

INSPECTION REPORT

CODSALL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Codsall, Wolverhampton

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124424

Headteacher: Mr John Armstrong

Reporting inspector: Mr Alan Rawlings
2557

Dates of inspection: 12-15 February 2001

Inspection number: 204981

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 - 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Wolverhampton Road
Codsall

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Chris Hughes

Date of previous inspection: 22 June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2557	Alan Rawlings	Registered inspector	Mathematics (support)	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
19365	Gordon Stockley	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
19056	Graham Leech	Team inspector	English	
28097	Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
20729	James Berry	Team inspector	Science	How well does the school care for its pupils?
13066	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology	
7483	Ray Donne	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
4355	Frank Earle	Team inspector	History Religious education	
13066	Mary Harrison	Team inspector	Art	
20490	Paul Wilson	Team inspector	Music	
12985	Shirley Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education	
Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities

31008	Pauline Rourke	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs Equal opportunities English as an additional language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school is for boys and girls between the ages of 9 and 13 years. It is fully subscribed with 478 pupils on roll, which is above average for a school of this type. 42 pupils have been identified with special educational needs (SEN); this is well below average. Less than 1% of all pupils have a statement of SEN. There are 42 pupils eligible for free school meals which is also below average. 61 pupils are from minority ethnic groups, which is above average for shire counties and there is currently one pupil for whom English is an additional language. As a result of different education systems in the vicinity there is some mobility in the pupil population, principally at the end of Year 6 when about 15% of mostly high attaining pupils leave. Other pupils of generally average attainment join the school in Year 7. Consequently, although the attainment of pupils on entry to the school in Year 5 is above average, it is closer to average from Year 7. This profile of attainment is unchanged from the last inspection.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with some very good features. Standards are above average overall and the vast majority of pupils make good progress. The governors, the headteacher and all key staff work harmoniously and purposefully to secure an effective education for the pupils. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Attainment in national tests at age 11 in English, mathematics and science is well above average and higher than in similar schools, especially in science.
- Teaching is consistently good and often very good in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils enjoy school, learn well, are well behaved and respectful of others.
- The personal development of pupils is very good.
- There is a very good programme of extra curricular activities, especially sport.
- The school lives up to its aims in what it provides for its pupils.

What could be improved

- Procedures for the identification of pupils with special educational needs and the quality of Individual Education Plans that guide the support of these pupils are unsatisfactory.
- The school improvement planning process does not yet attach sufficient weight to the further improvement of teaching, learning and the quality of education.
- The limited amount of time provided in Years 7 and 8 for design and technology, history and geography restricts the breadth of pupils' learning in these subjects.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in June 1998, attainment has improved and is now generally above average across the school. Teaching has also improved and is now consistently good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and attendance levels remain above that of similar schools.

Progress, overall, with the Key Issues identified in the last inspection has been good. More able pupils are now well provided for and assessment procedures are much improved. The school is now better managed with a good lead from the headteacher and senior team. The development planning process has improved but the school's self-evaluation procedures are not yet sufficiently developed.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	B	A	A	B	Well above average A Above average B Average C Below average D Well below average E
Mathematics	A	A	A	B	
Science	A	A	A	A	

Attainment in tests at the end of Key Stage 2 is well above average and also above that of similar schools. Pupils make good progress during Years 5 and 6 in English and mathematics and achieve particularly well in science compared with their attainment when they enter the school. In Years 7 and 8 attainment remains generally above average in these subjects but less strong than at Key Stage 2. However those pupils that remain at the school into Year 7 together with those that join continue to make generally good progress overall.

Pupils' literacy skills are very good; they read and speak well. The quality of the presentation of their written work is often quite impressive. Pupils' number skills are also good although less well developed through the curriculum compared with literacy. Attainment in information and communication technology is also above average.

Attainment in other subjects is at or above average; it is consistently above average in French, music and art and design. In physical education, religious education, history and geography attainment is average. Whilst attainment in design and technology is above average at the end of Key Stage 2 it is average thereafter.

The school exceeded its targets for English and mathematics in 2000 by a wide margin. The targets that have been set for 2002 are overcautious although this does not imply a lack of determination by the staff of the school to do their best for the pupils.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and play a full part in the life of the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. This is a civilised place to learn. Exclusions are used appropriately to maintain these standards of behaviour in the school.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are thoughtful and respectful of each other. They readily accept responsibility and develop their independence well.
Attendance	Very good.

This area is a strength of the school. Pupils are very well behaved, both in and out of lessons. They work hard and are particularly considerate of each other. Consequently the atmosphere they create in lessons is a real asset for effective learning. This is helped further by their regular presence at school as shown by attendance levels that remain well above average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good across the school and generally very good in Years 5 and 6. This is a considerable improvement from the last inspection. All pupils benefit including those that are talented as well as those with special educational needs.

In Years 5 and 6, lessons are planned very well, teachers set high expectations of pupils and learning takes place at a brisk pace with a good mix of teaching methods. Literacy skills are taught well in the specific lessons but also in other subjects. As a result, all pupils maintain a good level of concentration and make good progress. Teaching is particularly strong in English, science, French, art and design and religious education.

Although the quality of teaching in Years 7 and 8 is not quite up to the very good standard in the other years, it remains good; in art it remains very good. Pupils continue to learn well and some of their longer pieces of work or projects show a commitment and attention to detail from both boys and girls. A few weaknesses in the teaching of physical education result in progress that is no better than satisfactory despite pupils' overall enthusiasm for sport.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good provision overall to include French for all pupils in Years 5 and 6. The personal social and health education programme is a strength and the range of extra curricular activities, especially sport is very good. There are weaknesses in the balance of time for subjects at Key Stage 3.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Unsatisfactory. The special needs register is incomplete and support for pupils is ill defined at times although the good teaching partly compensates for this.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Only one pupil needs this support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall and improved since the last inspection. A particular strength is pupils' moral and social development which is very good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall and strengthened by the introduction of Heads of Year and the overview of learning that they provide. The school is now much more organised in the way it assesses and supports the progress of pupils.

The care and support of pupils have improved since the last inspection especially in the procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' attainment and progress. The five point grading system is readily understood by all and some of the best assessment practice is to be found in art, mathematics and science. The system is not yet fully effective across all subjects. At present the system is not linked closely enough to National Curriculum levels and so it is less useful than it might be as a measure of attainment against a known standard.

Information provided for parents is satisfactory overall. There are regular newsletters and termly progress cards. Annual reports on pupils are helpful but often lack judgements about progress against

national expectations. The school is also planning to make more readily available information about what is taught.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides thoughtful and sensitive leadership. Nearly all departments and year teams are led well. These factors combined with the good team ethos across all staff set a secure framework for pupils to learn effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body takes a strong lead in shaping the direction of the school and maintains a good overview of progress.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is now better organised with data to do this work but is still developing a strategy to carry it out effectively.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory and better than at the last inspection with a closer link between financial and school improvement planning.

The school has a hard working staff whose expertise and experience are well matched to the demands of the curriculum. Support staff are suitably qualified and there are good induction arrangements for staff new to the school. An appropriate range of books, materials and equipment supports learning although the number of computers is on the low side. The governing body endeavours to obtain value for money in its spending decisions and the school continues to work towards the four principles of best value but these are not yet embedded in the practice.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high standards of work that the school expects from the pupils. • The good progress that pupils make. • The behaviour of the pupils. • The leadership of the school. • The quality of teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quantity of homework. • More details about the progress of pupils and how they are getting on generally. • The way that the school works with parents.

The views of parents about the school are generally very positive. Those aspects that please parents most are in accord with the findings of the inspection team. Given the range of formal and informal opportunities for pupils to work away from their teachers, inspection evidence does not support the criticism of some parents about the quantity of homework although a few irregularities were discovered. The introduction of progress cards goes further than the school is required to do in respect of reporting on progress. However, annual reports are not specific enough about progress against national standards and parents concerns are justified. The team is satisfied that the school does what it can to link with parents but this is an area that the school currently has under review.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The overall attainment of pupils is well above average by the end of Key Stage 2 at age 11 and above average by the end of Year 8 when they leave the school. The difference in attainment is not significant and due to the fact that a significant number of higher attaining pupils leave for education elsewhere at age 11 to be replaced by pupils with attainment that is at more typical levels for their age. Whatever their attainment, pupils generally achieve well at the school. There are no groups of pupils for whom progress is unsatisfactory. For the vast majority, progress is good; pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress.
2. National test results at age 11 in 2000 were well above average in English, mathematics and science. This is true for both the percentage of pupils who attained either level 4 and above or level 5 and above. These results are above those of similar schools. In the case of science where the results were exceptionally good, they are well above similar schools. When these results are compared with pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1, it is evident that pupils made good progress and very good progress in science. By the end of Year 8, attainment in these subjects is above average linked with good progress overall.
3. The trend in results is upwards and matches the national trend. This is certainly satisfactory given that attainment is already above average. Statutory targets for Key Stage 2 in 2000 were exceeded by a wide margin and it is likely that the similarly modest targets for 2001 will also be exceeded. The school has failed to embrace the notion of challenge in the setting of its targets although this does not imply any lack of determination to do its best for the pupils.
4. Pupils achieve well in English. Standards of reading, writing, speaking and listening are very good. All pupils mostly take pride in the presentation of their work and write legibly, with good attention to correctness of expression. They are articulate and express themselves confidently when questioned, when in debate or when they read aloud. These skills are well developed across all other subjects.
5. Pupils also achieve well in mathematics and standards have improved in recent years. Basic number and mental skills are good; calculators are used appropriately. Pupils are confident across the range of mathematical skills especially in their ability to use and interpret graphs. They apply these skills well in other subjects although the use of mathematics is less well developed through the curriculum compared with literacy. Some Year 8 pupils are not quite as agile with number as the younger pupils who have benefited from the National Numeracy Strategy.
6. Pupils excel in science at Key Stage 2 and attainment remains above expectations in Years 7 and 8. Pupils learn quickly how to design and carry out experiments. They develop a breadth of understanding of the subject that strengthens their scientific skills to the point where some higher attaining pupils seek further challenges.
7. Attainment in other subjects is generally above national expectations, especially in art and design and French across the school. In history and geography attainment matches expectations but is restricted in Years 7 and 8 by limited time for the subjects. This is also true in design and technology where progress is less good in Years 7 and 8 and attainment is in line with expectations after rising above in Years 5 and 6. In religious education attainment matches expectations across the school.

although attainment in physical education is held to expectations because there is insufficient focus in the teaching on the quality of pupils' activities and the setting of targets to move them forward.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress despite weaknesses in procedures for identifying those who need additional support and the nature of support that is needed. Factors such as the good classroom ethos and supportive nature of other pupils combined with the good teaching are all positive influences. The progress of the single pupil with English as an additional language is good.
9. Overall the school has successfully addressed the underachievement of higher attaining pupils identified in the last inspection. There is no evidence that these pupils now achieve any less well than their peers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils have very good attitudes to school and this has a very positive impact on their learning. They are keen to come to school and they enjoy most of their lessons. They work very hard with sustained interest and enthusiasm due largely to the high expectations of teachers who plan interesting lessons with enjoyable learning activities, especially in Years 5 and 6. Pupils also show a very high level of interest and enthusiasm by taking part in the very good range of extra-curricular activities provided during the lunch hour and after school.
11. Behaviour is very good in classrooms and around the school. Pupils know the school rules on behaviour and are polite and kind to each other and to adults. They show great respect for other peoples' feelings, values and beliefs and this is a strength of the school. No examples of unacceptable behaviour were seen during the inspection and pupils do not regard bullying as a significant issue. Any offenders are dealt with effectively by the headteacher. Conversely, there were many examples of very good and excellent behaviour noted, both in lessons and elsewhere. On one such occasion, a line of pupils was making its way between lessons when one pupil accidentally spilled the contents of his pencil case onto the floor. A number of other pupils immediately rushed to help him pick up his pens and pencils. Pupils are expected to behave well and trusted to do so. Pupils repay this trust by playing well together and acting responsibly, for example when using computers at lunchtime. Lunchtime in the dining area is a pleasant social occasion where pupils chat happily together.
12. Although the vast majority of pupils behave very well, a small minority of pupils, mainly in Year 8, do not find it easy to maintain the high standards set by the school. On occasions, therefore, it is necessary for firm action to be taken, and there were eight short-term exclusions during the last academic year.
13. Pupils' personal development is very good. The school's good provision ensures that pupils develop into mature and sensible young people as they progress through the school. Pupils make the most of the opportunities provided for them to accept responsibility and develop their independence. They willingly carry out duties such as taking registers to the office, monitoring admissions to the building before registration time, switching on and setting up the computers at the start of the school day, and carrying out a range of tasks to help individual teachers. Pupils are also prepared to take responsibility for their own learning when given the opportunity to do so. They use reference material in the library, reference software on computers and the resources of the Internet confidently in their search for information in connection with their studies. The programme of residential visits also makes a good

contribution to pupils' personal development, as does the school council where pupils put forward suggestions about ways in which the school might be improved.

14. Attendance rates are very good and well above average for similar schools. Unauthorised absences are well below the national average. Pupils arrive punctually and registers are completed quickly and accurately, enabling a prompt start to be made to the day. In some classes pupils make good use of registration time by reading quietly to themselves.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The teaching has improved since the last inspection when it was judged to be sound and often good. It is now good overall and generally very good in Years 5 and 6. In the lessons seen, virtually all of the teaching was at least satisfactory with four lessons in five good or better. In Years 5 and 6 over two lessons in five were at least very good.
16. A common strength across the teaching is the effectiveness of classroom management. Nearly all pupils are keen to learn and are well behaved. The teachers build on this by establishing good working habits within a classroom ethos where respect, consideration and tolerance are normal expectations. In particular lessons, especially through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, these personal qualities are reinforced through the nature of the work and the debate that the teachers promote.
17. The pupils benefit from a good level of subject knowledge and in the case of French, the opportunity of being exposed to language teaching earlier than in some other schools. Where non-specialists work with pupils in mathematics, good monitoring and training ensure that a minimum quality teaching standard is maintained. The skills of literacy and numeracy are increasingly being taught across the curriculum. In the case of literacy it is now routine practice, especially in Years 5 and 6. Where specific difficulties are discovered, individual literacy support is provided through a skilled learning assistant and a computer aided learning package. However there are weaknesses in procedures for the identification of pupils with special educational needs (SEN). The teachers partly compensate for this in lessons through their own vigilance and interventions, thereby minimising the impact on the progress of these pupils.
18. In the previous inspection, the progress of higher attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8 was judged to be unsatisfactory; this is not now the case. A range of strategies is in place, which taken together ensures these pupils make the progress they should. For example, Year 8 teaching is now better targeted at higher attaining pupils through the grouping of pupils by ability, project work in humanities subjects extends these pupils and in mathematics there are 'master' classes. The school is also far more data-organised to identify these pupils in the first place and thereby provide teachers with the information about prior attainment that they need to help them plan their lessons. The needs of all pupils are generally met well in the classroom.
19. Pupils' learning is good overall with particular strengths in Years 5 and 6 linked to strengths in particular subjects. The teaching of information and communication technology is thorough. This, together with access to computers in most homes promotes good independence in learning and the ability of pupils to research widely. This is illustrated by some of the extended project work produced in humanities subjects in particular. Pupils are also supportive of each other's learning and this is fostered though the teaching as in PSHE lessons where debate is encouraged and how pupils can positively affect their learning is explored.

20. Some of the best teaching is in art and design across the school and in English, science, modern foreign languages and religious education in Years 5 and 6. This is because of the expertise of individual teachers in linking high quality lesson planning with a lively and varied range of teaching methods. A common feature of these lessons is also the motivation and enthusiasm they generate in the pupils coupled with an expectation that they will rise to the challenge of the work. The science lesson when it was almost possible to 'touch' the atmosphere of interest and engagement by the pupils as they explored combustion is just one example.
21. One lesson was seen where the teaching was unsatisfactory but other inspection evidence suggests that this is not the norm. However there are some weaknesses in the teaching in general that need to be addressed. The teachers sometimes talk for too long and this delays the start of written work, which is often crucial, if, as in history and geography, the time available for the subject is limited. In a few mathematics lessons, an overemphasis on oral work also slows the pace of learning. In physical education, some of the teaching does not build in evaluation of performance and the setting of targets for pupils. Consequently, despite the pupils' enjoyment of the subject, they do not get the focused support that would lift their progress above satisfactory.
22. The marking of pupils' work is generally better than in the last inspection. Some of the best, as in science, art and design, English and modern foreign languages, where work is annotated with guiding comments, are models for others, especially for geography where marking is superficial. The use of National Curriculum levels in a more explicit manner and as part of the target setting process for pupils is insufficiently developed although present in some subjects such as science and mathematics.
23. In the questionnaire, some parents were dissatisfied with the quantity of homework that is set. Overall, given the range of formal and informal opportunities for pupils to do work away from their teachers, inspection evidence does not support this criticism. However, this is an aspect that merits review. For example, in geography homework is set regularly, every fortnight, but this is too infrequent.

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

24. The curriculum is now generally better organised following changes to the timetable, provision for high attaining pupils and schemes of work since the last inspection. All subject areas, other than physical education, have now established schemes of work for both key stages, which outline clearly how pupils will learn and make progress. English and mathematics have embraced positively the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. Enrichment opportunities, offered to pupils who are gifted and talented, include master classes in mathematics, additional out-of-class activities and extended projects. Although in-class provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory, teachers are not helped in this as much as they should be. This is because of unsatisfactory arrangements for the identification of pupils with SEN and Individual Education Plans that do not always guide teachers and pupils as they should.
25. Statutory curriculum requirements are met in all subjects. The inclusion of French, which is not required to be taught in Years 5 and 6, enhances the curricular opportunities for these pupils. However, the time allocated for history, geography and design and technology is below average in Years 7 and 8. This has an adverse

effect on the breadth of learning that can be offered to pupils in these subjects and depresses standards in design and technology. This is in contrast to the generous amount of time for English in particular, and also for mathematics. The carefully planned, personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme that also covers sex education, drugs education and citizenship benefits pupils in each age group and is a strength of the school. The school's policy of regrouping pupils into bands of ability in Year 8 is supported by parents and has helped to focus planning for higher attaining pupils who now achieve well.

26. There is no co-ordinated programme or policy across the whole curriculum to use and support pupils' numerical skills. However, there is good provision within a small range of subjects. For example, mathematics and science have adopted a common approach to the teaching of graphical skills.
27. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. These are popular with pupils, often linked with class work and sport and they help to increase pupils' interest in school. Pupils visit museums, other places of cultural and historical significance, outdoor centres and destinations abroad. Particularly distinctive, however, is the involvement of teachers, and the high participation rate by pupils, in the extra-curricular sports programme. Cricket is exceptionally strong. There is also very good provision for computer clubs and for music.
28. The school enjoys strong links with its partner first schools, other middle schools and the high school to which the pupils transfer. These links support continuity in pupils' learning in all subjects as well as ensuring that their pastoral needs are looked after. Liaison in music is very good with pupils taking part in joint productions and performances. Strong links in art enable pupils to participate in a portrait project that continues from Year 8 into Year 9.
29. Visitors to the school include the police, bank representatives and local religious leaders who all help contribute to the breadth of the pupils' experience. However the school recognises the need to extend these community links and to draw on the experience of the wider community, and parents in particular.
30. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The school now meets statutory requirements for collective worship through whole school, year group or class assemblies. Support material in the form of a booklet of readings and prayers is provided for tutors and local clergy contribute to collective worship. Some subjects offer pupils opportunities to explore the spiritual dimension of experience. Good examples were observed in art, religious education and music. Although approaches on the spiritual development of pupils have been shared with all staff, in general the school's intentions in this area are not yet being implemented systematically across the curriculum.
31. Pupils' moral development is very good and clear aims underpin this provision. Emphasis is placed on developing the values of honesty, truthfulness, fairness and integrity. Pupils are encouraged to show respect for each other, are taught to know right from wrong and to stand by their own beliefs and values. Good teaching in a PSHE lesson emphasised this aspect of moral development through discussion of the pressure on people to smoke or experiment with drugs. The PSHE programme also provides opportunities for pupils to consider a range of moral and ethical questions, respect for property and care for the environment. Good examples in other subjects were seen in English, mathematics, physical education, religious education and geography where teachers drew out the moral implications of the issues pupils were studying. Pupils respond well to opportunities to show practical moral concern through support for local and national charities. Pupils in Year 7 have organised

activities in response to the current Blue Peter Appeal. Money is also raised for Comic Relief, the local hospice and through the annual Poppy Appeal.

32. Provision for pupils' social development is very good and the PSHE programme is a significant influence where pupils explore relationships in family life and with peers, and the responsible use of leisure time. These lessons give pupils good opportunities to engage in discussion with the teacher and each other. The school is making good progress in introducing a taught programme of citizenship. There are already occasions when pupils learn about the working of national and local government and visits are made to Wolverhampton Magistrates Court. Pupils also participate in mock trials. There are opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility and initiative through the influential School Council and the school shop. The good order and relationships in many lessons contribute to pupils' social development. Numerous activities in music enable pupils to contribute to the life of the local community and themes studied in geography, religious education and history help pupils to set their own experiences in a wider social context.
33. Opportunities for pupils' cultural development are good. In design and technology pupils use themes from modern artists in their designs for kinetic sculpture. In history, religious education, music and art there are good opportunities for pupils to learn about their cultural heritage. Support for multicultural education has improved since the last inspection. The library now has a wider range of multicultural texts and these are well used in English. Pupils are introduced to aspects of world music and to non-European artistic traditions. The religious education curriculum introduces them to three principal world faiths. A recent innovation is the creation of e-mail pen-friendships with pupils in a school in south-west France. The school has pupils from a variety of cultural backgrounds but there is little evidence that it is using this to explore and celebrate its own cultural richness and diversity.
34. Pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is enhanced by the extra-curricular programme. Clubs such as those for French and Young Engineers contribute to their cultural understanding and an awareness of issues relating to the use of new technology. The extensive out-of-school sports programme provides a good context for their social development. Visits to places of historical interest and to religious communities also extend pupils' classroom experiences.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

35. The school's care for its pupils is good and has improved greatly since the last inspection; weaknesses present then have all been remedied. Systems have been introduced to improve the personal support and academic guidance for individual pupils and they are working effectively. There are now Heads of Year linked to tutor groups, where close attention is given to a pupil's progress and to any problems. First aid arrangements are now satisfactory with a trained person on the premises. The school nurse visits every week and during these times she is happy to see any pupil about personal matters. An up-to-date record is now kept of any accidents and parents are notified by letter. However, accident records are maintained on individual slips with the potential for records to be mislaid or lost. Risk assessments are made satisfactorily for most potentially hazardous activities, such as those found in technology and science, but this process is not being satisfactorily carried out in physical education. The school has appropriate arrangements for child protection; staff are well informed and receive training on this aspect of welfare. Catering arrangements for pupils when on site are very good.
36. The school's system for monitoring and promoting attendance is effective and attendance is very good. There are few problems for the Education Welfare Officer, who works effectively to support the school.
37. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress are generally good but not yet fully developed across all departments. For example, procedures are comprehensive in science and mathematics but not in physical education. There is also good practice from which others could learn, especially in the areas of progress measurement and target setting using the full range of test and other data provided by the school. The best practice is to be found in art, mathematics and science. However this aspect of assessment practice is unsatisfactory in history, geography and physical education. Good use is made of the school's five point grading system and most pupils understand it. However, this is not linked to National Curriculum levels and so is less useful than it might be as a measure of attainment against a known standard.
38. Procedures for the assessment and identification of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are unsatisfactory. Evidence from the inspection suggests that the SEN register is incomplete with some pupils who would benefit from specific help not yet identified. Individual Education Plans for pupils on the SEN Register are at times barely adequate with targets often reiterating the difficulty rather than identifying what pupil and teacher should aim to do. Review meetings for those few pupils with a statement of SEN are carried out in accordance with the Code of Practice and provision for the pupil with English as an additional language is good.
39. Behaviour in the school is very good and there are numerous methods for recognising and promoting good behaviour, such as the merit, commendation and certificate systems. There are also appropriate arrangements for sanctions when they are needed. Pupils are made aware of what is expected of them through the code of conduct and classroom expectations, both of which are displayed. The school is not afraid to exclude pupils whose behaviour falls well below its expectations and threatens to impede the learning of others.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. Parents' views of the school are more positive than at the time of the previous inspection, but there remain some areas in which they would like to see an improvement. Parents are particularly pleased with the high standard of work expected from pupils, the good progress that they make, the pupils' behaviour, the quality of the leadership and the quality of teaching. Some parents would like to see more consistency in homework, better quality information about pupils' progress and an improvement in the way in which the school works with parents.
41. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory, but there are some aspects that could be improved. Regular letters and half-termly newsletters keep parents informed about school life and routines. Parents are aware that important information is always sent out on Fridays and the newsletters are now numbered sequentially so that they would know if they have missed one. The school is beginning to adopt one of the principles of best value in its work by seeking parents' views before reviewing the school development plan. However parents were not consulted prior to the decision to change the teaching arrangements in Year 8.
42. Parents of pupils in Year 5 have the opportunity to meet their child's teachers during the autumn term in order to find out how their child has settled into the school. Progress cards have also been introduced. These give regular, termly feedback on progress prior to the annual written report. Parents are also given written information at the start of the school year with key dates. Whilst many parents are happy with this system, almost one-fifth of those who responded to the questionnaire felt that they are not well enough informed about how their child is getting on. This concern is justified, as apart from at the end of Key Stage 2, there is no information in the report to show parents how their child is performing in relation to typical expectations for their age. Additionally, as very few specific improvement targets are stated on written reports parents are not always sure how best to help their child at home. Currently the school does not let parents have advance information about the work their children will be covering during the term ahead, although there are plans to put this information on the school's web site when this is launched. The school holds few curriculum information events for parents.
43. The Parents' and Friends' Association (PFA) continues to make a significant contribution to the school by organising fund-raising and social events, and this is the main way in which the majority of parents support the school. Money raised by recent PFA events has been used to pay for new library books and to subsidise the cost of pupils' educational visits and travel to sporting events. The school seeks parental help in school from time to time but there is only a limited response, such as from one parent who coaches the school netball team.
44. On the whole parents are very interested in their children's education and they make a good contribution by, for example, monitoring homework and listening to reading. Some parents are very involved with the local town-twinning scheme and strong links exist with a twin town in France. Codsall pupils correspond by e-mail with pupils in the Loire and the school's football team is visiting the twin town this summer. The home-school agreement has had a positive effect, particularly in promoting the school within the community. The school has developed a generally good partnership with parents; this enhances the quality of the pupils' education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. In the previous inspection, this was an aspect of the school where there was a serious weakness. In the intervening three years, governors and the headteacher have worked systematically to address the issues that were identified such that the school is now effective in the way that it is led and managed.
46. The school's aims are reflected accurately in the work of the staff and how pupils develop as young people. This is illustrated, for example, by the many opportunities both through the curriculum and extra curricular activities for pupils "to achieve their potential". This is truer now than in 1998 when the needs of higher attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8 were not being met. The governing body reviews these aims annually and has revised them in the light of review. The governing body is active in its role which it discharges fully through its monitoring, budgetary and forward planning activities. Recent changes to the committee structure have the potential for even more efficiency in their work. In conjunction with senior management the governing body is currently in the process of shaping the future direction of the school to rightly try and develop a stronger community dimension.
47. The governing body endeavours to obtain value for money in its spending decisions. For example, it has engaged a private firm of building surveyors to assist the school in the major maintenance plan currently being carried out, this being a cheaper and better service than that offered by the local education authority. However, the four principles of best value – comparison, challenge, consultation and competition – are not yet fully embedded in the school's procedures. For example, parents were informed and not consulted about significant changes to pupil groupings in Year 8.
48. Since the last inspection, there has been an understandable preoccupation with addressing the many key issues that were identified. A monitoring visit by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) in 1999 helped the school to evaluate progress and to regroup. Parents have been kept properly informed of progress through annual reports from the governing body. Overall, progress has been good. Higher attaining pupils are now well provided for and assessment procedures are much improved. The school is better managed with a good lead from the headteacher and senior team. The development planning process has improved and there is a closer link between this and the budgetary process. However the school's self-evaluation procedures are not well developed. Too much information about what needs to be done is generated by evaluations from external professionals. Current department development plans do not always attach enough weight to school improvement priorities that would raise standards and improve the quality of education compared with those actions that could be more properly described as 'maintenance' tasks. There are plans to refine the school improvement process over the coming cycle to rectify this weakness. This is necessary, as the school development plan in its present form does not provide a clear statement of *current* school priorities.
49. The school is now much more data-organised to help identify the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils although there is more to do. Records are maintained of individual pupils, including those that have the potential to excel, together with target grades from standardised assessments. However the performance of ethnic minority groups is not monitored and insufficient use has been made in the past of national value added tables to, for example, measure the progress of pupils between the end of Key Stage 1 and the end of Key Stage 2. The school target setting process for the performance of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, has been, and continues to be overcautious. However, inspection evidence indicates that this has not prevented the school from trying to achieve the best from its pupils.

50. A strength of the school is the good team ethos across the staff who are hard working and whose expertise and experience are well matched to the requirements of the curriculum. Support staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, with the exception of the technician, who would be more effective with relevant training. There are good induction arrangements for staff new to the school. An appropriate professional development programme is in place although the school is at an early stage of integrating this with performance management processes.
51. The headteacher provides thoughtful and sensitive leadership and has introduced heads of year who are strengthening the way that the school monitors the personal and academic development of pupils. Heads of department generally lead their teams well and this quality extends to those staff who have specific responsibility for subject learning in a particular key stage or those who share responsibilities. At present however, the leadership of special educational needs provision is unsatisfactory due, in part, to time pressures involved with the job; the new leadership of physical education is not yet fully effective.
52. The school makes appropriate use of its resources, including the specific grants that it receives. Satisfactory use is also made of new technology, both for administration and to support teaching and learning. The school's finances were audited in January 2000. A number of recommendations were made and these have all been implemented.
53. The accommodation is satisfactory, although there are many parts of the building where access is only possible by passing through other teaching areas and this causes a minor distraction to staff and pupils. The library is well stocked and is used throughout the day for lessons and research. The school has satisfactory books, materials and equipment although the number of computers is on the low side. A lack of appropriate nets for racket work and an unusable kiln both limit opportunities in sport and three-dimensional work respectively. As at the time of the previous inspection, the interior is clean, bright and free of graffiti. Good quality displays of pupils' work enhance many areas.
54. Standards and teaching quality have improved since the last inspection. The school is now well led and bearing in mind unit costs, which are average for schools of this type, the school now provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to consolidate the good progress made since the last inspection, governors and senior management should:

- (1) revise provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), but in particular so that:
 - all eligible pupils are identified on the SEN register;
 - Individual Education Plans include clear targets for pupils to help all teachers to plan accordingly;
 - leadership of this area improves.

(Paragraphs: 1, 8, 17, 18, 24, 38, 51)

- (2) enhance the school improvement planning process so that:
 - school self-evaluation focuses on standards, teaching, learning and, in particular, securing a greater consistency of good assessment practice;
 - department and year plans are fully synchronised with school priorities.

(Paragraphs: 3, 48, 49)

- (3) review time allocations across subjects in Years 7 and 8 to ensure that the curriculum and all learning builds fully on pupils' achievements at the end of Key Stage 2.

(Paragraphs: 7, 25, 91, 98)

In addition, governors should consider the following action points that need not form part of their action plan but are, nonetheless, weaknesses:

- (4) carry out a risk assessment in physical education;

(Paragraphs: 35, 132)

- (5) ensure that the existing monitoring of pupils' performance includes that of minority ethnic groups.

- (6) (Paragraph: 49)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	103
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	39

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	25	53	20	1	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	478
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	38

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	42

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	35
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	30

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	71	49	120

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	63	64	68
	Girls	43	41	48
	Total	106	105	116
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	88 (81)	88 (81)	97 (87)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	57	56	63
	Girls	42	39	43
	Total	99	95	106
Percentage of pupils At NC level 4 or above	School	84 (81)	79 (80)	88 (81)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	22
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	8
Indian	10
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	417
Any other minority ethnic group	18

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	2	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	7	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	23.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	82

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81.7
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	25.2
Key Stage 3	25.2

Financial information

Financial year	1999 – 2000
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	£
Total income	874,910
Total expenditure	865,838
Expenditure per pupil	1835
Balance brought forward from previous year	28,000
Balance carried forward to next year	37,072

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	478
Number of questionnaires returned	278

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	52	4	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	45	50	4	1	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	60	4	1	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	56	16	3	0
The teaching is good.	43	51	4	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	33	50	12	4	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	42	8	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	40	3	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	27	51	17	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	42	48	3	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	48	5	2	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	46	8	1	8

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

ENGLISH

55. In the national tests at age 11 in 2000, results at level 4 and level 5 were well above the national average and above that for similar schools. Since the last inspection there has been an upward trend in pupil performance, which is better than the national trend. Attainment in English is broadly similar to that in mathematics but not as high as in science. The cohort of pupils in Years 7 and 8 differs from that in Years 5 and 6 because several high-attaining pupils leave at the end of year 6, but nevertheless, attainment by the end of year 8 remains above national expectations.
56. Standards of speaking and listening are very good. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 maintain their concentration throughout the "big book" sessions and respond articulately and with enthusiasm to questions. They show enjoyment in reading out loud and do so with expression. In group work, they exchange ideas freely, debate opinions and draw conclusions. Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment make oral contributions alongside their peers both in the whole class sessions and in group work which is carefully matched to their needs. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 listen actively and make good contributions to class discussion. Their responses are more inhibited than those of younger pupils but are nevertheless considered and often quite extended.
57. Standards of reading are very good. In Years 5 and 6 pupils follow the big books with little need of help from the teacher. They analyse texts confidently to identify features of style and structure. They skim and scan capably to extract information and to pick out significant words and letter groups. Very effective use is made of a good variety of reading to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding. In Year 6, whole-class work on a science fiction story, "The Windmill", was followed by group reading of a range of similar texts selected for their differing reading demands. In Years 7 and 8, pupils also have a good range of reading experience and meet the demands of mature literature. In Year 8, pupils of lower levels of prior attainment responded with interest to an abridged version of Dickens' "Oliver Twist", helped by the experience of watching a filmed version, while higher attaining pupils discussed confidently the poetry of Tennyson. Good attention is paid to the development of wide reading in library lessons and the completion of reading records throughout the school.
58. Standards of writing are very good. In Years 5 and 6 pupils have a good awareness of the potential of language to express feeling and recognise the variety of alternative expressions which can be used. They show a good understanding of the use of punctuation, and of the structure of sentences and paragraphs. Across the school pupils draft work well and write in a variety of styles to suit different purposes. Writing activities arise naturally out of pupils' reading. In Year 7, pupils empathised with Floella Benjamin, the author of their class reader, by composing an account of her first impressions of England. Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment in Year 8 responded sensitively to the situation of the South African boy in their reader, "No Turning Back", by writing a realistic entry for his diary. Most pupils take pride in presentation and write legibly, with good attention to correctness of expression. Pupils of lower levels of prior attainment have some problems with spelling but convey meaning clearly, though at times quite briefly, in complete sentences. Higher attaining pupils write at length, with confidence.
59. Progress is good overall. This is helped by the careful attention paid to grouping arrangements within classes where there is a spread of ability. Higher attaining

pupils have the benefit of “booster” lessons and additional lunchtime sessions. Attention is also paid to differing needs through some provision of alternative tasks and extension work in Year 7. The setting arrangements in Year 8, however, offer better opportunities for pupils to make good progress relative to their prior attainment. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. There is some provision of in-class support, withdrawal for spelling development and the use of a computer integrated learning system, but this provision is limited.

60. Pupils’ attitudes to work are very good. They are very attentive in class, and respond with enthusiasm to opportunities to participate. Relationships with staff are good, and pupils work co-operatively with each other in pairs and groups. They show interest in their work and take pride in its presentation.
61. Teaching is good overall. Teachers have secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. Lessons contain a good variety of activities to stimulate pupils and maintain their interest. Relevant homework tasks are regularly set and pupils’ work is carefully and supportively marked, with good use of helpful comments to enable pupils to make progress. Lessons are well planned throughout. The scheme of work for Key Stage 2 literacy is particularly effective in setting out a pattern of teaching which promotes a swift pace and a full range of tasks appropriate to different levels of attainment. Consequently it is in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is often very good. Lessons in Years 7 and 8 are less tightly structured and the pace is more leisurely but good nonetheless.
62. The curriculum is well planned and good attention is paid to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support written work. Opportunities are taken to incorporate drama, though its use is relatively limited in Years 5 and 6. English contributes to pupils’ moral, social and cultural development through the many opportunities offered for class and group discussion of issues raised in the literature studied, including a commendable range of multicultural texts.
63. The team of experienced and committed teachers is capably managed by the head of department and the Key Stage 2 co-ordinator, who convene regular meetings for planning and to share good practice. A programme of monitoring pupils’ progress and the delivery of the curriculum has begun. This needs to be extended, with greater use made of assessment data which is an aspect that is underdeveloped.
64. Progress has been good since the last inspection. Attainment has risen, and higher attaining pupils are now achieving appropriately high levels. The overall quality of teaching has improved. Good use is made of ICT and drama now has a place in the subject curriculum.

LITERACY

65. The school has shown proper concern for the development of pupils’ standards of literacy across the curriculum. A literacy working party has been set up and an audit of the literacy demands made by subjects has been conducted. There has also been in-service training for all staff to raise awareness of approaches to use in the classroom. This thorough approach has contributed to pupils’ very good literacy skills. Many strategies are already in use to reinforce these skills across the curriculum, although they are not yet formally identified in all schemes of work.
66. Pupils’ speaking and listening skills are well-developed across subjects. They mostly listen attentively and are articulate and often enthusiastic in question and answer sessions and group work. In religious education pupils speak confidently about beliefs. In science, pupils make very capable reports back to the class on their experiments. In art pupils are encouraged to use the language of the subject to

critically analyse their work. Word lists specific to subjects are on display in classrooms throughout the school, to help pupils develop and apply their vocabulary. In mathematics pupils enter new words in their own vocabulary books.

67. Good attention is paid across subjects to the development of reading and writing. Reading aloud is encouraged and pupils read with confidence. Wide reading is fostered by timetabled library periods. Subject classrooms, for example science, are supplied with a good range of reference books which are well used by pupils. A good range of writing opportunities is offered across the curriculum. In history, geography and religious education, for example, pupils complete extended projects which are informed by good research. Pupils' word processing skills are well developed and they use them to produce very polished finished pieces for their work folders and wall displays.
68. Good practice across the curriculum is reinforcing the progress made in the Year 5 and 6 literacy lessons. The school is about to embark upon a programme of meetings with subject departments to develop their literacy strategies.

MATHEMATICS

69. On entry to the school, attainment in mathematics is above average. Results in the national tests for 11 year-olds have been consistently well above the national average over recent years, as they were in 2000. When compared with similar schools, attainment at the end of Year 6 is above that of similar schools. For 2000, test results in mathematics were similar to those in English but less good than in science. There is little difference in boys' and girls' results over several years. Likewise, there are no particular differences in the results achieved by differing groups of pupils, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds. The overall pattern of these mathematics results shows an underlying upward improvement. At the end of Year 8, standards attained in mathematics are also above expectations. The apparent lower attainment in Year 8 results from significant mobility amongst the pupil cohort at the end of Year 6.
70. From the evidence of the national tests and work seen during the inspection, overall attainment is well above the nationally expected level by the end of Year 6. The achievement observed in lessons varies appropriately across ability sets. All groups of pupils have very good number skills and use mental methods very well in the subject and across the curriculum. Their oral skills are good and they accurately explain their calculations. Pupils show good recall of earlier learning. The highest achieving groups display good manipulative algebraic skills and manage equations well. Work on angles is clearly understood. They are less confident in explaining their work on probability and in applying their knowledge of place value to more complex decimal-fraction conversions. Pupils with special educational needs, and those in middle groups also achieve well. They readily order fractions and decimals, and have good data handling skills. Some are less secure in using standard methods for long multiplication and division and a few find questions involving time and the 24 hour clock difficult.
71. By the end of Year 8, standards in mathematics remain above expectations overall. Again number skills are good although not as strong as in Years 5 and 6. (Not all pupils currently in Year 8 have benefited from the National Numeracy Strategy.) Higher attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8 show particular strengths in using and interpreting graphs. Other groups, including those with special educational needs, are confident in handling data and using the different methods for finding an average. Pupils are able to isolate diagrams in work on shape and space, identify the

underlying patterns and apply learned facts. However a common weakness for some pupils across many groups is the incorrect use of mathematical syntax in written work. Similarly, some pupils have insufficient practice in using and applying their mathematics and in considering mathematical proof. The majority of pupils use their calculators very sensibly and are able to check whether or not their answers are reasonable.

72. A joint project between mathematics and science has strengthened pupils' graphical skills. In geography they handle scales confidently and also measure accurately in design and technology. In information and communication technology they use their mathematics to calculate averages on spreadsheets. Although pupils' use of mathematics in other subjects is generally good it is not as well developed in a planned way across the curriculum compared with literacy.
73. Teaching is good overall. Although there are variations in the quality of teaching within the department across the school, all teaching is at least satisfactory. Teachers are technically correct in their work and the quality of their explanations is good because of the care they take to be precise in what they say. The common strong aspects of the teaching include the many opportunities offered to pupils to communicate their mathematics orally through thoughtful questioning, the very good relationships between teachers and pupils, and the good knowledge teachers have of pupils' understanding of their work. In a Year 8 lesson on angles, pupils' mathematical language was strengthened by both the planned oral work, and by the good use of mathematical vocabulary books. The best lessons include a good balance between oral work and other activities, including written work, as in a Year 6 lesson on ordering decimals and fractions. In this lesson, the teaching ensured pupils' learning was well consolidated. However, in some lessons, there is an over emphasis on oral activities. This causes the pace of the lesson to slow, pupils miss out on practical and written activities to support their learning and their concentration is reduced. However overall, pupils enjoy their mathematics, work hard and learn well.
74. Since the last inspection, the mathematics department has made good progress. The department is well led and the effectiveness of this leadership has strengthened teamwork with a clear focus on improving teaching and pupils' attainment. Staff development activities have strengthened the confidence of all teachers of mathematics, but especially those who are non-specialists. Teaching has improved and all lessons have clear learning outcomes. There is still some inconsistency in the quality of teaching observed, but all members of the mathematics team have embraced the National Numeracy Strategy and use many of its elements well. The department recognises the need to increase pupils' experience of activities which use and apply mathematics. Likewise it is aware of the need to link its work more explicitly to National Curriculum levels, involving pupils in the assessment of their work.

SCIENCE

75. Attainment in national tests in science at age 11 is well above the national average and also well above that of similar schools. Observation of lessons and examination of pupils' work show that attainment remains above expectations into Years 7 and 8. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls. The results show a rising trend, which matches that seen nationally. The school's performance in science is stronger than in English and mathematics.

76. Achievement in Years 5 and 6 is good. Pupils enter the school with a wide range in the depth of knowledge they have acquired in the subject. Progress is rapid in experimental science, where pupils acquire many useful skills for designing, carrying out and recording experiments. For example, Year 6 pupils through considering the factors that affect the burning of candles can predict what will happen and then design and carry out experiments to test whether they are right. As topics are covered in increasingly more detail, pupils produce a good volume of written work, which results in increasing skill levels and a greater range of knowledge.
77. Achievement in Years 7 and 8 is also good. Whilst many pupils enter Year 7 with above average standards a considerable number join from other schools, often with more modest attainment. Teaching and written work show a steady expansion of topic breadth and strengthening of scientific skill levels, thereby promoting a fuller understanding. Year 7 pupils measure soil pH by experiment and link this to which plants thrive in what soil. In Year 8 pupils use data loggers to track accurately the course of an experiment. Many show a sound understanding of what graphs of reaction times mean and how to draw information from them. They design experiments after considering independent and dependent variables.
78. In all years pupils with special educational needs are well known to their teachers who then grade their approach or occasionally produce work tailored to their specific needs. These pupils make satisfactory progress, which often becomes good when they are individually supported. The higher attaining pupils in Year 8 are presented with more demanding work through the setting system. However, although in all years these pupils make good progress, the full potential of the best is not always exploited. Achievement in the use of information and communication technology within science is good; pupils readily use spreadsheets, data loggers and simulations. Pupils also make good progress with their literacy skills, which are well emphasised in the science teaching.
79. Most pupils clearly enjoy and take a pride in their science, especially the practical work. They generally behave well and work hard, so long as there is plenty for them to do. They usually work well in groups with most members contributing to the common aim. Apparatus is handled with respect and increasing precision. They are keen to answer questions and, especially the younger ones, pose many of their own.
80. Teaching is good overall and it is very good in Years 5 and 6. Lessons are well planned with crisp objectives that are made plain to the pupils. Classes are well managed and disciplined with teachers using a good variety of methods and a good balance between theory and practical work. Most lessons start with a check on what was learned last time and many conclude with emphasising what has just been learned. Many lessons encourage pupils to develop ideas themselves and to design their own experiments; this strengthens their independence. Pupils take these lessons forward themselves when there is the skilful injection by the teacher of the knowledge and ideas that are needed for them to be successful. This example of excellent teaching is well illustrated by the work Year 6 did on their candle experiments. Where lessons are less dynamic pupils are given good factual knowledge but then go on to practical work that is carried out more to a recipe than a pupil designed experiment. Work is marked conscientiously and teachers' comments suggest how pupils could improve their work next time. Homework is usually set and provides a useful extension to pupils' learning.
81. The department is well managed. The head of department works hard to develop the courses and to keep up to date. There are good and clear systems of assessment, although these have yet to be firmly linked to National Curriculum levels. However, Year 7 and 8 pupils are provided with good information about what they need to do

and understand to achieve the higher levels. They assess their own performance and set targets. Whilst the classroom curriculum is good, there are no subject related visits to enhance it. Specialist accommodation is adequate but the storage and preparation area is very cramped. There is part time technician support for science. This is a good support for the work of the teachers although the technician's knowledge of laboratory procedures is limited. The school has good links with the local High School, which enables cohesive planning of the whole Key Stage 3 course.

82. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Attainment has risen in both key stages to above those found nationally, progress of the older pupils has improved and lessons no longer lack pace. Schemes of work relate more securely to the National Curriculum and assessment procedures are now good.

ART AND DESIGN

83. By the age of 11 attainment in art and design is above that expected for pupils of this age. Pupils use their sketchbooks appropriately to make exploratory studies, including good explorations of colour mixing, studies for portrait drawings and designs for a piece of their own work in the style of Archimboldo. Higher attaining pupils are developing sensitivity when working with pencil to depict tone. Lower attaining pupils have some difficulty in getting the range of tones but they persevere and experiment confidently. Pupils progressively increase their skills in observational drawing and in the use of pencil and crayon. They extend their skills in literacy through discussion of their previous work in detail. They have designed and printed their ideas for wallpaper after studying the work of William Morris. They discuss the work constructively and extend significantly their skills in critical analysis.
84. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 also attain above expectations. They design well a piece of work, which creates an optical effect on the viewer and have used the Internet to research the work of artists, including Bridget Riley and Victor Vasarely. This work requires pupils to work with mathematical precision and a great deal of concentration; it is a sound link to numeracy in art. Lower attaining pupils take longer to grasp such concepts but are confident in exploring their ideas in their sketchbooks. Higher attaining pupils extend their work to produce computer generated, animated images. Pupils are proud of their achievements and discuss their work articulately. They use their sketchbooks very well. For example they explore the use of different materials, techniques and colour, as when drawing beautiful representations of feathers, using pastel. Pupils are constantly developing and deepening their understanding through detailed explorations of their own ideas and critical analysis of their own and other artists' work, including Miro and Kandinsky.
85. Pupils have average skills in art when they arrive in school but they make very good progress in art across both key stages. This is illustrated in the Year 5 lesson where pupils learned quickly how to use pastel when making observational drawings of apples. Higher attaining pupils produce detailed drawings and were particularly pleased with their representations of reflected light, when they used white pastel. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make similar progress to the other pupils. This is because teachers are very sensitive to their needs and give additional adult help, or plan different work when necessary.
86. Pupils' learning, attitudes and behaviour are all very good. They are interested in their work, can concentrate well and have very good relationships with each other and the teachers. They both respect and use equipment and materials well.

87. The quality of teaching is very good across the school and this accounts for the progress that all pupils make. Teachers are enthusiastic and use humour and praise effectively to motivate and interest the pupils. The subject knowledge of both specialist and non-specialist teachers is very good; they intervene to help pupils at exactly the right time and at a level which pupils understand. They use good resources, such as fresh fruit and skulls, for observational drawing. They take time to discuss and evaluate work with pupils, making them think and analyse their own and other pupils' work constructively. Comments in sketchbooks are supportive and also enable pupils to understand how they can improve. Lessons are challenging to all pupils and take place at a brisk pace. Teachers have very good classroom management skills. Art makes a good contribution to literacy and a sound contribution to numeracy. Literacy across the curriculum has helped to focus ideas for critical studies, writing and discussion.
88. Leadership in art is good. The head of department has already identified the need to develop textiles within the department and to improve further the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Work is also in progress to refine assessment procedures in the light of changes that were introduced nationally in September 2000. Art programmes include appropriate learning in both two and three dimensions. Standards of pupils' work and teaching in the department are monitored effectively.
89. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Year 6 pupils are now taught in half classes, there has been some improvement in the provision for teaching ICT, a bid has been accepted for the development of more storage space and there is better liaison with the High School. There are now better links with other departments, including English, history and design and technology. The head of department has increased her knowledge and understanding of ICT and day-to-day planning has improved. All of these factors have had a positive impact on standards.
90. The accommodation situation in the art area has not changed since the last inspection. The kiln is still not in use. People walk through the open plan area, which can be distracting to pupils, as is the noise of machinery being used in the adjoining design and technology area. Display supports the curriculum and enhances the school environment. There is a particularly good display of masks in the art area.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

91. Attainment in design and technology is above national expectations by the end of Key Stage 2 and this is an improvement on the situation found in the last inspection. The time allocated for the subject in Years 7 and 8 is roughly half the time pupils have in most other schools at this age. This restricts the breadth of experience of pupils and the depth that can be achieved in their understanding. Consequently attainment is lower in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6 and largely matches expectations.
92. Year 6 pupils attain good standards. They respond well to the level of challenge teachers present them. Practical skills are good. They work with precision and attention to finish in projects that feature a good range of materials and processes. For example they learn about electronic circuits designed to test fuses and successfully make their own. They gain a good understanding of the properties of materials through practical investigations such as the fruit tasting sessions they conduct in a healthy eating project. This project makes an important contribution to the science curriculum as well as developing pupils' skills of observation and analysis. Pupils have a good understanding of the uses of templates and patterns to achieve consistency in their work. Through this they have a good understanding for this age of industrial processes such as mass production.
93. Year 8 pupils are attaining standards that are average for their age; progress is sound. They make satisfactory use of information sources such as the Internet to research their projects, for example when they use a nutrition database to investigate the properties of ingredients. They have a satisfactory understanding of components and mechanisms and work competently with a range of tools and equipment. They develop ways to test their designs before committing to working with expensive materials by making, for example, prototype hats. Their work is given considerable strength in a link with art and design to develop kinetic sculptures influenced by the work of Kandinsky and Miro. Designs are creative and look good while fulfilling their purpose well as desktop artefacts.
94. Teaching is good across the school and this is an improvement on the situation found during the last inspection. Teachers plan well to introduce pupils to a good range of materials, equipment and processes in their time at the school. Pupils' learning is good. Teachers are well prepared for lessons so no time is lost and lessons proceed at a pace. The level of challenge presented to pupils particularly in Year 6 leads to good learning. Teachers have developed good relationships with pupils and lessons are orderly, safe and purposeful. Behaviour is very good in the workshops. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. This is shown in the quality of their planning and in the support and guidance they give pupils as they monitor activities around the workshop promoting individual progress.
95. The leadership of the department is good. There is a clear sense of vision which includes the importance of making links with other areas such as art and science to reinforce and broaden the teaching and learning in both. In this respect the department is efficient in making best use of the limited time available for the subject. The department is now planning to develop design booklets that will support and guide pupils through their projects. These booklets will provide a record of the progress they make during the design stage of their work as well as offering opportunities for them to evaluate and assess their work. This will help to improve existing practice and make the design process more easily understood by pupils and parents.

GEOGRAPHY

96. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 matches national expectations. By this time pupils have acquired a range of geographical skills and a developing geographical vocabulary. Their basic map reading skills are good. They have a good sense of scale, as shown in maps of their route to school drawn by pupils in Year 5. They interpret well simple Ordnance Survey map symbols and have a very good understanding of direction, using compass points with accuracy. Individual project work on different countries by pupils in Year 5 shows a very good capacity to investigate a topic, select geographically relevant information and present it logically and interestingly. Pupils enhance their projects through effective use of maps, photographs and drawings. In their study of the Lake District, pupils in Year 6 drew sensible conclusions from their interpretation of data presented in the form of graphs and tables and identified significant geographical features on photographs. They utilise this information and other written information satisfactorily to understand why the area attracts so many visitors and the changes which that imposes on the lives of people who live there and the local environment. Pupils have not, however, developed a sense of the uniqueness of places and their understanding of the geography of the Lake District is superficial. Although pupils have a growing understanding of human geographical processes, their understanding of physical processes is poorly developed. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is hindered by poor literacy skills. This often results in inaccurate answers and some incomplete work.
97. Attainment by the end of Year 8 also matches expectations. Pupils possess and use a good geographical vocabulary. They can generalise and draw appropriate conclusions from a variety of sources of information. They have a good understanding of such concepts as development, tourism and urbanisation and appreciate how conflicting expectations amongst peoples can lead to aggression and exploitation. Many pupils write well and with empathy of the conditions under which people live in developing countries and ask perceptive questions about details of their quality of life in comparison with their own. In Year 8 pupils have completed project work on the Dorset Coast and the exploitation of the Tropical Rain Forest. This project work by gifted and talented pupils is well above national expectations due to the depth of their understanding and the extent of their independent research work.
98. Pupils write with conviction and with real concern, of the outcomes of the destruction of the Amazon rain forest. They have very good skills of investigation and make very good use of ICT in their research and in the presentation of their work. Overall however, pupils' work remains close to national expectations rather than above because they do not study a sufficiently wide range of places and environments in the limited curriculum time available to them in Years 7 and 8. Additionally, and in common with Years 5 and 6, their understanding of the physical structure of the earth and its geological features is rather superficial. Weaker literacy skills continue to hinder the progress of pupils with SEN.
99. Teaching is satisfactory overall across the school. Some instances of good and very good teaching are marked by the effective use of well-produced resources and with tasks appropriately modified to meet the learning needs of all pupils. In these lessons tasks are broken down into a series of activities which engage pupils, secure their concentration and take advantage of their high levels of self-motivation so that their learning is good. This applies particularly to the preparation of pupils for the high quality project work which most of them produce. There is sometimes highly effective collaboration with the English department as when Year 8 pupils drafted letters to the Ministry of Agriculture in Brazil at the same time as they were studying

formal letter writing in their English lessons. Although class access to computers is limited, pupils are encouraged to use ICT at home or during the school's computer clubs and many pupils use it effectively. Where the teaching is less effective it lacks challenge and allows pupils too much leeway to work at their own, for many, slow, pace so that their learning is reduced in both quality and quantity. Occasionally time is wasted in over lengthy teacher exposition at the beginning of a lesson. Some tasks devised for pupils with SEN focus too much on factual knowledge rather than understanding geographical processes and their outcomes. Other tasks devised for a wider ability range miss opportunities for pupils to engage in thoughtful written answers, relying too much on the completion of lists and very brief answers. A widespread weakness is that much of the marking of pupils' work is in the form of acknowledgement rather than correcting errors and indicating how pupils can improve.

100. The department is satisfactorily led and managed. The scheme of work meets most National Curriculum requirements, but it does not clarify where investigative skills, ICT and fieldwork are used. The limited amount of time for geography in Years 7 and 8 coupled with the policy of only setting homework once a fortnight, means that both standards and the breadth of study are adversely affected. By addressing these matters and improving the quality of marking, standards could be improved further.

HISTORY

101. Attainment of the vast majority of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 matches national expectations. Pupils have a secure grasp of chronology and describe some of the main features of the period studied such as the living conditions of different types of people in Victorian Britain. They also describe some of the main differences between the past and the present, relating these to their own experience. The majority use historical sources securely as material on which to base simple observations but they are weak at recognising that different kinds of sources may give different interpretations of past events. Higher attaining pupils often attain above-average standards when they work on small-scale written projects. They have good factual knowledge, which they use to support basic historical judgements, and produce structured written work. All pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN) are making satisfactory progress, but higher attaining pupils make less good progress in lessons than in the personal project work they do outside of lessons.
102. Attainment in Year 8 is also at national expectations. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in extending their knowledge of history. They make simple observations about changes and similarities across historical periods, for example between Roman and Anglo-Saxon Britain. They derive information from a limited range of written and visual sources, but are not always secure in recalling previous learning. Evidence from written work shows that, when given opportunities, pupils use sources to present accurate descriptions of past events and more able pupils show an awareness that the past can be presented from a variety of view points. A good example of this was seen in the work of a Year 8 pupil who wrote very convincingly as an opponent of Charles I although opportunities for this kind of activity in lessons are limited. Most pupils, including those with SEN, make satisfactory progress in gaining knowledge of the periods studied. However many pupils are not making sufficient progress in developing the skills they need to select, evaluate and interpret historical sources independently.
103. Learning is satisfactory overall. Pupils behave well in class, are willing to settle to the tasks set and most work with concentration and effort. Very confident reading and perceptive comments by pupils were positive features of a Year 7 lesson on the

Norman Conquest but pupils had no opportunity to use this confidence in speaking to exchange views and opinions. In some lessons work is set to match the needs of pupils of different ability, but this is not a consistent feature of provision across the department. Adapted worksheets help pupils with SEN to make satisfactory progress, especially in using specialist terms and using written sources. The quality and extent of the written work of most pupils shows that they are interested in the subject and that of higher attaining pupils is thoughtful, fluent and well-presented. Opportunities are given for pupils to work with computers and many show good levels of competence in word-processing.

104. The quality of teaching across the school is satisfactory. Teachers have clear aims for lessons and these are carefully explained to pupils. Textbooks and other resources are well used to help pupils acquire a sound knowledge of the past and there is an evident desire on the part of teachers to help pupils understand and enjoy history. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen but there are weaknesses. The introduction by the teacher is sometimes over-long and as a consequence pupils become restive and the lesson loses pace. Pupils are very willing to participate in activities and to answer questions but teachers do not always fully exploit this enthusiasm to develop pupils' learning. Good opportunities to do this is a Year 8 lesson on the Civil War were missed because the teacher did not draw pupils into discussion or require more extended answers from individuals. Pupils are not always challenged to think historically about events, evidence, causes or consequences. A Year 5 lesson on Tudor portraits clearly caught the imagination of pupils and they were very animated in their group-work. Over-direction by the teacher, however, curtailed discussion and reduced the opportunity for pupils to come to independent judgements on the evidence contained in the sources.
105. A range of visits to sites of historical interest enhances pupils' classroom experience. However the total time allocated to the subject is below the national average. This restricts opportunities for individual research in lessons and limits the amount of time available for extension work. Pupils' work is assessed regularly but insufficient use is made of National Curriculum levels as a means of setting clearer individual learning targets. Day-to-day management of the department is satisfactory, but longer term planning is weak, especially with regard to assessment and curriculum development.
106. There has been an improvement since the last inspection in the teaching in Years 7 and 8. Higher attaining pupils are more able to develop their historical knowledge and skills through project work. Further improvement is needed in the quality of the assessment process, in developing pupils' historical thinking through greater use of discussion and debate and in ensuring that lesson planning is more consistent in catering for the needs of pupils of all abilities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

107. The majority of pupils in the school are achieving at levels that are above expectations for pupils of their age. This good standard is attained in the lessons dedicated to information and communication technology (ICT) skills as well as in lessons across a range of subjects that have developed the use of ICT to support their work. This is an improvement on the standards observed during the last inspection.
108. By Year 6 pupils are attaining high standards in organising and presenting their ideas in animations that are designed for younger children. They use ICT very well in this and other ways to communicate information. For example they are in touch with French pen friends using electronic (e)-mail. Pupils of this age are introduced to challenging tasks when they develop their understanding of control technology. Earlier in their time in the school they controlled the movements of a robotic vehicle about the floor using simple commands entered via a control panel. Now in Year 6 they make good progress in control technology when they learn to programme the operation of pelican crossing lights using flow chart software that demands a good level of precision when they input commands. In Year 6 science pupils develop a good understanding of ways in which sensors can be used to monitor events by recording levels of light in the classroom and then presenting them in the form of a graph for analysis. Pupils also achieve good standards in Year 5 when they learn to use a spreadsheet to model financial information. They use the Internet well for research in a good number of subjects including French and design and technology. In French they research the areas in which their pen friends live. In design and technology they conduct good research into their food projects using nutritional databases.
109. Year 7 and 8 pupils continue to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in the use of ICT and attain standards that are above expectations. Their work with spreadsheets for example is good. They learn to use the presentational functions such as graphs and charts and analyse and communicate the results of their investigations well. Pupils in the past have succeeded well in a national competition in which they researched and created a newspaper. Their research and communication skills are good.
110. The school encourages all pupils to use the Internet for research by making it available where possible in class time and in the very popular computer clubs that are run at various times during lunch and after school. Pupils and parents sign an agreement that sets out clearly how pupils should utilise the service. There are strict rules on the content for example of their e-mails. By this means and by the use of a service that filters out undesirable information, the school does what it can to protect pupils from possible harmful effects of the medium while at the same time offering them a good range of opportunities to develop research skills.
111. The teaching is good throughout the school. A number of teachers have developed good knowledge of the ways in which ICT can help advance learning in their subjects. They are very well supported by the information technology co-ordinator who has very good knowledge of the medium particularly the ways in which it can be used across the curriculum to promote learning. Lessons are well planned following National Curriculum guidelines and this leads to a coherent learning programme for pupils. Teachers plan well so that pupils spend their time in front of the computer screen profitably. There is a good level of challenge that pupils rise to and as a consequence lessons are purposeful and stimulating. The best teaching features lively question and answer sessions that continually remind pupils that they must think about what they are saying and that they must take responsibility for their own

learning. Lessons are highly practical and teachers work around the classes well to offer good advice and support. They make sure that each pupil is able to make the progress of which he or she is capable. They know their pupils well and keep good records of their attainment.

112. The leadership of ICT is very good. The head of department works hard to ensure that teachers make best use of the medium in their subject. Despite this some teachers are not able to use the computer rooms because of limited resources and the fact that the specialist rooms are in use for ICT lessons when some teachers from other subject areas would like access. The school's pupil to computer ratio is below average in comparison with national figures, particularly for pupils in Years 7 and 8. Though assessment procedures are good the school needs to develop a system of recording achievement that includes examples of best work from all the opportunities pupils have to use ICT both in school and out.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

113. Attainment is good for the majority of pupils by the end of Year 6. For a sizeable minority it is very good. Attainment at the end of Year 8 is also above expectations for most pupils with some variation above and below this level for a substantial minority. Pupils thus have a good basic knowledge on which they can build successfully after leaving the school. This marks an improvement on the satisfactory standards attained at the time of the previous inspection. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls.
114. Pupils start to learn French from their arrival at school which means that their modern foreign language experience is ahead of other pupils of this age elsewhere who may not yet have started to learn a language. Parents appreciate this. Progress throughout Years 5 and 6 is rapid. Pupils soon get accustomed to the sounds and basic sentence patterns of the language. They do not give one or two word responses because they learn how to manipulate questions in French to form answers. At the same time they are prompted and encouraged to frame their own questions and to quiz their teacher or their partners in paired work. New vocabulary is, where possible, introduced in context which aids both short and longer-term memory. Written work is generally accurate and reflects the good standards achieved in oral work. Growing familiarity with French sentence patterns aids grammatical accuracy.
115. This productive approach to language learning continues into Years 7 and 8 at a higher level of sophistication. As a result, pupils demonstrate good levels of comprehension and higher attaining pupils are quick to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words. Most pupils, particularly in the earlier stages, speak with confidence within familiar and rehearsed situations but this facility is not retained throughout by all. This is partly caused by the changes in the pupil cohort at the end of Year 6 when some pupils who leave school are replaced by others who have not always benefited from the same flying start. Written work is a strength. The good practice established from early on is consolidated as pupils progress through the school. Towards the end of Year 8 pupils produce some extended pieces of writing, for example, on daily routines, descriptions of families and the local environment. Low attaining pupils manage the writing too but make a number of errors and are less ambitious in expression. Overall, however pupils with special education needs (SEN) make satisfactory progress especially when the classwork is based on listening and speaking rather than writing and when targeted classroom assistance is available.

116. Pupils enjoy their lessons and respond enthusiastically when flashes of humour and imaginative, competitive learning games make serious learning fun; their participation in such lessons is high. They respond well to paired work and do not waste time by lapsing into English in these interludes. Pupils also enjoy hearing about French customs and culture such as the two birthdays - their own and their saint's day.
117. Teaching is good overall and very good in Years 5 and 6. The pace of lessons is often demanding and challenging but, where necessary, the pace is adjusted to the capabilities of the group so that good progress can be sustained. The specialist teachers introduce learning materials logically and systematically so that all pupils consolidate previously learnt knowledge before moving on. Teachers make very good use of paired work for the practice and reinforcement of vocabulary and structures. Written work is marked carefully in line with school policy. Oral feedback in lessons is good; helpful comments and pointers to improvement are regularly added to written work. This is an improvement from the previous inspection. Assessment and reporting procedures are also more rigorous now.
118. Teachers are aware of the needs of their pupils and have improved their resource base and range of teaching strategies to offer better provision for all. However more subject specific rather than general individual learning plans would help to focus support more clearly for pupils with SEN. Also some of the less popular unit topics with pupils would be more interesting with more use of appropriate video clips and/or computer software.
119. Temporary leadership arrangements while the head of department is on maternity leave are good. Point by point responses to the previous inspection report, the detailed scheme of work and good forward plans are all clear evidence of a well-run department. This is mirrored by the common approach and shared teaching methodology that is producing effective learning in the classroom. There are a few opportunities for the teachers to see each other at work and this limits the potential for further improvement of the good practice already evident.
120. The department has made progress in combining language learning with computer assisted language learning, for instance through the recently established e-mail link with a school in south west France. However, problems remain regarding timetabled access to school computers and the range of appropriate software is limited. The reintroduction of visits to France is a very positive step toward enhancing pupils' opportunities to practise their skills in a real situation. Resource levels are now good but having to teach French in non-specialist classrooms means that aspects of the country and the vocabulary of the subject are not accessible visually for the pupils.

MUSIC

121. Attainment in music on entry to the school is slightly above average but rises to above national expectations at age 11. By the end of Year 6 pupils use a variety of instruments with competence for both performance and composition. They build well on their vocal and instrumental skills. In Year 6 they sing and play melodic and rhythmic parts in group improvisations, often applying secure skills to the tasks. Vocal work is a little above average, and includes some two-part singing. In Years 7 and 8 attainment is above expectations in composing and performing and slightly above expectations in appraising. Pupils are conversant with a range of musical techniques. In Year 7 they use keyboards well in composition projects. In Year 8 pupils work on folk-song variations using voices and instruments (for example guitar and violin) to support the compositions. Individual vocal and instrumental skills are often good. Overall, standards in music compare well with general attainment in the school and are higher than at the time of the last inspection.

122. Pupils make good progress between Years 5 and 8 compared with their attainment on entry to the school. Accomplishment and progress for pupils with special educational needs is at least satisfactory, sometimes good. Teaching materials are especially designed to meet the needs of all pupils. This successfully promotes pupils' learning and progress because tasks are modified to take account of the differing stages of pupils' musical development. At both key stages pupils are encouraged to develop and use a musical vocabulary with which to describe and appraise the music that they hear.
123. Pupils' attitudes in music lessons are good. In all observed lessons pupils' response was attentive, with appropriate levels of interest, co-operation and behaviour. They work well individually and with enthusiasm in instrumental groups. In Years 5 and 6, they co-operate well in group composition and enjoy performing tasks. They listen attentively to instructions and to each other's compositions. Independent learning skills develop in Years 7 and 8 where pupils often display good concentration and focus in lessons. They settle and respond well to instruction. This has a positive effect on learning.
124. Teaching is good, with significant elements of good practice. The teachers' keyboard and vocal expertise and general musical skills are used to good advantage in the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. The teaching embodies thorough planning, good pace, a range of interesting work, and clear aims. Pupils have opportunities to explore their own culture and world cultures, for example in work on the Gamelan. This helps pupils to broaden their understanding of other cultures. Instrumental teaching is carefully integrated into the work of the department. Above average numbers of pupils take instrumental lessons in school. The visiting teachers make a valuable contribution to the curriculum and help to promote the good record of attainment in instrumental grade examinations. Homework is set from time to time but is irregular and does not fully support pupils' learning.
125. The department is well organised, with sound administrative processes in place. The long-term monitoring, assessing and recording of pupils' work are sound, and the department is working to improve the use of assessment in relation to curriculum planning and setting targets. The range of work meets the requirements of the National Curriculum except in relation to the recommendations for the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils have few opportunities to use computers appropriately in music lessons and therefore do not develop the necessary musical ICT skills. Accommodation is rather cramped, but the music room provides a stimulating environment.
126. There is an appropriate range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enthusiastically commit time and effort to the choir, orchestra and other groups. The performing and composing work of pupils is appropriately celebrated in the school and in the community, within a regular calendar of musical events. Such opportunities for pupils to perform have a strong impact on the prevailing ethos of the school and do much to strengthen links with parents and the community. Progress in relation to the points raised in the last inspection has been good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

127. By the time they reach age 11, most pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN) attain at a level in games that is appropriate for their age; some perform at a higher level. In football, for example, Year 6 boys showed a sound understanding of tactics in a five-a-side game and could pass accurately, moving to support the player with the ball. Attainment in swimming is above national

expectations. All Year 5 pupils achieve well and make good progress in stroke development and water safety skills. Attainment in dance is satisfactory. Boys and girls showed creativity and versatility in movement as they performed from the stimulus of a poem, drawing on their secure literacy skills as they identified appropriate action words and evaluated their performances with a partner.

128. In Years 7 and 8 progress is sound in team games such as football and netball. Many pupils of all levels of attainment effectively apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of rules and tactics in the full games. Low attaining pupils make good progress in volleyball as they develop the skills of the game in the context of tactical play. Planning and performance skills develop well in most lessons but pupils' skills in evaluating their own and others' work are limited. The use of specific criteria against which they can assess their performance is rare. Most pupils know how to warm up effectively before lessons but their knowledge and understanding of what they are doing and the effects of exercise on the body are superficial.
129. The quality of teaching and the learning that it promotes are satisfactory. The management of pupils is of a high order; pupils are well-motivated, dressed appropriately for games and put good physical and creative effort into their work. Teachers have a sound knowledge of the subject and the way it should be taught. A range of strategies is used effectively to give pupils responsibility for their own learning. Pupils respond well to this but do not always make as much progress as might be expected. This is because there is, at times, insufficient focus on the quality of their work and the setting of specific targets to move it forward. Tasks are not always matched well to all pupils' needs. Higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged although this is compensated for, in part, by stronger progress through their participation in the extra-curricular programme. Pupils with SEN are well integrated into lessons and make similar progress to their peers.
130. On those occasions when the teaching is most effective the level of challenge is higher, both physically and intellectually. This sometimes results in very good learning aided by the good motivation of the pupils. For example in a Year 8 volleyball lesson, the physical demands were well balanced by searching questioning which extended the depth and breadth of pupils' knowledge and understanding of strategic play. A Year 5 dance lesson was also notable because pupils had to evaluate each other's work as central to identifying what makes performance effective and how it could be improved.
131. Standards are high in extra-curricular sport with over three-quarters of the school population involved regularly in an extensive programme of clubs, inter-class and inter-school competitions. The school is particularly strong at cricket and has been the Under 11 Staffordshire County Schools' Champions and finalists in the Midlands Region Schools' Kwik (mixed) Cricket Championships. The Under 11 boys' team also went on to become national finalists in the Daily Telegraph Hardball Championships. In football the school has also won at county level. Eight pupils currently represent Staffordshire in hockey, netball, cricket and tennis. Last summer, one pupil represented England in the English Schools' Cricket Association Under 13 squad.
132. The department comprises a committed and experienced team of staff who work well together, ably supported by a large number of their colleagues, who give generously of their time to the extra-curricular programme. Progress has been unsatisfactory since the last inspection and there remain elements still to address, specifically in the teaching linked to assessment. There has also been limited progress in responding to curriculum changes introduced nationally last September. Access to the curriculum in Years 7 and 8 is not equal for both genders because girls study four

areas of activity and boys study only three. Health and safety risk assessments in physical activities have not been carried out in relation to, for example, the use of specific apparatus. Although the subject development plan covers many important areas to address, the improvement of teaching and learning to raise standards is not one of them. The department has recently undergone a period of transition following the appointment of a new head of department who is now in the process of rectifying what needs to be done.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

133. Attainment of the majority of pupils by the end of Key Stage 2 matches expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. Pupils describe satisfactorily some basic beliefs and practices in the religions studied and understand how beliefs may be expressed in practice. This was evident in a Year 6 lesson on baptism when individual pupils showed good understanding of some of the symbolic elements such as water, candles and the image of the dove. They are less confident in making comparisons between religions and occasionally the recall of previous learning is poor, leading them to attribute features incorrectly to the religions they have studied.
134. Attainment in Year 8 meets expectations for the majority and exceeds this for higher attaining pupils. They describe some of the key features of the religions studied and some of the main differences between them. Pupils are particularly strong in offering personal responses to the themes studied. This was apparent in the Year 8 lesson on "rules for a perfect society" where pupils understood how beliefs affect behaviour and drew examples from their own experience. The written work of higher attaining pupils is above average, and on occasion well above. They research a topic independently and present their own conclusions with supporting reasons. All pupils, including those with special educational needs (SEN) make satisfactory progress in their knowledge of religion and good progress in the ability to formulate their own responses to the material studied. The quality of their written work is generally good.
135. Pupils have a positive attitude to the subject, willingly participate in activities and are prepared to work with concentration on the tasks set, especially in Years 5 and 6. The very good behaviour of pupils in a Year 6 lesson on baptism was a major factor in its effectiveness. The responses by pupils in a Year 8 lesson on "The Earth Today" covered concern for others, honesty and acceptance of other people's religious beliefs in a mature way. The school has pupils from a variety of faith backgrounds. Teachers encourage individual pupils to share their beliefs and experiences with others in their class such as in a Year 6 lesson on "Rites of Passage" when Christian and Muslim pupils brought into class artefacts from their respective religions to show to other pupils. In a Year 8 lesson on Islam, the contribution of Muslim pupils who described their own religious practices helped other pupils to understand how religious commitment is expressed in everyday life.
136. The teaching is very good in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. All lessons have clear aims and teachers explain to pupils the level at which they should be working. The supportive and encouraging manner in which teachers conduct lessons creates an atmosphere of trust and allows pupils to speak of their own experiences, often in quite personal terms. One lesson prompted a pupil to speak movingly of bereavement and several others spoke confidently about objects associated with their christening, which they had brought into class. On occasion teachers use imaginative approaches such as artwork and role-play to help pupils explore the meaning of religious stories. The stories of Jonah in Year 7 and of Moses in Year 5 were approached in this way. In most lessons good whole-class management keeps pupils' attention on the lesson and expectations of behaviour and participation are high. In a minority of lessons group work is not as well

managed resulting in pupils becoming noisy and easily distracted, slowing down the pace of learning and the work-rate of the group.

137. Good opportunities are given for pupils to work on special projects; these allow some independent and individualised work. Pupils clearly respond well to these opportunities, many of them using a variety of resources including computers and the Internet. Lessons are carefully planned to reflect the attainment levels set out in the Locally Agreed Syllabus, but there is no specific planning for different tasks matched to the differing ability levels of pupils in the class. Pupils' work is regularly marked, often with helpful comments but there is little written guidance on how they might improve the standard of their work. Recently published guidance from the local education authority on assessment is being introduced into the school, but use of this for target setting by pupils has not yet been developed.
138. Visits to religious communities enhance the classroom experience of pupils. The curriculum is providing a very effective contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. Management of the department, which is shared by two qualified and experienced teachers, is good. Both teachers share clear aims for the development of the subject and work well together. There has been improvement since the last inspection in the teaching, the range of activities in lessons and in opportunities for higher attaining pupils to extend and develop their knowledge through project work. Further work is needed in: setting tasks in mixed-ability groups which match the ability of higher attaining pupils; using assessment clearly to indicate to pupils how they can improve; managing small-group activities. This is a good department making a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and the ethos of the school.