

INSPECTION REPORT

SLATED ROW SCHOOL

Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 110587

Head teacher: Mr J O'Donnell

Reporting inspector: Mr M W Whitaker
1424

Dates of inspection: 31st October – 3rd November

Inspection number: 223646

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Special |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 4 - 19 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Old Wolverton Road Wolverton Milton Keynes |
| Postcode: | MK12 5NJ |
| Telephone number: | 01908 316017 |
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| Appropriate authority: | The governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs S Clark |
| Date of previous inspection: | October 1997 |

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|------------------------|----------------------|--|--|
| Mr M H Whitaker (1424) | Registered inspector | Information and communication technology | What sort of school is it |
| | | | Teaching |
| | | | Leadership and management |
| | | | Schools results and achievements |
| | | | What should the school do to improve further |
| Mrs K Lee (11368) | Lay inspector | | Pupils, attitudes, values and personal development |
| | | | How well does the school care for its pupils |
| | | | Partnership with parents |
| Mrs P Clark (10760) | Team inspector | Mathematics | Staffing |
| | | Religious education | |
| | | The foundation stage | |
| Mr P Hall (7615) | Team inspector | Science | Pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development |
| | | Physical education | Accommodation |
| | | English as an additional language | |
| Mr M Wright (1242) | Team inspector | English | How good are curricular opportunities |
| | | Design and technology | Resources |
| | | Art and design | |
| | | Special educational needs | |
| Mrs D Pearson (22466) | Team inspector | Geography | |
| | | History | |
| | | Music | |
| | | Equal opportunities | |
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Slated Row School is a school for pupils' aged between 4 and 19 years with moderate learning difficulties. A number of pupils have additional complex needs such as hearing impairment and speech and communication disorders. There are currently 141 pupils on the roll of the school and boys outnumber girls by almost two to one. The vast majority of pupils are of white British origin reflecting the population of the area. All pupils have statements of special educational needs and 42 pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils enter the school at different stages of their education but all are attaining below national levels in all subjects because of their special educational needs.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is now an effective school. The vast majority of pupils achieve good standards, building on their learning and making good progress as they move through the school. This is largely the result of the good teaching and the very good leadership and management provided by the head teacher who is very well supported by an active governing body. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Promotes moral and social development very well.
- It has developed effective links with parents who rightly regard the school highly.
- Teaching is predominantly good because teachers know pupils well and in many areas have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach.
- It develops very positive attitudes to learning in pupils, ensures that behaviour is very good and as a result pupils learn effectively. Relationships are excellent.
- Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are excellent.
- The head teacher and governors have been very effective in improving the school through their very good leadership and management.

What could be improved

- Individual targets for pupils should be more specific and assessment should be more effectively used in planning.
- Achievement and progress in information and communication technology should be improved.
- The role of curriculum manager should be developed to include more detailed development plans and monitoring the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
- The governing body should develop its monitoring of standards in a more systematic way.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was inspected in February 1996 when it was judged that special measures were needed. A subsequent report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in October 1997 found that good improvements had been made and that special measures were no longer necessary. The school has continued to build on this improvement and further good progress has been made in most areas. The use of assessment in planning is in need of more development although progress has been made in this area. The assessment of pupils when they enter the school is now effective in providing a starting point for teaching. The leadership and management have improved considerably and have had a positive effect on learning. The governing body now plays an effective role in the management of the school. The

accommodation has been improved considerably and is now good despite some remaining weaknesses for physical education. The school has continued to improve, meeting its targets well. Good quality plans indicate that it is very well placed to improve further.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

| Progress in: | by age 5 | by age 11 | by age 16 | by age 19 | Key very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| speaking and listening | B | B | B | B | |
| Reading | B | B | B | B | |
| Writing | B | B | B | B | |
| Mathematics | B | B | B | B | |
| personal, social and health education | B | B | B | B | |
| other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs* | B | B | B | B | |

* *IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.*

Overall pupils achieve well and make good progress in most subjects throughout the school. Progress in science is good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and achieve well in all areas of learning. Achievement and progress in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory throughout the school. It is not effectively used to support learning across the subjects of the curriculum. The school has a clear objective to raise standards and is setting itself increasingly challenging targets. As a result standards have improved.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Attitudes to the school | Very good. Pupils enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Very good both in and around school and when on visits or using facilities within the local community. |
| Personal development and relationships | The personal development of pupils is good. Relationships are excellent. |
| Attendance | Satisfactory. Post 16 students attend well. |

Pupils are very enthusiastic about school, they enjoy coming and work hard in lessons. They behave very well in lessons and isolated incidents of misbehaviour are well-managed with little detrimental

effect on the work of others. Pupils increasingly develop independence and are given more responsibility as they move through the school. Although the level of attendance is about the same as that in similar schools the attendance of Post 16 students is very good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | Aged up to 5 | aged 5-11 | aged 11-16 | aged over 16 |
|----------------------|--------------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Good | Good | 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.

The quality of teaching is predominantly good. During the inspection 98 per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better 52 per cent was good, 26 per cent very good and three per cent excellent. Two per cent was unsatisfactory. The quality of teaching in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education is good. Basic skills in numeracy and literacy are taught well. In science it is predominantly good in Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers generally have very good knowledge of the subjects they teach. Teachers with specialist knowledge are increasingly used with secondary aged pupils and this has a very positive effect on pupils' learning. Teaching in physical education is very good. Music teaching is very good in Key Stage 2. Design Technology is very well taught in Key Stages 3 and 4. Classroom organisation and the management of pupils' behaviour are also strengths in teaching which help to develop very good attitudes to learning amongst the pupils. Although planning is satisfactory throughout the school assessment is generally not used as effectively as it could be to guide teaching because the learning objectives for pupils are not precise enough. This sometimes means that even where teaching is satisfactory or good individual higher or lower attaining pupils are not always extended. However, pupils of different levels of attainment learn effectively, achieve well and make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Satisfactory. The school teaches a suitable curriculum matched to the needs of the pupils and students. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | There is only one pupil for whom English is an additional language and provision is satisfactory. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Provision for moral and social development of pupils is very good. It is good for cultural development and satisfactory for spiritual development. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | The school provides good care for its pupils. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are excellent, procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good. Assessment is not used sufficiently well to plan the curriculum. |

The school works effectively with parents. Parents regard the school highly. Although statutory requirements are met in all subjects the curriculum for religious education lacks balance.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| Leadership and management by the head teacher and other key staff | The head teacher, supported by the senior management team, has provided very good leadership for the school. Clear systems have been established so that everyone is clear about their role. |
| How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities | The governing body has been very effective in moving the school forward. It fulfils its duties well. Approaches to checking standards achieved have been established. They are not yet consistently used throughout the school. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school has analysed its performance well; as a result targets identified have been set and met. The role of curriculum managers has developed well although there is no systematic approach undertaken by all curriculum managers in monitoring the quality of teaching. |
| The strategic use of resources | Care is taken to ensure that the use of resources, including staffing, is carefully planned. |

Staffing, accommodation and resources are good. However, the number of teachers and support assistants is below the average for similar schools and this affects the school's ability to always support the learning of the highest and lowest attaining pupils. Teachers however have good subject expertise and support staff are effectively used to support learning. Accommodation is good and has been improved considerably. Some weaknesses remain in physical education accommodation and showering facilities.

The school applies the principles of best value in its financial dealings. The leadership and management of the school, including the role of the governing body, has been very effective in improving the school and taking it out of special measures.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and make good progress. • The very good behaviour and the way the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible. • The good teaching and management of the school. • The school is approachable and works closely with parents for the benefit of their children. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are less happy with the homework set. |

The inspection team agrees whole-heartedly with all the positive views of parents. The team finds that homework is satisfactory, about the same as in other similar schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1 Pupils in all key stages, including the Foundation Stage achieve well and make good progress in most subjects and areas of the curriculum building on their earlier learning as they move through the school. The exception to this is in information and communication technology where achievement and progress is unsatisfactory. The standards now achieved in the school represent a significant improvement on those achieved at the time of the first inspection, building on those identified in the subsequent report from Her Majesty's Inspectorate. This is the result of consistently good teaching and very good leadership and management.

2 Children in the Foundation Stage of education achieve well in all areas of learning and particularly well in speaking, listening and personal and social development. They enter the school with low levels of attainment and the school's emphasis on co-operation, listening and communication through speech or Maketon signing enables them to make rapid progress. By the age of five they have improved their ability to share and take turns and most take an active part in singing and learning rhymes. They have developed their ability to hold pencils correctly and make controlled marks on paper as the beginnings of writing.

3 In English all pupils achieve well and make good progress in all areas building on their work as they move through the school. Good progress is made in the development of basic literacy skills. Many pupils have significant delays in their language development when they enter the school. They make good progress in their speaking and listening skills responding well to good teaching and excellent support from the speech therapists. In Key Stage 1 they enjoy stories using pictures to re-tell the story and by the end of Key Stage 2 they increasingly respond to questions with some speaking confidently in public. Progress continues throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 and by the end of Post 16 provision they speak confidently in public for example when making presentations about their favourite sports or taking part in school drama activities.

4 Good progress is also made in reading often from a very low starting point. Pupils quickly develop an understanding of the purpose of books. The effective use of highly structured teaching in literacy and phonics lessons has a major impact on pupils' learning. In Key Stages 1 and 2 the library is used effectively to develop a love of stories and books. A good foundation is set on which pupils build in Key Stages 3 and 4. As a result of this structured approach pupils who enter the school at this stage, having previously had reading difficulties, begin to make good progress and achieve well because of this positive approach to reading. Even though some students continue to have modest reading skills in the sixth form, this represents good achievement and often very good progress when compared with their earlier attainment. Writing skills also develop well. Most pupils who enter the school early in their career are unable to form letters and some can barely make marks on paper. Again the highly structured approach is successful in raising pupils' achievements and by the end of Key Stage 2 many can form letters well, use computers to write sentences and are beginning to have an awareness of basic punctuation. Good progress continues in Key Stages 3 and 4 and by the end of these phases most have developed handwriting styles and are writing for a range of purposes such as expressive poems for Halloween and invitations to parties. A few higher attaining pupils are beginning to achieve standards close to nationally expected levels, using their skills to write extended pieces following research in humanities lessons, for example. The confidence developed extends into the sixth form enabling students to write extended pieces of text for example when explaining their knowledge of the Olympic Games. As a result they succeed in nationally accredited courses.

5 Pupils' achievements in mathematics are good throughout the school. The introduction of the numeracy strategy and accredited courses has had a positive effect on raising standards because expectations have been raised. Young children enter the school with poorly developed mathematical knowledge. Most are aware of different colours but they cannot consistently name them. By the time they enter Key Stage 1 most can count up to 10, recognise colours and two and three dimensional shapes and some can name them correctly. By the end of Key Stage 1 they are developing confidence and are beginning to enjoy mental arithmetic. They can count independently, recognise different days of the week and a few can sequence them. This represents good achievement and progress, and continues throughout Key Stage 2. Here a few pupils are confident with numbers up to 100 and have developed an understanding of number lines and grids. Their confidence in the use of money increases and they can select from a variety of coins to make amounts to one or two pounds. Lower attaining pupils have developed their confidence in the use of numbers to 10 and coins up to 10p and can recognise and sort objects by colour and shape.

6 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have developed real confidence and enjoyment in working in mathematics. In shape, many can now describe the properties of two and three dimensional shapes in terms of sides, corners and angles and they have developed their ability to record information using graphs, bar charts and pictograms. Again this represents good achievement, building on previous learning. Achievement and progress continues throughout Key Stage 4 where pupils' work on units within externally accredited courses. They develop their understanding of processes in calculations, using calculators to help them to solve problems and to check their own answers to problems. They increasingly design and carry out experiments, collecting and recording data, interpreting results and drawing conclusions for example when looking at the variety of holidays taken by staff and pupils. Progress and achievement in the sixth form is evident through successes in accredited courses and through the application of their knowledge to projects such as renting flats, decorating them and budgeting for living.

7 Achievement in science is satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2 and good in Key Stages 3 and 4 with particularly good progress evident in Key Stage 4 successes in accredited courses because of the higher expectation involved. In Key Stage 1 pupils develop their ability to explore and observe the world around them. They explore the use of light and learn that candles and torches are more effective in the dark. More enquiring skills develop in Key Stage 2 where pupils look at reflections, electricity as a source of power and the need for batteries in torches. This represents sound progress as pupils build on their learning. Investigative skills develop further in Key Stage 3 for example when exploring forces through pushing and pulling. By the end of Key Stage 4 the rate of achievement and progress results in success in nationally accredited courses and their investigative skills have improved considerably when looking at decay to predict the order in which different vegetables are likely to decompose.

8 Pupils have made insufficient progress and achieved unsatisfactory levels in information and communication technology throughout the school over time. Progress in lessons observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory and sometimes good but the school has not developed the subject well enough to enable pupils to build on their learning. It is currently not used effectively to support learning in the subjects of the curriculum. The situation is now being improved through the appointment of specialist staff and improved levels of resourcing.

9 In religious education achievement and progress throughout the school are satisfactory. In all other subjects of the National Curriculum progress and achievement are good in all key stages.

10 In relation to personal, social and health education and pupils' individual targets, achievement and progress are also good as pupils build on their earlier learning through the good teaching and careful planning. Targets in individual education plans are sometimes too broad for the school to easily identify and record the achievements and progress of some pupils because the steps are insufficiently precise. This means that the small but significant progress made by pupils is not always well recorded or used to guide teaching. The achievements and progress made do not vary between boys and girls. The provision for English as an additional language ensures that achievement and progress is similar to other pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11 The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of pupils are strengths of the school and play a major part in the good progress made in school. This has developed further since the last inspection.

12 Pupils of all ages have very good attitudes to their learning and to their life in school. They are a credit to the school. Parents say that their children like to come to school. Pupils look happy as they arrive in the morning. Their punctuality depends largely on the transport arrangements but pupils hurry into school and are eager to begin their lessons. Most pupils attend school regularly, most absences being due to illness, and attendance is about the same as in similar schools. Attendance rates for the oldest students are very good. A small number of pupils are poor attenders. The school monitors these pupils closely and has seen an improvement in their attendance. A good number of pupils of all ages gain certificates for full attendance.

13 In lessons, pupils concentrate well and work hard due to the constant encouragement from class teachers and support assistants. Pupils respond very well to the interesting lessons, the lively pace of teaching and the very good support given in class. For instance, Year 10 pupils make good progress in speaking in French because the teacher's amusing and lively presentation make the subject enjoyable. Class teachers manage their pupils very well so, on the rare occasion when some restlessness occurs, the majority are not distracted from their tasks.

14 Behaviour is very good. Parents are rightly pleased with the high standards of behaviour, expected and achieved by the school. Pupils behave very well in school and out in the community, for instance on the mini-bus to the swimming pool and also on a visit to the church. No exclusions have been necessary in the years prior to inspection. Pupils are very polite and friendly to adults. Pupils at lunch rushed to help one inspector when she spilt her glass of water. The excellent relationships which are apparent were summed up by a pupil new to the school. When asked what was the best thing about the school he replied "There is no bullying or fighting here. At my last school I was always being beaten up".

15 The personal development of pupils is very good. Pupils can work independently and in small groups, helping each other in lessons. In a numeracy lesson for Year 4 and 5 pupils, 4 pupils played a game of snakes and ladders, taking turns equally and all collaborating on adding up the numbers on the 2 dice. They gain confidence in lessons due to the excellent relationships with class teachers. For instance, a pupil who was not confident in word processing was won over by the pleasant encouraging manner of the class teacher and was soon asking to borrow the exercise book to practise at home. Pupils of all ages respond very well to the wide range of responsibilities thoughtfully provided by the school. Representatives on the School Council take their duties seriously, bringing to the meeting agendas which have been discussed in class. The Post 16 students talked very clearly on their sense of right and responsibility in school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

16 The quality of teaching throughout the school is predominantly good. This represents an improvement on the first inspection and continues to build on the finding of Her Majesty's Inspectorate. During the week of the inspection 105 lessons or parts of lessons were observed. Teaching was satisfactory or better in over 98 per cent of lessons, very good or better in 29 per cent, and good in 52 per cent. It was unsatisfactory in less than 2 per cent of lessons.

17 A major strength of the teaching is the very good knowledge teachers have of the subjects they teach and of the needs of the pupils. They use this knowledge very effectively to enable pupils to achieve well and make good progress. In the Foundation Stage, for example, teachers have a very good understanding of the curriculum which they use well to plan tasks to extend pupils' thinking. In English throughout the school teachers have a very good grasp of the aspects they are teaching and this has a marked impact on the development of pupils' linguistic skills, vocabulary and understanding. Basic skills are very effectively taught using a range of strategies to develop pupils reading and writing. The introduction of the structured approach to the literacy and numeracy strategies has further developed teachers' skills and understanding. The developing use of subject specialists has also enhanced this aspect of teaching. In secondary science, for example the teacher used her knowledge very effectively to provide an excellent lesson on the respiratory system using a wide range of resources and techniques to capture the imagination of pupils and ensure very effective learning takes place. In physical education specialist knowledge also enables pupils to learn effectively and make very good progress, for example in trampolining where teachers with specialist qualifications provide very good demonstrations of the skills being taught.

18 The use of resources and support staff is another real strength in the teaching. Resources and facilities are very effectively used in physical education for example, where poor in school accommodation means that community resources and facilities at other schools are used. The use of these facilities, such as the sports centre for trampolining considerably enhances pupils learning and the quality of teaching. Also, in the science lesson referred to earlier very creative use was made of models of human organs where the very visual and hands-on approach was very powerful in ensuring learning. The deployment of support staff is very effective in the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 where they are able to work with individuals or very small groups to enhance learning. Teachers ensure that support is well targeted. Relationships between staff and with pupils are a real strength.

19 Teachers' planning and the use of assessment to inform teaching are satisfactory. Planning ensures that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum and activities are broadly matched to the assessed needs of pupils throughout the school. However, individual education plan targets although related to the needs of pupils are often too broad to enable teachers to judge the often small gains made by pupils and use this to plan the next steps. This means that in some lessons some individual pupils do not make as much progress as they might. For example in mathematics, occasionally, higher attaining pupils are given tasks which do not challenge them sufficiently and this can result in minor misbehaviour.

20 However, the management of pupils and organisation of lessons are good features of the teaching. Throughout the school teachers try to make learning interesting. In art and design, for example teachers generally manage pupils very well ensuring that tasks stimulate and motivate pupils. Care does need to be taken, however, as occasionally inappropriate seating arrangements or lack of attention to individual pupils can result in unacceptable behaviour, such as flicking paint. Therefore learning is reduced and teaching is less than satisfactory. This, however, rarely occurs because of the attention staff pay to detail in their management of pupils.

21 Parents felt that homework was not used effectively to support learning. During the inspection the use of homework was broadly the same as that seen in other similar schools, for example reading or researching topics. It is not used extensively and could be more effective in supporting learning, for example through a clear and consistently used policy for all subjects and key stages.

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

22 The quality and range of opportunities for learning provided for all of the pupils are satisfactory. This has improved since the last inspection and has been enhanced by the introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies. The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant and fully meets statutory requirements. There is some imbalance within the planning and teaching of religious education. All curriculum subjects well supported by curriculum policies have been ratified by the governing body. All National Curriculum subjects are taught. There is a good personal, health and social education programme which pays due attention to both sex education and drugs misuse. The well-developed leavers programme includes well-structured elements of careers education. The provision for careers, work experience and vocational studies have a positive impact on the learning and social independence of the pupils in Key Stage 4 and into the sixth form and prepare them well for the next stage of their life. Curriculum planning is firmly rooted within the National Curriculum programmes of study whilst takes account of the ability, gender and age of the pupils. The well planned topic approach used in Key Stages 1 and 2 is sufficiently well monitored, to ensure that that all of the planned elements are successfully covered.

23 All pupils enjoy a wide range of additional experiences to support the basic curriculum. These all enhance their learning and extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. The pupils enjoy visits to Museums and Art Galleries. They participate in a wide range of educational visits both within the United Kingdom and abroad and all pupils have the opportunity to share planned residential experiences with their peers. The staff of the school also make excellent use of a range of visitors, musicians, artists in residence and the local community in order to extend their class based learning. These activities motivate the pupils and stimulate interest. In their curriculum planning teachers make good use of these opportunities and establish cross-curricular links between subjects. In planning good attention is paid to the inclusion of numeracy and literacy skills in all curriculum subjects. These elements are particularly well developed in the planning for science, technology and the humanities.

24 Individual education plans are in place but they are not used consistently to inform teachers planning or to highlight the precise learning needs or targets of the pupils. As a result targets are often too broad to enable teachers to use them to inform day to day planning.

25 The school staff have introduced strategies in order to ensure the continuous and progressive development of numeracy and literacy skills. The numeracy and literacy strategies have been fully and effectively implemented and are already having a significant impact on the achievement levels of the pupils. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The curriculum planning which underpins the development of key skills work for sixth form pupils is effective and has a marked impact on the achievement levels of all of the students. This is well demonstrated by the success levels achieved by the students following a range of externally moderated courses.

26 The range of extra curricular activities is limited by the schools unavoidable transport arrangements. This, however, is well compensated for by the staff's commitment to extend the

curriculum experiences of all pupils, as described above. Sixth form students enjoy the opportunities provided to extend their own skills, by offering to support the provision of lunch time clubs supporting the teachers effectively. This is very effective in promoting their personal development. In addition the developing partnership between parents and school has helped to ensure the success of the paired reading strategy and the good use of home school reading record books. Where homework is used well as in reading the impact on the progress made by the pupils is very evident and the standards of achievement are raised. However, homework is not yet consistently used to support all subjects.

27 The effective curriculum policies, good curriculum planning and consistent support provided by the governors help to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities and access to the full range of opportunities provided by the school. This includes pupils with additional special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language.

28 The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. It is central to the very strong ethos now shared by the school community. The school has not needed to exclude any pupils in recent times, and the very good behaviour is maintained through consistent modelling of what is expected by staff and older students, and by a focus on praise and achievement. The perhaps misnamed 'red card' system rewards special effort or achievement by some individuals, but mostly by groups or teams. The highest scoring team over the year enjoy a sponsored trip. The peer pressure to succeed is supportive rather than critical. Discussions with senior pupils show that they expect to have special responsibilities to help and support younger pupils in their studies or in the playground. They accept the position these responsibilities have with the rights and privileges their growing maturity brings them.

29 The school is a very effective and caring social community. Pupils arrive enthusiastically in the morning, are welcomed by staff and welcoming to each other and to visitors. Social opportunities within the school, including the early evening youth club, extend naturally into the local community as part of an experience rich curriculum. Pupils have four or five opportunities for residential experience in this country and abroad as part of school. This provision is seen as central to pupil's social development, and funds and sponsorship are actively and successfully sought to ensure the full burden does not fall on parents alone and those who might otherwise not be able to participate. By the end of statutory schooling, and in the Post 16 provision, pupils will have experienced many opportunities to visit social, commercial and work related settings, and to develop their own social skills accordingly. Within the school, lunchtimes, playtimes, discos and the sixth form rooms are relaxed social settings, accompanied, rather than supervised, by adults.

30 Provision for pupil's cultural development is good. Pupils have wide opportunities to explore the leisure and cultural opportunities available in their community. Pupils are linked to top quality sporting clubs and provision and see drama, music and dance. Residential experiences offer pupils insights into the culture of several European countries. A planned programme of visitors enriches the provision in school. An assembly led by a visitor from a national children's charity, built upon the interest and concern of pupils and their developing fundraising skills, and showed how their money is being spent to support refugee children from a war zone in Africa, but successfully showed black workers as central to the work, alongside children as victims. Celebrations and festivals of world religions are recognised in displays and some lessons but a modern interpretation of ethnic diversity and contribution has yet to be systematically thought through.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

31 This is a caring school where all pupils are valued. Parents are right in their comments on the “warm, caring environment where pupils are treated as individuals”. Constant praise and encouragement from staff help pupils to work hard and to feel a sense of achievement in lessons. The many opportunities for pupils to take responsibilities from an early age boost their self-esteem and independence; from the teacher’s “daily helper” in the youngest class to being elected Prefects in the Sixth form. Parents are impressed at how the school helps their children to become mature and responsible.

32 The school has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating bullying. These are very successful, resulting in the very good behaviour seen throughout the school. Staff have high expectations of behaviour. The reward systems, ABC (Achievement, Behaviour, Commitment) cards for older pupils and star charts and stickers for the younger ones, are used consistently to promote good attitudes and behaviour and are appreciated by pupils and parents. The School Council has played a large part in producing the clear anti-bullying code which is displayed in every classroom. There are excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. Certificates are awarded for full attendance and the head teacher works in close partnership with the education welfare officer, both making home visits if necessary, to encourage pupils’ regular attendance. There are good procedures for child protection with all files now securely confidential. Through the good personal, social and health education programme pupils are taught healthy and safe living. Procedures for health and safety work well; for example, the caretaker is conscientious in recording and evaluating fire evacuation drills.

33 The school supports pupils with additional and more complex needs well by using a wide range of external services, for instance the speech therapy service. This extra support helps these pupils to make good progress.

34 The procedures for assessing pupils’ progress are sound and have improved from the ineffective procedures reported in the school’s previous OFSTED inspection. The school has good procedures to measure pupils’ attainment on entry. It uses pre-school reports and parents’ views well to show the level of pupils’ skills. The class teacher uses this information appropriately to set targets for new pupils and these provide a sound basis for teaching.

35 Pupils’ progress in the subjects of the National Curriculum and in their personal and social skills is measured systematically on the whole but varies in quality and usefulness. In mathematics, for example, assessment is good and shows clearly the skills pupils have mastered and where they need to go next. In English, whilst teachers indicate pupils’ progress accurately against National Curriculum levels, there is too little information in these records to show where pupils’ strengths lie and where they need extra help. In other subjects, assessment is sound overall but good in science for Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils and in Post 16 for all pupils. In art and design there is little assessment of pupils’ progress.

36 While staff know their pupils well and intuitively match the teaching to their needs the written targets in pupils’ individual education plans are not detailed enough to show the small steps in learning necessary for each pupil. The school makes too little use of this assessment information for all subjects. This was also a key issue in the previous OFSTED inspection and, whilst the school has moved forward, there are still weaknesses here. In the best practice, in mathematics and science, the results of the pupils’ work at the end of each unit of work are analysed and then used effectively to plan further tasks. In physical education, assessment is used well, especially to identify the highest

attaining pupils and stretch them with more demanding work. In other subjects, assessment is often too general in the way it is presented to guide teachers' planning.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37 The school has good links with parents who are very supportive and appreciative of the school's efforts on their children's behalf. They are especially pleased with the good behaviour which the school promotes and achieves. They are also happy with the good teaching and management in the school and feel that their children make good progress. The inspection team agrees wholeheartedly with all these favourable comments. A few parents are less happy with the amount of homework set but the team finds that the use of homework generally is satisfactory and about the same as in similar schools.

38 The school works hard to keep parents informed and involved in their children's learning. Links are effective; many parents take the opportunity each term to discuss their children's progress. Annual reports on progress are now good, giving parents clear information about their children's attainment in all subjects. These have improved since the last OFSTED inspection. Those parents who attend their child's annual review contribute to the setting of targets for the coming year, adding to the partnership between home and school. Regular letters home keep parents well-informed of what is happening in school. This is particularly useful for parents who live a long way from the school. The school uses questionnaires effectively to seek out parents' views on school matters. Parents agree that the school responds very well to concerns or suggestions and feel that the school works closely with them for the benefit of their children. The home/school books provide a means of regular communication between parents and teachers.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

39 The quality of leadership and management has improved considerably since the first inspection at the school and has continued to improve since the subsequent report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in October 1997. The head teacher, very well supported by senior colleagues, and the governing body provides strong, clear and purposeful leadership with clear structures and systems established. These enable all staff to have a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities.

40 Since his appointment the head teacher has established a clear sense of direction for the school based on high expectations and raising standards. This is shared by staff and governors who have all worked hard and effectively to remove the school from special measures. There is a shared commitment and the capacity for further improvement is very good.

41 The governing body fulfils its responsibilities well. This is a considerable improvement since the first inspection. A clear committee structure has been created and all committees have terms of reference. All decisions are clearly minuted and shared as appropriate with all staff so that everyone is aware of developments in the school. Procedures for monitoring the standards being achieved have been introduced through governors attached to classes to monitor progress over time and through governors linked to literacy and numeracy. These are to be commended although a more systematic approach is not yet fully in place. Governors have developed a very good understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school and have been fully involved with senior staff in determining priorities for development and ensuring that these are implemented. Clear plans are in place for the further development of the school.

42 The roles and responsibilities of subject managers have improved since the last inspection. They are clear about their management roles and feel fully involved in developing the school. They now evaluate their subjects and produce subject action plans which are used to inform the school development plan. They also form the basis of financial allocations to subjects. The quality of plans

varies; literacy and numeracy are detailed partly because of the national priority given to these areas; others often lack details about responsibilities, time-scales and ways of measuring the effects of improvements on the standards achieved. This is an area for further development in the role of subject managers. They all review planning in their areas of responsibility and the introduction of deputy managers to ensure coverage throughout the school has helped this process. The observation of teaching to determine strengths and weaknesses has not yet been introduced in a systematic way although this is undertaken to a limited extent in the core subjects. It is particularly effective in English and has helped to raise standards by improving the quality of teaching.

43 The school development plan is a very effective tool for managing the improvement of the school. It clearly identifies priorities and is linked to the budget to ensure that the available finance is effectively used. The governing body committee structure is closely involved in this through its Pupils, Curriculum and Finance committees reporting to the full governing body. Best value principles are applied to all financial issues, with a range of estimates being obtained for major expenditure, for example.

44 The school's financial procedures are good. The head teacher and governors work closely with the bursar who provides very good support. Expenditure is carefully monitored ensuring good financial control. The most recent auditors report recommendations have been acted upon.

45 The leadership and management of the school are very good, teaching is consistently good leading to effective learning and good achievement. Costs are low and consequently the school provides very good value for money.

46 The accommodation has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is now good and supports all requirements of the National Curriculum with the exception of physical education where on-site provision is inadequate and changing facilities are unsatisfactory. This is compensated for by the very good use of community facilities.

47 The school buildings and extensive grounds are well kept and maintained by the caretaker who takes a pride in ensuring the high standard of cleanliness and decoration. Ramps have been installed to cater for wheelchair access and there is a covered way linking all the classrooms. Unfortunately when the hall is having to be used for physical education this route is not available necessitating going round the outside of the building which is unacceptable in bad weather.

48 In the primary school the classrooms are now of adequate size although the separate playground is very small. In the secondary school the creation of specialist rooms for technology, music and drama are welcome additions supporting specialist teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4. This provision is very recent and it is too early to fully evaluate its impact on pupils learning.

49 The Post 16 area has been rebuilt following the fire and now provides a pleasant and appropriate centre for the older students to prepare for life after school.

50 The school has fewer staff in both teaching and support compared with the average for similar schools. With an increase in the number of pupils with more complex needs, this understaffing has a negative effect on planned support levels for some classes. Generally expertise and experience are well deployed and roles and responsibilities, some of them new, are clear.

51 Following some well-considered and successful recruitment, levels of subject expertise are good and contribute to the overall strength of the teaching. In particular this is having a positive effect

on the improving consistency of good teaching in specialist subjects in Key Stage 4, an important improvement since the last inspection.

52 The support staff are experienced and skilled and make a significant contribution to the effective running of the school, the continuation of pupil care, and often the quality of their learning.

53 Administration, caretaking, cleaning and catering staff show commitment to the smooth running and good presentation of the school.

54 Staff development and arrangements for the introduction of performance management are well developed and carefully linked to priorities in the school development plan.

55 Resources to support learning are being developed annually in line with both the subject developmental plans and the school's overall priorities. Resources to support learning are good in English, mathematics, geography, history and music. The newly developed resources for music, design, food technology, art and design, and the sixth form block can be seen to be having a positive impact on standards of achievement. The newly developed library and dance music studio, likewise are beginning to be used effectively and to raise standards. Resources in science, physical education and religious education are satisfactory. Whilst the level of resources are being developed to support information and communication technology and its use across the curriculum are currently unsatisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56 In order to improve further the head teacher, staff and governors should;

- (1) Raise achievement and the amount of progress made by pupils in information and communication technology by
 - (a) ensuring that it is used more consistently in all subjects to support learning;
 - (b) developing teachers' confidence and expertise;
 - (c) developing the range of resources available.(Paragraphs 55, 123 and 126)
- (2) Improve the use of assessment and recording in teaching by
 - (a) ensuring that planning identifies steps which are precise enough to measure the gains in pupils' learning;
 - (b) ensuring that pupils' individual targets are routinely used in planning to enable those with all levels of attainment to achieve well.(Paragraphs 19 and 24)
- (3) Develop the role of subject managers in the leadership and management of the school by
 - (a) ensuring greater consistency and detail in subject development plans to inform resource allocations more precisely;
 - (b) ensuring a more systematic approach, to monitoring the impact of teaching on learning by identifying the areas of strength and the areas for improvement.(Paragraph 42)

In addition to the above main issues the following more minor issues should be considered for the action plan:

(1) The governors should increase their role in monitoring the standards achieved by pupils by further developing their role as link or attached governors.
(Paragraph 41)

(2) Improve the quality of accommodation for physical education, particularly in relation to showering facilities.
(Paragraphs 46 and 148)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of lessons observed | 105 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 30 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 3 | 26 | 52 | 17 | 2 | 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 | No of pupils Y9-14 |
|---|-----------------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 141 |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 42 |

| Special educational needs | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs | 141 |
| Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register | 141 |

| English as an additional language | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| 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 | 8 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 2 |

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 1 |
| White | 140 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 0 |

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y14

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 15.3 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 10 |
| Average class size | N/A |

Education support staff: YR– Y14

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 17 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 424 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 1999-2000 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | £ |
|--|---------|
| Total income | 922,568 |
| Total expenditure | 921,011 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 5,981 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 4,296 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 5,853 |

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 141 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 77 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 73 | 24 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 48 | 43 | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 44 | 45 | 1 | 0 | 9 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 26 | 47 | 16 | 0 | 11 |
| The teaching is good. | 66 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 61 | 29 | 7 | 1 | 1 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 79 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 58 | 39 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 62 | 30 | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 73 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 59 | 36 | 1 | 0 | 4 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 57 | 32 | 3 | 0 | 8 |

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

57 The majority of pupils who start at Slated Row School in the primary department come from designated nurseries and are below five years of age on entry. At the time of the inspection there was only one child of reception age on the school register as a result of which the evidence of achievement and progress for children up to statutory school age is drawn from teacher records, photographs and limited recorded work from previous years.

58 The evidence available indicates that overall children's achievements in the Foundation Stage are good and very good in speaking, listening and personal social and emotional development. This is an improvement since the last inspection. They make good progress against all the nationally recommended Early Learning Goals. Many children come into school with impoverished basic skills in communication, social awareness and restricted experiences of the world around them. The school gives justifiable emphasis, in the setting of initial targets, to developing the ability to sit together, listen, follow instructions and communicate either by speech or the use of Makaton.

59 By five years of age pupils can participate in group activities, share, take turns know they should be quiet when someone else is speaking and make very good progress in personal independence skills. Most know the names of their friends and can recognise the printed form of their own name. They take an active part in familiar rhymes and songs and are aware that letters and words convey meaning. They can hold a pencil correctly and make controlled marks on paper as a precursor to writing. The majority can count together 1 to 5 and sing number songs such as 'Five Speckled Frogs' the higher attainers understanding the number remaining has changed when a frog is taken away. Most can recognise colours and simple shapes while some can use their correct names. They have begun to explore the world around them, experimenting with a range of materials such as sand and water and have used a variety of interesting techniques when painting including blowing paint through a straw to make firework pictures. Pupils gain confidence moving around the school and have visited special places outside school including a farm at lambing time, a Church, old and new houses, shops, rivers, woods and garden centres where they can see the changes that occur through the seasons of the year. They take part in school concerts, listen to many different types of music and make tunes using percussion instruments. They enjoy listening to stories from the Bible especially about Jesus and why we celebrate Christmas. They make good progress in their physical development by running, jumping, climbing, throwing and kicking balls.

60 In those lessons seen, which included the one reception child, teaching was always at least good. Lessons are well planned and tasks are matched to the abilities and needs of individual children. The very good relationships, staff teamwork and encouraging supportive atmospheres created, builds confidence and raises children's self esteem ensuring that they work hard, enjoy learning and develop as much independence as possible.

61 The curriculum covers all the Early Learning Goals, is broad, balanced and referenced to the National Curriculum targets providing an effective introduction to statutory education in Key Stage 1.

62 The department is well managed. There is a good programme of induction for new children after which the first half a term is used for observation and completion of the baseline assessments.

The initial individual planning sheets and individual education plans are written in conjunction with the Speech Therapist and the parents taking account of all the information available from any source either inside or outside school. These plans are regularly reviewed and updated and detailed records are kept of individual achievements to provide clear information for future planning. Classroom accommodation, resources and changing facilities are good but the separate playground is very small and does not allow for the use of large play equipment.

ENGLISH

63 There has been a significant improvement in the standard of teaching and learning in all aspects of the English curriculum since the last inspection. All pupils are achieving well and making good progress as they build on their earlier levels of competence. Pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills, their reading skills and their writing skills as they mature. By the end of the sixth form career pupils' achieve well in English when following externally validated courses and as a result are well prepared for the next stage of their life. Although the pupils are attaining below the levels nationally expected for their age, they achieve well and make good progress.

64 The majority of pupils enter the school with significantly delayed language development. They respond well to the good teaching and excellent support from visiting therapists and make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills. The staff effectively use signs, symbols, gesture and well structured question and answer procedures in order to develop the pupils' language. The pupils learn quickly and make good progress. The majority begin to respond using complete sentences and by the end of Key Stage 2 understand nouns and pronouns. They enjoy stories such as Brown Rabbits Day. Pupils in Year 1 respond well in relation to the story follow instructions, use pictures in order to copy and follow the actions described in the story. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils increasingly pose questions and answers without prompts and a few of the higher attaining pupils speak confidently in public. The good progress continues through Key Stages 3 and 4 and by the end of the sixth form pupils are sufficiently competent and confident to speak publicly and prepare presentations about their favourite sports. Many pupils demonstrate speaking and listening skills in line with the standards expected nationally for pupils of a similar age. This increased level of competence and confidence is very well demonstrated when pupils speak effectively in public assemblies and regularly in school dramatic activities and public performances.

65 The majority of pupils entering the school experience significant difficulties with their reading. As a result of good teaching they quickly develop a good understanding of the purpose of books, the sequencing of stories and the meaning of text. The good use of structured teaching in both literacy lessons and when developing pupils' phonic awareness has a significant impact on their learning. Whilst progress is often slow the good small steps approach to teaching developed in Key Stage 1 establishes a foundation which is built on in each key stage. The good use of the new library and the enthusiasm of the teachers is effective, encouraging pupils to develop a love of stories and books. The pupils show excitement when the time comes for them to visit the library and change their books. These good gains in learning are reinforced by the developing partnership with parents who are increasingly using the reading record book effectively to help their children at home.

66 This enthusiasm for reading is maintained in Key Stages 3 and 4. New pupils entering the school at this stage, having previously experienced reading difficulties, are rapidly influenced by the positive reading ethos and begin to make good progress. For some pupils, the levels of reading skills achieved are modest by the end of the sixth form, these levels, however, represent very good progress when measured against assessment of what they were previously able to do.

67 Writing skills develop well. Most pupils enter the school unable to copy letters and some barely able to make marks on paper. The good structured teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is very effective so that by the end of the Key Stage 2 pupils can form letters, use computers to word process simple sentences and the higher attaining pupils can write basic sentences and have a rudimentary awareness of basic punctuation.

68 The good progress continues and pupils develop a neat printing style and by the end of Key Stage 4 can write for a variety of purposes. Some pupils write extended poems related to Halloween and make good use of very expressive language. They write formally when preparing invitations to parties or celebrations. Higher attaining pupils write letters and some can write their names and addresses with very little help. By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils begin to write stories, often using basic work sheets to help them organise ideas before producing finished texts. Pupils draft work and a few are beginning to use computers to produce neat copies. However, the use of computers to support learning is insufficiently developed. This aspect of the work is under developed and too few opportunities are provided. The higher attaining pupils use their writing skills to support their learning effectively in many subject areas, most particularly in science and humanities. A few of the higher attaining pupils achieve levels in line with the level expected nationally for pupils of their age. The confidence developed by the students in the sixth form enables them to produce extensive pieces of written text. They research books and magazines to develop their ideas and to support the development of good well written study topic files. For example, a number of students had developed significant pieces of work in which they explained their knowledge of the recent Olympic Games in Australia. The results of these extensive pieces of writing lead to achievement in recognised and externally accredited courses.

69 Both pupils and students in all key stages become motivated by the good teaching they experience and respond well to challenges set for them by the teachers. They behave well and, they concentrate and take pride in the completed tasks. They understand the purpose of the tasks and can explain what they are doing confidently to visitors and as a result they make good progress.

70 The quality of teaching is consistently good in all key stages and often in Key Stage 1 and in the sixth form it is very good. This is because of the very good subject knowledge of the teachers and the structure of lessons. It is also occasionally very good in Key Stage 3, particularly when pupils enjoy poetic language and start to create their own poems. In all key stages the good level of subject knowledge of the teachers has a marked impact on the development of the pupils linguistic skills vocabulary and understanding. Basic skills are methodically taught in most classes and in most lessons. There are very effectively taught in literacy lessons. The introduction of the literacy strategy has been very effective and has significantly influenced the standards of teaching and learning. Teachers plan in relation to the National Curriculum and set broad targets related to the needs of pupils. However they are not always sufficiently precise. Planning is good in Key Stage 1 and in the sixth form and occasionally good else where. In some lessons the lack of precise individual learning objectives leads to work being provided which is not always finely matched to the needs of the pupils and in particular the level of challenge is often not sufficiently great for the higher attaining pupils. Teachers know their pupils well and frequently use good verbal prompts to reinforce learning during lesson. They set high expectations of the pupils who in turn respond very well. All teachers use a range of teaching methods and teach with enthusiasm in order to stimulate pupils and to engender a love for the subject and, in particular, for stories. This is a particularly strong feature of the teaching in Year 1. Pupils are effectively and purposely managed and good use is made of all taught time. Teachers plan and work very effectively with their special support assistants and this partnership is very significant in ensuring that the pupils continue to develop and make good progress.

71 The quality and use of assessment data to inform planning is restricted by the limited nature of the actual procedures. Current procedures do not consistently enable staff to demonstrate the small gains in learning made by the pupils because of the lack of precision in targets. Many teachers who know the pupils well intuitively compensate for these limitations in the planning process but their practices are not consistently used across the school. This is an area for review and development. Whilst homework is provided the practice is not consistently followed on a regular basis. Where it is used the product of the good partnership is demonstrated by the improved learning.

72 The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils in all key stages and in the sixth form. The taught curriculum fully meets statutory requirements. Play is well structured and used to develop ideas and concepts especially in Key Stages 1 and 2. Drama is a strength of the school and underpins much of the good classroom teaching because it provides an excellent platform for pupils to develop confidence and use their public speaking skills. The effective use of the community, residential visits and links with visiting writers all have a positive impact on the standards achieved by boys and girls in all key stages.

73 The subject manager has very effectively raised standards in the school since the last inspection and is well equipped to continue this process. The careful and regular monitoring of teaching and learning and the meticulous introduction of the literacy hour have both been very effective in raising standards. The good range of in-service training provision, including that developed with the speech therapist, has given the staff confidence to implement the literacy strategy very successfully. The strategic development of resources, the careful auditing of the resources needed to support the planned curriculum and the monitoring of teaching demonstrate very good practice. Departmental resources are prudently purchased, carefully used and stored and are stimulating and relevant to the needs of the pupils. This is an efficient well managed department which gives good value for money, when costs are measured against the good progress made by the pupils. The English department is a strength of the school and underpins and supports the work in all subject areas.

MATHEMATICS

74 Pupils' achievement in mathematics throughout the school is good. Since the last inspection the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy in the Primary Department and the introduction of accreditation in the Upper School have had a positive effect in raising standards and improving pupils' attitude to mathematics.

75 Most children who enter school before five years of age have poorly developed mathematical knowledge. Some use number words and a few can find one object from a choice of two. Most are aware of different colours but are not able to name them consistently. The majority, however, are interested in mathematics equipment such as bricks and lego-type material and are eager to join in activities and number games. By the end of the Foundation Year, when pupils move into the mainstream class, most can count together up to 10, a few counting independently. The majority can recognise colours and simple two and three dimensional shapes and some can name them correctly. All are aware there are many different coins and most can use 1p coins in simulated shopping. Some pupils, who find difficulty understanding the use of numbers, make progress in learning the names for numbers and colours and can use fingers or objects when taking part in number songs and games.

76 By seven years of age pupils are developing confidence with numbers and beginning to enjoy mental arithmetic questioning. Most can count independently during number songs, for example taking responsibility for moving the little models into the 'pond' during the song '5 speckled frogs'. They can order the events of their day using symbols, begin to recognise the names for different days of the

week and a few know the sequence of days. The majority of pupils can name colours and simple shapes and know that blocks of colour on a chart can represent data such as the varying heights of pupils in the class. They enjoy role play when shopping and use an increasing variety of coins up to £1. The lowest attaining pupils develop their confidence and understanding working with numbers up to five.

77 By eleven years of age most pupils can count independently to 10 and a few are confident with numbers up to 100 especially when taking part in the mental arithmetic sessions. They can add and subtract with single digit numbers. The higher attainers work with 2 digit numbers. They understand the use of number lines and grids, have made paper number lines for their own use and some recognise odd and even numbers. They become increasingly confident in the use of money and can make up given amounts selecting a variety of different coins up to and including £1 and £2. Everyone can create a simple pattern using a variety of techniques, the higher attainers being able to replicate the pattern onto squared paper. They carry out simple investigations and record their results as a grid or a bar chart, for example the colour of eyes in the class. The majority begin to understand the importance of solving problems and are able to describe the processes used, for example how they found the answer to an addition sum. The lower attaining pupils continue to build on their understanding and use of numbers 1 to 10, shopping with basic coins up to 10p and have the ability to recognise and sort by colour and shape.

78 By 14 years of age the most striking features of the subject are the enjoyment and confidence pupils develop in handling mathematical processes. In mental arithmetic they work with numbers up to 100 and beyond, count on in 2's, 5's and 10's, add and subtract digit numbers and recognise odd and even numbers up to 20. They can discuss how problems are solved, for example how many ways to colour a shape using only two colours. Most recognise and name the basic two and three dimensional shapes and can describe their properties in terms of sides and corners or angles and have been introduced to the use of a protractor. They measure using standard measures both in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum, for example in science and food technology. They can record information in a variety of ways using bar charts, graphs and pictograms while the higher attainers can find a given point using co-ordinates. The lower attainers become confident in single digit addition and subtraction and begin to understand the use of mathematical language for giving directions e.g. left, right, up, down.

79 In Key Stage 4 pupils are working on various units within the external accreditation scheme (NEAB). By sixteen years of age pupils are confident in using the numeracy and mathematical skills they have been developing throughout their school life. They begin to understand the processes involved during some calculations, for example the relationship between doubling and halving or addition and subtraction. They can use calculators both as an aid to solving problems and to check their own answers. Most identify and measure different types of angles, know the points of a compass and understand clockwise and anticlockwise. They are able to design an experiment, collect and record the data, choose appropriate methods, interpret the results and draw conclusions for example the variety of holidays taken by pupils and staff. Using mathematics across the curriculum they are prepared for the requirements of the world outside school by reading and interpreting bus and rail timetables, shopping and finding the best value prices for products or trips such as cinema or theatre tickets.

80 In the Post 16 course students are rightly encouraged to use mathematics in everyday life situations and, complete the units for accreditation. They are encouraged to work and plan together for example through the National Skills' Profile scheme as a team they apply their knowledge and skills to projects such as would be required to rent a flat, decorate it and budget for living costs.

81 Pupils enjoy mathematics and find it increasingly interesting as they are able to use it to plan and design experiments and to apply of mathematics in their everyday lives. The majority of pupils listen carefully, follow instructions and know when and how to ask for help. Occasionally pupils lose concentration and either chatter or waste time but this rarely disrupts the hard work of the rest of the group.

82 The quality of teaching is good it is occasionally very good or excellent. Careful planning and good subject knowledge along with teachers' clear understanding of the needs of individual pupils ensures that tasks are well matched to their levels of attainment. As a result pupils work hard and achieve well. Just occasionally, especially at the upper end of the school, a few higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged resulting in some 'off task' behaviour. This is usually because the objectives set are not well enough matched to their needs. Prior attainment is not used effectively in these lessons to extend a small number of pupils. The very good teamwork between all staff, the good relationships with pupils and the encouraging supportive atmosphere created in classes builds pupils self esteem and confidence so developing independent learning skills and a pride in the work produced. The brisk pace of most lessons and the interesting variety of activities chosen motivates pupils to enjoy the subject and even realise that mathematics can be fun.

83 The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers all the requirements of the National Curriculum including the National Numeracy Strategy. There is a baseline assessment at the point of entry to the school and subsequent regular assessments to monitor progress and inform planning. There are clear records of achievement and parents are kept well informed through the annual reports and Parents' Evenings. Some monitoring of teaching occurs but this is not yet sufficiently systematic enough to identify strengths and weaknesses to further improve the quality of teaching. A review of the development of the subject has taken place and an appropriate action plan has been established.

84 The subject is well managed with regular liaison between the Primary and Secondary departments. Staff have been well trained in the numeracy strategy which has been effectively implemented in the lower school with plans to extend it into the senior school in the near future. The introduction of external accreditation in Key Stage 4 has also had a positive effect on achievement. As a result discussions are now taking place with a view to increasing the options available.

85 There has been significant improvement since the last inspection in the quality of teaching, the standards of achievement, the effectiveness of assessment and the leadership offered by the Subject Manager.

SCIENCE

86 Pupils' achievements in science are satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2 and good in Key Stages 3 and 4 with some particularly good progress being achieved by pupils in Key Stage 4 where they achieve good levels of success in accredited courses. While there is evidence of good achievement there is a need to co-ordinate and monitor planning, teaching and learning more closely in order to create a stronger foundation, particularly in the rigour of investigative and experimental work.

87 In Key Stage 1 pupils develop the language and communication skills to begin their work, learning to explore and observe the world around them. Where learning is stronger pupils not only make observations about what they see, but are helped to establish cause and effect, as in a lesson where they realise that candles and torches have more effect in the dark, that switches turn the light off, and that torches without batteries don't work. They are also delighted by the experience of

exploring the dark corners of the school with torches, and gain new insights into the power and behaviour of light.

88 In Key Stage 2 pupils add more enquiry to their explorations and look at reflection, electricity as a source of power, and the need for batteries in torches. They link this understanding to the powering of household appliances, and recognise that a switch operates a train set, but without a clear sense of why. Higher attaining pupils by the end of the key stage have identified the sun as our ultimate source of energy and light, but that the moon is only a source of reflected light.

89 During Key Stage 3 investigative skills are further developed, and pupils are asked to record observations regularly. Pupils identify basic ‘pull and push’ forces, and work out why rope will pull easily but not push. There is a greater sense of purpose to enquiry and investigation.

90 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have achieved well, built up the pace of progress and completed a nationally recognised certificate of achievement at an appropriate level. This level of achievement could be extended with a more consistent foundation, particularly of investigative language and skills in the early part of the school. Pupils have developed their investigative skills considerably and as in an investigation on decay, predicted correctly the order in which a range of vegetable matter is likely to decompose. They identify from a diagram the eight features of a woodlouse that enable it to live. They read and complete assessment tasks with good understanding. There are a few pupils who, with a firmer foundation throughout their school life, might engage successfully in a GCSE course.

91 Pupils enjoy science and develop a positive attitude to their investigations. They learn well from stimulating and demanding challenges, and in some cases are able to write coherent accounts of their work. Pupils complete worksheets well and handle the assessment tasks in Key Stage 4 with confidence. However recording skills are not sufficiently developed in the early part of the school limiting aspects of achievement at that stage.

92 The teaching of science is predominantly good. There is some very good and occasionally excellent teaching at the top of the school. It is variable in quality in the primary classes being more dependent on individual teacher’s subject knowledge and confidence than on a consistent and planned approach. Most science is practical, encouraging pupils to explore and experience objects in the classroom and the world outside. In Key Stages 1 and 2, greater focus needs to be given to predicting and questioning what they observe, and to measuring and recording their observations in more detail as skills develop. An example of good teaching, an introduction to a topic on light, explored candles, torches and classroom lights. Pupils were enabled to explore the effect of torches in darkened rooms, made the link between switches and light, and between batteries and working torches. The teacher had planned well, was clear what the learning outcomes were, and helped pupils develop the language of observation and enquiry.

93 Teaching is good in Key Stage 3 and very good in Key Stage 4. Subject knowledge is very good and allows complex lessons with a high level of challenge to be developed. An imaginative lesson with a low attaining group explored the causes of shadows and developed understanding further by helping pupils construct and use shadow puppets. In an example of excellent teaching on the respiratory system, pupils were spellbound by a lesson involving models of human organs, the dissection, in which some took part, of a pig’s organs, a video clip, and finally diagrams. This powerful combination of learning strategies where real lungs could be inflated, made sense of models and diagrams in a lesson that is unlikely to be forgotten.

94 Recording and assessment are good in Key Stage 4 against the Certificate of Achievement, but not so consistent elsewhere. This results in objectives not being sufficiently clear on occasions reducing the progress the school is able to identify.

95 The curriculum meets requirements and concludes with the opportunity to gain accreditation against a nationally recognised Certificate of Achievement. This represents good progress since the last Ofsted inspection. Primary science is derived from topic plans. Medium term plans offer an adequate range of experience but variable subject expertise and limited documentation of work completed provide a limited evidence base for determining how good the overall quality of provision is. The use of Information and Communication Technology remains under-developed. A recent appointment has been identified to spend time on this aspect of development, in support of the specialist subject co-ordinator. The co-ordinator is part-time. This limits the time available for monitoring which is currently underdeveloped.

96 Accommodation is good with a well-presented laboratory for senior pupils, however resources are barely adequate to support the primary curriculum and aspects of the secondary curriculum. Electronic circuits and microscopes are examples of where there is a deficit. There are good links with local mainstream schools enabling specialised items of equipment to be borrowed as needed, but this is time consuming. There is an efficient system for borrowing equipment from the senior department. The subject development plan, although in place, lacks detail at the moment and is in need of further improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

97 Whilst standards of attainment are generally below the nationally expected levels, there are a few pupils in each key stage whose attainment levels are in line, in some aspects of the art and design curriculum. Pupils in all key stages achieve well and make good progress when compared with their earlier learning. A number of pupils in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form achieve good levels of work when following nationally accredited courses.

98 Pupils make good progress in their learning, developing their knowledge, understanding and skills as they move from Key Stage 1 to the sixth form. As they mature they learn to control a wide range of media, they experiment with a range of techniques develop an awareness of the work of famous artists and develop impressive portfolios of work which represent the wide breadth of their experiences. In Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils learn to use sketch books and develop their abilities to be able to draw from direct observations and memory. The higher attaining pupils do this very well and show a good understanding of form, shape, texture and perspective. The progress made in the statutory years of schooling prepares them well for life in the sixth form where they effectively follow nationally accredited courses.

99 The pupils have good attitudes in all art and design lessons. They use a range of resources with care and enjoy working in the styles of Monet, Mark Francis and Picasso in particular. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils experiment with colours and learn to name both primary and secondary colours. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have experimented with drawing and painting from direct observation, completing free paintings of animals and developed an understanding of printing using animal shapes. They can make patterns and shapes in sand and when using a variety of materials to create collages.

100 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils can collaborate to create friezes and murals of sea life. They develop an understanding of the works of famous artists using impressionistic and pointillistic

techniques. Pupils develop the use of calligraphy in their artwork and in one lesson in Year 7 pupils used their skills in this area to develop their brass rubbing techniques using crayons of different colours. The skills continue to develop and by the end of Key Stage 4 pupils can confidently work in watercolours, selecting fine brushes to complete their pictures and fill in the fine detail. Pupils in the sixth form extend their skills further and use their experiences to help them to prepare visual presentations as a part of their English work. They also develop their skills, making masks in a project linked to the history and geography of South America. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 make large-scale collages, weaving and using a variety of materials. The artwork produced by the pupils and students of the school is very effectively used to enhance the learning environment in the many circulation areas and corridors.

101 The quality of teaching in lessons is predominantly good or better in all key stages, which represents a significant improvement on the findings of the last Ofsted inspection. The teachers have a good level of knowledge of the subject, the needs of their pupils and students and of the National Curriculum requirements. The teachers make good use of basic skills in order to help develop the level of understanding of the pupils by consistently and effectively using the technical language appropriate to the subject. Lesson plans have clear whole class learning targets. However there are no individual learning targets. As a result of the absence of individual objectives the current assessment procedures are not able to be used to effectively inform future planning for individuals. However teachers' expectations of the pupils are suitably high, and they have a good knowledge of the pupils. This together with the good partnership established between the teachers and the special support assistants, ensures that pupils learn well and make good progress. All staff manage the pupils effectively and use their skills to ensure all the pupils sustain their concentration and complete set tasks. In the sixth form the teachers effectively check that pupils complete all requirements of the externally accredited courses, and are successful. In all of the key stages the teachers make some use of homework. These procedures are not a consistent feature of teachers planning but when used well they enhance the learning of the pupils. The consistently good teaching helped to create a climate in which pupils and students learn new skills work at a good pace and increase their levels of concentration, skill and independence.

102 The art and design curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils. It fully meets statutory requirements. Good contributions are made to the spiritual moral social and cultural development of the pupils. Pupils enjoy access to a wide range of experiences. These include activities involving artists in residence, artists spend time in school working with the children. They visit Museums and Art Galleries and frequently are visibly working in the community with their sketch books. All of these elements have a positive influence on the standards of work achieved.

103 The subject is efficiently managed and well lead. The quality of teaching and learning in all key stages is beginning to be routinely monitored it is currently insufficiently developed. The subject is well resourced and all aspects of the department are prudently managed. Both resource and curriculum audits are used to inform the subject development plan. Although this represents progress it is not yet sufficiently detailed. The two subject managers have a shared commitment to the improvement of the subject and demonstrate the capacity to succeed in this. The provision of the newly developed art and design suite is already beginning to have an impact on the quality of work produced by pupils in Key Stage 4.

104 There is evidence of significant improvement in art and design since the last Ofsted inspection. The knowledge and skills of the specialist teacher is already having a good effect on standards in Key Stages 3 and 4.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

105 There have been significant improvements in the standards achieved by pupils in both design, and food technology work since the last Ofsted inspection. A notable impact on the enthusiasm of pupils and the standards of their achievement has been the recently completed art and design suite of rooms. Although pupils do not attain standards which reach the levels nationally expected for pupils of their age they do achieve well and make good progress in their learning.

106 Pupils enter the school with very few skills but rapidly begin to enjoy the experiences provided. They enjoy working with model cars, animals and construction kits. They make designs in sand, prepare drinks, make sweets and enjoy preparing for parties and picnics. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have an awareness of basic recipes and they begin to make choices when preparing drinks and sandwiches. They have an awareness of basic shapes when constructing pots, puppets, kites and mobiles. By the end of Key Stage 4 they have increased their awareness of design, have developed strategies for gluing, fixing and constructing materials. They develop construction projects relating to homes and shelters using a wide range of materials. Pupils confidently and enthusiastically construct models using recycled materials and help to make props and masks to support drama activities.

107 By the end of Key Stage 4 pupils have developed a wide range of skills and confidently use hand tools to design and construct model cars, bridges, clocks and model bicycles. They mould and work in three-dimensions using clay and plaster. Using these materials the pupils design, evaluate and modify their pieces of work, for example, when making South American masks or frames to hold their jigsaws. Pupils develop their fine motor skills and create precise models using straws, matchsticks, plastics, metal and wood.

108 The good level of skills developed are extended in a wide range of option activities during their time in the sixth form. The quality and range of projects undertaken are successfully evaluated as part of externally accredited courses. Some aspects of their design work have achieved national recognition. Pupils reached the final of a competition where they were required to design a human rights banner. On a different occasion, the pupils made a large-scale design and a realistic model, representing the plan for the local arts centre. The quality of this work was recognised and displayed at the national centre of the Royal Institute of British Architects. This represents good achievement and progress.

109 The pupils in all key stages are highly motivated by the good teaching they receive. Teaching is very good in Key Stages 3 and 4 and for Post 16 students. They really enjoyed making bread and cakes and when helping to prepare food on residential visits. They enjoyed preparing for and participating in the Halloween disco. They collaborate well together, support each other and take a pride in what they make. They respect the work of others and treat resources carefully. They consistently behave well and increasingly develop independence skills and good relationships with both peers and adults. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of health and safety procedures in both design and food technology.

110 The quality of teaching is consistently good. Often it is very good especially in Key Stages 3 and 4 and for pupils in the sixth form. On these particular occasions, the good level of subject knowledge of the specialist teacher has a positive impact, significantly raising the standards of understanding, knowledge and skills. The good shared planning and practical involvement of both teachers and special support assistants helps to boost the confidence of the pupils by providing support sensitively but when needed. All staff are vigilant and pay attention to health and safety issues. Teachers set high expectations, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4 and in Post 16 and pupils are

encouraged to finish work to a good standard. The quality of this work is best demonstrated by the results obtained when pupils complete externally accredited courses in design or when pupils designed and prepared foods for picnics, made cakes or shaped their individual loaves of bread. Teaching methods are varied and stimulating. Pupils are well managed in all lessons. Both time and resources are used well to best effect. As a consequence pupils have fun, learn well and acquire new skills.

111 The curriculum is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of the pupils and prepares them well for adult life. The newly completed art and design suite is already making it possible to extend the range of curriculum activities. This facility is highly valued by both teachers and pupils. Very good balance exists within the planned curriculum between design and food technology. Great care is taken to ensure that all pupils enjoy full access to all elements. The curriculum is planned to enable all pupils to build progressively on their earlier levels of skills and understanding. The statutory requirements are fully met. Particular attention is paid to pupils with additional needs to ensure that they can fully participate in all activities although this level of planning is not shown on teachers' written plans. Teachers' records do not demonstrate the small steps of progress made by some of the pupils. This is an area for further development, as assessment does not adequately guide teaching.

112 The subject managers have very effectively developed the subject throughout the school. The subject is led in a very enthusiastic and well-informed manner which has a very positive impact on the very good attitudes the pupils develop. Teaching and learning are carefully monitored and the purchase of resources is carefully matched to the planned curriculum. The school's priority in developing the subject has been well judged, the new accommodation and resources are already beginning to have a real impact on the quality of work produced by the pupils.

113 There is a shared commitment amongst all of the staff to improvement. They have the capacity and enthusiasm to achieve this. The good collaboration between teachers and support staff, their knowledge, skills and enthusiasm make this subject a strength of the school.

HUMANITIES (HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY)

114 Achievements in humanities are good. Pupils and students make good progress during lessons and over time. There has been good improvement since the last inspection as progress is now good. Key Stage 4 now follow National Curriculum programmes of study. Study of the local environment now occurs well although information and communication technology is still underused. Geography and history are taught as topic work to the primary classes. Key Stage 3 have history and geography lessons which form part of the humanities theme for each term. Key Stage 4 pupils follow the accreditation for the Community Challenge with very age appropriate tasks to encourage learning. As part of 'Skillpower 16', Post 16 students plan a journey which this year has involved the topical subject of the Olympics. They follow maps and bus routes in order to organise their travel to and from work placements and industrial visits as part of units of accreditation.

115 Pupils in Key Stage 1 recognise and find their way around school with support. During a science topic pupils used their torches to find their way to the light room. Time lines for daily events are used well each morning with symbols to support less able pupils. Pupils enjoyed a visit to Whipsnade Zoo. A plan of the Zoo shows pupils have made good progress and can recognise and draw animals such as tigers and elephants. Photographs are used well to record work. Play sessions with cars and roads encourage map work directions. Pupils are encouraged to learn the geography of the school and transfer these skills to the wider world. They experience outings to local places of interest in the community to reinforce concepts.

116 Pupils within Key Stage 2 make good progress. The very good role-play encouraged by the class teacher emphasises the history of the gunpowder plot. Pupils become very involved with the character the teacher created by wearing a hat which successfully promoted a discussion between the pupils about the character of Guy Fawkes. This theme is further developed to create a map of the Houses of Parliament where pupils place cut out shapes to re-tell the story. They are encouraged to make decisions about where the items are placed and why. This promotes good vocabulary of positions such as under the logs and in the cellar. Pupils are very enthusiastic, help each other and behave very well. Most pupils know only wood was used for fires a long time ago and wood comes from trees. By the time they are 11 pupils answer questions to show they understand the story of Guy Fawkes. The well organised humorous lesson with excellent teamwork by the support staff and teacher encourages independent small group work. Pupils successfully acted out the story, made tapes of the plot and were thrilled to play them to each other. One pupil wanted to know what gunpowder looked like. Photographic evidence shows teachers use the local environment well to compare local rivers and canals, old and new buildings in the surrounding villages and settlements such as the growth of Wolverton. Pupils visit the local wood to explore the texture of bark and study the wild flowers.

117 In Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress during the interesting lessons and over time. Year 7 pupils have a good understanding of the sequence of the Battle of Hastings. Drama is used well by the teacher with good emphasis on the correct names of the kings which most of the pupils remember and role play these characters with great enthusiasm. The good use of resources encouraged pupils to remember the historical facts such as marching from the North, Harold with an arrow in his eye and the Battle of Hastings in 1066. The pupils are to make their own Bayeux Tapestry using a sequence of photographs taken during their drama. Independent writing is encouraged well, pupils are able to recognise items in the Bayeux Tapestry picture and can relate them to the Battle. The low literacy ability of a few of the pupils inhibits their reading and writing skills. Maps of the local area help Year 8 pupils to compare roads of today with roads and paths in the 1900s. The good discussion promoted by the teacher encourages pupils to talk about farming in the past in this area. Pupils are able to point out the position of their school, the canal and various roads on their maps. They can identify the differences between the maps to recognise there were more fields in the 1900s and people lived in villages. The most able pupils work independently to recognise more differences. The teacher successfully encourages good and confident interaction between the Year 9 pupils. They are very involved in 'Operation Pied Piper' and can empathise with young evacuated children who were sent away from their parents. One pupil could describe a ration book and another knew that identity cards were used. Appropriate homework is used to encourage pupils to talk to an elderly friend or relative to find out first hand information. As a result pupils make good progress to understand what evacuation is about. Most pupils can write a list of items which would fit into a small suitcase and know that items of today were not invented at the time of World War II such as personal stereos and tissues.

118 Pupils within Key Stage 4 complete tasks to encourage independent learning. A few pupils are confident in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to access further information on historical facts although this is not sufficiently developed. Very good use of research using books is encouraged by the teacher. Pupils in Year 10 make good progress in their understanding of time lines using models of transport. Less able pupils and pupils with more complex needs do not always receive small achievable steps to ensure good learning takes place. The most successful teaching occurs where pupils are split into groups with a range of interesting resources and support from an adult. A few pupils have made satisfactory progress over two lessons to understand the community challenge of planning a playground. ICT computers are available and pupils try hard in pairs to access information. However, pupils' ICT skills are not well developed and the low reading ability of a few pupils prevents easy access to the Internet. An appropriate video of Walt Disney

World Resort 2000 introduces Year 11 pupils to think about the design of a theme park as part of the Community Challenge. The teacher successfully interwove historical themes to interest pupils in their planning. One pupil is confident enough to search out the Alton Towers web site for design ideas. Most pupils knew they needed a key to their plan and one boy took great interest in planning for the protection of wild life. Evidence and good displays shows pupils are successfully researching areas of World War II. One class is comparing the area of Stony Stratford to the Wider World of France.

119 Post 16 students make good progress, successfully carrying out a study for an ASDAN unit to plan a journey. They found out about the history of the Olympics and visited a travel agent to find out information to plan a journey to Sydney. Good use was made of independent study to investigate information by using the computer, books, maps and drawings. Each year pupils have a residential trip to Holland. Students have visited a beach site to contrast the environment there to that of Milton Keynes. They have carried out a lot of map work of Milton Keynes to support them in their travel skills for the world of work.

120 Very good use is made of the local environment to visit, experience and research areas for historical facts and geographical contrasts. Video evidence illustrates the good use of residential visits to experience a different location. Pupils and students are appropriately challenged and gain confidence and independence. The co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge. Long and medium term plans are comprehensive and monitored and supported by the co-ordinator. Teachers communicate very well but as yet there is little monitoring of teaching across the school. Planning of lessons is satisfactory. More detailed objectives with attention to meeting individual needs is not well established to ensure assessment is more focussed. Assessment is variable and requires a consistent approach. Homework is set regularly for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

121 Pupils in all key stages do not achieve satisfactory levels of attainment and have not built on their learning over time in information and communication technology. This is because the subject has not been sufficiently well planned, resourced or managed until recently. Current development planning has improved, resource levels have improved and staffing expertise has been increased. The subject is now well-placed to develop further.

122 The range of knowledge, skills and understanding amongst pupils varies considerably within all key stages. In the separate information and communication technology lessons observed pupils of all levels of attainment were making satisfactory progress within the lessons in relation to the objectives set. Learning in these lessons was satisfactory but overall attainment over time is unsatisfactory. These lessons were for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and Post 16 students. In these lessons pupils are developing their knowledge, skills and understanding of the use of the Internet and search engines to access information. Younger pupils are developing their use of computers to design and make celebration cards. They can log on and understand the need for user-names and passwords. Post 16 students use desktop publishing well when preparing a personal presentation on sport.

123 In a limited number of lessons information and communication technology was used effectively to support learning but this is not extensive and is unsatisfactory overall. For example word processing in English or designing a fun park in geography. No observations were possible in Key Stages 1 and 2 and the absence of evidence and discussions with pupils indicate that achievement is unsatisfactory.

124 In the lessons observed pupils had positive attitudes to the subject. They listened carefully to instructions and tried hard to follow them. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 for example when beginning work on preparing celebration cards persevered when using artwork to find appropriate graphics. They worked co-operatively in pairs, taking turns and sharing ideas. At the end of the lesson all thanked the teacher and said how much they had enjoyed it. In another Year 8 class pupils worked with great enthusiasm when discovering different sources of information, for example book, television, radio and the Internet. They enjoyed using search engines to find a range of data and were excited by the opportunities provided by the Internet when looking at 'space'. Although the use of information and communication technology to support learning in different subjects is limited when it was observed pupils were very enthusiastic and learning was effective. For example, in a Year 11 humanities group concerned with designing a theme park good use was made of the Internet to gather information for ideas. Pupils were very pleased with the outcome.

125 Insufficient teaching of information and communication technology was observed in Key Stages 1 and 2 to make secure judgements about the quality of teaching. Teaching in discreet information and communication technology lessons in the secondary school and with Post 16 students is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. The good teaching is largely associated with good subject knowledge and the use of subject specialist teaching. In these lessons pupils are enthused by the teachers' knowledge and clear instructions. They enjoy success, for example when using the Internet and make clear gains in their knowledge, use and understanding. In less successful lessons planning lacked detail to ensure that tasks are matched to pupils' levels of attainment. However the good use of support assistants coupled with teachers' knowledge of the pupils goes some way to overcoming this weakness.

126 The subject is now managed well. A clear development plan is in place and resources have been improved, however further development is necessary. The appointment of a specialist teacher is already having an impact on management and planning and is beginning to indicate improved standards. Many staff however currently lack confidence, skills and knowledge to teach or use information and communication technology effectively and there is a considerable training need in order to raise standards. The curriculum is appropriately planned for Key Stages 3 and 4 but not yet in Key Stages 1 and 2. Assessment and recording information is available although not yet used effectively to support planning or teaching.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

FRENCH

127 Pupils' achievement in French, bearing in mind their learning difficulties, is good. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are beginning to adapt and reform words they already know into simple combinations and new sentences. They are developing some confidence in speaking and communicating in French. A small number of pupils with greater learning difficulties listen and take part enthusiastically. They are increasing their vocabulary and some are beginning to speak a few single words in the right context. In Key Stage 4, at least half of the pupils can interpret spoken sentences in French giving directions in a town. Pupils with greater difficulties are able to answer simple questions in French with encouragement.

128 Teaching in both Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and sometimes very good. It is supported by the teacher's very secure knowledge of the subject and very good choice of activities that both challenge and motivate all pupils very well, including those with greater difficulties in learning or

speaking. Lessons are interesting and relevant enabling pupils to maintain good concentration and value each other's attempts to communicate in a foreign language.

129 In Key Stage 3 the teacher plans and presents pupils with appealing activities and paces these activities very well. Lessons are well organised with appropriate resources. This helps pupils to remain focused on the themes of lessons and get to grips with new ideas with confidence. A lesson where pupils learnt to describe face parts and name vegetables in French, culminated in 'making a face' out of a selection of salad vegetables and then eating it. This lesson engaged and enthused the class and produced some spontaneous French speaking between pupils when they had to tell each other what they thought about their vegetable face.

130 The teacher's amusing and lively presentation during Key Stage 4 make the subject enjoyable and develops good listening skills amongst pupils. Pupils benefit from encouragement and skilful questioning with good pronunciation. They develop confidence in trying to speak French and gradually shape their own speech in response to the teacher. Well-planned activities and careful introduction of new vocabulary enables pupils to learn more independently and make good progress. The lessons in Key Stage 4 build very well on pupils' visits to France when they recall and describe their experiences in French.

131 Pupils' attitudes to this subject are very good, they enjoy their lessons and try very hard to answer questions in French and achieve good results. Some pupils find it harder to express themselves or are reticent in speaking a foreign language but respond well to the encouragement and enjoyment they derive from French lessons. They pay attention to the teacher and are respectful of each other's efforts to communicate in a foreign language.

132 This subject makes a significant contribution to the social and cultural development of pupils through the organisation of residential visits to France and in the way that the specialist classroom is a French-speaking environment. Each year there has been a visit to a residential activity centre in Normandy where pupils' forged links with other children, both French and English, experienced French food, local visits and outdoor education activities. Pupils take on specific responsibilities on the school journey and visit a bakery to watch croissants being made. They also visit the Mont St Michel as well as a French castle and market place. On their return, they have access to artefacts from France and displays of French customs and way of life.

133 The curriculum is very well planned showing continuity across the years and enabling pupils to make good progress according to their individual ability. It is supported by a clear and concise policy and schemes of work developed by the co-ordinator and her colleague who also teaches the subject. There are many opportunities for reinforcing other curriculum subjects in French lessons, for example the roots of English words are explored. French lessons have also contributed to the wider world project in humanities and link with art and design through discussion of the French Impressionist painters. This subject also contributes to the Youth Award Scheme where pupils rise well to the challenge to learn about another country.

134 The subject is very well managed and co-ordinated and the two part time teachers use some of their own time for additional liaison and planning. Learning support assistants focus well on individual needs and are particularly effective when they have the confidence to speak French themselves. There is an accurate and up to date inventory of resources for the subject and activities are planned and budgeted for year by year and with longer-term vision. There is a dedicated room for French that is well equipped with a videotape recorder, a television, audiotape facility and a language master, a desktop computer with speakers and printer, and a small library of books and teaching resources.

MUSIC

135 Achievements in music are good. Pupils in Key Stages 1 and 3 make good progress in lessons and over time. Pupils within Key Stage 2 make very good progress with very good cross-curricular links with English to encourage speaking and listening. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Very good accommodation is now in place where pupils are enabled to perform, experience and learn music skills. Resources are comprehensive and include a range of instruments and percussion. The co-ordinators successfully liaise to ensure continuity between primary and middle school. Teachers and the co-ordinator have good subject knowledge and know their pupils well. Good opportunities are provided for pupils in Key Stage 3 to work as independently as possible in the performing arts which successfully combines art and design, drama and music. Music lessons in guitar and recorder playing further encourage pupils to develop self-confidence and musical skills. Pupils in Key Stage 4 do not have time tabled time for music but contribute well to performances and work towards accreditation for the Diploma of Vocational Education in Arts and Media Services. This includes an age appropriate visit and review of a theatre or dance performance and a study of the life and work of a musician or actor. Visiting actors and musicians compliment well the work of the school. Post 16 pupils experience visits to theatre and performances and support younger pupils. Teachers know their pupils well and on going assessment in lessons is good. Further development is required to use assessment information to guide overall curricular planning.

136 In Key Stage 1 the pupils are making good progress to develop a sense of different moods, recognise music pitch and respond to rhythm. The good variety of percussion instruments and the structure of the lessons ensure all pupils are involved well. Pupils are successfully encouraged to march and follow movements while listening to a lively CD. The pupils thoroughly enjoy the session. They listen and respond well to the staff. An appropriate mood is created with music and drama by dressing up and “taking a magic carpet ride to India”.

137 Within Key Stage 2 pupils in Years 3 and 4 make very good progress. They sit quietly and listen carefully to the sound of fireworks. Most pupils can create their own sounds such as ‘whizz’ and ‘bang’ and are able to choose suitable instruments to imitate the sounds. Pupils respond very well to the sense of humour and clear instructions which are reflected in the good teamwork and encouraging atmosphere. Pupils learn how to evaluate their own performance through recording. They are successfully developing a sense of rhythm when clapping to music. In Years 4 and 5 pupils make good progress in learning the words of songs. The special support assistant gives very good help to two pupils who need encouragement to join in. The expressive voice of the teacher and the well-presented lesson in small achievable steps ensure the pupils give very good attention to the tasks. Pupils are encouraged to explore and successfully identify sounds. The appropriate use of resources ensure pupils make very good progress in following the pointer, making sounds and using actions to portray the characters. By the end of the lesson pupils can sing all the words to a new song with confidence. Most pupils can shout, shake their hands and stamp their feet in rhythm. By the time they are 11 pupils sing and use actions for a Halloween song. Pupils are encouraged very well to work together to explore music and movement to introduce the musical elements of pitch and dynamics. They explore and express their ideas about music using various movements. Elements of ‘sound’ are linked well to the science topic and multi-cultural elements are introduced well with a song about Divali and with references to Rangoli patterns. Pupils make good progress in the playing of loud and soft sounds. A few pupils can play two notes on chime bars to accompany the singing. They clap in rhythm and respond well to the teacher’s high expectations and good use of percussion instruments.

138 During the week of the inspection Key Stage 3 pupils enjoyed a visit to the musical show 'Joseph'. This reinforced well the work achieved in art and design, drama and music. This is the planned Christmas show which staff and pupils will perform for their parents and friends.

139 Key Stage 3 pupils make good progress to perform together. They are able to follow a theme to build on acquired skills and make good progress linking their ideas together. An atmosphere of mystery and magic is created with a darkened hall, strategic lighting and a stage on which they confidently perform. Pupils plan together, take turns and go straight into their parts. They understand the beginning and the end of a sequence and speak up very well with good voice projection. A volunteer musician works well with the teacher to encourage pupils to sing in harmony the words of songs from the music score of 'Joseph And His Multicoloured Dream Coat'. The professional approach and high expectations of the co-ordinator ensures successful productions, which are performed throughout the year and recorded on videos. The quality of teaching is not yet monitored in a systematic way and the subject development plan requires greater detail. Music lessons provide very good learning opportunities for pupils who in turn achieve good musical skills, confidence and the ability to perform together for an audience. Pupils take instruments home in order to practise, they say they enjoy playing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

140 Pupils achieve well in physical education throughout the school, as a result of a variety of good links with specialist facilities in the community, and the good and very good teaching and coaching skills of staff. Many go on to achieve at a high level in the senior part of the school. Strengths include swimming, trampoline and games. Secondary evidence suggests older pupils achieve very significant success in personal and team outdoor challenges as part of residential experiences.

141 In Key Stage 1 pupils learn self-control when working with others in a combined space. They learn to roll, turn, change pace and direction, and to transfer these skills onto soft play equipment or low apparatus with some success and enjoyment.

142 By the end of Key Stage 2 most pupils have developed a good level of water confidence, and many can swim unaided at close to age appropriate levels. They are aware of safety issues and apply them in public settings. In gymnastics pupils show inventiveness in exploring and demonstrating a range of control rolls and turns on low apparatus. They take turns well and use the equipment sensibly. They learn to move and store apparatus sensibly, saving time in a cramped multi-use school hall.

143 By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils have learnt to change rapidly for physical education, although the poor facilities require them to do this in turn and make showering impractical. They develop good skills and approaches to a variety of major and minor games. Although overall the skill levels are below those expected of pupils for that age nationally, everyone makes good gains and, as a result of the banding system, higher attaining pupils can succeed at appropriate levels. Some pupils are able to participate actively in their own physiotherapy programmes, supported by skilled staff.

144 By the end of Key Stage 4 and in the Post 16 group pupils are spending more time developing both the physical education and their social and personal skills in a variety of public settings. They build football and hockey skills to a good level in a national coaching centre, they improve their swimming, and develop confidence and gain success in trampoline award schemes at an excellent gymnastics centre. They learn to work strongly as teams, to understand the need for rules and how to

operate competitively without becoming aggressive. They show pleasure in their own and others successes.

145 The attitude of pupils towards physical education in the school is very good. It is seen as central to the overall ethos, particularly the development of personal and social skills. In this it is very successful. All pupils observed on visits to community facilities are very well behaved and a credit to the school.

146 The quality of teaching is very good, stronger when working on specialist areas with older pupils. The staff team all have very good skills, many have specialist coaching awards. They are generally well supported by classroom assistants some of whom are well able to support individual pupils through prepared physiotherapy programmes. The school has established very good links with high quality community facilities, in some of which they also attract the additional skills of swimming instructors and hockey professionals. In the best teaching, lessons are well structured, with very good subject and pupil knowledge being used to set and adjust the level of challenge very accurately. Motivational skills are very good and feedback and demonstration is precise and helps pupil's understand exactly what is required of them to improve. Safety is given close attention. In some lessons opportunities for pupils to plan and evaluate elements of their own work are missed, and the role and positioning of support staff is not established as carefully as it might be.

147 The curriculum is broad and balanced, enriched by very good community links. It has a clear underlying philosophy, as increasing the elements where attainment is specifically recorded. It now offers an accredited course for older pupils, an improvement since the last inspection. Assessment in Key Stages 1 and 2 is used to support banding against ability for some activities later in the school and is leading to better achievement at all levels. The subject is well led and managed with a commitment that goes well beyond the school gates.

148 Accommodation owned by the school is poor and insufficient for the full range of pupils and activities. Storage is unsatisfactory and limits space for pupils. In particular the accommodation for changing and showering is unacceptable. It leads directly to considerable loss of taught time, and limits the possibilities for pupil privacy and dignity. However the accommodation and resources that the school accesses from across the community are good and considerably enhance the quality of provision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

149 Although religious education is not on the timetable as a discrete subject it is taught in the Primary department through topic work and in the Secondary department through Humanities. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory across all key stages the Foundation Year and Post 16.

150 In the primary school pupils listen to a variety of stories from the major religions which identify and encourage discussion about moral and social issues as they relate to their own lives. By five years of age children are becoming aware of themselves and beginning to explore the world around them. They have listened to stories from the Bible, for example the Birth of Jesus, and taken part in religious festivals such as Christmas and Diwali.

151 By seven years of age they understand the need to care for others including animals and looking after the world around us. They talk about their families and the people who help us. They listen to stories from the Old and New Testament and know about some important elements of

Hinduism. They visit a local Anglican Church and role-play some Christian celebrations e.g. a christening.

152 By 11 years of age they have extended their discussions to include personal relationships e.g. what it means to be a friend. They listen to further stories from the Bible for example the 'Lost Sheep' and Noah to illustrate how we must care for each other and all creatures. They also hear stories from other religions such as that of Rama and Sita from Hinduism. They know that all religions have special places in which to worship such as a Church, Synagogue or Mosque and that followers of the different religions have special customs that include food and clothes. The higher attainers show a depth of understanding in relating stories to their own lives, for example in discussion with two pupils just moved up from the primary school, they were able to compare Noah's Ark with the current situations of floods in England and one confidently stated "we wouldn't have another world flood because God promised we wouldn't".

153 By 14 years of age pupils have listened to the stories about the Life of Jesus, His Birth, Death and Resurrection and considered the treatment of Jews in World War II. They listen to versions of the story of Creation but have little opportunity to develop their understanding or look at the comparison between the different ideas although one boy wanted to know how God created the Earth in space "because we can't breath in space". They discuss other moral issues such as jealousy particularly through the story of Joseph and his brothers. During the inspection one class went to see a production of 'Joseph' in Milton Keynes.

154 In Key Stage 4 and Post 16 pupils study Islam as a major religion for the Youth Award Scheme. They also concentrate on religion within their own and the wider community. By 16 years of age they have discussed Human Rights, the Faith of an individual, learning about Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa and Terry Waite and considered the role of various Charity Organisations such as Save The Children who came to visit the school during the inspection.

155 Pupils enjoy the stories from the different religions. They listen quietly, ask relevant questions and take part in group discussions. No teaching was seen in the Secondary department and no direct teaching in the primary classes. However where religious education is included as part of topic work the lesson planning identifies the religious element of the lesson and the intended learning objectives. The good relationships and encouragement for pupils to express their opinions results in discussions which relate moral issues to everyday life. Where lessons were less effective opportunities were missed to allow pupils to develop and extend their own ideas.

156 The curriculum is based on the Buckingham Agreed Syllabus and generally balanced except in Key Stage 3 where not all attainment targets are fully covered. The organisation of religious education is currently being reviewed following the recent appointment of the new subject manager. As a result the monitoring of teaching and subject development planning is not in place.