In particular, most parents were in agreement that their child liked school and was expected to work hard to achieve his or her best. They believe that their children are making good progress and that the teaching is good. Parents feel comfortable to approach the school if they have any concerns. They state that the school is helping their child to become a mature, responsible individual. Inspection evidence agrees with most of the parents' positive views. However, there is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching mostly in Years 5 and 6. Progress throughout the school is generally satisfactory but children are not always stretched to their full potential.
62. A significant number of parents were less positive about the range and extent of extra-curricular activities. The inspection revealed a good range of interesting activities, many of which are seasonal, such as gardening club, bird watching and a variety of sport. Most of the activities are organised during lunchtimes. This enables those pupils who travel by bus to attend but may mean that not all parents are aware of the activities in which their child is involved. Many parents are unhappy with the amount of work their child is expected to do at home. This concern is not borne out by inspection evidence. Homework is set regularly. In Years 5 and 6, it is mainly reading, spellings and mathematics but useful homework is set in other subjects. In Years 7 and 8, homework is set in most subjects. Some involves finishing off of class work, but in general the homework extends pupils' learning and sometimes includes research tasks. A good example was the homework set for one Year 8 history group, who were asked to draft an essay based on planning they had done in the lesson. The teacher provided two versions of the same homework, giving the one with more support to the less able pupils. The main concern expressed by those parents who attended the meeting was the ongoing staffing problem in science and the disruption and uncertainty this has caused. Although this has caused difficulties in the past, at the time of the inspection, science teaching was judged to be satisfactory for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and good for the older pupils with a consequent improvement in pupils' progress.

63. Parents' concerns that the school does not work closely with parents are borne out by inspection evidence. The school's partnership with parents is unsatisfactory overall because of weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school. The school is responsive to parents' requests or concerns but does not create sufficient opportunities to work with and involve parents in the school and has not established enough regular contact with them. This can be seen through:
- the kind of information provided to parents;
 - use of the pupils' diaries;
 - meetings; and
 - reports.
64. The school provides a range of useful information for parents. The prospectus and annual report of governors contain the full range of required information, clearly presented. Information about the curriculum is contained in the prospectus but is limited. Those parents who request additional information about the curriculum are given further details but the numbers who ask are low. Newsletters are sent out to parents but the school has not established a timetable or frequency for newsletters, which is a weakness. All pupils have a homework diary but this is not consistently well used and is not fully developed into a channel of communication between home and school.
65. Parents have two formal opportunities each year at parents' meetings to discuss their child's progress with teachers. Even so, parents are concerned that they are not kept well informed about the progress their child is making at school. There is some evidence to confirm this. Attendance at parents' evenings is good. However, there are no systems in place for following up those who do not attend. At other times parents are welcome to make an appointment to see any member of staff to discuss progress or raise concerns but the school does not go out of its way to urge parents to do so. Neither has the school held any curriculum meetings or workshops for parents, to explain what and how pupils learn in different subjects and, for example, how the national strategies for numeracy and literacy work or how parents can help their child at home. This is unsatisfactory.
66. Parents receive one written report each year. Reports usually cover all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education although science was not reported last year. Currently personal, health and social education is not reported, which is a weakness. Reports provide good information about pupils' attitudes, effort and attainment. However, National Curriculum levels are not used when writing about attainment and progress is inconsistently well reported. Overall, there is too little detail about the specific progress the pupil has made in each subject. Reports contain space for targets to be identified but in most cases these are not sufficiently precise and focused to help pupils and their parents know what they have to do to improve. However, some parents' complaints that reports contain too much educational jargon are not justified.
67. On the positive side, the school benefits from some parental help in the classroom, particularly in Year 5. Parents also provide help with transport to enable the inter-school sports activities to take place. A considerable number of parents volunteer to help on trips and visits. They

are very well briefed and well supported in this activity. Plans are underway to re-launch the parent, teacher and friends association.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

68. The overall leadership and management of the school are unsatisfactory because although they have strengths they also have important weaknesses. The headteacher provides capable, pragmatic, responsive leadership and is well supported by the deputy headteacher and a well-informed governing body. The school day runs smoothly because all the staff, including the administrative staff and lunchtime supervisors, work as a team, promoting high standards of behaviour and acting as positive role models for the pupils. The school has been involved in a number of worthwhile management activities in response to national initiatives to improve teaching and learning, a key focus since the last inspection. These include:
- the collection and analysis of data;
 - setting pupils targets for improving their work;
 - subject reviews and audits; and
 - performance management.
69. Whilst there is no doubt that these have been partially successful, their impact on raising pupils' attainment has been reduced by the fact that they have been tackled discretely and not as one, strategic, "joined up" process to move the school forward. The cycle of school improvement is therefore unsatisfactory.
- The analysis of data is undertaken but is not used sufficiently by teachers to help them set specific improvement targets
 - The target setting that is undertaken is not yet well developed or used consistently or in sufficient depth to help teachers plan their teaching and pupils' learning or measure the progress pupils make.
 - Some substantial subject reviews are undertaken but issues that emerge from these do not always consistently get taken forward into the school's overall development plan.
70. A number of key factors have had a bearing on this situation. Over the past two years, the headteacher and governors have been tackling deficiencies in the quality of teaching and management in science and mathematics, which they rightly identified as having a negative impact on standards. As part of the process, the headteacher has taken over the management of mathematics. Improvements in standards in mathematics have been significant under his stewardship. Quality and standards are also improving in science with a newly-appointed subject leader. However, all this has meant that the headteacher not been able to devote the time needed to the whole-school strategy for improvement and the direction it needs to take.
71. Nevertheless, the head teacher knows what has to be done. He has made a good start, establishing performance management in the school. He knows the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has focused the staff on the importance of improving teaching and learning. However, although he involves staff in discussing and setting policy and is very supportive and appreciative of the work they do, he has not spent sufficient time evaluating the implementation or the impact of the policies. Nor has he provided middle managers with

sufficiently clear roles and responsibilities or the support to help them fulfil their monitoring roles satisfactorily. He has yet to concentrate the whole learning community, governors, staff, pupils and parents, on the overall ambition to raise standards and it is this key focus that is missing from the school aims.

72. Governors also display strengths. Their system of focused monitoring, when a nominated governor visits the school to observe and investigate identified subjects and issues is well managed. They carry out the visit with the full co-operation of the staff, are sensitive to the professionalism of the teachers and listen and learn from their views. They make sensible and well-observed comment. However, although they report back to the governing body as a whole and their reports are discussed, some important issues are sometimes left in abeyance. An example of this is their perceptive observation about the lack of appropriate facilities for Year 6 art and design, which has still to be rectified and which continues to have a negative effect on standards.
73. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. They are well informed about many aspects of the school. However, they are not sufficiently concerned with improving standards of attainment. They rightly value the good standards of behaviour, the caring ethos of the school and the strength of the staff team. They now need to be more single-minded in the drive to raise academic standards and the rate of progress in terms of how pupils' learning builds on their prior attainment. Since the last inspection, there has not been sufficient effort tackling all the key issues that were identified. The governors have not insisted that each was pursued in detail. This has meant that improvement has not been fast enough and some weaknesses remain. Two examples of this are the issues about more able pupils and about spiritual development. The school has made progress in both areas but without specific, planned actions being taken. There are examples of effective spiritual development in lessons but there are no clear procedures for finding out what in practice pupils are experiencing in this area or for ensuring that teachers plan appropriate activities into their lessons. Consequently, governors cannot guarantee that they will take place or say where or when they happen. Similarly, there are lessons in which more able pupils are stretched as a result of the improved lesson planning but this is not strategically planned so for example, all the pupils who attained Levels 5+ in their national tests are not systematically tracked, monitored and challenged to ensure that they achieve their best.
74. The management and co-ordination of subjects have improved since the last inspection. Many of the subject leaders are beginning to use data more effectively to start to set improvement targets for their subjects. The special educational needs co-ordinator, who is currently on maternity leave, has established good systems and procedures that have contributed to the continuous development of special educational needs in the school. The current special educational needs co-ordinator has senior management status and is providing good leadership. There is good practice in physical education, art and design, music, science and French. In physical education, the teacher monitors pupils' progress against their previous best. In French the teacher has kept a record of pupils' attainment over the past four years and has succeeded in raising attainment from 5% of pupils in aged 13 attaining Levels 4+ in 1997 to 61% in 2001 by analysing strengths and weaknesses and adapting her teaching accordingly. The new science teacher has assessed what is needed using the data

available and is already having a positive effect on standards. The new teacher in charge of music has a clear vision for the subject and the subject co-ordinator for art and design has been effective in bringing about improvements since the last inspection. However, there are weaknesses because management has not set clear priorities for middle managers or provided them with appropriate support and time:

- to tackle priorities;
- to monitor the quality of provision;
- to discuss and share good practice;
- to scrutinise pupils' work; or
- to analyse data in more depth.

Neither have managers at all levels undertaken sufficient professional development to keep up to date and to learn new management skills.

75. The school manages its finances prudently and uses its funds appropriately. Although the unit cost per pupil is slightly higher than average, this is explained by the small size of the school and by the use of part-time teachers which is marginally more expensive than full-time staff. Governors are guided by the cautious advice of the headteacher so they have successfully rectified a deficit budget and are now well placed to make further improvements to the buildings. They now recognise the importance of applying best value principles and have, as a consequence started to concentrate on measuring pupils' improvement against their levels of attainment on entry. This new focus on improvement and best value is not yet being consistently used to make decisions about spending priorities, for example, whether to resource information and communication technology or increase library or music resources before completing the building plans. Governors have, however, rightly agreed to maintain current levels of staffing when the large Year 8 cohort leaves, to give staff more time for their monitoring roles.
76. The current levels of staffing are adequate but the level of spending on teaching staff at just under 70% of the total school budget is low and subject leaders do not have support to fulfil their management responsibilities as well as they should. Neither does the school employ any technician support to enable the teachers to spend less time on non-teaching tasks. The school made a decision to employ part-time staff so there are subject specialists for each curriculum area. However, the school is not maximising the use of specialist staff for pupils in Key Stage 2 except for music and French. Similarly, some classes in Key Stage 2 do not have access to specialist rooms in art and design and science. This has a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning and on standards. Over the past few terms, the school has had a number of temporary and supply staff. They are quickly integrated into the team but the school's arrangements for their induction are unsatisfactory because there is no formal programme to ensure that they are well supported. The school is well supported by the team of non-teaching staff.
77. Learning resources overall are insufficient because of the limited number and quality of musical instruments, limited resources in geography and insufficient computers in subjects across the curriculum to ensure the further development of pupils' information and communication technology skills. Some aspects of accommodation are having a negative effect on pupils'

learning. This is the case in art and design for pupils in Years 5 and 6 because they do not have access to the specialist art and design area. It is also true of information and communication technology, where the cramped space means that there is insufficient opportunity for pupils to practise their skills. The use of the temporary classroom for French is unhelpful because the noise of the heating system makes oral work difficult. However, this is managed very well by the teacher but the school is rightly looking to re-site the language classes.

78. Performance management has been sensitively and systematically introduced by the headteacher. He has successfully linked the element of classroom observation to the school's positive work on improving teaching and learning. This is a developing strength of management.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 79 In order for the school to raise standards further the governors, headteacher and staff should:
- Increase the impetus, focus and pace of improvement so that:
 - i the school's aims are redefined to focus specifically on raising standards of attainment and improving the rate of pupils' progress;
 - ii staff, pupils, parents and the community are consulted so these aims can be shared and owned;
 - iii the aims are used continually to create an ethos of high expectations and high standards of attainment;

(see paragraphs 1, 7, 63, 64, 65, 66, 71, 72 and 73).
 - Draw together the various management processes and activities into a logically-sequenced plan for the school's improvement so that:
 - i the analysis of data is used to identify what needs to be improved;
 - ii improvement targets are set and used consistently by all staff to inform their planning;
 - iii departmental issues from the monitoring of teaching and subject reviews and audits are consistently taken through to the school's improvement plan.

(see paragraphs 69-74, 97 and 123)
 - Improve the way teachers use data and assessment to help pupils make progress so that:
 - i appropriate data is collected and analysed;
 - ii staff are trained to understand the data;
 - iii targets for learning are set and shared with staff, pupils and parents;
 - iv learning targets are used to plan the curriculum and learning;
 - v pupils' progress is monitored.

(see paragraphs 47, 53, 56, 58, 97, 98, 145 and 179)
 - Enable subject leaders to manage and co-ordinate their subjects more effectively so that:
 - i they have time, direction and guidance;
 - ii they plan to meet the targets set for pupils' learning;

- iii they monitor and evaluate progress towards meeting targets;
- iv strengths and weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum are identified and good practice is shared;
- v teachers are sufficiently trained and kept up to date;
- vi resources are improved.

(see paragraphs 31, 39, 52, 74, 76, 77, 88, 97, 108, 119, 121, 123, 132, 140, 160, 174, 178 and 179)

- Develop better teaching and the sharing of good practice so that:
 - i learning objectives are clear and shared explicitly with the pupils;
 - ii teachers expect more of pupils, asking more penetrating questions and giving them more opportunities to work independently;
 - iii more time is allowed for pupils to consider their learning at the end of the lessons;
 - iv more use is made of teachers' subject specialist knowledge across the school;
 - v there is more staff discussion about good teaching.

(see paragraphs 6, 17, 22, 24, 25, 27, 28, 33, 86, 95, 96, 107, 131 and 138)

- Improve the application of and standards in information and communication technology across the school so that:
 - i information and communication technology resources are deployed and managed strategically;
 - ii information and communication technology activities are integrated coherently in all subjects;
 - iii monitoring and assessment procedures are improved so that pupils' capability is developed systematically.

(see paragraphs 6, 10, 94, 98, 119, 123, 128, 141, 143-145, 147, 148 and 177)

In addition to the key issues, the governors should consider the following weaknesses for inclusion on the school's action plan:

- developing the governors' use of evaluation and best value; (paragraph 75)
- improving the induction for new staff; (paragraph 76)
- formalising and regularising procedures for health and safety; (paragraph 54)
- being more proactive in involving parents in the work of the school; (paragraphs 63-66)
- producing better reports for parents. (paragraphs 59 and 66)
- appointing non-teaching technical support staff (paragraph 123).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

75

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	13	51	27	8	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y5 – Y8	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	263	n/a
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	42	n/a

Special educational needs

	Y5 – Y8	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4	n/a
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	26	n/a

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.1
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	33	24	57

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	26	27	26
	Girls	19	21	19
	Total	45	48	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79 (82)	84 (74)	79 (73)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	26	26	26
	Girls	20	21	19
	Total	46	47	45
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	81 (71)	82 (73)	79 (76)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	261
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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	3	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	2
Total aggregate hours worked per week	29

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	83
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	22
Key Stage 3	22

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	503112
Total expenditure	494274
Expenditure per pupil	2009
Balance brought forward from previous year	-1401
Balance carried forward to next year	7437

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	263
Number of questionnaires returned	103

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	58	11	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	30	54	13	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	28	51	13	2	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	43	27	7	1
The teaching is good.	24	64	11	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	50	24	6	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	42	6	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	45	9	4	1
The school works closely with parents.	16	54	18	11	2
The school is well led and managed.	30	49	12	3	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	25	61	9	2	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	15	46	23	9	8

Other issues raised by parents

Parents expressed concerns about standards and the quality of teaching in science. These are being addressed by the school and are commented upon in detail in the main report.

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

ENGLISH

80. In the national tests for eleven-year-olds, the school's results in 2000 were close to the national average and in line with those in similar schools. The results in the previous two years have been varied. In 1998 they were below the national average and in 1999 they were well above the national average. Each year pupils' test results have exceeded the teachers' assessments suggesting that teachers have underestimated the attainment of some higher and average-attaining pupils. This year, the school has created smaller classes of Year 6 pupils, grouped according to their ability and, as a result, is on course to meet its targets for English in 2001, with standards typical for the age group in work seen during the inspection. Standards for thirteen-year-olds in English, again based on work seen, are at least in line with national expectations. Higher-attaining pupils achieving above average for their age.
81. As pupils move through the school they make satisfactory progress in developing skills and knowledge in English. Girls and boys attain similarly, although in some classes in Years 7 and 8, girls need real encouragement to contribute in class discussions whereas the boys participate willingly. Pupils with statements of special educational needs make good progress overall, and especially in lessons where they receive individual support. In these lessons they produce a substantial amount of work of good quality.
82. In Year 6, attainment in speaking and listening is at least in line with the national average for eleven-year-olds. Pupils talk with understanding about the characters in their books. With the teachers' encouragement they read out their poems to the class. They express the qualities of different kinds of poetry, for example Haiku and Cinquain, with confidence. They use appropriate terms when talking about their work. These Year 6 pupils read appropriately for their age. Most read confidently and with good expression. If they don't understand, they know *"to read on to see if there are any other clues"* to help them, as well as using dictionaries and thesauri to look up particular words. They are enthusiastic readers with favourite authors such as Jacqueline Wilson, because *"she makes her stories funny and keeps you in suspense"*, or J K Rowling's 'Harry Potter' series. They know what kinds of books they like, such as ghost and horror stories or books about sport. Their writing is in line with the national standard expected from eleven-year-olds. They draft and redraft their work and the more-able writers use devices and more interesting language for the reader. The school's use of the National Literacy Strategy is developing their writing skills and their knowledge of language and how it works. Progress is satisfactory and many pupils over the year have improved their punctuation, spelling, sentence structure and use of paragraphs.
83. By the age of 13, pupils in Year 8, typically communicate well speaking confidently and listening sensitively. In drama pupils learn how to use voice technique to achieve a particular effect, by varying the pace, pitch and volume, for example in the chorus of the Witches' speech from Shakespeare's 'Macbeth'. They make pertinent comments when acting as a critical audience for others' performance in the class, showing good observation and listening

skills. By Year 8, most pupils are able and fluent readers and can form opinions about character and style. To help them develop these skills, when studying *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, they look at selected parts of the text to find evidence about the main characters. Most pupils in Years 7 and 8 write using appropriate style and content and include detail in their descriptive writing. They are familiar with writing of different kinds and for different purposes including letters, dialogue, playscripts and poems. After visiting the local newspaper to see how a paper is put together and produced for example, pupils composed and desk-top published their own group newspapers, working to similar constraints of length, layout and using an appropriate reporting style. They produced reports on sports, composed letter pages and devised classified advertisements, all in appropriate style and format, showing good command of the literary conventions.

84. Across the different subjects that they study, pupils' literacy skills are satisfactory. Most pupils listen and communicate well in most lessons. By Year 6, pupils' reading skills are enhanced by the amount of reading, of both fiction and non-fiction, that most of them do in different subjects at school and at home. Many visit the local library and make good use of the school library, changing their books regularly. They have well-developed research skills. For example, when researching endangered species in geography, they use a wide range of text-book references and a CD-ROM effectively to extract the appropriate information. Older pupils in Years 7 and 8 understand what they read by interpreting and making inferences and deductions, reading beyond the literal meaning of the text. Pupils write for different purposes, such as taking notes in geography and commenting on the work of different painters in art and design. They use language appropriately making good use of technical terms for example in science, history and music. The pupils in Years 7 and 8 use vocabulary effectively in their creative writing and in their writing for different purposes, for example expressing a point of view.
85. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all but one of the twelve lessons seen, which was unsatisfactory. Teaching is generally good in Key Stage 3 with more variability in Years 5 and 6. Lessons have many good features:
- All teachers, have good relationships with their pupils so all pupils behave well, but particularly so in Years 5 and 6.
 - Pupils with statements of educational need work hard and concentrate because of the effective support from the learning support assistants.
 - Teachers use introductions effectively to help pupils remember what they learnt in the last lesson and to set out the new learning objectives for the lesson.
 - Teachers use and create opportunities for pupils to talk, discuss, respond, expand, justify.
 - Pupils work in groups on challenging tasks appropriate to their ability.
86. However, there are features of the literacy hour in Years 5 and 6 that are not consistently in place and which indicate missed opportunities for pupils to increase their learning. For example, some lessons have little variation of task to match different pupils' capabilities. Some move too slowly, demanding too little of pupils. Quite often, activities are not timed or planned to allow time to reflect on the learning at the end of the lesson. This means that pupils do not always absorb what they have learnt and make progress beyond the lesson. Where the teacher does not work in detail with a different group each lesson during group work, but

moves around too rapidly, opportunities for specifically focused teaching and learning, geared to the needs of each group, are missed.

87. The English co-ordinator manages teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 effectively. She teaches these pupils and has introduced many changes that have improved the learning opportunities for older pupils and have helped them to make faster progress. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 now have individual targets for their reading, writing, speaking and listening, based on their attainment so far judged against the National Curriculum statements. These are assessed termly and discussed with the pupil. Pupils are aware of their learning targets and what they need to do to improve. The co-ordinator has already incorporated features of the National Literacy Strategy into her teaching, and has carried out an audit of what literacy is happening across the curriculum. She has effectively tackled the key issues from the last inspection, namely challenge for the most able pupil, lesson planning and assessment to inform planning.
88. However, her effectiveness is limited to Key Stage 3 because although she holds termly meetings to review the teaching of English throughout the school, this is not sufficient to give her, as the co-ordinator, a clear whole-school overview. She has little detailed knowledge or responsibility for the subject in Key Stage 2 because she has no time to monitor, teach or observe in Years 5 and 6, to share good practice or to improve the effectiveness of all the teachers. Structures and systems, such as those for assessment and planning, are not consistent across the school in English. In short, there is little coherence between the management of the subject between the key stages. This is unsatisfactory and adversely affects the consistency of what and how pupils learn in English, as they move up the school. Consequently, although much individual teaching is good and pupils respond well to it, their overall progress is only satisfactory rather than good; and standards are rather lower than should be the case.

MATHEMATICS

89. In the national tests, for pupils aged 11 in 2000, results were above the national average with the proportion of pupils attaining higher results well above the national average. When compared with results from similar schools, standards overall were well above average. Since 1998 the rate of improvement has been faster than that nationally. There is no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys.
90. The standards of pupils' work seen during the inspection were above average. By the age of eleven most pupils are confident in their understanding and use of number, they use a wide mathematical vocabulary accurately and apply their knowledge and skills thoughtfully to the solution of problems. For example, when working on pie charts, higher-attaining pupils express proportions as both fractions and percentages and use these to calculate quantities represented by a sector. Lower-attaining pupils measure angles to the nearest degree, identify a shaded area as a fraction of a whole but they are not confident in expressing a range of fractions in their simplest form.
91. By the age of 13 higher-attaining standards continue to be typically above average. Higher-attaining pupils are developing fluency with algebra. They express rules algebraically, solve

linear equations, using inverse operations, write and interpret formulae and substitute numbers into formulae that include powers. Pupils with average attainment tackle multi-stage problems and apply mathematical reasoning when finding angles in geometric configurations that include triangles and parallel lines. They interpret conversion graphs and scatter diagrams but have difficulty with percentage increase and decrease. Lower-attaining pupils solve simple problems applying geometric reasoning, they group discrete data and represent them graphically and they calculate the percentage of a quantity.

92. Pupils make good progress in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and benefit from the effective help given by the learning support assistants and teachers.
93. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is having a positive impact on teaching and standards in mathematics lessons, though the absence of a whole-school numeracy policy results in limited opportunities for the application of mathematics in subjects other than mathematics. Nevertheless, pupils do apply their mathematical skills in some other areas of the curriculum. In physical education, learning is enhanced by the confident use of estimating and measuring skills, whilst in science, pupils use skills in graphical representation and interpretation to good effect. The emphasis on vocabulary development in mathematics, which links to work in literacy, has a positive effect on the development of mathematical reasoning.
94. The use of information and communication technology in mathematics is underdeveloped and unsatisfactory. Its use is not planned systematically into schemes of work, neither was any seen in the lessons observed during the inspection.
95. The quality of mathematics teaching is good overall and contributes to effective learning and high standards. All lessons observed were at least satisfactory, with seven out of the ten being good or better. Half the lessons seen in Years 7 and 8 were very good. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is generally sound. Strengths of subject knowledge are evident in clear explanations and perceptive questioning that helps pupils to understand. Occasional weaknesses in teachers' knowledge are evident, where less efficient mathematical methods are taught and teaching points from pupils' responses to questions are missed. Lesson planning in Years 7 and 8 is very good. It is more variable in Years 5 and 6 where the intended learning is not always facilitated by the tasks that are set for pupils. The impact of the National Numeracy Strategy extends across all year groups where all lessons have a clear structure including an oral/mental starter that ensures the quick and effective involvement of pupils. Tasks are skilfully set to match the different levels of attainment of pupils in the class, ensuring that they engage with their work. However, in some lessons, where pupils finish work early, time is wasted while pupils wait for work to be marked before further work is set. In a few lessons, the highest-attaining pupils are not sufficiently stretched and would benefit from more challenging extension work. Homework is set regularly and is used productively to consolidate learning and to apply what is learnt in class to the solution of problems. The lack of a consistent approach to the use of calculators leads to some inappropriate use. Resources for teaching mathematics are adequate though a greater range, including relevant computer software, would enhance the teaching and learning of numeracy.

96. Pupils respond well to the good teaching they receive. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and teachers are excellent. Standards of behaviour are very good and pupils show high levels of interest in their work, which contribute to their academic progress. There are limited opportunities for pupils to discuss and evaluate their own mathematical thinking and the methods they use. This shows in the way pupils depend too much on their teachers rather than trying things out independently and learning from their experiences. The use of assessment checklists in Years 7 and 8 helps pupils to monitor and chart their progress. However, the overall benefit is limited because pupils are generally unaware of the National Curriculum level at which they are working, the target they are expected to achieve, and what they need to do to reach their expected standard.
97. Mathematics is currently under temporary management, led by the headteacher. During this time, performance has improved, the planning and teaching of the subject in Years 7 and 8 has been successfully reviewed, and the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is beginning to have a positive impact on teaching and standards. However, planning of further development to assure continued improvement is not satisfactory. The analysis of data on the performance of pupils on entry to the school is not used to set high and challenging targets that are understood by pupils and parents for performance at the end of Year 6. The recent audit of mathematics has not been translated into a systematic plan of action. There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Consequently aspects of very good practice are not being effectively shared to help to improve aspects of weaker practice.
98. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards have improved as a consequence of improved teaching and pupils' attitudes to learning are now good. Higher-attaining pupils are making better progress though the highest attainers could be stretched further. There is room for further improvement through a more consistent approach to record keeping and by helping pupils improve by tracking their progress and making the resulting learning targets clearly understood. The use of information and communication technology to enhance the learning and teaching of mathematics remains unsatisfactory.

SCIENCE

99. Overall, attainment in the national tests for science in 2000 for eleven-year-olds was well below national standards. All pupils under-performed, girls more significantly than boys because many more pupils attained Level 4 than nationally, while far fewer than expected attained Level 5 or better. Even with wide variation between each cohort, the pattern of the trend in attainment indicates a decline in standards in Key Stage 2 science since the time of the last inspection report.
100. Currently, based on the work of pupils seen during the inspection and discussions with them, attainment in lessons is satisfactory in both key stages. In Key Stage 3, by Year 8, pupils' attainment is in line with national standards. At the time of the last inspection, attainment in Key Stage 3 was less satisfactory than in Key Stage 2. The situation is now the reverse. Most Year 8 pupils know, for example, about blood circulation and understand and use

terms such as ‘*arteries, veins, lungs, heart, ventricles and aorta.*’ They know which way the blood is circulating and a few know the pulmonary exception to this rule. Pupils with special educational needs are learning and progressing well. More able pupils are knowledgeable, more confident and very quickly offer accurate information about the circulation of blood. They make good progress in their science lessons. Pupils in Year 7 are learning about inherited and environmental variations. They know and understand well the term ‘*variation*’ and can distinguish the differences between inherited and environmental factors that influence changes between people. For example, they know that eyesight and weight can be influenced by environmental factors such as watching too much television and overeating, respectively.

101. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils in Year 6 can, for example, identify differences in the properties of a range of materials by drawing on prior knowledge and through carrying out simple investigations. They can articulate what they know about the materials confidently such as, which materials conduct electricity and which are attracted to a magnet. Pupils use scientific terminology well when naming apparatus and describing processes in the water cycle such as ‘*Bunsen burner, gauze, tripod, solid, liquid, gas, dissolve, evaporate and condensation*’. In Year 5, pupils know and understand the principle of circuits. They have a good understanding of what they need to make one and are confident using the equipment. The lunchtime gardening club, provides good opportunities for pupils from both key stages to work together. They practise good stewardship and learn about citizenship issues while improving their knowledge and understanding of life processes and living things.
102. Opportunities to support literacy are developing very well. Pupils are given many opportunities to contribute to the oral parts of lessons and encouraged to use technical scientific vocabulary. The science teacher expects and achieves extremely high standards of behaviour. Consequently pupils listen attentively. They respond positively and respect the views and ideas of other pupils. The written work of pupils with special education needs in both key stages continues to be weak. However, work that is carefully matched to their ability, guidance provided by the teacher and learning support assistant and the use of specific resources such as writing frames help provide a context for improving these skills. Opportunities for numeracy in science are satisfactory. Currently, word processing is used across classes in Key Stage 3 to draft and re-draft topic folders on a range of topics from across the science curriculum. CD-ROMs are used to access information. Pupils browse, select, copy, and paste into other applications where they modify the text and insert images. However, the use of information and communication technology is under-developed, for example, in using information and communication technology to collect, present and analyse results of experiments.
103. Teaching in science is now satisfactory or better. During the inspection week teaching and learning were satisfactory in Key Stage 2 and good in Key Stage 3. Teaching and learning were never less than satisfactory and, in seven out of the nine lessons seen, were judged to be good. There is a clear correlation between the good teaching and effective learning.
104. A particular strength of the good teaching is the effective organisation of science equipment and resources. This enables lessons to run smoothly, such as in a lesson in Year 5 where

pupils were investigating circuits. Another strength is the selection of appropriate approaches and activities for example:

- good use of question and answer techniques to involve both boys and girls;
- good lesson planning that identifies a range of activities, each tightly timed to engaged and keep pupils on task;
- good intervention strategies that are used to challenge pupils with probing questions;
- good use of paired and team activities so that pupils take responsibility for their learning.

105. As a consequence, pupils are mature, settle quickly to tasks, engage in purposeful discussion, make appropriate notes and use appropriate scientific vocabulary. All this has a very positive effect on learning in science.
106. The co-ordinator's purposeful and active approach to teaching science in Years 7 and 8 provides an effective learning environment where pupils feel valued, secure, fully engaged and keen to learn and display a clear enjoyment in their learning. This has a positive impact on the quality of learning in lessons. Pupils' responses to their written work and practical activities are particularly mature. The teacher's pleasant and firm manner establishes and maintains good relationships. As a consequence, pupils behave well and are courteous and trustworthy. They show respect for each other and scientific equipment. Pupils respond well to set routines and the structure of science lessons. They work independently and collaboratively when required. Pupils respond well to the challenges set by the science teacher. They are well aware of what they have to do and apply themselves purposefully to the opportunities for them to show initiative and take responsibility. This is a particular feature and strength of science teaching and learning.
107. Conversely, some weaknesses in the teaching of pupils in Years 5 and 6 prevent them developing deeper knowledge and understanding of a range of topics across the science curriculum. This happens when pupils work too slowly because of insufficient training in investigative routines, when they drift off task and the teacher is slow to react and when limited opportunities are provided for pupils to fully develop the requirement for planning, obtaining, presenting, considering, and evaluating evidence is under developed. Occasionally, class teachers' lack of specialist knowledge means that explanations of more complex problems are not forthcoming.
108. Science is led by an enthusiastic supply teacher. She is committed and determined to make changes to the science curriculum. Analysis of the national test results for 2000 has already been used to decide necessary changes to teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 3. Scientific enquiry has rightly been identified as a weakness and an area for particular attention. Appropriate action is being taken. Plans for resourcing science now have strategic targets that include the purchase of computer hardware and software so that pupils can engage in data capture and analysis. There are plans to improve the effectiveness of the subject's use of this new technology. The appointment of this supply teacher has already had a positive effect on learning in science and there is a clear commitment to improvement in the future. However, management roles and responsibilities are still not provided and

insufficient time is available, particularly for the monitoring of science teaching in Year 5. Nevertheless, leadership and management of science is satisfactory and improving.

ART AND DESIGN

109. Standards of achievement in art and design are average in Years 5 and 6 and above average in Years 7 and 8, during which most pupils achieve well and some pupils produce excellent work. Boys and girls attain equally well. Pupils in all years handle materials confidently and have good basic skills in drawing and painting. Skills in working with three-dimensional materials are less well developed because pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to use them. In Years 7 and 8, pupils make good use of sketchbooks to record their ideas and to experiment with different techniques. Many pupils produce work that is bold and imaginative in concept and skilful in execution, especially when they are given the opportunity to work on a large scale and encouraged to take risks.
110. The quality of teaching and learning overall is good. Teaching is good in Years 7 and 8 and pupils learn well as a result. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 but is less consistent so pupils do not make such good progress. Most lessons have clear objectives and make effective use of a range of teaching strategies. Lessons are well organised and discipline is invariably good. In Years 7 and 8, pupils' learning is enhanced by encouraging them to reflect on their work through discussion and by writing about their response to the work of particular artists. Lesson planning is good. In one lesson in Year 7, the teacher's imaginative planning prompted pupils to work successfully on a large scale because they were stimulated by the physical sensation of handling objects in a '*feelie*' box. This helped them understand the work of some twentieth century artists in greater depth. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils worked purposefully and with a clear understanding of the style of Clarice Cliff because the teacher had explained the features clearly and had planned time for them to practise in their sketchbooks before producing their plate designs in the same style. However, in Years 5 and 6, some pupils could achieve more if more were demanded of them. This is partly due to class teachers' lack of specialist knowledge and partly because teachers sometimes allow pupils to concentrate on finishing the piece of work rather than developing the particular artistic skills. In addition, pupils in Years 5 and 6 do not enjoy the same access to specialist facilities as pupils in Years 7 and 8 as their lessons are not taught in the art room. This limits the scope of the work they are able to tackle and consequently lessens their progress.
111. Pupils in all years behave well, work hard and enjoy their art lessons. They show positive attitudes towards the subject and are proud of their work especially when it is displayed around the school.
112. There are effective arrangements in place for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress. In Years 7 and 8, this includes involving pupils in evaluating their own and each other's work. There is a programme of gallery visits for older pupils. This adds to their knowledge and understanding of art and artists.
113. Significant improvements have taken place since the last inspection. Standards are higher, especially in Years 7 and 8. The curriculum is now well planned, with no overlap or

repetition between years. The subject co-ordinator provides effective leadership, based on a strong commitment to the importance of creativity in the curriculum, and meets regularly with class teachers to review and plan the curriculum.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

114. Attainment in design and technology at the end of Key Stage 2 and at the end of Year 8 is in line with the national expectations. There are no significant differences in the levels of attainment reached by boys and girls in either key stage.
115. In Key Stage 2, all pupils are able to carry out research and generate interesting ideas that they are then able to develop. They work in plastics, wood, food and textiles. Pupils have a basic understanding of how to design and plan their work through to making the final product. In Year 5, all pupils are able to design hand puppets and produce paper patterns for their manufacture. Higher-attaining pupils can make more complex patterns. The use of paper patterns allows the pupils to prototype their designs, which leads to easy modification to ensure successful manufacture.
116. As they get older, in Key Stage 3, pupils are confident in using equipment to measure, mark out, cut, shape and finish wood, food and textiles. Pupils' written work and comments indicate that they have a developing understanding of safety issues and hygiene. By Year 8, pupils use their developing designing and practical skills successfully to tackle longer and more complex assignments.
117. Pupils with special educational needs find parts of the design process difficult but are able to attain similar standards as their peers. Higher-attaining pupils can develop a clear idea of what has to be done with the minimum of adult help, propose a logical sequence of actions and modify their work as it progresses to include their own ideas. This could be seen in the individual designs on model vehicles in Year 6 using wood and card and the hand puppets produced in Year 5. As was the case in the previous inspection, pupils in Years 5 and 6 are better at making things than they are at investigating, planning, designing and evaluating the task and the product.
118. Pupils answer questions competently, although technical language is not widely used. Pupils can evaluate their work orally. Higher-attaining pupils, in particular, do this well and are aware of what needs to be done to improve their work. This was evident in the Year 7 lessons when pupils practised using sewing machines to make a *Juggling Bag* using textiles. Overall however, pupils' evaluation of their own or others' designs in order to develop planning skills is under-emphasised in some classes, as it was at the last inspection
119. Pupils make satisfactory progress as they move through the school. By regularly using different materials, pupils increasingly build on their skills of designing and making. This is also due to the opportunities and encouragement presented by teachers for pupils to practise varied making skills. Pupils' graphical skills develop slowly over the key stages. Progress in the use and application of information technology over the key stages is hindered by lack of suitable resources. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.

120. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good in both key stages. Pupils respond very well in lessons. They show interest in their work and actively participate in teacher-led question and answer sessions. Concentration is good throughout the lessons. Behaviour is very good. Relationships are good and mutually supportive. Collaborative work is very successful when groups of pupils work on chosen topics and pupils work well individually in the practical sessions, particularly in Year 5. When given opportunities to take responsibility, pupils respond willingly. Pupils with special educational needs show commitment to learning in class and undertake the same tasks as other pupils. This was particularly noticeable in the Year 8 class, where pupils' attitudes to learning, combined with the teachers' support, ensured an atmosphere of concentration and appreciation throughout the lesson.
121. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Specialist teachers' knowledge is never less than satisfactory and usually good. The content is well taught, usually with clear demonstrations, for example when teaching sewing techniques. Time is generally well used in lessons, which are appropriately planned and structured. Teachers assess and record pupils' work satisfactorily in Key Stage 3. However, the use of assessment is less effective in Years 5 and 6 because work is not set and marked consistently. A lack of liaison across the key stages continues to inhibit pupil progress. This was an issue in the previous inspection.
122. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils. In lessons, teachers give pupils verbal praise for positive contributions, which motivates pupils so they make good progress and improve their work. A friendly working atmosphere is created in all lessons, and teachers ensure pupils understand and apply new knowledge effectively.
123. The management and leadership of the department are unsatisfactory and require further development. The subject specialist teaches pupils in Years 7 and 8. She does not monitor the teaching in Years 5 and 6 because this responsibility has not been made clear in her role description. This limits how she can help the non-specialist class teachers make further improvements to their teaching. Assessments are not used systematically to assist curriculum planning. The preparation of resources for learning is sometimes limited because of insufficient non-teaching technical support. Information and communication technology is under-developed within the department and there is insufficient liaison between the other teachers undertaking design and technology activities. Since the previous inspection there has been some increase in the technological experiences available to pupils. There remains, however, an under-emphasis on pupils' evaluation of their own or others' designs.

GEOGRAPHY

124. There were few opportunities to observe geography teaching during the inspection week. However, evidence from these few lessons, the review of pupils' books, discussions with the subject leader, teachers and pupils show that pupils' attainment in geography throughout the school is in line with national standards. For example from their study of St Lucia Year 6 pupils demonstrate that they can identify the key features that characterise the island. They know that it is tropical, there are banana plantations, it is sunny and there are white

sandy beaches. In Year 8, pupils draw clear and accurate climate graphs. In other work, pupils can, for example, describe the effects of river flooding and investigate the ways in which people seek to manage these rivers, using very good evidence from CD ROMs and the Internet to support their views.

125. There is no difference in the performance of boys and girls and the progress of pupils in individual lessons seen was good. The achievement of more able pupils is satisfactory. However, challenge for these pupils is inconsistent across both key stages. There is often challenge in the language used but not in the activities the teachers expect the pupils to complete so, for example, in some lessons, there is too much colouring in. Pupils with special education needs make is satisfactory progress.
126. In both key stages pupils develop skills of mapping and drawing graphs. They use photographs to gather information. Their use of geography skills to support knowledge and understanding of places and themes is good, however, there are limited opportunities for enquiry and thinking skills. Pupils' knowledge of places and environments is sound. Most pupils have a good factual knowledge and a secure understanding of key concepts. For example, pupils in Year 5 use atlases and an outline map of Europe to identify, locate, name and label the countries of Europe. They know how to use lines of longitude to calculate time, both forward and back from Greenwich. In Year 8, pupils use their interpretation of the climate graphs they have drawn to begin to recognise and explain the changes in the temperature and rainfall the further you travel towards the middle of continental Europe and Asia.
127. In both key stages pupils' numeracy and literacy skills are developing steadily although this is limited to the few opportunities teachers provide. Opportunities for extended writing are few and the display of key words and questions is under developed. However, pupils in Year 8 write informative and long accounts when using information gathered from CD-ROMs and the Internet. The written work of those with special education needs in both key stages is weak. However, work that is carefully matched to their ability and guidance provided by the teacher help provide a context for improving this skill. Numeracy is developing steadily. In both key stages graphing skills are developing well. In Year 6, pupils' use of a spreadsheet to draw a climate graph is particularly well developed. Pupils, also in Year 6, learn to observe, measure, collect and graph data from their visit to the Cheviot Hills to conduct a river study. Pupils in Year 8 proficiently draw and begin to compare and establish patterns in four climate graphs from across Europe and Asia.
128. Information and communication technology is sometimes used constructively by pupils. Year 6 pupils sometimes work independently and interrogate a CD-ROM. They access appropriate information for an environmental geography topic on endangered species. They are able to access information accurately. They display well- practised skills of browsing, copying, pasting pictures and text to other applications and then printing. The use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning in geography is good, where it is offered. However, this area is insufficiently developed mainly because there are still insufficient computers available. This was an issue at the time of the last inspection report and has not been sufficiently addressed over the last four years.

129. A purposeful working environment in geography classrooms provides an effective learning environment where pupils feel valued, secure and interested in their learning. This has a positive impact on the quality of learning in lessons. Pupils' responses to their learning are very good. Teachers establish and maintain good relationships. As a consequence, pupils behave well, are trustworthy and courteous. They show respect for each other and equipment, such as computers and geography resources. They value the oral contributions other pupils make and work well together in pairs and small groups. They work well independently and collaboratively when required. Pupils respond well to the challenges set by their teachers and in so doing, they display initiative and take responsibility for their learning.
130. Overall, in the four lessons seen, teaching was good. It was less than satisfactory in one lesson and in three out of four lessons was good or better. In one of these lessons, teaching was excellent. The good teaching has a strong impact on learning which was good in both key stages. The good teaching is characterised by clear learning objectives, which are shared with the pupils and displayed prominently throughout the lessons for pupil to reference. This ensures that pupils are clear about what they are going to learn. A particular strength is questioning pupils about knowledge gained in previous lessons. It re-establishes what pupils have learnt, engages the pupils well in learning from the outset and effectively sets the scene for the lesson. Teachers consistently give clear and precise instructions at a pace that pupils can follow that ensures they engage in learning very quickly. Pupils respond to this by applying themselves immediately to the tasks at hand without the need for further encouragement from the teacher. Good progress follows. Where a good range of resources is used well this stimulates pupils well. For example, in Year 7, very effective use was made of video by freeze framing and asking appropriate questions related to a short section of two different videos. As a result, pupils were attentive and learnt well.
131. Teaching is not so good when there is little challenge in the tasks set by the teacher, especially when they control activities too tightly. Too often, even in good lessons, teachers answer their own questions too readily, albeit, to keep the pace alive, and this limits opportunities for pupils to think about their answers to questions. Time often runs out and so there is not enough time for pupils to clarify and reflect upon what they have been learning.
132. Since the time of the last inspection the leadership and management of this subject have only been partially satisfactory. The subject leader has a clear interest in this subject and a commitment to improvement. This had led to appropriate changes to the teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 to meet the requirements of the new 2000 curriculum. Some analysis of attainment on entry takes place and closer links with the high school are developing. Ongoing assessment is good and the subject leader clearly identifies the next steps for pupils learning in his own marking. However, there are important aspects of the management of the subject that remain unsatisfactory:

- Opportunities for sharing good practice are missed because the co-ordinator's management role has not been properly identified by the senior management of the school.
- Planning for Key Stage 2 is under developed because of the long gap between pupils' experiences in Year 5 and those in Year 6.
- Insufficient time has been spent on setting strategic targets for improving standards because this has not been a key focus for the whole school.
- Strategic and formal monitoring of teaching and learning, across both key stages, is under developed because the co-ordinator has not been given time to do so.
- Resources are limited and in variable condition

As a consequence, there has been limited improvement since the time of the last inspection.

HISTORY

133. During the inspection, no Year 6 history classes were being taught. Judgements about pupils' attainment and progress in Year 6 have been made on the basis of examining samples of their work and interviewing a representative group pupils about their studies in history.
134. Overall, by the end of Key Stage 2 and Year 8, both girls and boys attain standards that match those expected nationally for their ages. More able pupils attain highly in Key Stage 3 as a result of specialist teaching which is well planned and challenging. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers present them with activities and resources that have been appropriately adapted to their needs.
135. Most pupils in both key stages have secure historical knowledge and a sound grasp of chronology. They use historical terms and dates accurately and can give detailed accounts about key features of different historical societies both orally and in writing. This was exemplified in the Year 6 work on Ancient Egypt where pupils gave full descriptions of the life of a vizier. The majority of pupils show a good understanding of the causes and consequences of historical events. Year 5 pupils, for example, could explain why World War Two broke out and what the impact was on people's lives in Britain. Year 7 work on why William the Conqueror won the battle of Hastings showed that pupils could link different reasons for the victory. More able pupils could say which factors were more important. A few very able pupils demonstrated high attainment by recognising that these factors can be interpreted differently. Generally, however, pupils' understanding of historical interpretations is not sufficiently secure. Whilst pupils are able to recognise that there are different interpretations of the past, their ability to understand why and how these are derived is not so evident..
136. Pupils generally make satisfactory progress during their time at the school. By the end of Year 8, pupils can produce well constructed written work and can argue from different viewpoints, selecting relevant information to justify their opinions. Pupils' progress is generally more rapid in Years 5, 7 and 8 than in Year 6. This is particularly evident in pupils' enquiry skills, which are well developed in Year 5 but in Year 6, the work covered

does not allow them to practise these skills and, as a result, they demonstrate little understanding of how different sources can be used to find out about the past.

137. The quality of teaching is good overall. Consequently pupils respond positively, behave very well and learn successfully. During the inspection, teaching quality in the lessons seen ranged from very good to satisfactory. Examples of very good teaching were observed in both key stages but teaching was more successful in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 2 because it is generally better planned. The Year 7 and 8 lessons seen had a clear purpose and tasks well designed to achieve the intended outcomes. These were fully explained to the pupils so that they knew what was expected of them. On the other hand, some lessons for Years 5 and 6 contained tasks that did not match the aims of the lesson. The success of the more effective planning is due to the logical sequencing of activities and the guidance given to pupils about improving their literacy skills. Pupils learn to use appropriate historical language and they are helped to use writing frames, plans and drafting. This helps pupils complete a final challenging task with confidence. For example, Year 7 pupils of all abilities could tackle the evaluative essay, *How great an Emperor was Augustus?* because of the preparatory work they had carried out. The teacher first helped them to identify and analyse the advantages and disadvantages of the emperor's rule and then gave pupils of differing ability guidance about how to complete the essay in ways well matched to their needs.
138. Lessons observed in both key stages were not always timed well, with activities rushed or inadequately completed. Generally, teachers did not end lessons with a summary, preventing pupils from consolidating and reflecting upon what they had learnt.
139. Teachers make judicious use of film and video recordings to motivate pupils, sustain their interest and to help explain the past. They use cards and fortune graphs to help with classification, analysis and evaluation. Well-managed group discussions help pupils to form judgements. Relevant educational visits to local places of historical interest enrich pupils' learning. One teacher regularly and expertly uses items from the news to show pupils the modern day relevance of history. Teachers' questioning effectively prompted pupils to think carefully about their learning by justifying their answers and discussing their answers with each other. Key Stage 3 pupils were challenged to consider alternative viewpoints. Pupils were given very good advice about how to improve their work, often by the skilful comparison of pupils' various responses. However, teachers do not sufficiently help pupils to use information and communication technology in their historical studies.
140. At present, the leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory but improving. Some areas identified for improvement in the last inspection have been successfully rectified but others less so. Key Stage 3 provision has improved. However, there is no coherent improvement strategy for the subject for both key stages and so improvement in Key Stage 2 has been less successful. The subject leader has only recently taken up post and has no management time to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in history. Pupils' attainment across both key stages history is too infrequently evaluated and revised, particularly to address the recent changes in the National Curriculum. Pupils' understanding of historical interpretations remains underdeveloped. The long gap in pupils' studies between the end of the autumn Term in Year 6 and the start of Year 7 is interrupting pupils'

progress. Teachers also do not have the opportunity to share their judgements about pupils' attainment to ensure their expectations of pupils are consistent. There are very few meetings with teachers from partner first and high schools to help plan the history curriculum in a coherent way

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

141. Attainment within the timetabled specialist information and communication technology lessons is in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and it is mostly in line in Year 8. However, pupils' overall attainment in information technology in Year 6 and by Year 8, including its use in other subjects, is below average. Within this, there are examples in some subjects of pupils performing satisfactorily.
142. In timetabled information and communication technology lessons, pupils in Year 6 know how to highlight and select sections of text. Most can load one or two applications but some need help to do so. Pupils understand and use a range of specialist vocabulary, such as '*minimise*', '*edit*', and '*save*'. By Year 8, pupils can move information between different applications, enlarge and diminish pictures and click and drag material. Most use the keyboard to type in text and take out straightforward errors, such as changing spacing or punctuation. Higher-attaining pupils know how to edit the layout and use desktop publishing effectively to combine text and imagery.
143. Progress in information and communication technology lessons is, overall, unsatisfactory. Generally, the reasons for the lack of higher-level attainment and inconsistent progress are as follows:
- The computer room is poorly organised leading to cramped conditions and limited opportunity for pupils to practise their skills.
 - The usefulness of information and communication technology is not apparent to many because the opportunities for them to apply previously taught skills in interesting contexts in information and communication technology lessons and in other subjects are limited.
 - Provision is unsatisfactory. There are too few opportunities for pupils to work with a range of applications such as data logging and data analysis in science and mathematics or control technology in design and technology.
144. Pupils in Key Stage 2 sometimes make satisfactory progress, for example, when putting pictures into text. Pupils at both ends of the ability range, including those with special educational needs, progress well on occasions but there are instances where they require more support or direction from the teacher to progress at an appropriate rate. When progress is satisfactory, it is linked to teachers' ability to engage in a useful interaction initially with the whole class and subsequently with groups of pupils. Where more confident pupils are encouraged to help others, this also supports progress. However, over a longer time period, progress in gaining a full range of skills, knowledge and understanding is unsatisfactory. Even by Year 8, pupils do not have the confidence to explore for themselves, so they are obliged to wait for help. Only rarely are they able to assess the usefulness of information and communication technology.

145. Whilst long-term planning of the curriculum by teachers is satisfactory, there is a lack of detail in short-term planning to include the use of information and communication technology in the different subjects that pupils study. There is, on paper, a sound understanding of the attainment levels appropriate for each age range but the use of assessment criteria is not communicated effectively by staff to pupils. Assessment procedures do not currently reveal a clear picture of individual attainment nor do they enable teachers to match work to pupils' prior learning. It is also difficult, given the current lack of assessment data, for staff to evaluate their own courses and units. Informal assessment of pupils' progress and questioning at the right level are seen in most lessons. Verbal feedback to pupils in lessons is good but the marking procedures have still not been carefully thought through. Without records of attainment and more varied sources of help for pupils to know what to do next, many do not progress as well as they should.
146. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to information and communication technology and most arrive at lessons willing to learn. Their behaviour is good. Most pupils concentrate hard for long periods of time in order to get things right but a few pupils chat throughout work and so fail to concentrate fully, partly because of the need to share computers. Progress is also slowed to some degree by pupils' tendency to be over dependent on their teachers. Pupils do not achieve the higher levels of attainment because they are not sufficiently autonomous as learners and they are not yet able to select the appropriate information and communication technology application.
147. The quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6 was unsatisfactory in two thirds of the lessons seen. In Years 7 and 8, teaching was unsatisfactory overall. Whether teaching is by the specialist teacher or by class teachers, satisfactory teaching is characterised by an ability to pitch questions to pupils at the right level and to use their answers as the starting point for an explanation. Good demonstrations motivate pupils and enable more independent working. The presence of an additional adult in the room has a good effect in some lessons. However, in most lessons teachers misjudge what is achievable in the time. Objectives are limited to developing pupils' skills with the mouse and keyboard. Teaching methods and organisational strategies are limited by the room layout and by limited learning resources. Pairs of pupils too rarely changed places at the keyboard and in most lessons, the whole class is expected to progress at the same rate. Inevitably, though only for short periods of time as teachers are occupied helping a few pupils with their problems, some pupils are frustrated because they are waiting to be helped and some others become bored through lack of challenge.
148. There has been an improvement in the quality and amount of information and communication technology resources since the last inspection. However, the organisation and deployment of these resources has hindered progress. The newest computers are positioned in a room, which is partly an information and communication technology suite and partly a food technology room. This has meant that the computers have limited space between them, leading to very cramped working conditions. This is especially so when full classes are expected to work in the room, with up to four pupils sharing one computer.

149. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to evaluate their own work or to attain targets appropriate for them. This is often due to teachers leaving insufficient time at the end of lessons for pupils to reflect on their work and not planning specific time for them to evaluate what they have done. Planning against the full National Curriculum and co-ordination throughout the school to ensure pupils receive their entitlement to the full information and communication technology curriculum are unsatisfactory and remain issues from the previous inspection. The role and responsibilities of the coordinator in this respect have not been made sufficiently clear by senior management.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

150. French is taught to all pupils in Years 6, 7 and 8. In Year 6 they are taught for one lesson per week and in Years 7 and 8 for two lessons per week. All pupils are taught in groups where there is a mix of abilities. The co-ordinator teaches all pupils and is a French specialist. During the inspection, three lessons were observed.
151. Overall, the standards reached by pupils aged 13 in French are high when compared with national averages. By the age of 11, the majority of pupils have laid a firm foundation for their work in Years 7 and 8. They are able to understand simple sentences and can participate in short conversations with confidence. They have begun to match the written with the spoken word and can use written information to help them build short sentences. By the age of 13, the majority of pupils have developed their speaking skills and are confident in longer, more complex conversations. They are also beginning to talk about future events. They are developing their reading skills by reading short books and can understand native French speakers on tape. Project work enables them to extend their writing skills whilst also giving them the opportunity to use information and communication technology and download information from the Internet. However, their work folders are often disorganised and not conducive to adopting a systematic approach to learning a language.
152. Throughout all three years, the majority of pupils enjoy their learning and feel confident in the progress that they are making. Those pupils who find learning difficult enjoy French and are able to succeed at their own level. More able pupils have the scope to become more independent learners, especially by working in pairs and completing more complex tasks for homework.
153. The teaching across all year groups is good. Lessons are well prepared, ordered, make good use of resources and incorporate a wide variety of activities. Pupils consequently enjoy their learning, are able to succeed and therefore make good progress. Repetition of vocabulary is lively, pair work is focused and pupils enjoy songs that reinforce their acquisition of vocabulary. Displays help to create a stimulating environment in a classroom, which is cramped and far from ideal for language learning. Pupils' work is marked regularly. They have regular assessments and tests, and they are supported in lessons by the teacher's comments that help them to move forward. The teacher also uses the findings from assessments constructively to help plan future programmes of work. However, the teacher does not use French sufficiently or consistently in lessons so pupils are sometimes confused

about the language they should be using. Consequently they do not use French as a matter of course during the lessons and miss some opportunities to use the language in a real situation. This limits pupils' progress.

154. The motivation and achievement of pupils are also greatly enhanced by the well-supported annual visit to France for Years 7 and 8. This visit also has a positive impact on the personal and cultural aspects of the pupils' education. Interest is also stimulated by a variety of extra-curricular activities such as French breakfasts and boules tournaments.
155. The very good leadership and management of the very competent and enthusiastic co-ordinator who does all the French teaching, have transformed the French Department over the last four years. The standard of pupils' work is high, schemes of work are appropriate and comprehensive, resources are up-to-date and information and communication technology is used extensively. It now forms an integral part of pupils' work and there is a selection of CD ROMs. The teacher attends courses in France and welcomes the opportunity for discussions with fellow French teachers and the advisory teacher from the Local Education Authority. Since the last inspection, improvement overall has been very good. More able pupils have worksheets and homework which are more demanding and the number of pupils reaching the higher levels in the National Curriculum has increased from 45% in 1998 to 61% in 2001. Opportunities to develop pupils' reading skills have been created and pupils' progress is monitored carefully. Resources have improved to include a new course book, reading books, dictionaries, magazines, videos and additional cassette players.

MUSIC

156. Music is taught to all pupils for one lesson per week. All pupils are taught in groups where there is a mix of abilities. The music co-ordinator teaches all pupils and is a music specialist. During the inspection, four lessons were observed.
157. Standards of attainment in music are average overall, but there are strengths and weaknesses in different aspects of the subject. Singing is a particular strength. Pupils have good control over their voices, listen to each other when singing together and respond readily to comments and instructions from the teacher. Listening skills are also well developed. Pupils are able to focus their attention on specific aspects of music and comment on what they hear. However, there are significant gaps in pupils' knowledge about music because they do not have sufficient opportunities to perform and compose using musical instruments.
158. The quality of teaching is good. It is better in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6. The recently-appointed music co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge and is able to draw on a range of effective teaching strategies. Lessons provide pupils with a high level of challenge to which they respond positively and standards are now rising after a period of decline. Progress is most evident in lessons, which are well focused and enable pupils to work through a connected sequence of activities. It is more marked in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 2 because of the more secure teaching. However, in some lessons in all years, pupils are not given enough opportunity to think for themselves or plan their own work. At present, the progress pupils have made by the time they are 13 is only satisfactory because of the discontinuity of teaching that they have experienced.
159. Pupils have a positive attitude towards the subject and admire and respect their teacher. They work with enthusiasm. Behaviour is good and levels of concentration are high.
160. The range of activities in which pupils can take part is limited by the number and quality of musical instruments available. Composing in particular is severely constrained by the need to share a limited number of musical instruments between groups of pupils so pupils' learning through composing is more limited. Instrumental tuition is offered to pupils on a range of instruments. The number of pupils taking advantage of this opportunity is relatively small but is starting to grow. The music teacher plans to start a school choir and to extend the range of opportunities for pupils to take part in other musical and performing arts activities outside lessons.
161. The high standards at the time of the last inspection have not been maintained but there are clear signs that standards are beginning to rise again. This is because music co-ordinator is providing effective and enthusiastic leadership and has drawn up an appropriate action plan for improvement, which has the support of senior management. The priorities identified in the action plan are appropriate and focus on resources and curriculum planning. There should also be an emphasis on teaching and learning, with a particular focus on lesson planning and on giving pupils more responsibility for their own learning.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

162. Overall, standards of attainment in physical education are at least in line with national expectations and in some aspects are above in both key stages. By the age of 11, pupils show sound quality in their movement. They are able to demonstrate and apply skills in context. In games, basic tactical understanding is evident. Safety procedures are understood and applied appropriately. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 recognised the need for ‘warming up’ and ‘cooling down routines’ prior to and after exercise. They also quickly responded to their teachers’ instructions regarding movement and the use of equipment. The majority of pupils are able to evaluate both their own and their peers’ work sensitively and suggest strategies for improvement. By the age of 13, standards continue to as expected although in Year 8 a significant number of pupils lack co-ordination in games and find it difficult to apply tactics and techniques in a game situation.
163. In all years, pupils generally achieve and make progress in line with their ability, both in lessons and over time. Challenge for the whole spectrum of ability is provided by careful analysis of individual pupils’ progress against their prior performance. From the lessons observed, those with special educational needs were well supported, either by the class teacher or, in some cases, by learning support staff, who provided reassurance, strategies and advice for helping these pupils improve. This enabled them to integrate fully into lessons and achieve in line with their ability.
164. The quality of teaching is good, overall and leads to good learning. Teachers planning of lessons and clear explanations promote high standards. Lessons are well structured to allow for a range of different teaching strategies and to provide challenge to pupils of differing abilities. Staff have a good subject knowledge and this underpins their authority in lessons. In the majority of lessons, pupils are actively engaged in ways that arouse their enthusiasm so that there is an exciting buzz in lessons and learning is therefore enjoyable. Teachers are approachable and establish a good rapport with their pupils. They expect and usually receive high standards, both in work and behaviour. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of time targets to inject pace and urgency to pupils’ work. Pupils are expected to review and evaluate their own performance, as well as that of their peers. This improves their communication skills and helps them analyse and identify strategies for further improvement. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
165. The quality of learning is good overall, more so in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 3. Careful planning of activities allow pupils to develop their skills step by step and builds up confidence. For example, in a Year 6 lesson on sprinting, pupils were asked to see how much ground they could cover in three seconds and how much this could be improved by effective starting procedures. Teachers successfully communicate their enthusiasm for the subject so that pupils become engaged in activities and want to achieve. The use of assessment, both informal and formal, contributes a great deal to the quality of learning. Most pupils know how well they are doing and are increasingly able to identify strategies to improve. This is again an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils enter the school with a wide variety of previous experiences and subsequent high-quality teaching, particularly in Years 5 and 6, allows them to make good progress in line with their ability. Although there is no significant difference in the achievement of girls and boys, there is evidence that some boys are less willing to apply new skill techniques in a game context.

166. Physical education is allocated slightly more time than is recommended nationally. Pupils are taught in mixed ability groups sometimes with boys and girls together and sometimes as single sex groups. The programme for physical education is well planned to give pupils a wide range of experiences to enhance their learning and involve them in team activity. The curriculum is well supported by a wide range of extra-curricular sporting activity, both competitive and recreational. There are opportunities for competitive games with other schools and in local area competitions, for example, in football, rugby, netball, rounders, hockey, athletics, swimming and cross-country. These activities are open to all and are generally well supported. Literacy is being developed through frequent use of key words, opportunities for verbal communication and the development of listening skills. Numeracy skills are encouraged, for example, in Year 5 through the use of accurate measurement and recording.
167. The subject is well led and managed in a collaborative style that makes best use of teachers' complementary strengths. This is due to the commitment and enthusiasm of the subject co-ordinator. There is a shared commitment to improvement, as can be seen in the way the new National Curriculum levels in physical education have been taken, customised to the needs of the school and used to help ensure pupil progress between years. The department also has an effective strategy for monitoring teaching and learning, which has led to changes in schemes of work and provided new targets for improvement. Information and communication technology is currently being developed in Years 7 and 8 to help record a clear database for pupils to record achievements and progress.
168. A particular feature of the work in physical education is the use of displays around the school to celebrate pupil involvement and success in sports and field trips. The department makes a significant contribution to the school's wider aims in the way it promotes social and moral developments. Currently, staffing, resourcing and facilities make a positive impact on pupils' learning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

169. During the inspection, it was not possible to see any religious education teaching in Years 5 and 6. Inspection judgements for these years are based on examination of pupils' work, both in books and display; discussions with the religious education co-ordinator and an analysis of documentation, including planning sheets. Lessons were observed in Years 7 and 8.
170. Attainment for all pupils of all ages is in line with the expectations of the local agreed syllabus for religious education and there are no significant differences between boys and girls. These are similar findings to those at the last inspection. In all years, pupils' knowledge and understanding are better on the specific practice of different religions and weaker on reflecting on the implications and impact of religions on the everyday life of communities, groups and individuals.

171. By the age of 11, the majority of pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the key components of Christianity and are at least acquainted with two other religions. They can produce organised and sometimes sustained descriptions of religious belief, teaching and practices. For example, when talking about Christianity, pupils can use key words in context such as *'baptism'* and *'communion'*. When talking about Judaism, they can use words like *'Chanukah'* and *'kosher'*. They are less secure in articulating how religion can impact on the everyday life of people.
172. By the age of 13, pupils express their personal views and feelings about religious belief and holy buildings. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils were able to express and compare the different emotions and feeling they had whilst visiting different types of Christian churches. Some expressed a *'sense of awe'*, others commented on *"being frightened, feeling stilled, peaceful or overpowered"*. In each case, they could explain what led to these emotions and recognised that different people react differently to the same situations. The majority of pupils demonstrate knowledge of the fundamentals that unite Christian groups and some of the differences. For example, in a Year 8 group, pupils were able to explain the different symbolic meaning of communion as seen by Catholics and Anglicans.
173. Staff are aware of the need to use individual plans to support those with special educational needs, both in the planning and delivery of their lessons. This helps ensure that these pupils make satisfactory progress. The use of discussion and drama helps those who find writing difficult to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religious education. The more able achieve standards appropriate to their ability. They are often set more complex tasks, particularly in Years 7 and 8, and can use their knowledge to produce organised, well-structured and detailed accounts of religious teaching and practices. They are also able to make judgements about similarities and differences between religions. For example, in one Year 8 class, pupils were able to distinguish between the practice and significance of baptism in different Christian groups. Further development is hindered by lack of appropriate resources.
174. Teaching is satisfactory across all year groups. This is similar to findings in the last inspection. Teachers make good use of praise and encouragement to motivate pupils. Lessons are well prepared and structured with clear objectives and key teaching points. Organisation and class management are effective and foster good relationships and behaviour. Staff, generally, have a sound knowledge of the syllabus and show a positive commitment, both to the subject and to the pupils in their care. Work is often structured so as to match different ability levels, but there is a lack of resources, particularly visual material, to stimulate and provide a wide range of responses. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on the Salvation Army, pupils only had brochures produced by that organisation. These were appropriate for some of the pupils but provided difficulty in terms of access for the poorer readers, as well as in providing enrichment or extension material for the more able.
175. Teachers encourage the use of group work and in some cases this is effective. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils discussed Mohammed's motives for leaving Mecca using a series of clues provided by the teacher. On other occasions, however, group work lacks structure

so that it is difficult to identify individual pupils' contributions to the task or comprehend the particular outcome of the activity. Teachers make good use of review to reinforce pupils' learning, but occasionally this is very teacher-directed and does not check that pupils actually understand what it is they have been studying. There is good use of informal feedback to pupils, but, overall, assessment remains an issue, as it did at the last inspection. Many pupils find it difficult to recognise their strengths and weaknesses, and, as a consequence, are unable to identify targets and strategies for improvement. Marking tends to focus on presentation or general English skills. Whilst these are important, there is also a need to inform pupils on the particular religious education areas of knowledge and skills to be developed.

176. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are good. They are confident to answer and raise questions. They listen attentively to the views of others and remain on task. This is because staff have created a working atmosphere in which it is acceptable to work hard and do well.
177. The subject meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus and contributes positively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are often asked to consider and reflect on particular religious issues and to show respect for the views of others. Opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss moral issues in the study of sacred texts and the unit of work on *Caring for God's World*. Staff provide good role models in terms of showing respect and courtesy to others. Although multicultural issues are explored in the study of other religions, the school does not actively invite members of other non-Christian faith groups into lessons or assemblies to lead pupils to a fuller awareness and understanding of other's beliefs and cultures and how these impact on people's everyday lives. Literacy skills are developed through the use of writing frames in Year 6, the identification of key words and the promotion of oral work. There is no evidence that numeracy or information and communication technology skills are currently being fostered, although information and communication technology has been identified as a key priority for the subject and the co-ordinator has identified subject-specific software to be purchased and developed in lessons.
178. Religious education is co-ordinated across the school by an experienced teacher. She holds regular meetings to see how things are going, but there is no systematic monitoring and evaluation of the subject. This limits the co-ordinator's knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject and this, plus lack of time, impacts on the effectiveness of her support for colleagues and the further development of the subject. Whilst there are identified priorities for the subject, they do not include establishing clear benchmarks for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress. Teachers plan learning activities well, in a logical sequence, particularly in Years 7 and 8, but there is little evidence of any consistency in approach and no apparent mechanism to formally share and record best practice.
179. Since the last inspection, standards have been monitored and teaching remains satisfactory, overall. Learning objectives are consistently set for all lessons. There is, however, still little change in assessment practice. Assessment is left to individual staff and, although this usually adheres to school policy, it is not sufficient to provide useful data within years or between key stages to identify progress systematically in the subject. The school is also aware of the

continuing need to develop appropriate information and communication technology-based activities within its schemes of work. The role of the coordinator to remedy these weaknesses has still not been made sufficiently clear by management.