

INSPECTION REPORT

DELAPRE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Northampton

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122069

Headteacher: Mr R Buntine

Reporting inspector: Mrs G Kayembe
2901

Dates of inspection: 8th – 11th May 2001

Inspection number: 195243

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Rothersthorpe Road

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs C Richardson

Date of previous inspection: June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
02901	Mrs G Kayembe	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? 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?
14214	Ms G Smith	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?
03943	Mr D Innes	Team inspector	English	
30699	Mr A Kemp	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
18584	Dr M Davis	Team inspector	Science	
31680	Mr P Redican	Team inspector	Art and design	
08552	Mr W Hart	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
13734	Mr H Davies	Team inspector	Geography Religious education	
31329	Ms K Barrett	Team inspector	History	
	Ms C Humphreys	Team inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language	
15396	Mr R Bulman	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Equal opportunities	
23323	Dr J Harvey	Team inspector	Music	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Delapre is a popular middle school catering for about 680 girls and boys between the ages of nine and thirteen. It is large for its type and is based on two sites, the main school and the Annexe. The roll has been growing at a good rate over the last few years. The vast majority of pupils are drawn from in and around the local area, which shows signs of considerable economic and social disadvantage. This is not reflected in the broadly typical proportion, at about 18 per cent, who take up the offer of a free school meal. The majority of pupils are white British, but about ten per cent are from minority ethnic backgrounds, which is higher than many schools. English is not the first language for about three per cent of pupils, however, all but one are fluent in it. The overall attainment of pupils when they start at the school fluctuates between below average and well below average from year to year. It was well below average for the 11-year-olds who sat National Curriculum tests in 2000. A few pupils begin with attainment levels that are above average, but the overall proportion of such pupils is relatively low compared to most schools. The low levels of literacy and numeracy amongst many pupils are reflected in the high proportion who are on the register for special educational needs. The number with statements is about average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school which provides a very effective all-round education for its pupils. The quality of teaching is consistently good or better and very good overall, thus it supports learning well. Leadership and management are explicitly focused on providing the best for pupils at the school and preparing them well not just for the next phase of education but for future life as adults. Good pastoral care fosters very positive attitudes and enthusiasm amongst pupils for school. Overall, the school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Leadership and management are very good and successfully promote a culture of high expectations. Pupils and their education come first and foremost in the work of the school
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school, and, in particular, make very good progress between the ages of 9-11
- The provision for the personal and social development of pupils is excellent and contributes to excellent attitudes to school and very good behaviour amongst pupils
- Teaching is very good and enables pupils to make measurable gains in their learning and to feel proud of what they are achieving
- Provision for special educational needs is excellent
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent and pupil participation very good
- Parents' views of the school are very good

What could be improved

- The use of computers in subjects, which is underdeveloped thus the requirements of the National Curriculum in information and communication technology (ICT) are not fully met
- Curricular time, as it is not used as efficiently as it could be to provide the high level of literacy and numeracy teaching that pupils need whilst ensuring enough time is given to other subjects such as science
- Monitoring of pupils' progress by subject departments, because this is not rigorous or systematic enough
- Aspects of teaching such as marking and homework and improving the minority of lessons which, though satisfactory, are not up to the high standards of the large majority

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress in improving itself since the previous inspection of June 1997. The quality of teaching has improved markedly, with teaching never being less than satisfactory whereas 13 per cent of lessons seen last time were less than satisfactory. There has also been a substantial increase in the good and very good teaching. The attainment of all pupils has improved well since the

last inspection, but that of girls has improved at a faster rate than boys. Performance in English has improved at a particularly good rate and this is evident in the results over the last few years of National Curriculum tests for 11-year-olds which have improved from below average to being in line with or above national averages. Inspection evidence indicates that the weaknesses in standards of work in science, French and music identified in the last inspection report have been effectively tackled. In French, the improvement is very good. Other key issues from the last inspection have been effectively tackled, although the issue of collective worship continues to require attention. The timetable is better balanced with sufficient time for art, design and technology and music, but science is still short of time, and has less curricular time than most schools nationally.

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	B	C	B
mathematics	C	D	E	C
science	C	C	C	B

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

Though pupils' performance in 2000 was well below national averages in mathematics and in line with national standards in English and science, these results show good achievement when pupils' low attainment on entry to the school is taken into account. Comparison with similar types of schools indicates that performance of pupils at Delapre is better than that of pupils with similar backgrounds in other schools in English and science. It is in line with these pupils in mathematics. The school met its targets for attainment in the national tests for 2000 in mathematics and exceeded them in English and science. Boys and girls make equally good progress, though girls gain better results than boys as they begin school with higher attainment. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds attain similar standards in the tests, and the inspection findings also reflect this. Inspection evidence, including strong evidence from the school's value-added data, points to good progress overall in English, mathematics and science, with very good progress being made in English and science by pupils in Years 5 and 6.

Evidence from inspection indicates that standards are at least in line with national standards in all subjects by the time pupils are 11 and 13. By the time they are 11, most pupils reach high standards of work in the use of computers, but in a narrower range of applications than expected nationally. By the age of 13, pupils' art work is of better quality than found in most schools and their knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas are good, but their skills in experimental work are below average because not enough time is spent teaching science. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make very good progress throughout the school.

In English, pupils' oral skills develop well and they read with confidence and accuracy throughout the school, most showing sound understanding of the texts they read. The quality of their writing improves because of the high priority it is given. However, the accuracy of writing of even able pupils is marred by the frequency of persistent errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation. In mathematics, pupils develop at a good rate their skills in mental arithmetic and in applying mathematical rules to solve number problems.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent, pupils are enthusiastic about school and very well focused on their work. They appreciate the educational opportunities the school provides and eagerly participate in lessons and extra-curricular activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good in and out of lessons. Pupils are aware of the impact of their behaviour on others. They treat one another with respect and kindness.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds mix well with one another and show respect and understanding for different values and beliefs. They rapidly develop mature attitudes and establish excellent relationships.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Too many pupils are taken away by parents on holiday during term-time. Punctuality is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 9-11 years	Aged 11-13 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good

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

All lessons were at least satisfactory with 85 per cent being good or better and 43 per cent being very good or excellent. Thus, the overall quality of teaching was very good with high expectations, well-structured work and excellent management of pupils being hallmarks of the majority of lessons. As a result, the needs of pupils are well met overall. Teaching in English is very good and good in mathematics. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills improve markedly because of the very good work done on these in English and mathematics lessons and by SEN staff. However, the inconsistent contribution to literacy and numeracy of other subjects means opportunities for eradicating common errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar in literacy work and skills such as handling data and interpreting graphs in numeracy work are missed.

There are some examples of very good marking which help to identify for pupils what they need to do to improve their work. However, marking is not consistently of this quality. Comments are often not focused sharply enough on how to improve or are too brief. Homework is provided in English and mathematics, but rarely in other subjects, and even in English and mathematics its regularity and rigour are variable.

The very best teaching, seen in over 40 per cent of lessons, is lively and very well paced. In these lessons, pupils are inspired by the engaging activities and exciting resources prepared for them, and are eager to learn.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good at both key stages. The strategies for literacy and numeracy are effective overall. Extra-curricular activities are excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special needs achieve very well because of the excellent provision and their very good responses in lessons. Their work is very carefully matched to their individual needs and they benefit from the high quality learning support. The management of SEN is very good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, and excellent for social development. This provision makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development and in raising their self-esteem. There is a very good focus on the development of multicultural education as well as teaching pupils about British traditions and heritage.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very high level of pastoral care. Assessment procedures are good in English, mathematics and science, but not as well developed in other subjects. Whole-school analysis of pupils' progress and use of assessment data to guide planning are very good, but in most subjects, monitoring of pupils' progress is not systematic and rigorous enough.

A lot of teaching time is spent on English and mathematics, and given weaknesses in many pupils' literacy and numeracy skills when they start at the school, most need this amount of time. However, the school is missing opportunities to deliver literacy and numeracy skills through other subjects and to deliver aspects of other subjects through literacy and numeracy in order to create a greater balance in the teaching time across the whole curriculum. Most subjects do not make enough use of ICT hence breaching legal requirements. The school has established a good working partnership with its parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. A clear direction for future development, which is very well focused on school improvement, is set by the headteacher. There is very good reflection of the school's aims, values and policies in its practice. The headteacher and deputy make a very strong team and both provide the school with excellent leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very supportive of the school and actively involved in its work. Governors fulfil their responsibilities very well. They are fully aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are working stalwartly towards meeting requirements in ICT and collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Regular checking of the quality of teaching and learning takes place. Test results are analysed in detail and action taken to tackle weaknesses identified. Overall, the school responds swiftly and effectively where evaluation indicates improvement is required.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The accommodation and resources in the school are satisfactory and the match of staff to the needs of the curriculum is good. Money is well spent in order to ensure that the best educational value is gained from it.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children like school• The school expects pupils to work hard• The school is well led and managed• The school is approachable• Pupils are helped to become mature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homework• Information about child's progress

Parents hold very positive views of the school on most aspects of its provision. Inspection evidence strongly supports the positive views they have expressed. Whilst inspection findings agree with the views of some that there is room for the school to improve on homework, the inspection evidence does not back up the views of others about the lack of information about their children's progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. A variety of tests, including reading tests and tests in mathematics and English, is administered to pupils when they arrive at the school. Some of these are produced by a well-known university as part of a national scheme, PIMS (performance indicators in middle schools), in order to help schools to identify the starting points of pupils and their subsequent progress. Results of these tests indicate pupils' attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year but is either below or well below average, depending on the year group. Results of reading tests show that 85 per cent of the pupils in the year group who most recently took National Curriculum tests for 11-year-olds in 2000 (current Year 7 pupils) had reading ages below their actual ages. Over half had reading ages more than a year below their actual ages. The average reading age in most year groups, on entry to the school, tends to be about a year or more below the average chronological age. For the current Year 7 pupils it was about one and half years below. These pupils' mathematics results were particularly weak and overall, their attainment on entry was lower than any previous year group since the school has been administering tests on entry. Whilst the attainment on entry for the current Year 6 pupils was also well below average, the most recent intake of pupils, current Year 5 pupils, have done markedly better on the tests on entry to the school than previous year groups. However, their overall attainment is still below average.
2. Against the background of low and, in some year groups, very low prior attainment, pupils' performance in National Curriculum tests at the age of 11 is good overall, and very good in English. Though results for 2000 were in line with national averages in English and science and well below average in mathematics, they were considerably better than had been predicted based on the tests taken by the same pupils when they started in Year 5. Pupils' performance in English and science was better than that of pupils in schools across the country which have a similar intake, but the results were very good in English and science in comparison to their attainment on entry. In the mathematics tests, results were in line with those of similar schools, but again, in comparison to their prior attainment, pupils achieved good results. Comparatively few pupils reach the higher than expected level, Level 5, in the National Curriculum tests, however, few begin school with above average attainment. Analysis of school data suggests that higher attainers do very well in the tests. In the 2000 tests, girls' performance in all three subjects was better than that of boys, and the gap between girls and boys, particularly in English and science, was greater than the gap between the sexes nationally. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds performed as well as the indigenous white majority.
3. Trends over time indicate steady improvement in test results with particularly good improvement in English. The overall improvement is good given that the attainment on entry varies from year to year and that, for those who took their tests in 2000, the attainment on entry was lower than it had ever been since the school has been performing entry tests. Girls' attainment has improved more significantly than that of boys over the last five years and, as a result, the gap between the girls and boys is becoming wider. In 1999 and 2000, it was greater than the gap nationally, particularly in English and science. However, boys had significantly lower attainment than the girls, for example there are many more boys than girls on the school's register for special educational needs. Hence the progress made by both girls and boys is equally notable. The data provided by the school also indicate that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attain similar results as their peers and make good progress. Pupils from African-Caribbean backgrounds perform considerably better than African-Caribbean pupils in schools nationally. A few pupils, mainly boys, with a history of disaffection and

disinterest tend to make less progress than the rest, but even here the school enables them to achieve satisfactorily where, in some cases, other schools may have given up on these pupils. Overall, the school met its targets well, matching the targets set for mathematics for 2000 and exceeding them in English and science. The school also exceeded by a wide margin the predictions for pupils' performance based on the PIMS data. Pupils who left the school at the end of last academic year at the age of 13 were re-tested under the PIMS scheme just before leaving. The results from these indicate that they continued to make good progress in Years 7 and 8 after taking their National Curriculum tests at the age of 11 in 1998.

4. Inspection evidence largely reflects the results of National Curriculum tests over the last three years and the PIMS data on pupils' attainment and their progress as they move up through the school. In all subjects, pupils' attainment is at least in line with national expectations by the ages of 11 and 13, and in ICT by the age of 11 and art and design by the age of 13, it exceeds expectations. Overall progress is very good between the ages of 9 and 11 and good between the ages of 11 and 13.
5. In English, by the age of 11 and 13, pupils' standards of work are in line with national expectations. By the age of 11, pupils have good oral skills and listen attentively, speaking clearly in discussion or when answering questions. The majority read fluently and with confidence, and understanding of the text is usually good. Pupils in the higher ability groups, as early as Year 5, can highlight and annotate texts and offer opinions backed by evidence. Pupils in lower ability groups demonstrate similar strengths in lessons, but are more dependent upon teachers' guidance. Most pupils write at length without difficulty but common errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar often appear in their written work. By the age of 13, the balance of strengths and weaknesses is similar to that of younger pupils. Skills of speaking and listening are good and pupils read with good understanding of the main points of a text. Written work is enriched by pupils' increased ability to draw upon widening vocabularies and to make effective use of a variety of sentence constructions. Writing is more accurate than at age 11, but errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar persist. Nonetheless the overall progress made by pupils is good overall, and very good between the ages of 9 and 11. Writing expressive poetry is a particular strength by the age of 13.
6. In mathematics, by the ages of 11 and 13, standards of work are in line with national expectations. Pupils have satisfactory skills in mental mathematics and the majority confidently handles increasingly complex sums using pen and paper methods as they move through the school. They make good progress in developing techniques for solving different types of problems and handling everyday examples of the use of number, for example using a Chinese menu to calculate the total amount spent on food or the change they might get from a ten-pound note. Most pupils exceed expectations made of them based on their attainment on entry, though a minority of low attaining pupils in Year 5 lack sufficient mastery of arithmetical problems and need more practice.
7. By the age of 11, pupils' attainment in science is in line with national expectations. They have sound knowledge and understanding of scientific principles and ideas and explain these effectively. The majority of pupils make good progress in developing their skills in experimental and investigative work, carrying out experiments with care and identifying correctly how to ensure that it is being carried out under proper test conditions so that the results are valid. By the age of 13, pupils have made good progress in extending their scientific knowledge and understanding so that it is now above average. However, progress with experimental and investigative work is slower between the ages of 11 and 13 and overall, pupils' skills in this area are not as good as they should be, mainly as a result of insufficient teaching time for science. Overall attainment is in line with national expectations by the age of 13.

8. The use of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum is inconsistent. There are some subjects which provide pupils with good opportunities for applying literacy or numeracy skills, for example music and French. There are some good uses of numeracy in science although not enough time is spent in science on producing and interpreting graphs. Overall, literacy and numeracy skills improve at a good rate as pupils move up through the school principally because of the good attention paid to these in English and mathematics. Whilst other subjects make some contribution, which undoubtedly benefits pupils, it is not as consistent and as regular a part of teaching as it could be. Hence, opportunities are missed, especially in relation to eradicating common spelling, grammar and punctuation errors or developing data handling skills. There is no co-ordinator for literacy or numeracy, though the school is in the process of appointing one for literacy, and this is one of the main factors in the lack of consistency in the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
9. Pupils are making good progress in other subjects. In art, pupils' skills with a variety of tools and materials are good by the age of 13. ICT skills in data handling and presenting information are good also by the age of 11. However, further progress is hampered in both key stages by the lack of sufficient use of computers in subjects and by the lack of resources to carry out data-logging work in subjects such as science and geography. Standards, though satisfactory, are not as high by the age of 13 as by 11, and there is little evidence of data handling work, such as that involving the use of spreadsheets or databases, as well as lack of work in data logging. In design and technology work, pupils' skills in constructing products using a variety of tools, materials and techniques are good. Colourful and lively designs in the range of clocks made out of perspex by pupils in Years 7 and 8 are a good example of the attention that pupils pay to detail, their originality in the designs they develop and the good level of technical skill they achieve when making them. However, there are some weaknesses by the ages of 11 and 13 in their designing skills, such as in the quality of their research work, their capacity to suggest alternative solutions to design problems and their skill in communicating ideas graphically.
10. In geography, mapping, diagrammatic and graphical skills are developed well across Years 5 and 6. Pupils are beginning to carry out enquiry tasks successfully on the themes and places studied. By the age of 13, geographical skills have continued to develop well and there is some good analyses and representation of data. Pupils draw graphs well and successfully annotate diagrams and make notes. In their history work, pupils aged 11 are able to use sources of evidence to identify some of the different ways in which the past is represented, for example, through examination of artefacts, documents and photographs from Victorian Britain to identify differences between Victorian schools and their own. By the age of 13, they successfully describe features of past societies and the impact of change, for example by identifying the changes imposed by European settlers upon the Plains Indians in the late nineteenth century.
11. Pupils develop very good listening skills in French. Within a few weeks of starting to learn French, most follow lessons taught largely or entirely in French, responding promptly to classroom instructions and questions. Many pupils in Years 7 and 8 speak fluently, holding brief and often spontaneous conversations with their teachers and classmates. Reading and writing skills also develop well. Higher and lower attainers express their opinions simply on topics ranging from school subjects to sport, and conduct surveys of their classmates' preferences. Higher attainers use the perfect and future tenses to describe past events or their immediate intentions.
12. In music, skills in singing are good, though more variable in performing with instruments. In physical education, by the age of 13, standards of work in dance, cricket and athletics are strengths. In dance the girls are able to create and perform complex sequences of movement. Pupils' practical performance in games becomes more refined than between the ages of 9 and 11, and they transfer new skills into a

competitive situation. Good knowledge of Christianity is a feature of pupils' standards in religious education, and overall knowledge and understanding of religious tradition in non-Christian faiths are satisfactory. Pupils listen to one another's views but do not always engage in enough discussion.

13. Pupils on all stages of the Code of Practice for SEN pupils achieve very well at Delapre. This is because of their very good response in lessons, answering questions eagerly and working hard to do well on the tasks they are given. Their work is very carefully matched to their individual needs and they benefit from the high quality learning support. The progress pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make during their time in the school is significant. Between the ages of 11 and 13, pupils' progress is very significant in reading.
14. Overall, throughout the school pupils are successfully developing new skills, knowledge and understanding at least at a good pace in all subjects and in most aspects of individual subjects. Progress made by the school in improving standards since the last inspection has been good overall, and very good in French.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

15. The previous inspection found that pupils' behaviour was exemplary and that they had very positive attitudes to learning. Over the intervening years, these standards have been maintained and pupils continue to be highly motivated and exceptionally well behaved.
16. Pupils of all ages enjoy coming to school. They buzz with ideas and enthusiasm and are keen to take part in the wide range of activities provided during the school day. Indeed, so many pupils want to participate in the extra-curricular activities that the school has introduced a rota system in order to make the groups more manageable. Supported by a consistently high standard of teaching and inspired by the infectious enthusiasm of their teachers, pupils of all ages approach their work with a genuine commitment and desire to learn. Pupils feel confident about asking for help when they need it and their desire to learn is a significant factor in the good progress they make. During assemblies, pupils listen carefully and sing clearly and enthusiastically. Pupils are generous in spirit and delight in each other's successes. For example, the choir sang during the inspection and, at the end of their performance, the rest of the school broke out into spontaneous and heartfelt applause. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, enjoy learning and time passes quickly. During lessons, pupils concentrate very well and usually manage to keep working right up to the end of the allocated time. Indeed, some of the pupils spoken to during the inspection feel that some of their lessons are too short and they would like more time for subjects such as personal, social and health education. During discussions, pupils respect each other's views and usually manage not to interrupt one another. If they do so, then it is most likely to be because their enthusiasm has temporarily got the better of them. Pupils are very keen to help during the school day and relish the many and varied opportunities for responsibility. For example, pupils volunteer to pick up litter during the morning break and help to tidy up after the early morning breakfast clubs.
17. Pupils behave very well in and around school. They are friendly and outgoing and get along very well with members of staff and with each other. The vast majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, work well together. Pupils mix freely during break and lunch times and are well mannered and extremely polite. Members of staff lead by example and address the pupils with the respect and consideration they deserve. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, respond similarly and their very positive approach to learning helps to make this school a calm and pleasant place. The behaviour of pupils at lunch and playtimes is very good. They play energetically and happily in mixed age and gender groups. There is a high regard for

school property and, therefore, a total absence of any vandalism or graffiti. Pupils respect one another's beliefs, cultures and backgrounds. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds mix freely and all races and religions are equally respected and valued. Those with emotional and behavioural needs also behave well and are making very good progress in meeting the behavioural targets in their individual education plans. Although there are very occasional instances of bullying, parents and pupils have complete confidence that such issues are dealt with quickly and very effectively. There have been no permanent exclusions over the last academic year.

18. Pupils' personal development is excellent. The school encourages pupils of all ages to use their initiative and to assume responsibility within the school. For example, pupils stage and refine performances for the school talent competitions and help to collect tea and coffee money for the staff room kitty. As part of their ICT course, Year 8 pupils compile their own personal profile. They review, assess and discuss their personal and academic progress, along with their own achievements, and these become an integral part of their record of achievement which is passed on to the receiving upper school. Pupils of all ages use their initiative and are quick to help someone if they are unsure of what to do. Older pupils undertake residential trips to France and an outdoor activity centre and these visits encourage them to use their initiative and become more self-reliant. Pupils with special needs also demonstrate equally good personal development and show initiative and take responsibility.
19. Throughout the school, there is a strong sense of community and pupils are very proud to belong to Delapre Middle School. A very strong sense of community and belonging is instilled in pupils by the school's warm and caring atmosphere. This is reflected in the very high degree to which pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds, including those with SEN and minority ethnic backgrounds, feel that they are a part of this community. Relationships between pupils and with members of staff are excellent. The school closely adheres to its motto 'Purpose with Care'. Tremendous emphasis is placed upon boosting pupils' self-confidence and teachers use humour to very good effect. There is an air of close co-operation. The excellent relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect and are reflected in pupils' very positive attitudes during lessons. One example of the warmth and mutual support that exists between pupils and staff is the impromptu advice sheet that pupils prepared for their teachers. This contained a host of ideas and suggestions as to the best way to survive the Ofsted inspection and concluded that the safest way to ensure success was to carry on as normal and simply be themselves!
20. The overall level of attendance is satisfactory. It has been very close to the national average for several years and this continues to be the case. When pupils are absent, it is usually because they have been ill, but around one fifth of the pupils are taken out of school for a family holiday. The absence of these pupils inevitably means that they miss the work that is undertaken by their classmates and this could place them at a disadvantage in the future. The school is working hard to reduce the level of unauthorised absences. Although the overall level is around twice the national average, a handful of poor or non-attending pupils account for over half the total. Pupils usually arrive in good time at the start of the school day and registration takes place promptly. Timekeeping during the day is good and this helps pupils to make the most of their time at school and underpins their excellent attitudes to learning.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. All lessons were at least satisfactory with 85 per cent being good or better and 43 per cent being very good or excellent. Thus, the overall quality of teaching was very good and a significant improvement from the time of the last inspection. Teaching in English was very good and it was good in mathematics. Literacy and numeracy skills are very well taught through English and mathematics respectively. However, not all other

subjects have as rigorous an approach as they might. The net impact is that pupils' literacy and numeracy skills improve markedly because of the work done in English and mathematics lessons. However, the inconsistent contribution made by other subjects means opportunities for eradicating common errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar in pupils' literacy work and skills such as handling data, interpreting graphs in their numeracy work are missed.

22. Teaching was also very good in history, ICT, French, music and physical education. In the remaining subjects, the quality of teaching was good. There were no significant differences between teaching in different year groups, though most of the satisfactory teaching occurred in Year 8. The quality of learning closely matched the quality of teaching and had a positive impact on the gains made by pupils in their knowledge, understanding and skills in the topics they were studying.
23. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, both in terms of the quality of work they produce and their attitudes, responses and behaviour. As a result, pupils readily accept the challenges presented to them and work hard in lessons, rarely becoming distracted or misbehaving. Key strengths of teaching include the detailed planning and preparation teachers undertake so that, in many cases where they are teaching a number of different subjects, their own knowledge and understanding of the material they are covering is good. Pupils are also usually told exactly what they are expected to learn and this leads to a purposeful working environment because pupils know what they must do and get on with it.
24. Work prepared for pupils is well-structured with often lively and appealing activities, such as a dramatic recreation of a Victorian classroom in history, which successfully engage pupils' interests. Good use is made of questioning to probe pupils' understanding and to assess what they have learned. Many teachers are good at directing different kinds of questions to different pupils, according to their level of understanding. This is coupled by good ongoing monitoring and support in lessons to make sure that all pupils are able to cope and are suitably challenged by the work they are given. As a result the needs of pupils are well met overall. However, although in English and mathematics pupils in different ability groups are given different work which is well matched to their needs, pupils of differing ability in the same class are not often provided with work that is matched to their individual needs. Resources used are interesting and well matched to the purpose of the lesson.
25. Management of pupils is excellent in the majority of lessons. As a result, pupils are very well behaved, often behaviour and attitudes in lessons are excellent. A purposeful, work-centred atmosphere is a regular feature of the vast majority of lessons. Pupils work at a good pace because teachers themselves set a brisk, businesslike manner.
26. In the minority of lessons that are judged to be satisfactory overall, whilst most aspects of teaching and learning are sound in these lessons, they lack the spark, the brisk pace and challenge that are a common feature of the majority of the lessons seen. Occasionally, the pace is too rapid for pupils to keep up. In some lessons, pupils are not actively enough involved in their learning and are spending considerable amounts of time listening passively to the teacher.
27. There are examples of very good marking which help to identify for pupils what they need to do next in order to improve their work. However, marking is not consistently of this quality and it is at times too cursory or brief and comments do not focus sharply enough on improvement to be of use to pupils. Homework is provided for English and mathematics, but rarely for other subjects, and even in English and mathematics the regularity and rigour of homework is variable.

28. The very best teaching, seen in over 40 per cent of lessons, is lively and very well paced. In these lessons, the engaging activities and exciting resources inspire pupils who become even more eager to learn.
29. The quality of teaching for pupils with SEN is very good and excellent teaching was seen right across the school. The teaching of basic skills of literacy and numeracy is very effective. The school meets the needs of pupils with SEN very well. The teachers' planning ensures that the work is well matched to pupils' needs. The liaison between class teachers, learning support assistants (LSAs) and the co-ordinator for SEN, particularly when pupils are given specialist one-to-one tuition or taught in small groups, is very effective. However, on some occasions, teachers do not share their lesson plan with LSAs in advance of the lesson. The quality and use of ongoing assessment, including marking, is very good and homework is appropriate. Pupils' individual education plans contain clear targets which are sufficiently practical for class teachers to implement successfully when support staff are not present. The LSAs are very effective in their support roles. They have a clear understanding of their role in maintaining a good balance between giving direct help to pupils and challenging them to work by themselves or find solutions to problems with as little help as possible. Pupils make very significant gains against their set targets. Teachers and LSAs are very willing to adapt and adjust the work they give to pupils to take account of their changing needs. Because the teaching is so very good pupils progressively learn new skills, knowledge and understanding at a very good rate. They work at a brisk pace and produce a good amount and quality of well-presented work. Pupils are very interested in lessons, sustain concentration well and can work on their own. They understand what they are doing and why they need to do it. The excellent teaching stimulates pupils to relish the challenges offered. When working in lower ability groups, pupils apply themselves diligently to their learning.
30. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. They are well taught in lessons and where pupils are taught in groups based on ability, the ablest groups of pupils are stretched and challenged well.

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

31. The curriculum is generally broad and balanced, with all National Curriculum subjects and religious education being in place in all years. Statutory requirements are met, apart from the teaching of ICT across the curriculum where they are not fulfilled. The use of computers is insufficiently developed in the majority of subject areas. Most frequent use is made in English and art and design, but even here it is not really sufficient. In particular, there are no opportunities for pupils to make use of computer technology to control objects electronically or to measure changes in variables such as temperature or pressure using data-logging equipment. The timetable places a very strong emphasis on literacy with a high proportion of time allocated to literacy and additional curriculum time targeted towards reading, spelling and continuous writing. This leads to a low allocation of time to science, particularly in Years 7 and 8 and means that not enough time is spent on practical and investigative science work. Curricular provision is enhanced by grouping pupils by ability in mathematics and English, and in Years 7 and 8 half classes are provided for art and design, design and technology and ICT on a rotational basis. The burden upon the timetable arrangement is considerable in creatively attempting to meet the needs of all pupils. Extraction from lessons, for example for pupils with SEN or for specialist music instrumental tuition, is kept to a minimum but in some cases does impinge on pupils' opportunities for learning.
32. Equal access to all areas of the curriculum is provided for all pupils, and there are no significant equal opportunities issues. However, certain aspects of curricular planning

inadvertently put pressure on both higher and lower attainers, particularly when their time in lessons is infringed by extraction for different activities. This is the case in English, when some pupils are taken out of lesson time for choir practice. In science, lower attaining pupils cope less well than higher attainers with the shortage of teaching time allowed. Many aspects of the school's daily life are organised to foster equality and promote positive images and expectations of all pupils. Subject co-ordinators review their documentation, displays and working methods annually to ensure that they are free of bias. In many lessons, boys and girls work together unselfconsciously, and all aspects of physical education are open to both genders. The presentation of topics in French and projects in design and technology successfully involve pairs and groups of mixed ethnicity.

33. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is excellent. All statutory requirements for pupils with statements of special needs are met, and the coordinator manages the provision and planning of individual education plans well. The school identifies and fosters the potential success of pupils with outstanding talents. Arrangements for grouping pupils by ability and a good range of extra-curricular activities provide opportunities for extending and enriching the work of gifted pupils, both within school and further afield. Frequent involvement in local festivals and sports competitions instils in pupils and parents the aspiration to excellence, and promotes the notion of winning in an atmosphere of friendly rivalry. A minority of the most able pupils benefits from residential courses for the exceptionally talented and there is a day annually for able pupils in Year 8 to participate in producing a poetry book which is published. A larger number gain from summer schools designed to promote the development of higher order thinking skills.
34. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are in place in Years 5 and 6 and developing well in Years 7 and 8. Language and number skills are well taught in English and mathematics lessons. Generous curriculum time is devoted to literacy reflecting the acute needs of the pupils. The emphasis upon literacy is included in some other subjects, such as the use of key words and insistence on reading aloud, but this is insufficient and the promotion of both language and number skills in other subjects is an aspect requiring development.
35. Extra-curricular activity is a key strength of the school. It is recognised as an essential component of a full school life and is particularly effective in music, drama and sport. In music the school enjoys regular choir successes at the Town Music Festival and has supported the West End Production of 'Joseph' at the local theatre. Additionally there are other musical groups, including a full orchestra, string orchestra, rock band, brass group and a wind band. Dance and drama clubs are also popular provisions. Regular performances occur within school and frequently feature in events in the community. The most recent drama production based upon the writer Charles Dickens, 'What the Dickens is going on?', involved in excess of 150 pupils. A full range of sports' clubs exists and pupils have successfully represented the school at both county and international level in basketball. Outside trips abound including holidays abroad and the annual week at an outdoor pursuits centre.
36. The school's provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good. It covers all the required elements, such as sex and drugs education, and principally seeks to underpin all that the school aspires to achieve for the pupils. Whilst it is delivered as a subject in its own right, wider issues are contained in several subjects, often overlapping and complementary. These issues include human rights, a place to live, a place to work, the Victorians, anger management and tobacco smoking. The school is currently piloting a careers education programme, which clearly makes connections with the teaching of citizenship.

37. The school has established good working relationships with local lower and high schools. Pupils visit these schools to perform musical and drama activities and various enrichment courses in Year 8 for those pupils targeted as borderline in National Curriculum levels. Inward transfer of pupil performance data is improving and together with visits from the respective heads of year enables transfer procedures to be relatively seamless.
38. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The headteacher and staff interpret the school's motto, 'Purpose with Care', well to give pupils a very clear understanding of right and wrong. They ensure that the relationships between pupils, with teachers and with visitors are exceptional. Pupils' sense of wonder and their understanding of life are encouraged well in assemblies, lessons and through many other activities. Staff create many opportunities to give pupils a very good awareness of their own culture and those of other lands and people.
39. Pupils' spiritual development is good. Assemblies, once a week for each year group, are meticulously planned to give pupils insights into the human spirit and provide them with very good opportunities to reflect on issues such as the qualities that make someone a hero. On other days form tutors take assemblies but their quality is variable. Many are very good but at times they do not meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Some examples of good spiritual emphasis were seen during the inspection in tutor periods. In one the exploitation of children was explored while in another spirituality was enhanced in an emotive reading of the story of Joseph from the Old Testament. Many subjects add to pupils' spiritual development, inviting pupils to reflect, for example on how human activity affects the shaping of the land. In religious education pupils gain a very good understanding by studying beliefs and values in Christianity, Sikhism, Judaism and Hinduism. In other subjects the school fosters spirituality by encouraging and celebrating pupils' achievements. Staff have made significant improvements in the quality of provision for spiritual development which now infuses much of life in the school, however, because there is no planned approach to teaching spirituality, opportunities in subjects are still missed.
40. Promotion of pupils' moral development is very good and lies at the heart of the ethos of the school. Teachers set high expectations of behaviour and when pupils do wrong, those with responsibility act quickly and effectively. In lessons, teachers expect and achieve high standards of behaviour without using oppressive means of control. By their example, they demonstrate high moral standards to pupils, who feel that they are treated fairly. Within subjects there is a strong emphasis on morality. Examples include an emphasis on fair play and respect for the referee's judgement in basketball. Moral issues to do with conservation and food production are discussed in geography. In art there is respect for the work and displays of other pupils. There is a very strong sense of right and wrong that runs through all the work of the department for pupils with special educational needs. In religious education, moral development is very well promoted through the study of major world faiths, and topics such as responsibility, homelessness, prejudice, anger, vandalism and terrorism. All subjects play a significant role in pupils' learning of morality. In assemblies and form meetings, teachers provide pupils with opportunities to, and examples of how to, challenge prejudice and stereotypes.
41. The development of pupils' social skills is excellent. Its promotion is evident in all aspects of school life. There is a conscious effort to teach about tolerance and understanding. Pupils learn how to work co-operatively very well in many lessons and in a wide range of subjects. The very good links with the community and outside agencies actively promote pupils' social and moral as well as academic development. These also help to provide an informed view on issues pupils may face in future life. Visiting ethnic minority specialist staff provide a programme of drama lessons based upon anti-racist themes. The local community police officer visits the school, in support

of the drama project, 'A Foolish Moment' which is based upon the theme of stealing. The police also help to deliver the 'Harmful Weapons' project. The local Barnardo Group annually lead a Year 6 religious education project, and the school reciprocates by raising money to support their cause. Representatives of other charities, such as the NSPCC (National Society for the Protection against Cruelty of Children), Macmillan Nurses, Madam-Curie, Help the Aged, make presentations to the pupils and the school raises money for a wide variety of causes. The school has involved Northamptonshire Mental Health Team to encourage a sense of compassion and understanding towards those with disabilities. A member of staff from the local drug addiction centre is a visiting speaker at the school's drug programme project. Specialist coaching from local sporting clubs, with which there are strong links, provide pupils with opportunities to develop skills in sports such as basketball, football, rugby and dance as well as to promote their social skills in terms of learning the rules of the game and abiding by them.

42. Pupils' cultural development is very good. In many subjects there are good opportunities to learn about the diversity in different countries through studies of their cultures, histories, music, dance and festivals. In English, drama is used very successfully to enrich pupils' appreciation of their own historical culture, involving casts of up to 150 pupils. Multicultural awareness is encouraged well through music and the study of religion in different cultures. In art and design pupils have the opportunity to learn about Egyptian, Hindu and European art. There are very good opportunities to learn about dance from different countries in physical education and from visiting dance groups. Pupils also learn about British culture visiting museums and local places of historic interest. Their knowledge of their own history was enhanced when they took part in a canal restoration project, making special bricks that were included in the restored canal wall.
43. Overall, there has been good improvement in the learning opportunities provided for pupils. Weaknesses identified in the previous inspection report in meeting pupils' needs have been effectively tackled through the arrangements for setting by ability in English and mathematics and music and art are now given more time, although there is still not enough time for science.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The previous inspection found that this school looked after its pupils very well and this continues to be the case. All members of staff regard the welfare of pupils as a top priority and parents are confident that their children are well looked after during the school day. Members of staff know pupils very well and they share a wholehearted and sincere commitment to ensuring that pupils' personal, educational and emotional needs are fully met. Members of staff are very familiar with child protection and health and safety procedures. The school's arrangements comply with current legislation and with local authority guidelines.
45. Pupils speak of their school in glowing terms and think very highly of their teachers. They know that members of staff genuinely care about them and they feel safe and exceptionally well supported; indeed, there is very little about the school they would like to change. For a variety of reasons, some pupils are not able to have breakfast before they come to school in the morning. In order to ensure that these pupils have something to eat, the school recently started running breakfast clubs, one in the main school and the other in the Year 5 annexe. For a small sum, pupils are able to enjoy a healthy and hearty breakfast and this ensures that they have a good start to the day. There is a sociable and relaxed atmosphere and some pupils enjoy coming along, even when breakfast is available at home! In addition, the school tuck shop is open during mid-morning break and it provides a good range of snacks and drinks.

46. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are satisfactory overall. Procedures for monitoring the standard of pupils' work and the progress they are making at whole school level are very good. The assessments, such as PIMS and reading tests, undertaken are detailed and informative. The development and use of these procedures have had a significant effect on raising the standard of pupils' work and in ensuring that they make good progress particularly in literacy and numeracy. The school uses an appropriate range of assessment tasks and tests and the results are put to good use when planning what pupils will do next. The school is also able to pinpoint pupils who may need additional support or is talented in a particular area. During lessons, close attention is paid to the needs and abilities of all pupils and they receive well-considered advice and support. However, the extent to which individual subject departments monitor and track pupils' progress in the subject is not rigorous or systematic enough. In almost all subjects, one or more aspect of assessment or use of assessment data is underdeveloped. Overall, assessment procedures are well established in English, mathematics and science, but procedures are more variable in the other subjects of the National Curriculum subjects. Assessment information is not used sufficiently well to guide curricular planning in many. In addition, the results of assessment are not used to set individual targets, especially short-term targets for all pupils. This means that they cannot refer to specific objectives that would help them to improve the quality of their work.
47. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are good. Much of the monitoring is informal and is based upon class teachers' close knowledge of pupils' individual circumstances. Relationships are excellent and teachers are sensitive to pupils' ups and downs. The high quality of the personal support ensures that pupils enjoy their time at school and maintain a positive frame of mind. Pupils use their time at school productively and very caring teachers constantly encourage pupils to work hard and to do their best. These factors have a very positive influence on the progress pupils make and on the standard of their work.
48. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are excellent. The standard of teaching is very good and, by providing lessons that are interesting and well organised, teachers lay the foundation for a calm and orderly learning environment. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils have a very clear idea of what is, and what is not, acceptable. These lead to the creation of a very harmonious atmosphere and a sense of common purpose that pervades the entire school. Pupils spoken to during the inspection think that the system of punishment and reward is straightforward and fair. Pupils in Year 5 particularly like having the annex all to themselves and parents and pupils indicate that harassment or bullying of any sort is simply not tolerated.
49. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. Registers are regularly reviewed and the school keeps a close eye on individual attendance. The education welfare officer provides very good support and emerging trends are picked out at an early stage. The school is scrupulous in following up all absences.
50. The school is very effective in assessing and monitoring the performance of pupils with SEN, their personal development and their attendance. Provision in statements is fully implemented and the school liaises with external agencies when necessary. Teachers and LSAs know their pupils well and support them very effectively.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

51. This school sees a close partnership with parents as fundamental to its drive to raise standards. Members of staff do everything they reasonably can to strengthen links between home and school and to involve parents in their child's education. This school has become increasingly popular in recent years and parents hold it in very high regard.

Parents indicate that their children like coming to school and they are pleased with almost every aspect of the school's work. Almost every parent who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire, as well as those who attended the meeting, feels that the standard of teaching is good and they are especially pleased with the way in which the school is led and managed.

52. Some parents have reservations about the amount of feedback they receive about the progress their child is making. The inspection team does not agree with these concerns and feels that parents are kept well informed. Pupils' annual reports are detailed and give parents a clear idea as to what their child can, and cannot, do as well as the progress being made. Teachers are always willing to speak to parents at the end of the school day and there are two formal opportunities per school year when parents can discuss their child's progress with their class teacher. The proportion of parents that attends these meetings, however, declines as pupils move through the school and, by the time pupils are in Year 8, half the parents have stopped coming. In contrast, information evenings have been held on literacy and reading and these have been well attended. Around one in every six of parents who returned the questionnaire expressed concern about the amount of homework. Inspectors support these concerns and feel that the amount of homework set is insufficient.
53. Parents are encouraged to be involved in supporting their children's learning and in school life. Parents of children with SEN are properly involved in identifying their needs, providing support and involved in regular reviews of their children's progress.
54. Links with parents are good and these enable parents to make a worthwhile contribution to their children's learning at home and at school. The overwhelming majority of parents feel that teachers are very approachable and parents offer their support in a number of ways. For example, they accompany pupils on school trips and help to make costumes for school performances. The parents' association is active and organises various social and fund raising events, such as the Christmas Fair. The impact of their involvement is positive and an extra pair of hands is very useful during practical activities such as design and technology. The majority of parents try to ensure that their children attend regularly and avoid booking a family holiday during term time. Around one pupil in every five, however, is taken out of school for a holiday, the duration of which occasionally exceeds the annual ten-day maximum. These absences inevitably mean that they miss the work that is undertaken by the rest of the class and could place them at a disadvantage in the future.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The overall quality of leadership and management of the school are very good, but that provided by the headteacher and the deputy are excellent. Their commitment to the needs of their pupils and staff is total. As a result, the school is a thriving community where everyone understands and shares common aims and values and strives to do their best. There is a very good reflection, overall, of the school's aims, values and policies in its everyday work because these are all well understood by staff and because of good monitoring and evaluation by the senior management team. The headteacher sets a very clear direction for educational development, and this is encapsulated within the very clear school development plan where priorities which are most pertinent to the school's future development are identified. The senior management team and governors support him in strategic management of the school in order to achieve the goals that have been set and to secure continuous improvement in the quality of education provided and in the standards achieved by pupils.
56. There is effective delegation of responsibilities through the school and heads of subjects provide at least sound, and often good or better, leadership and management of their areas. There is exceptionally good team work amongst staff and in the context

of this school where a large number of teachers are involved in teaching most subjects, this good team work ensures the consistency of quality of planning and delivery across the school. Heads of year also provide good leadership and management of their areas of work. The co-ordinator for SEN makes a very effective contribution to the life of the school and its management. Governors share the school's aims and goals and provide very well informed support to the headteacher and staff. Their work is well organised within an effective committee structure and many governors bring useful expertise from their own professions to the benefit of the school. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and are actively working towards addressing the areas requiring improvement and the two areas where legal requirements are not met, that is in relation to the teaching of ICT and holding a daily act of collective worship. Overall, they fulfill their responsibilities very well.

57. There are many examples of very good monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school. Heads of subject are involved in regular monitoring activities, and most have been involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning as well as monitoring the quality of planning and carrying out exercises to sample the quality of pupils' written work. However, some heads of subject have confined themselves to a narrow range of monitoring and evaluation exercises. In geography and physical education, for example, there has been no ongoing monitoring of the quality of teaching by the heads of department. There is very good management and analysis of performance data and action is taken swiftly where a need is identified. Overall, the senior management team respond very positively and quickly to issues raised through monitoring and evaluation activities, hence any weaknesses in performance or in the quality of education provided are not allowed to continue for longer than necessary. The new performance management requirements are fully met. The school has an appropriate policy in place.
58. Staff development is very well organised and teaching and non-teaching staff go on regular training and professional development activities. Induction for new staff, including those new to teaching, is very effective in helping them to settle in and become familiar with the school's routines. Overall, the professional development provided has a very favourable impact on the quality of the school's work. Development activities are linked well to individual and institutional needs.
59. The school's staffing is good with a team of well-qualified and experienced teaching staff who meet the needs of the curriculum well. The staff who work with SEN pupils, including the LSAs, are also well qualified and experienced and these factors help to promote pupils' progress. The provision for other non-teaching staff is good and their work effectively supports the work of the teachers.
60. The school's financial systems are very well organised and controlled, as detailed in the most recent auditors' report. The headteacher and his deputy have acquired considerable expertise in managing the school's finances, ably assisted by governors, administrative staff and representatives of the local education authority. The school development plan is linked well to finances both for long-term developments and more immediate objectives. Governors receive good information about spending and monitor this thoroughly.
61. A summary in graphic form of the school's financial strategy clearly demonstrates the close link between its own priorities, local and national initiatives and the allocation of funds. The major item is the building and equipping of a costly and impressive computer suite, designed to extend the use of ICT to all areas of the curriculum. With this and other projects in mind, the headteacher and his staff have been energetic in their pursuit of additional funds from sources ranging from central government to local financial trusts and businesses. The parent teachers' association has generously played its part. Specific grants are put to good use, as evidenced in the regular refurbishment of school buildings, and the good resources in most subjects. The

school thoughtfully and effectively deploys funds provided for improving the performance of pupils with SEN and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.

62. The school's accommodation is satisfactory. It is housed in mainly old but substantial buildings on two sites, causing some inefficiency in communication and the use of staff time. This is outweighed, in the school's view, by the growth in confidence of pupils in the Year 5 Annexe, prior to their transfer to the main building. Both sites provide a secure base for young pupils in a bustling urban environment and the staff takes pride in keeping rooms and corridors brightly decorated and welcoming. The buildings are kept in a good state of repair. The main building has several demountable classrooms, widely spread but providing well-lit roomy and comfortable accommodation. A well-used grassed quiet area and playing field complement the hard playing area and the school has the use of municipal sports facilities.
63. Most teachers regard their accommodation as at least adequate and appropriate for teaching the National Curriculum. The library is pleasant, well furnished and organised, although it is too small to accommodate whole classes for seated lessons. It has good stocks of books and other research materials, and is staffed for much of the school day. There are only two computers, which are much in demand.
64. Some subjects are disadvantaged by inadequate accommodation that makes teaching the curriculum difficult. There is only one science laboratory, so many lessons have to be taught in non-specialist accommodation. The ICT suites around the school are too small to accommodate whole classes, a problem soon to be resolved when the new computer room is finished. Despite some improvement since the last inspection, the very good standards in music are achieved in facilities that are still small and inadequate. The accommodation is, in principle, single storey, but the topography of the main site, according to the local education authority, makes it unsuitable for the use of wheelchairs.
65. The school's resources are satisfactory. Most departments have at least adequate provision, and some have good stocks of books, materials and equipment for teaching the National Curriculum successfully. There are no shortages of books; most texts are up to date and in good condition. There are examples of good use of external resources. However, there is no use of external resources in science and the fieldwork in geography could beneficially be developed further in Years 6 and 8.
66. Overall, there has been good improvement in the leadership and management of the school, in particular in procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of its work. The headteacher and deputy have also been key players in providing the clear sighted and informed leadership to ensure that effective improvement in other areas of the school's provision has taken place since the last inspection.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

67. In order to improve the quality of education and standards further, the headteacher, senior management team and governors should:
 - (1) Develop the cross-curricular use of ICT and ensure that national requirements are fully met by:
 - improving the access to computer equipment for all classes;
 - ensuring that pupils have access to data-logging equipment;
 - making sure that the use of ICT is identified in all schemes of work;
 - monitoring effectively and regularly the contribution made by subjects to the delivery of ICT skills.
- (Paragraph Nos. 9, 31, 71, 82-83, 90, 93, 104, 116, 126, 129, 136)

- (2) Improve the use of curricular time so that it is used as efficiently as possible to meet pupils' needs and national requirements by:
- developing the use of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum;
 - putting in place effective procedures for co-ordination of the use of literacy and numeracy across the curriculum;
 - incorporating a wide variety of texts into literacy hour so that it can be used to deliver aspects of other subjects;
 - incorporating 'real' problems in numeracy which are rooted in relevant subject contexts across the curriculum;
 - increasing the time allocated to science in order to improve the standards of work in experimental and investigative science;
 - examining ways of minimising further the extent to which pupils are taken out of lessons for musical rehearsals.
- (Paragraph Nos. 8, 21, 31-32, 34, 70, 73, 76, 78, 83, 86, 91, 100-101, 147)
- (3) Ensure that there is consistent and rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress by heads of subject and subject teachers by:
- ensuring that there are appropriate systems and procedures of how pupils' progress can be monitored in place in each subject;
 - making effective use of assessment data to guide curricular planning in all subjects;
 - using assessment information from ongoing assessment and any summative assessment tasks to set short-term targets in subjects;
 - including short-term targets that have a specific numeracy/mathematics focus in individual education plans of pupils with SEN.
- (Paragraph Nos. 46, 81-82, 90, 96, 102, 108, 112, 142, 146)
- (4) Improve the quality of teaching further in the minority of cases where it is not up to the high standards of teaching elsewhere by:
- improving the pace and level of challenge;
 - improving the quality of marking so that it clearly identifies for pupils what they need to do next in order to improve their work;
 - ensuring that there is regular homework, especially at Key Stage 3;
 - making sure that pupils have opportunities to participate actively in all lessons;
 - ensuring that regular monitoring of teaching and learning is undertaken by all heads of subject.
- (Paragraph Nos. 26-27, 57, 73, 80, 89, 101, 105-106, 108, 120, 127, 129, 144, 147)

In addition to the key issues above the school should also include the following minor issues:

1. Continue to work towards meeting the requirements of a daily act of collective worship. (Paragraph No. 39)
2. Work towards developing different tasks for pupils of differing ability being taught in the same class. (Paragraph Nos. 24, 107, 145)
3. Improve the standards of pupils' performing skills in music and aspects of designing work in design and technology. (Paragraph Nos. 9, 12, 99-100, 102, 130-132)
4. Examine opportunities for improving the accommodation for music and science. (Paragraph Nos. 64, 137)
5. Increase the use of external resources for science and geography. (Paragraph Nos. 65, 107)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	110
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	34	42	15	0	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
Number of pupils on the school's roll	679
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	125

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	14
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	237

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	22

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	25
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	27

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.9
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.8
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	81	78	159

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	56	51	65
	Girls	69	51	71
	Total	125	102	136
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79 (72)	64 (67)	86 (76)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	57	48	63
	Girls	66	59	65
	Total	123	107	128
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (69)	67 (67)	81 (76)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	6
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	26
Indian	7
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	3
White	617
Any other minority ethnic group	14

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	2	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	33	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	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)	34.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.7

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	14
Total aggregate hours worked per week	310

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	25.2
Key Stage 3	25.0

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1,335,620
Total expenditure	1,288,990
Expenditure per pupil	1,924
Balance brought forward from previous year	20,000
Balance carried forward to next year	66,630

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	679
Number of questionnaires returned	252

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	41	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	40	3	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	41	3	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	46	13	4	2
The teaching is good.	63	33	1	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	34	50	14	1	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	30	3	0	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	22	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	39	46	10	1	3
The school is well led and managed.	70	27	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	32	2	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	36	4	0	6

Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the meeting with inspectors expressed very positive views of the school. Most of those writing comments on the back of the questionnaires also praised the school for its work. A few parents expanded on the concerns indicated by their responses to the questionnaire, and these were mostly about homework. Some said there was too little, others that it varied or that there was too much.

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

ENGLISH

68. Attainment of pupils aged 11 in national tests taken in 2000 matched the average for all schools. Results were above the average of schools regarded as similar on the basis of entitlement to free school meals. Results in English were better than in mathematics and science. Girls achieved more highly than boys and by a greater margin than found nationally. The trend of improvement has been above the national trend in recent years. Compared with reasonable expectation based upon reading skills assessed at the time of entry, these results indicate very good progress.
69. The evidence of the inspection is that attainment of pupils aged 11 and that of the oldest pupils, aged 13, match national averages. Younger pupils listen attentively and with good understanding to teachers and each other. They speak clearly and confidently when working in groups and, helped by experiences in drama and the urgings of teachers, become able to project their voices with satisfactory volume and clarity. Almost all read aloud confidently and accurately and although this is a strength it sometimes disguises lack of clear understanding. When working in groups to explore meaning or identify how writers gain effects, pupils at all levels of attainment show good skills relative to their general abilities. Pupils in high ability groups as early as Year 5 can highlight and annotate texts and offer opinions backed by evidence. Pupils in lower groups demonstrate similar strengths in lessons, but are more dependent upon teachers' guidance. Pupils with SEN make very good progress because their difficulties are known to all who teach them and are thus stringently tackled. Specialist teaching of these pupils is very good and learning support assistants are highly effective as was evident in a Year 6 lesson where pupils considered different ways of ending a story.
70. The quality of written work for pupils aged between 9 and 11 is less consistent than their oral work or reading standards. Standards of presentation are very good because pupils take pride in their work. Most can write appropriately for a variety of purposes in both prose and verse and communicate their ideas to their readers. Increasingly, they aim to use in their own writing some of the techniques identified in the books they read. A small minority recognises what questions require of them and can organise material for writing at length very effectively. Most achieve this through the use of structured writing guides or through teachers' guidance but some do not have sufficient opportunities. The accuracy of pupils' writing improves because of the priority given to it by most teachers. However, the quality of writing of even some otherwise able writers is reduced by the frequency of persistent errors. Despite frequent practice, many pupils fail to separate sentences by appropriate use of full stops and commas. Some use capitals in the middle of words. Features of local speech lead to the omission of syllables from some words or errors of grammar such as faulty agreement between subject and verb. Many confuse words of similar sound such as *there, their and they're*. In Years 5 and 6, pupils benefit from planned opportunities to use computers. This further encourages the pride they have in the appearance of their work and helps to improve its accuracy.
71. Pupils aged 13 achieve satisfactory standards compared with their earlier attainment and with national expectations for their age. The balance of strengths and weaknesses is similar to that of younger pupils. Skills of speaking and listening are good and pupils read with good understanding of the main sense. To gain full understanding and recognise the implication of significant detail, the majority depends upon teachers' guidance. Written work is enriched by pupils' increased ability to draw upon widening vocabularies and to make effective use of a variety of sentence constructions. Writing is more accurate but the kinds of error noted in the work of younger pupils continue to

reduce the quality of the work of the majority. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT for research purposes if they have access at home to the Internet. They have insufficient opportunities in school to use ICT in their literacy work and this limits their achievement.

72. The quality of teaching is good. It is often very good, and never less than satisfactory. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is particularly strong and in almost half the Year 5 lessons observed teaching was excellent. The very successful teaching in these years results from the school's effective adoption of the National Literacy Strategy which provides guidance on lesson content and strategies for teaching and learning. In the more successful lessons in all years, teaching and learning are good and in almost half are very good or excellent because teachers demonstrate particular skills. Teachers have very good understanding of the strengths and needs of individual pupils and ensure that all are challenged appropriately. They plan lessons very effectively so pupils understand how they are linked to previous and future learning. They ensure that pupils fully understand what is required of them and can begin tasks confidently. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort, behaviour and achievement which pupils want to match. At all levels of attainment and all ages, though especially in the early years, their enthusiasm and desire to contribute add significantly to the quality of learning and good levels of achievement. Lessons usually comprise a series of seamlessly linked activities with clear learning objectives towards which pupils move at a purposeful and often brisk pace within set time limits. Such lessons provide a variety of activities and this helps pupils to sustain very good concentration. Teachers show enthusiasm for their work to which pupils respond positively. They make skilful use of questions both to test pupils' understanding and to extend it further. The positive quality of the relationships established by teachers ensures that pupils are confident in offering opinions and suggestions. This confidence was clearly apparent in a Year 7 group being introduced to Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales' in a lesson which was well planned and made very effective use of very good resources.
73. In less successful though still satisfactory lessons, pupils have too few opportunities to contribute to their learning and the pace is inappropriately fast or slow for all to gain full benefit. In one Year 7 class lesson, each week, the potentially very good quality of teaching and learning is reduced by the withdrawal of one third of the class for choir practice. The best marking of pupils' work recognises strengths and advises pupils on the means of further improvement. Other marking recognises only positive features and some comments are too brief to be helpful. There is a clear need for greater consistency.
74. Since the previous report, effective monitoring of teaching and learning have been developed. Higher attaining pupils are now more appropriately challenged and there is no evidence of low expectations of any pupils. The failure to provide sufficient opportunities for writing at length has almost been eliminated. Teaching and learning in the subject are well supported by a very capable co-ordinator and the attitudes and actions of senior staff and governors. Pupils have very good attitudes to their work in the subject. These together with the quality of teaching result in very good progress in lessons and over time in Years 5 and 6 and good progress in Years 7 and 8.
75. Drama is taught to all pupils as a subject with its own specific skills and also as a means of exploring events and relationships encountered in literature and social and moral issues such as drugs misuse, pollution of the environment and issues of ethnic difference. Pupils demonstrate good skills of performance. They become confident in improvisation and work together purposefully and with good levels of enjoyment. The school has established a good reputation for public performances of high quality involving large numbers of pupils.

Literacy across the curriculum

76. Levels of literacy improve from well below average when pupils enter the school to match national standards. This significant improvement results mainly from the high priority the school gives to achieving this aim, the excellence of the provision for pupils with special educational needs, and the quality of work done in English. The contributions to literacy development in other subjects are less effective since they are of uneven quality and some opportunities are neglected. In almost all lessons, teachers ensure that pupils understand, use and correctly spell technical language relevant to their studies. This is a major strength in history and music. Most subjects provide pupils with opportunities for discussion though this is rare in history. Pupils are encouraged to read aloud in a satisfactory number of subjects and benefit from hearing reading aloud of good quality by teachers especially in design and technology, English and music. There are few opportunities for pupils to write at length except in English, geography and religious education. In science, pupils are encouraged to redraft their work to improve the quality of presentation and levels of accuracy. Evidence of teaching skills such as spelling and note-making is rare outside English lessons and is not common to all of them. The school is aware of the need to extend current good practice across all subjects and intends to take appropriate action.

MATHEMATICS

77. The attainment of pupils in mathematics on entry to the school is well below the national average. The results of National Curriculum tests for 11-year-olds in 2000 were well below average but were broadly in line with the results in schools with a similar intake. The school has extensive performance data based upon nationally validated tests. These indicate that the same pupils both at age 11 and 13 years consistently exceed attainment predictions given at age 9 and 11 years. Compared to the attainment on entry, pupils' results for 2000 are indicative of the good progress they have made since they began at the school at the age of 9 despite being well below national averages. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls.
78. Currently standards in lessons and work seen during the inspection suggest that overall improvement is progressively taking place and that attainment by the ages of 11 and 13 is broadly in line with national expectations. The progress pupils make throughout the school is good and their achievement in relation to their prior attainment is also good. At both key stages, standards of mental arithmetic are satisfactory and pupils' skills in handling data, drawing and presenting information on graphs and charts are sound. However, skills in interpreting graphical information are not as secure for many pupils other than the ablest. Whilst able pupils have well-developed skills in working out for themselves how to solve a given mathematical problem, many lower attainers are still reliant on teachers to guide them through solutions. High attaining pupils in Year 8 are confidently using and applying the first principles of Pythagoras' theorem and manipulating answers correct to two decimal places. Average attaining pupils in Year 7 interpret data from frequency polygons and scatter diagrams. They understand ideas such as correlation being a comparison between two sets of data. When drawing their graphs pupils easily recognise if the two sets of data are linked and describe their conclusion using the appropriate mathematical language. Most pupils exceed expectations made of them based on their attainment on entry, though a minority of low attaining pupils in Year 5 have not fully mastered the four basic rules of arithmetic (adding, subtracting, dividing and multiplying) using two, or more, digit numbers.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is good or very good in about nine-tenths of the lessons observed and is evenly distributed across the age and ability range of pupils. In the best-taught lessons, the teachers state the learning intentions at the outset and reflect on them at the end. Links are made with previous knowledge, good use is made of time and resources and effective questioning encourages pupils to carefully explain

mathematical methods. Teachers value pupils' responses and the explanations they provide as to how they can solve a given problem. These responses are used very effectively by teachers to assess pupils' understanding and to correct any misconceptions they might have. Lessons reflect effective pupil/teacher relationships, which inspire pupils' confidence and increase their self-esteem. In one Year 6 lesson observed, the worksheets, relating to percentages, were graded in difficulty and appropriate to the range of pupils' needs within the middle ability group. The initial focus was upon shop labels which were authentically produced and reflected bargain offers such as '2 for the price of 1', '10% of' and '10% off'. Pupils were then asked to identify the appropriate solution procedures and to explain these methods; this enabled the teacher to assess understanding. It also allowed other pupils to appreciate the range of available methods used to solve these problems. Emphasis was given to literacy, detailing the different mathematical meaning between 'off' and 'of'. Behaviour was excellent and the pupils were very positive towards their work reflecting the ability of the teacher to enable the pupils to listen and learn. Classroom management is a key strength of the department.

80. In the minority of lessons, which were satisfactory only (in just two instances) these began with limited introductions and therefore faltered from the start. This approach led to a lost opportunity for capturing the direction and objective of the lesson and the full potential of the intended outcomes. In a top ability Year 8 lesson, the activity focused upon enlargement. Good use was made of photographs and negatives of pupils within the class. However the lesson failed initially to give adequate guidelines as to how negatives are enlarged, relying only upon verbal explanations. No use was made of a worksheet or flip chart in providing a reliable reference point for pupils' questions. Explanations by the teacher were frequently repeated as pupils sought clarification. These shortcomings weakened the overall impact and pupils' inattentiveness increased. In another Year 8 lesson observed with low ability pupils on algebraic equations, lack of extension work penalised the more able pupils. Whilst the lesson included a good deal of questioning, lack of encouragement to give extended answers restricted the sharing of ideas and limited learning opportunities for all.
81. Provision for teaching pupils with SEN within the school is very good. All teachers are aware of individual pupils and their specific needs. Appropriate teaching resources are used, the arrangements for grouping pupils by ability enable smaller class sizes for lower attainers and learning support assistants give additional help. Individual education plans do not have a sufficiently developed mathematical input in terms of target setting.
82. Since the last inspection good improvement has been made in the quality of teaching observed. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Presentations previously described as uninteresting, are now invariably creative and interactive. The National Numeracy Strategy is being successfully implemented. Because of the commonality of teaching material and work practices the affect has been to encourage teachers to work more closely together. Similarly the support for literacy is good with particularly good emphasis in Years 5 and 6 upon the use of mathematical language and the practice of reading aloud. The mathematics coordinator satisfactorily leads a large team and the teaching of number skills is becoming more of a central focus in lessons. The awareness and use of number skills in other subjects, however, is underdeveloped. The teaching of ICT is insufficiently developed across the subject and fails to meet the National Curriculum requirements. Homework is an issue in that it is inconsistently set across all age and ability ranges. A common assessment procedure and a single core mathematics scheme in Years 7 and 8 has yet to be agreed upon, implemented and developed. Coordination of these is a priority.

Numeracy across the curriculum

83. Standards of numeracy across the curriculum are overall satisfactory in mathematics but are insufficiently developed in other subjects to be satisfactory overall. Standards and provision are unsatisfactory because use of numeracy is not coordinated closely enough to enable pupils to sufficiently develop common skills to apply when needed in all subjects. Proportion was briefly explained in art and demonstrated well on an individual basis in particular the close attention given to estimation in outdoors observation. In ICT, pupils effectively used spreadsheets entering their own formulae in Years 5 to 6, but use of spreadsheets in Years 7 to 8 is too limited. In physical education the need to accurately measure athletic jumps was clearly explained using appropriate mathematical language. Numbers, dates and restaurant menu cards feature in French lessons. Science provided the best examples of the use of numeracy with calculations about speed, measurement of a number of variables, such as temperature, length, sampling data and calculation of averages. However there was a lack of graphical representation of data. Overall, there is insufficient coordination of the development of pupils' numerical skills in subjects across the curriculum to enable all to apply number confidently and effectively in all subjects.

SCIENCE

84. Results in the national tests for 11 year-old pupils have been close to average since the most recent inspection in 1997, matching the rise in national standards. Compared with schools with pupils from similar backgrounds, pupils' performance was better in 2000. When pupils' prior attainment is taken into account the 2000 results are indicative of very good progress. This is because the number of pupils with SEN in the school is growing. Three quarters of these are boys and, in 2000, test results of boys aged 11 were below those of girls. Results by pupils from minority ethnic groups match those of others in the school. The science department does not analyse the test results of other groups, such as those from the poorest homes. Test results are similar to those in English and better than in mathematics.
85. Attainment in work seen during the inspection, by 11-year-olds, is in line with national expectations overall. Standards of presentation of written work are good. At this age pupils can carry out simple experiments safely, recording their measurements and observations clearly. More able pupils know and understand, for example, how to use simple circuits to test if materials will conduct electricity. Lower ability pupils, including some with special needs, can carry out simple food tests on starch, following instructions carefully. Pupils are encouraged to make predictions about what they will discover, but most are unable to base their prediction on scientific knowledge.
86. Attainment by pupils at the age of 13 is in line with national expectations. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of science is good. Some pupils have a good understanding of how to calculate speed, using data collected in a local traffic survey. Others have a satisfactory understanding of hydrogen and its reaction with oxygen. At the age of 13 standards in experimental investigations are below average because pupils are not taught how to analyse and evaluate what they discover. Their ability to present results as graphs is below average. Attainment by pupils from minority ethnic communities is similar to others in the classes in all years.
87. Pupils' achievement is very good, particularly between the ages of 9 and 11. They move from well below average attainment at the age of 9, to average at 13. They make very good progress over time, because they are taught science in a way that provides many opportunities for doing experiments and captures their interest, particularly up to the end of Year 6. The work in pupils' exercise books shows good progress in knowledge and understanding in a wide range of topics during the final two years. However pupils, particularly those aged 11 to 13, make only satisfactory progress acquiring some of the skills needed to carry out scientific investigations successfully. They learn how to measure and record results in tables well. The more able pupils

have learned how to carry out an experiment under controlled conditions, but the teachers do not give enough guidance for pupils to analyse and evaluate their results, limiting their progress. Achievement by minority ethnic pupils is similar to that of others because they work well with other pupils, showing similar levels of interest. Pupils with special needs also achieve well because they receive good help from well-prepared LSAs and from their regular science teachers.

88. Pupils learn well because teaching is good overall. Teaching is at least satisfactory and sometimes very good. A slightly higher proportion of very good teaching was seen in Years 5 and 6, compared with Years 7 and 8.
89. Learning in Years 5 and 6 is good because teachers plan lessons well, have high expectations of what pupils can learn and manage pupils particularly well. These features enabled a class of 10 year-old pupils to learn well about sampling through simple experimentation and discussion. In Years 7 and 8 learning is good overall, pupils are very well managed, but the learning of scientific investigation skills is limited because teachers do not have sufficient time to teach these rigorously. Good use of questioning is a feature of most lessons and enables pupils to clarify their knowledge and understanding in relation to key scientific ideas. Learning by special needs pupils is good in all years because teachers are aware of their learning needs and LSAs give good, well-prepared support in lessons. Homework is rarely set and does not make a significant contribution to learning, particularly in Year 8.
90. Pupils also learn well because the head of department provides the science teaching team with good direction and support. All teachers follow a programme of lessons prepared by the head of science. It is closely linked to the science National Curriculum, but lacks clear statements of exactly what pupils of different ability are expected to learn. The aims of the team support the overall aims of the school in both personal development and subject knowledge. The single spacious laboratory is well used but each class can only use it for one of the two science lessons each week. This and the low curriculum time for science are affecting standards of pupils' experimental and investigative work. The department's single computer is well used to prepare worksheets, but there is no computer database to enable the teachers to track pupils' progress efficiently. The department does not meet statutory requirements on the use of computers because it does not have the equipment needed to enable pupils to learn, first-hand, how computers can be used for measuring during investigations.
91. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, with some good features. Since then priorities to improve teachers' knowledge and understanding of science, by additional training, have been effective in raising achievement, particularly by the older pupils. As a result better use is now made of time in classroom science lessons. Action to identify and rectify under-achievement through the 'booster' classes has raised achievement and the proportion reaching the expected level, Level 4, in the national tests for 11 year-olds has risen. There is no improvement in the time available for teaching science.

ART AND DESIGN

92. In the work seen in the school, standards are at national expectations in pupils aged 11. They use a good range of materials to produce work in two and three dimensions, including paint, paper and card, and clay. Pupils at all levels of attainment draw freely, from prepared groups of objects, or from memory and imagination. As a result, some exciting work is being carried out, based on studies of plants in vases, which uses pencil, oil pastel, watercolour and inks to achieve bright and lively effects. Pupils also study a range of artists and art movements, including those from other cultures, for example Egyptian and Hindu art, and this adds variety to their work. As a result, they

can talk about the work of these artists and can discuss, for example, how they use colour to achieve bright effects in their paintings.

93. By the age of 13, standards are above national expectations. Pupils use watercolour well, and some good studies of local buildings are seen which show a good grasp of the fluid nature of the materials. Their observation work is good, and high attainers show a sensitive use of line when drawing plants or portraits on a small scale. Sketchbooks are good, and pupils use a wide variety of materials to record visual images and to investigate and develop ideas. Pupils use ICT for research, and to develop and change images, but it is not used as widely as it could be because not enough computers are currently available.
94. Achievement in all years is good. Pupils make good gains in their ability to draw and paint as they move up through the school, and in their knowledge and understanding of the work of other artists. They also learn to use a variety of materials and processes, such as printing and collage, and they gain experience of using clay to work in three dimensions and in low relief. All pupils, including those from minority ethnic groups, make good progress, because of the consistently good teaching and the good variety of materials used in lessons. Pupils show an interest and enjoyment in their work in the subject, and their overall good attitudes make a positive contribution to the progress they make.
95. Teaching and learning in all years are good overall. All lessons seen were good or better. A strength of the teaching in Years 5 and 6 is the good subject knowledge shown by teachers. This was seen in a lesson on designing posters for a local balloon festival. The teacher was able to give good advice on how to explore ideas and draw them effectively using design sheets and good learning was the result. In Years 7 and 8 a strength of the teaching is the good variety of activities used. This was seen in a lesson outdoors, where pupils were studying the local church. Here they were able to draw, make rubbings and take photographs using a digital camera. This meant that interest levels were high, attitudes were good and good learning was the result. Another strength of the teaching in Years 7 and 8 is the good match of materials and methods to the lesson objectives, which means that all pupils can achieve success and learn well. Some of the work, however, is very tightly directed and the use of materials in these lessons is not exciting enough to promote learning that is better than good.
96. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Teaching quality is monitored, and developed, and is consistently good or better. Pupils use artwork to support their studies in other subject areas and this contributes to the good standard of the work seen. The subject also makes a very good contribution to the cultural development of pupils, and they are regularly involved in local initiatives and experience working with a range of professional artists. However, assessment information is not centralised at present, and this means that it cannot be used as well as it should be to guide overall planning.
97. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards in Years 7 and 8 have improved, sketchbooks are now regularly used, and pupils show an improved knowledge of the work of other artists and art movements, including the art of other cultures. The time allocation for the subject has improved, and although lessons are not spread evenly throughout the year, the work in other subject areas still means that good progress is made overall.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

98. Pupils' standards of attainment, by ages of 11 and 13, are in line with national expectations. Standards are less variable between the different year groups than they were during the previous inspection. The standards are also higher in the work being

produced by pupils currently in the school than they were in the work of pupils who left at the end of the last academic year. Indeed progress recently, following the appointment of a new head of department who is a specialist in the subject, has been much better than in the previous couple of years when the school was having difficulty in recruiting and retaining a specialist teacher to take charge of design and technology. Overall progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

99. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils are skilled at making products and have interesting and creative ideas about what to make but their communication and enquiry skills are not up to the required standard. Year 5 pupils demonstrate good problem solving skills. For example, when asked to solve problems involving paper structures, they made useful suggestions. By the age of 11, most pupils show good proficiency in working with a range of tools and materials. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, pupils used hand tools, such as wire strippers, carefully and correctly. Whilst Year 5 pupils communicate well when talking about their ideas and how they would like to develop them, they do not make sufficiently good use of sketches and notes. The good quality of the clocks and bird boxes made by Year 7 pupils indicates high standards of construction and imaginative use of ideas. Pupils are learning to combine designing with making in a satisfactory way. For example, when starting a project, 12 year-olds think carefully about the needs of the end user and the place where the product will be used. However, they do not yet work from their own plans or outline alternative methods of production. Whilst pupils do not satisfactorily describe and explain the modifications they have had to make when attempting to put their ideas into practice they do 'think before doing' in food technology and they are successfully learning how to put together a good folder for design.
100. As they move up through the school the majority of the pupils demonstrate satisfactory achievement with attainment in each year group becoming steadily higher than the previous year group as better foundations are laid lower down the school. Some classes used the food technology room for the first time during the inspection week and the value of the school's investment was clear for all to see as they cheerfully and successfully learned to make food products such as egg sandwiches. There are many good resources and ideas for design and make projects already in place, but there is some repetition and not all pupils are regularly required to use previously taught skills as they move from one project to the next. Pupils with SEN made good progress, for example in Year 7, because the teacher had structured the work to enable pupils to find the correct words and to put sentences in to a good order to explain how to make a food product. Pupils make satisfactory progress with development of literacy and numeracy skills. They make good progress with speaking and listening. They also produce charts and graphs in a satisfactory way but they do not have sufficiently well developed skills in interpreting graphical information. The pupils' use of skills from English and mathematics was apparent in many lessons and work samples but achievement in both of these areas was satisfactory only.
101. The quality of teaching throughout the school is good. It also has some very good features which enable pupils to make informed decisions about the products they are designing and making and to progress well towards nationally agreed targets. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the week of the inspection. Very good features were apparent when the pupils in Year 7 were using both hand and power tools very precisely because they had previously been required by the teacher to pass the test for a certificate of competence award before using the machines for a project on clocks. As a result of this very effective preparatory training, the acrylic sheets were accurately and safely cut by pupils. The teacher also expected pupils to think and to plan ahead by recording their ideas in a design folder and he made sure they had sufficient confidence in using skills such as free hand sketching to enable them to communicate early ideas about possible design choices. Good features included the provision of good quality kits of resources to enable pupils to make good quality

products in classrooms. In classroom based lessons the pupils were able to work well by themselves because teachers produced good quality notes and worksheets to help them. Learning support staff and teachers working in unison provided good support to pupils and so helped to raise standards. Pupils also make good progress because the teachers use their good knowledge from other subjects to provide interesting activities thus encouraging pupils' enthusiasm. However, occasionally lessons progressed at a slower pace because of the need to remind pupils about targets or else too little time was left for pupils to show what they could do. Because the key words in one lesson were introduced too late in the lesson, pupils were not able to use them in their work as effectively. Sometimes failure on the part of a teacher to listen to pupils' comments meant that opportunities to raise attainment were lost.

102. Design and technology is at a crucial stage in its development as plans are put into place to ensure that the school's good vision and developmental planning priorities for the subject are implemented. With many good changes recently made, for example the refurbishment of rooms and the introduction of new topics, improvement has effectively begun. Some aspects which are not currently in place are: the inclusion of key lesson objectives and marking guidance in lesson planning; clear links between successive units of work in order to better guide the progressive development of pupils' skills and knowledge; the use of ICT; increased access for pupils to a sufficiently wide range of sources of information; the completion of the painted safety lines around the machines; the moderation of marked work; the use of assessment data for target-setting and course evaluation and further improvement of the quality of coverage of the National Curriculum requirements, for example by improving the facilities for textiles.
103. Since the last inspection the school has made reasonable progress overall and very good progress in the last three months under the good leadership of the new head of department. Delays in development of design and technology were enforced by staff shortages over which the school had no control. The teaching is better now so that progress in most lessons in both key stages is good. The balance of activities in the course is now better, for example pupils are being taught how to communicate their design ideas. The time allocation is also now satisfactory. The accommodation is much better with good workshop and food technology facilities.

GEOGRAPHY

104. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. By the age of 11, overall attainment is in line with national expectations. This indicates very good progress in learning as attainment on entry was well below the national expectation. Mapping, diagrammatic and graphical skills are developed well across Years 5 and 6. Some very good climate graphs and diagrams were observed in the Year 5 unit on tropical rain forests. Pupils in Year 6 were tackling cultural similarities and differences between Jamaica and Great Britain in a very effective manner, developing knowledge and understanding, as well as using geographical questions in an appropriate way. Pupils are beginning to carry out enquiry tasks successfully on the themes and places studied. Listening skills are generally good and most pupils write in a satisfactory way using a range of formats. Pupils contribute effectively in class discussions and respond positively to teachers' questions. Little use is currently made in school of ICT to carry out information gathering, to represent statistical data or produce written work, but pupils are encouraged to research at home, using both the Internet and other information sources. A good example was observed in Year 6, where pupils had gathered information on Jamaica. Work is well presented and pupils take pride in writing, drawing annotated diagrams and constructing graphs.
105. By the age of 13, overall attainment is in line with expectations. This represents good overall achievement, as this year group was below the national average level of attainment on entry in Year 5. As in Years 5 and 6, most work is neatly and carefully

presented and pupils have well developed listening skills. There is however a reluctance in some lessons on the part of many pupils, particularly in Year 8, to participate in discussion usually because in these lessons teaching methods do not encourage such discussion. Geographical skills continue to be well developed. Some good examples of analysis and representation of data on employment changes in France were seen in lessons. Pupils can draw graphs well and annotate diagrams effectively. In Year 7, pupils were analysing and writing up in a successful way their notes on a local shopping survey. In all four years, pupils with special educational needs and those from multi-ethnic backgrounds make equal progress to the majority of pupils.

106. Teaching is good overall, with some good and very good practice. In most lessons planning is thorough and clear aims are set and explained. Pupils in all years are expected to think and develop independent learning skills. The challenge for higher attaining pupils however is not sufficiently rigorous in some classes. A good range of teaching and learning strategies is used to motivate and maintain interest but in some lessons there is still a tendency for the teacher to be over directive and for pupils to be too passive. This is particularly true of Year 8 pupils. Overall however, the range of teaching and learning strategies, combined with positive attitudes to learning from a significant majority of pupils, results in good and very good learning taking place in many lessons. The methods used by many teachers encourage pupils to ask geographical questions, to think about tasks and to use geographical language correctly. Generally appropriate tasks are set to meet individual needs and good support is given in lessons, particularly to pupils with special educational needs. In the very good lessons pupils are stimulated and motivated by interesting teacher input and very good progress in learning results. This was seen in a lesson in Year 8, where pupils were exploring inequalities in Brazilian society. There are however some weaknesses in some otherwise satisfactory lessons. These include lack of pace, limited amount of helpful marking to help pupils progress and limited tasks to meet pupils' individual needs, for both high and low attainers.
107. An increasing amount of enquiry-based activities is being provided and this has a positive influence on learning. Opportunities for field study are good in Years 5 and 7 but none are offered in the other two years. Appropriate and regular assessments are carried out to test knowledge and understanding. There is an appropriate expectation in terms of both quality and quantity of work and most lessons are conducted at a good pace. Although higher attaining students are making good and in some case very good progress, their performance would still benefit from the provision of separate, more rigorous tasks. Pupils with special educational needs and those from multi-ethnic backgrounds are well integrated in classes and are making equal progress to their peers.
108. Geography is a well-led and managed subject and the department has tackled most weaknesses identified in the last report. There is a clear commitment to raise standards and a capacity to succeed. Schemes of work have been well written and organised for the large number of non-specialist teachers. A good programme to use ICT as a tool in learning geography has been prepared, in readiness for the new computer suite. Teaching and learning is now much less teacher directed, but there is still some over prescription on the part of some teachers. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has improved, despite the difficulties involved, with so many staff teaching the subject. There is still, however, room for improvement, to enable teachers to share good practice and eradicate some of the weaknesses mentioned above. There is little homework set to help pupils consolidate and extend knowledge, understanding and independent learning skills. Improvements in recording pupils' progress would assist planning and evaluation of the curriculum and monitoring individual pupil and class performance.

HISTORY

109. Standards of work seen show that the attainment of pupils meets national expectations by the ages of 11 and 13. Pupils in Year 6 are able to identify some of the different ways in which the past is represented, for example through primary evidence such as artefacts, documents and photographs from Victorian Britain and to identify differences between Victorian schools and their own. By the age of 13, pupils are able to describe features of past societies and the impact of change, for example by identifying the changes imposed by European settlers upon the Plains Indians in the late nineteenth century.
110. All pupils, including pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, make satisfactory progress in both key stages. Pupils with SEN progress satisfactorily and benefit from any allocated support staff who are well prepared for individual lessons. Pupils with SEN participate well in role-plays, contribute to small group discussion and persevere with a wide variety of written tasks.
111. Teaching is a significant strength of the department. All lessons seen were good or better. Forty-three per cent were very good and 28 per cent were excellent. Lessons are well planned, for example in the teaching of the feudal system and investigation into the lives of the poor in medieval Britain during Year 7. There is very effective use of time and resources as seen, for example, in a study of the problems faced by Ancient Egyptians in Year 5. There is a high expectation of pupils and this is reflected not only in the sustained effort made by pupils throughout their lessons but also in the very good presentation of their written work. The very best lessons additionally include a brisk pace, a wider variety of engaging tasks and some opportunity for pupils to reflect upon their own learning. Teachers seen in Year 6 are particularly inventive in their dramatic recreations of a Victorian classroom and offer a richly resourced environment which stimulates pupil enquiry. All classrooms provide well-presented displays of pupils' work.
112. The subject coordinator provides strong leadership through a detailed scheme of work which suits the needs of the wide range of staff. The key elements of the subject, for example chronology and causation, are built into the monitoring of staff through both key stages. There are tasks set, for example analysis of the reasons for the end of the Roman Empire, which directly address these. The assessment arrangements for establishing individual pupil progress are satisfactory but there is no use of available data to analyse overall pupil progress or to guide curricular planning. There is a satisfactory contribution made to the spiritual, moral and cultural life of the school, with a good example seen of reference to the spiritual beliefs of the Plains Indians. However, these are taken as opportunities by individual staff rather than planned overall. There is a good contribution made to the social development of pupils in opportunities given for pair or group work and whole class role play. The subject is making a satisfactory contribution to the Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship course.
113. Since the last inspection the proportion of teaching which is good or better has considerably increased from the baseline of about 50 per cent satisfactory and 50 per cent better than satisfactory. There has been continuous review of curricular needs and detailed revision of several units of study. Progress has been made in developing assessment arrangements to monitor individual pupil progress but this has not been extended into a longer term and more formal evaluation of the quality of provision. Marking remains thorough, regular and personally supportive to pupils with some evidence of teachers' explanations to pupils as to how they can improve their skills and understanding.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

114. Results of school-based tests currently show attainment in the timetabled ICT lessons to be above average by the end of Year 6, though this is within a narrower range of programs than pupils are expected to use, and average by the end of Year 8. These results are better than those from school tests in 2000. The improvement is confirmed by standards seen by pupils in lessons during the inspection week. Attainment was above national expectations by the age of 11 and in line with these expectations by the age of 13. The number of pupils observed in Years 7 and 8 was small because the main site computer room is currently being refurbished and re-equipped.
115. Pupils in Year 6 confidently use multi-media methods to generate exciting nursery rhyme presentations for their younger relatives and friends. They make good use of sounds some of which they have chosen from the computer program and others that they have fed into the computer using microphones. They also work well with databases, spreadsheets and the control of electrically powered models.
116. Year 8 pupils demonstrate good skills when using digital cameras and desktop publishing techniques to produce greetings cards and personal profiles of value to them as they anticipate the completion of their Key Stage 3 work in another school. However, the pupils do not compare their sources of information when doing investigations, for example collecting and looking at data in spreadsheets. They allow spelling errors to appear in final versions of reports. Pupils do not modify the instructions they have given to a computer that may be controlling a model, to make it work better. This is one example of the lack of opportunity pupils have to apply their computer skills in other subjects where, with the exception of art and design and drama, the provision is unsatisfactory. Pupils are aware that they are using computers to save time and to make quality products they could not do as well in any other way. They demonstrate sound awareness of benefits and demands of working with computers.
117. Whilst progress in lessons is often very good, for example when Year 5 are extracting information from a database or Year 8 are working with pictures, text and sound, achievement over longer periods of time is not consistently good throughout the four years at the school. The progress pupils make as they move up through the school is very good in Years 5 and 6 and good in Year 7 and satisfactory in Year 8. Year 7 pupils are able to use a range of techniques very well, for example using email and accessing additional information from far and wide. Attainment in lessons in Year 7 is often above average.
118. All pupils improve their key skills by working with computers. Pupils with SEN do well in all lessons and especially well between the ages of 9 and 11. One pupil who worked very hard to communicate orally his good answer to the teacher's question was very pleased to follow the teacher's request that he should use his good computing skills to assist a classmate whose previous experience with computers had been less successful. Low attaining pupils in Year 6 reach levels of attainment which are very good for them. They can, for example, make the computer do relevant calculations to produce multiplication tables. They use special words such as 'cell' and 'formula' when discussing how to correct mistakes and put things right and confidently work for long periods without assistance. All pupils soundly use the computers when handling numbers, for example data from surveys about cars or food preferences. As early as Year 5 the pupils are writing poems and older pupils write and present, for example, an imaginary newspaper report of the Battle of Hastings with a very good and almost professional effect.
119. The teaching in both key stages is very good. In Year 5 the pupils made very good progress because the teacher taught them the skills and key words they needed to know, established very good interactions with them and worked so well with LSAs that the pupils, in their first lesson, used the computers with rapidly increasing confidence to

answer the questions about insects using the information stored in a data base. In Year 6 the teacher effectively used a projector to enable the pupils to comfortably observe changes on the computer screen and to enable pupils to suggest how to avoid repeating the mistakes they had made in the previous lesson. To effectively raise their self-esteem she even pretended not to be quite as good as they were with number work. The pupils received additional effective support from the LSA. In a Year 7 lesson, the pupils were very effectively trained to use the computers when making a presentation to the rest of the class. The pupils tested their hypotheses about the popularity of after-school clubs. They then entered the scores into the computer and successfully made coloured graphs and charts to illustrate their findings. The pupils were well motivated because the teacher could at the same time handle the equipment very well and interact effectively with the class. Pupils worked hard because they knew their work had to be handed in for marking before the lesson ended.

120. The high standard of teaching is a reflection of the good quality of the departmental and senior management. The department has good plans to extend good practice by improving the accessibility of computers to the pupils and also into subject areas. When the work is marked the pupils are encouraged to think critically about work they have done but are not told with sufficient precision and clarity what to do next to improve. Teachers do not always agree about the marks to be awarded so that marking, whilst having good features, is not completely satisfactory. The monitoring of the use of ICT across the range of subjects is not rigorous enough. Equipment is currently well used and maintained. The head of department is currently able to ensure good reliability of equipment and is well aware of the need to improve the technical support for teachers across all subjects. Resources such as books and help sheets though sometimes good are not sufficient to meet the needs of all pupils with varying characteristics in a wide range of contexts.
121. Since the last inspection the improvement in the provision of computers compares equally well with other schools. There has been steady improvement nationally and the school has maintained its relative position. The planning for lessons is now much better and teachers are more confident. The school has invested well in a new ICT suite, which was being constructed during this inspection. Part of the development plan includes further improvement in the number of computers and other ICT resources so that the school can fully meet the requirements of the National Curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

122. All pupils learn French in Years 7 and 8. Since the last inspection the quality of the curriculum and standards of teaching and learning have risen significantly and are now very good overall. This has led to a marked improvement in standards.
123. The current attainment of pupils in Year 8 is equal to the national expectation. This is in line with their teachers' most recent assessments and corresponds to targets set for pupils to reach before transferring to upper school. Boys and girls participate fully in lessons, which are well matched to their ability, and attain at similar levels. A minority of pupils, including some with SEN, achieve well but attain levels lower than the national expectation. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attain equally high standards. A substantial minority of boys and girls achieve higher than average standards when lessons are at their most challenging.
124. Pupils have very good listening skills. Within a few weeks of starting to learn French, most can follow lessons taught largely or entirely in French. They respond promptly to classroom instructions and questions. Pupils in Year 7 understand taped conversations and read simple language ranging from captions to short informal letters. Many pupils in Years 7 and 8 speak fluently, holding brief and often spontaneous conversations with their teachers and classmates. They refer to written prompts on the

classroom walls or on flashcards to assist them with accuracy in grammar. Pupils of all abilities, including some with special educational needs, use idiomatic French to tell the time, forecast the weather or describe their daily routine.

125. By the end of Year 8, pupils have learnt to describe their home and school life, talking and writing informatively about their family, friends and interests. They effectively adapt their writing to various purposes, such as writing dialogues about shopping for food or arranging to go out. Higher and lower attainers express their opinions simply on topics ranging from school subjects to sport, and conduct surveys of their classmates' preferences. Higher attainers use the perfect and future tenses to describe past events or their immediate intentions.
126. The quality of teaching in lessons seen was always at least good and many were very good. A minority of teaching was excellent. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are familiar with the requirements of the revised National Curriculum. Pupils gain from the good model of spoken French provided by teachers, listening attentively and speaking with confidence in turn. Lower attainers receive sympathetic and supportive attention from non-specialist staff who appreciate the difficulties of learning a language. Teachers usually use English judiciously to introduce and summarise lessons or to explain grammar points such as gender or possessive adjectives. Occasionally they use English more than is necessary. Since the last inspection teachers have developed a wide and varied range of techniques that engage pupils' attention and sustain their concentration well. A few lower attaining pupils find it hard to concentrate on longer activities. They usually respond to a brisk pace and the chance to be actively involved in the presentation and summary of lessons about personal appearance or the weather. Teachers use ICT insufficiently, since they lack training and have limited access to the school's computers
127. Teachers plan their lessons well, so that pupils benefit from a logical sequence of activities that exercise different skills in turn. Most lessons involve a practical use of language for a card or board game, simulating a café or doctor's surgery or conducting a survey of pets or hobbies. Long-term planning is equally good. Pupils' work is very well organised in exercise books, files and jotters, enabling thorough and effective revision. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They expect higher and middle attaining pupils to speak at length or at least in full sentences and encourage lower attainers to use simpler language with confidence. Teachers have excellent relations with their pupils and have well-established routines enabling time and conventional resources to be used effectively. A busy and productive atmosphere prevails in many lessons and pupils enjoy working in pairs or competing in teams. Teachers deal quickly and effectively with occasional minor instances of disaffection. In a very small minority of lessons when the teaching was mostly teacher led, the atmosphere was more subdued than in the more usual lively and active learning situations. Boys and girls work unselfconsciously together, often using dictionaries to look up words independently. They support their partners in script writing and reading comprehension.
128. Teachers assess their pupils' work continuously, keeping full records of their attainment and progress, with appropriate reference to the National Curriculum levels. They make pertinent suggestions for improvement, insist on corrections and ensure that any work missed is made up. Pupils are involved in the appraisal of their own and their classmates' performance. Illustrative portfolios and bright wall displays show pupils, parents and visitors what excellent standards of written work can be achieved. Teachers make regular use of homework, to prepare and extend the content of lessons, adapting the tasks to match the pupils' level of attainment. They are involved in a school study visit to France giving a minority of pupils the chance to meet French people at first hand.

129. The department is very well led, cohesive and buoyant despite scattered accommodation and the pressures of general class teaching. Its documentation is clear and informative, giving teachers and their assistants a helpful, supportive framework and ample suggestions for lively classroom activities. Teachers have undergone relevant training and have benefited from the Head of Department's expertise as well as sound external advice. Language teaching reflects the aims of the school and is closely linked to other areas of the curriculum, particularly the school's literacy and numeracy policies. Developments since the last inspection reflect regular formal discussion and a continuous dialogue amongst teaching staff. More can be achieved through mutual observation of lessons, which does not currently happen, and sharing best practice while allowing for differences in teaching style. The establishment of real (i.e. e-mail) and virtual links using computers and their use for research and presenting work is not established practice within the department but could add an important dimension to its work.

MUSIC

130. Standards in music have risen since the last inspection. By the age of 11 pupils are just about reaching nationally expected standards though performing, apart from singing, is below expectation. By the age of 13, pupils are attaining expected standards. Pupils sing well throughout the school and many of them achieve exceptional standards of performance when singing in one of the choirs.
131. Pupils aged 11 attain expected standards in listening and appraising. They choose musical sounds for composing with good aural discrimination. Performing is the weakest area of attainment. Pupils' instrumental playing is limited because of their poor physical co-ordination. This affects their composing because they cannot repeat their musical ideas accurately.
132. Composing by pupils aged 13 is at the expected standard but performing on instruments is a little weaker, though singing is a strength. Pupils' appraisal of their work in class is satisfactory, however, the whole year group has good listening skills; the focused and respectful attention pupils gave to a performance by the school's vocal ensemble, followed by warm applause, indicated a high level of sensitivity to music.
133. Achievement is good with boys and girls achieving equally well, including in singing, where boys' attainment is unusually good and has improved considerably since the last inspection. Pupils with SEN make progress in line with that of other children. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated into all activities and make similar progress to other pupils. Gifted and talented musicians make very good progress in performing because they are provided with extended challenges in class, which stretch them well, as well as by the many opportunities offered by extra-curricular activities.
134. Across the school as a whole teaching is very good. Teaching for pupils aged 9-11 is good and for those aged 11-13 it is very good. Pupils learn well because teachers give clear explanations of musical ideas they do not understand and confident demonstrations of music and music technology. Lesson planning is very good, building on well organised schemes of work, it incorporates many different activities to reinforce learning, for example in Year 7, both singing and composing work are used to develop skills in using rhythmic patterns. Pupils learn effectively because the breadth of activities sustains their interest. Music makes a good contribution to pupils' development of literacy skills because teachers consistently use music-specific vocabulary. As a result, pupils themselves use relevant musical terminology correctly to describe their work. Teachers also encourage pupils to introduce themselves on tape when recording their compositions. Pupils are managed effectively despite cramped working conditions in both music classrooms. They are able to concentrate and work well because there are no disruptions to their learning. When pupils perform

in class, their achievements are celebrated, but these performances are not always used as appraisal opportunities for other pupils. Occasionally the last few minutes of lessons are rushed and insufficient time is left for teachers to check what pupils have learned during them.

135. The curriculum is well planned to develop skills progressively, and to prepare pupils for requirements at their next schools. The excellent range of extra-curricular activities extends considerably the performing skills of pupils who attend. These offer opportunities for the most able musical pupils to achieve standards of exceptional performance especially in singing. Music makes a very good contribution to pupils' moral and cultural development, and an excellent contribution to their social development. There is also an appropriate contribution to pupils' spiritual development, but the department has not yet explored music's full potential in this area. Many 'spiritual' moments happen in class but the teachers have not recognised them as such or planned for them. Teachers do not mention the 'wow' factor even if everyone in the room has just experienced it. Spirituality is currently defined as singing faith songs but the definition needs to be extended to include the power of music to uplift the spirit or to create other emotional responses.
136. Pupils' work is assessed accurately and older pupils are regularly involved in evaluating their own work. Reports to parents are good, describing work covered and standards achieved. However reports, particularly for Year 5, do not always include points for pupils' further improvement. The head of department leads with infectious enthusiasm and commitment, despite having only limited non-contact time for her management activities. The senior management team actively supports the department's work. Departmental planning has sensible priorities for development, including the development of the use of ICT, which is currently limited, and improvement in resources.
137. The department has made great strides since the last inspection. All pupils now have a reasonable allocation of lesson time and learn a broader range of musical skills. Standards for pupils aged 13 have risen significantly. There has been some improvement in accommodation, though the two main classrooms are still too small, making movement during and between activities slow and difficult. There are more classroom instruments, including more good quality keyboards. Though the department is still short of multicultural percussion instruments, there is planning for further improvement of resources in this respect. Pupils now sing with real enthusiasm, many of them also giving up personal time to rehearse with extra-curricular choirs, which has led to recruitment of some pupils for a professional production of 'Joseph and his Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat' at the Derngate Theatre in June.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

138. Standards reached by pupils at the age of 11 are in line with the national expectation. When they arrive in Year 5 they are well below expectation. This therefore represents very good achievement over time. All of the pupils understand the importance of warming up before exercise. Athletics, basketball and cricket are particular strengths. The pupils work co-operatively in small groups and are able to play various roles. In cricket they understand the basic skills of bowler, wicket keeper and batter and can play simplified games. A few are accurate in throwing from a distance. In athletics the majority are able to measure and record their prowess accurately. They improve their standing long jump action through repetition and by using information supplied by the teacher. A minority has difficulty in measuring their jumps with metre rulers, but achieve well in the practical activity. Team players have above average basketball skills. They use advanced tactics and outwit their opponents with change of speed and cunning. A few are particularly accurate in their lay up shots. At both key stages pupils with SEN

and those with behavioural difficulties perform as well, if not better than their peers because of their ability and good motivation.

139. Standards reached by pupils at the age of 13 are in line with the national expectation. Particular strengths are dance, cricket and athletics. In dance the girls are able to create and perform complex sequences of movement using different levels, group shape and speed. They effectively use stimuli such as music and pictures to contribute to their work. The pupils' practical performance in games becomes more refined and they transfer new skills into a competitive situation. In athletics they accurately measure and record their triple jumps. The pupils enjoy and respond well to problem-solving tasks. They perform their own warm up before exercise when given the opportunity. Their evaluative and coaching skills are less well developed because they are not consistently given the tasks to practice these techniques. They are generally not confident in the use of technical vocabulary associated with physical education. All pupils achieve well.
140. The teaching and its impact on the quality of the pupils' learning are very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. It is best between the ages of 9 and 11 where the teachers' depth of knowledge ensures that the pupils have a good grasp of basic skills and an understanding of what makes an effective performance. They use question and answer sessions well in all stages of the lesson to consolidate knowledge and to make the pupils think about what they are doing. Tasks always progress logically with sufficient time to play or perform the end skill. For example in a Year 6 athletics lesson the teacher gradually built up the standing long jump skill enabling the pupils to practise and improve. Good teaching points for individual pupils resulted in achieving an increased distance and they were able to record and compare their own performance through measurement. Technical terms and health and safety factors were constantly reinforced throughout the lesson resulting in excellent progress for all pupils. Practical skills in Years 7 and 8 are well taught, resulting in improved standards. The teachers often give the pupils opportunities to plan and evaluate their own performance. The quality of learning is best in these lessons and involves those pupils who are temporarily unable to take part due to injury or ill health. In a few lessons, however, the pupils are not challenged intellectually to develop their technical knowledge and the non-participants are not sufficiently involved. In two lessons, tasks chosen did not extend the more able in the class resulting in slower progress for these pupils. Ongoing assessment of the pupils' performance is accurate and is used well to help them improve their work or change the lesson plan if necessary. Targets that are given in the reports to parents are not specific enough to raise standards.
141. Particularly good features evident in all lessons are the teachers' knowledge of the pupils, their caring approach and the well-established code of conduct. This creates a very effective learning environment and the pupils feel valued and important regardless of their ability. As a result they are exceptionally well motivated and keen to improve their performance. This is particularly evident in the varied extra-curricular programme where the pupils continue to enjoy national, county and local success in activities such as basketball and dance.
142. Leadership of the department is good, promoting a team spirit that contributes strongly to the personal development and achievement of the pupils. It has also ensured good progress since the last inspection. The appointment of a specialist in charge of boys' games has resulted in greater consistency of teaching between the boys and girls. The quality of teaching has improved and standards have been maintained. The pupils' evaluative skills and technical knowledge are improving progressively from Year 5 as good practice begins to have an impact. The new national requirements for assessment have been introduced and with a little refinement could be an effective tool for tracking the pupils' performance and identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Monitoring of specialist teaching is informal at present and requires

formalising to ensure sharing of good ideas. Non-specialist teachers continue to be given excellent support for the content of their lessons and consistency in expectation of standards. The development plan is focused on raising attainment but is not linked to time or finances.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

143. Pupils achieve well in religious education across all four years. By the age of 11, overall attainment is in line with the expectations of the local agreed syllabus. This represents very good progress in learning, as attainment on entry for Year 6 was well below expectations. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and books and lesson observations indicate that pupils understand the importance of symbolism in religion and are aware of the importance of respecting the views, beliefs and cultures of other people. Pupils listen attentively to their teachers and also are keen to contribute to lessons. This was seen in a lesson on Hinduism, when pupils moved from the known to the new, Christmas in Christianity to the characteristics and importance of Diwali to a Hindu. They display a good understanding of Christianity and their prior knowledge is good. This was seen in a lesson on the Eucharist and the significance of the Last Supper.
144. By the age of 13, attainment is in line with expectations of the agreed syllabus. In relation to prior attainment, progress in learning is good. Pupils continue to display good listening skills and there are some good examples of writing at length particularly in the books of higher attaining pupils. Presentation skills are good in most books. Pupils are able to empathise with the plight of less fortunate people in society. This was seen clearly in a lesson on the homeless. Pupils continue to be aware of the importance of symbolism in different faiths, for example the importance of worship both in the synagogue and the home to a Jewish family. Pupils have a good knowledge of religious language and understand important key words from the religions they have covered. There is however a tendency, particularly in Year 8, for many pupils to be rather passive in their learning. Across all four years pupils with SEN are well supported and they together with pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated and make equal progress to their peers.
145. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, with a high proportion of good and very good practice. Lessons are well prepared, possessing clear objectives, which are communicated to pupils. Pupils are challenged to think and to develop enquiry skills. This was seen in very effective lessons in Years 5 and 7 on the traditional image of Jesus Christ and the Hindu story of Sita and Rama. Artefacts are used well to widen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teaching in the good and very good lessons is enthusiastic and motivating, engaging pupils, which, when combined with pupils' positive attitudes, results in them making good or very good progress in their learning. Teachers make a good contribution to the development of literacy through the range of writing opportunities provided for pupils, including notes, extended writing, poetry and letters. There are however some weaknesses in a generally good teaching profile. These include shortage of strategies to fully meet the individual needs of all pupils. Some teachers display some subject insecurity and there is a certain degree of inconsistency in marking, particularly in the quality and quantity of helpful comments to assist pupils improve the standard of their work.
146. In a relatively short time the new head of subject has clearly identified the main areas of weakness and has produced a suitable development plan that is well-focused on pertinent priorities. Assessment levels based on the agreed syllabus are being introduced which should enable progress to be evaluated more rigorously than it currently is. These are not centrally recorded or used to monitor and evaluate learning. Although monitoring of teaching and learning is not easy when so many staff teach the

subject, lesson observations are not carried out regularly enough and more regular observation of teaching could enable good practice to be shared.

147. Satisfactory progress has been made in tackling issues raised in the last report. Work observed in books and in lessons is generally challenging and pupils are expected to think and work independently. But some weaknesses still exist such as the limited amount of written work produced by some classes and the inconsistencies in the quality of marking. The pace in some lessons is still not rigorous enough, particularly for higher attaining pupils. The use of homework to consolidate learning and develop independent learning skills also needs further attention. Religious education makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and awareness.