

INSPECTION REPORT

HARROLD PRIORY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Harrold, Nr Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109649

Headteacher: Keith Atkins

Reporting inspector: Jan Allcorn
1068

Dates of inspection: 13-16 November 2000

Inspection number: 223701

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 9-13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: The Green
Harrold
Bedfordshire

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr G Lord OBE

Date of previous inspection: November 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Jenny Mynett 9334	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils How well does the school work in partnership with parents
Colin Robertson 5399	Team Inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students
Roger Parry 20247	Team Inspector	History and Geography	How well does the school care for its pupils(support)
Barbara Baughan 19499	Team Inspector	English English as an additional language	
Pamela Draycott 14876	Team Inspector	Religious Education and equal opportunities	Pupils' personal development
Rhona Humphries 10727	Team Inspector	Design and Technology	How well the school is led and managed (support)
Derek Jones 3643	Team Inspector	Mathematics and Information and Communication Technology	
Russell Whiteley 8744	Team Inspector	Art and design, and music	
Michael Whalley 20247	Team Inspector	Modern Foreign Languages (French)	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Harrold Priory is a middle school with 416 boys and girls aged from nine to 13 years on roll. It is situated in the village of Harrold in North Bedfordshire, although pupils attend from a wider area. A considerable number of parents commute to London to work. Pupils come from families who value education, support their children well and are generally financially secure. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is very low as is that from minority ethnic groups. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average overall, with some very high achieving pupils, and a small number with learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below the national figure, but that for pupils with a statement of need is in line with that nationally.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Harrold Priory is a popular and successful school where pupils achieve well. This is shown by their well above average performance in national tests for 11 year olds and subsequent achievements in national tests at 14 years following transfer to the local upper school at 13 years. The school has many strengths. Throughout a difficult period of staff absence over the last two years the headteacher and his staff have maintained good standards. This is due to their high commitment and hard work, supported by good teaching. Pupils bring a high level of enthusiasm and interest to their work. However, systems for reviewing the school's work are not rigorous enough to ensure practice is meeting the school's expectations in all areas of its work. Although the governors with the headteacher have worked hard to overcome a recent budget deficit, a strengthening of accounting procedures is still required to prevent future overspends. Given the good standards pupils achieve the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Well above average results in national tests at Key Stage 2
- Well behaved, interested and enthusiastic learners who achieve well
- Mature and responsible young people with good social skills
- Good teaching from hardworking and committed staff
- A caring and supportive learning environment
- A good range of visits and extra-curricular activities
- Excellent links with the local lower schools and upper school

What could be improved

- Pupils' achievement in French, physical education and religious education
- The effectiveness of systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, including the budget
- Feedback to pupils on how well they are doing and how to improve their work
- The management of support for pupils with special educational needs
- The use of computers across the subjects of the curriculum

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1994 and overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Results in National Curriculum tests for 11 year olds have continued to improve. Standards in other subjects have either been maintained or improved, except in French, physical education and religious education. These were areas of weakness at the time of the last inspection. Attendance and behaviour continue to be very good. The amount of good and very good teaching seen has risen, a result of an increasing focus on developing teachers' skills. The reporting system has been reviewed and parents now receive good information on how well their children are doing. Other issues identified for action have been addressed, but procedures for reviewing the work of the school still lack sufficient rigour and there are still weaknesses in the assessment procedures. Although pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, there has been no real improvement in the opportunities provided for pupils to develop spiritual awareness across the subjects of the curriculum.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum Key Stage 2 tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			Similar schools ¹
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	A	A	A	B
Mathematics	B	B	A	C
Science	A	A	A	B

Key	
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

The school's results in Key Stage 2 tests are well above national averages and over time have improved at the same rate as those nationally. Appropriate targets are set which the school usually exceeds. In summer 2000 all pupils gained the expected level for their age in science, a good achievement. Pupils also did well at the higher levels in English and science and standards in these subjects were better than those for similar schools. The school prepares pupils well for the tests, a significant number of pupils with learning difficulties doing better than expected. Comparison with attainment on entry to the school indicates pupils sustain good progress in their learning over time.

Standards seen for current 11 year olds in Year 6 are above average in English, mathematics and science, with the higher attaining pupils doing particularly well. They are above average in history and geography. In art, information and communication technology, music and design and technology pupils achieve well given their lower skills on entry to the school in these subjects. Pupils in Year 8 continue to achieve above average levels in English, mathematics and science. In nearly all other subjects pupils are working at levels above those expected for their age. They are doing particularly well in art, music and textiles.

In French, physical education and religious education both the oldest Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils, although reaching average standards, could be doing better. In information and communication technology not all the required aspects are covered well enough for the older Key Stage 3 pupils. Pupils also have insufficient opportunities to use computers in other subjects to develop their skills further. This makes standards average rather than above average.

¹ Similar schools are schools with an equivalent proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. The pupils are interested and enthusiastic learners.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils work well together in lessons and enjoy their breaktimes together. They appreciate one another's achievements. Older pupils undertake responsibilities seriously. Pupils are confident and mature by the time they leave the school.
Attendance	Well above average

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 9-11 years	aged 11-13 years
Lessons seen overall	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 good. Nearly all lessons seen were at least satisfactory with just under half of these good and a further quarter very good or excellent. Teaching in English, mathematics and science is good as it is in most subjects. Particularly good teaching was seen in art, geography, and textiles. In these lessons teachers provide well planned learning opportunities that enable pupils to achieve the highest possible standards. Teaching is less effective in French, because teachers have insufficient training in the specific skills required to teach the subject. There is good teaching of literacy and numeracy skills in English and mathematics. Good opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills were seen in a number of subjects across the curriculum, for example, science. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and of the highest attainers are met through appropriately planned activities in most subjects. However, there is insufficiently demanding work for the most able pupils in physical education and religious education.

The good level of teaching throughout the school, supported by the pupils' very positive attitudes towards learning, ensures the pupils make good progress in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides good learning opportunities for pupils, including a good range of visits and extra-curricular activities, plus drama and media studies.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory overall. In most classes teachers provide well for these pupils' needs. The support provided by the learning support assistants is effective. In spite of recent improvements, the school's overall management of provision requires carefully monitoring to ensure the effectiveness of the new procedures in meeting the needs of all pupils.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Social development is very good and moral and cultural good. Spiritual development is satisfactory, but opportunities are missed to develop it across the curriculum.

How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a good caring and supportive learning environment for pupils. Teachers know their pupils well, keep a careful eye on their progress and give good support when difficulties occur. However, feedback to pupils on how well they are doing, through marking and linking achievements to National Curriculum levels, is not consistent enough yet to help all pupils know what to do to improve.
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The school works well with parents. A number of important health and safety issues mostly relating to the accommodation were identified. Staff knowledge of child protection procedures requires updating. Traffic outside the school gate at the end of the school day poses a safety hazard for pupils. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship, for religious education and information and communication technology are not fully met.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and staff have maintained good standards during long term absences of senior staff over the last two years. The work of subject heads of department is generally a strength. However the school does not monitor and support the work of staff with responsibilities as well as it could do. Overall leadership and management is sound.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors satisfactorily undertake their responsibilities. They work hard for the school and take an interest in its work. They know its strengths and weaknesses. However, they do not yet have clear enough procedures in place to ensure the budget is sufficiently controlled to prevent a further overspend.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The new school development plan is a useful tool for improving the work of the school, although the outcomes for the pupils are not yet specific enough to check its success. National test results in English, mathematics and science are analysed appropriately to identify areas for further development. In other subjects available information is not yet used to gain an overall picture of standards for comparison with national expectations.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are adequate overall and well used to support pupils' learning. However accommodation is tight, with one hall currently used for assemblies, lunches, drama and physical education.

The school compares appropriately its costs and results with other schools. Purchases are made to ensure the best value for money. However, the low level of technician support in the practical subjects means teachers have to give up valuable planning time to maintain these subject areas.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high standards their children achieve The mature and responsible attitudes their children develop Links with parents Good teaching High expectations Overall management of the school Children are happy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision for pupils on the special educational needs register The amount of harder work in Year 8 Information on their child's progress Teachers keeping to the homework timetable Toilets and changing rooms Lockers for their children Opportunities for less gifted pupils to feel valued

Inspectors agree with what pleases parents most about the school. Although last year individual education plans for all pupils with special educational needs were not fully in place, issues raised by parents are now being satisfactorily addressed. However, clear oversight of this area needs to be maintained. Toilets and changing rooms are inadequate. Bags left around the place are a hazard. Possible solutions are limited due to the amount of space available. Inspectors found little evidence to support parents' views for harder work for pupils in Year 8, more consistency in homework and opportunities for less gifted pupils to feel valued. They consider that parents receive good information on their child's progress overall.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Over the last three years overall performance in national tests for 11 year olds has been well above that nationally. In 1999 it was in line with that for similar schools and in 2000 above. In summer 2000 performance in all three core subjects, English, mathematics and science, was well above national averages. This represents an improvement in mathematics from previous years. Results at the higher levels, although above average, are still not as good as those in English and science, which were well above average. However, two pupils achieved the highest possible level, equivalent to that expected for a 14 year old, which very few pupils do nationally. In science all pupils achieved at least the expected level, a considerable achievement.
2. Inspection evidence gives the overall attainment of pupils currently at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) and for the oldest Key Stage 3 pupils (Year 8) above that expected nationally. Throughout both key stages pupils continue to make good progress in their learning from at least above average attainment on entry to the school. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress at both key stages, benefiting from clear programmes to develop their reading and spelling and good support in lessons in the core subjects. However, although not detracting from the school's achievements in national tests, discussions with pupils and the inspection of pupils' work indicate that pupils' standards do not always match the well above standards achieved in the tests. This is because the pupils are well prepared for the tests by the school: in particular pupils with learning difficulties who, although achieving well, obtain results in many cases better than their actual attainment.
3. For the core subjects of English, mathematics and science attainment is above that expected nationally at the end of Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 8, these levels have been sustained for all three subjects. The attainment of pupils is considerably above average in art by Year 8, with pupils making good progress from below average standards on entry to the school. The enthusiasm and skills of the art teachers contribute significantly to the pupils reaching expected standards by Year 6 and continuing this good progress into Key Stage 3. Similar good progress is made in music from below average standards in Year 5 to above average standards by the time pupils leave the school in Year 8. Attainment is also above that expected nationally in history and geography, an improvement since the last inspection. In design and technology attainment is in line with that expected for pupils by 11 years of age, indicating good progress from below average making skills on entry to the school. This is sustained in Key Stage 3 where pupils are achieving above average standards by Year 8, particularly in textiles.
4. Attainment in information and communication technology is in line with national averages by the end of Key Stage 2, and also for the oldest Key Stage 3 pupils in Year 8. Some older pupils achieve well. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2, a significant number of pupils having below average skills for their age on entry to the school. Although progress in specific information and communication technology lessons is good, there are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their skills further within subjects of the curriculum. This leads to some underachievement in information and communication technology at Key Stage 3, particularly as pupils do not experience sufficient work in control, such as the use of sensors in science.

5. Standards in physical education are in line with those expected nationally by the end of both key stages. This, however, represents underachievement by the pupils, in spite of good performances in competitions by the more talented pupils. It reflects a lack of clear schemes of work over the last few years that made sure all pupils built upon skills previously learnt. In religious education pupils are achieving at levels in line with those set out in the locally Agreed Syllabus, but here pupils are also not doing as well as they could do, particularly the most able pupils. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop the depth and level of understanding they are capable of, both through the low time available and the undemanding activities provided. By the time the pupils leave the school in Year 8 their standards in French are in line with levels expected for their age, but in relation to their abilities the pupils should be doing better. This is primarily due to a lack of expertise in the specific teaching strategies required in modern foreign languages that help pupils achieve the best possible standards. There has been no improvement in standards in French, physical education and religious education since the last inspection. This is in contrast to improvements in other subjects.
6. Pupils' reading and writing skills are good. Although there is no cross-curricular policy on the teaching of literacy, most departments are aware of the need to focus on basic literacy skills within their subjects and on the language competence needed for their work. For instance, in most teaching rooms there are clear displays of subject-related vocabulary, and good attention is paid to correct spelling. Pupils' work is well presented, with work on display creating high expectations and providing examples of good presentation. Pupils write well at length in some subjects, notably science, history and geography. There are high expectations of standards in speaking and listening in all subjects, particularly English and religious education, where there is an emphasis on group and pair discussion. This contributes to the good speaking and listening skills pupils acquire.
7. Pupils have good numeracy skills and these are used well and developed further in most subject areas. Pupils' numeracy skills support their work considerably in science, the science department having made an excellent practical response to the National Numeracy Strategy in common with other local middle schools' science departments. Pupils handle number and measurement, mentally, orally and in writing very well in history and geography. They use these skills well in design and technology and science and satisfactorily in information and communication technology. Opportunities for the application of spatial concepts are very good in history and geography and good in science. They occur in isometric drawing in information and communication technology, in the creation of composition in art and in formal diagrams in graphics. Opportunities for pupils to make sense of information presented numerically and graphically are very good in history, geography, mathematics and science.
8. In the National Curriculum tests in summer 2000 girls performed better than boys, more so at the higher levels. The difference is not yet sufficiently wide to cause concern, but needs to be kept under close scrutiny. In all subjects, both in lessons and in the scrutiny of work, no significant differences were seen in the standards of girls and boys. Higher attaining pupils are well supported by setting arrangements in English, mathematics and science. Where teachers plan well the very ablest pupils have the opportunity to achieve the highest possible levels. When this happens the particularly gifted pupils reach levels equivalent to those expected of much older pupils, for example, in mathematics, science and textiles. Pupils with particular talents have had the opportunity to take GCSE² in music and French in the past and one pupil is currently studying for GCSE in mathematics.

² General Certificate of Secondary Education –normally taken by pupils of 16 years

9. The school has a good range of data on individual pupil's progress and attainment from annual testing throughout Years 5 to 8. Verbal reasoning tests and other tests of pupils' potential are appropriately used to predict grades for English, mathematics and science in the national tests for 11 year olds. These are shared with staff. The targets the school sets itself in these subjects are suitably challenging, especially at the higher levels. The targets are exceeded overall, with lower attaining pupils in particular doing well. The school also analyses and monitors results against the targets it sets itself in these subjects, identifying any underachievement.
10. For other subjects of the curriculum the school is not yet using information on pupils' performance to compare overall standards in each subject from year to year with national expectations, in particular at the end of Key Stage 2. Most subjects have this information.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils demonstrate very positive attitudes to school and to their learning. This is an area of continued strength since the last inspection. Parents are particularly pleased by the way the school helps their children to become confident and responsible, and the good values it promotes through the very high expectations of staff. Pupils enjoy school. They are enthusiastic, eager to contribute, well motivated, and keen to participate both in lessons and the other activities of the school. Pupils are treated as individuals and encouraged to develop their own lines of enquiry. The generally mature attitudes and conscientious approach to work contribute to the good standards achieved in the school. Pupils value the house point and memo system that rewards positive attitudes, good work and behaviour. They recognise and applaud the successes of others in the house assemblies, and wear their star badges with pride.
12. The standards of behaviour in and around the school are very good. Pupils helped to develop the school rules, and are well aware of what is expected of them. Ninety-one per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire thought the school promoted good standards of behaviour. However, they expressed some concerns regarding the standards of behaviour and occasional incidents of bullying which occur on the school buses. Pupils are courteous and polite holding open the doors for adults and helping visitors. They speak well of their school. They are happy to discuss what they are doing and to show their work to visitors. Pupils feel that the school provides a safe and happy environment. They say there are occasional incidents of bullying, some bossiness from older pupils and some teasing, not all of which gets reported. However, they know who to go to if there are problems and consider the school takes any incidents seriously and deals with them promptly and effectively. One pupil has been excluded for five days this term, a rare event.
13. Relationships in the school are very good, both between staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves. Pupils treat each other well. Pupils are very supportive of those who are less able. Year 8 pupils act as counsellors or mentors to the younger pupils. There are many opportunities offered for pupils to work together, such as in an art lesson where the pupils together paced out measurements of the wingspan of the 'Angel of the North' sculpture, to get some idea of the size. Pupils work well together in both pair and group situations, and this friendly atmosphere promotes a good working environment and makes a positive impact on learning. They listen to each other and are happy to talk about their feelings. Pupils respect others' opinions, values and beliefs. A Year 7 class sensitively discussed prayer and worship in a PRASE (personal, religious and social education) lesson, taking note sensibly of others' views and opinions. Pupils willingly take advantage of the good opportunities the school provides for them to take on responsibilities or act in monitor roles. The very effective house system encourages participation in sporting and other competitive activities and pupils take full and sensible advantage of opportunities to inform staff of their views. The house captains have considerable responsibilities running the house system, which they do very well. The open day during the inspection saw many pupils readily helping staff by conducting scientific experiments, showing visitors around the school, or interviewing them on close circuit television.

14. The levels of attendance in the school are very high in comparison with national averages. The levels of unauthorised absences are minimal. Pupils generally arrive promptly to school and lessons start on time. There is no extra time built into the timetable for movement between lessons, however, delays are very few as staff hurry classes to their next lesson. Punctuality in the mornings can be a problem when the buses are late. With up to 100 pupils travelling to school on the double-decker buses this can mean a large proportion of the school arriving late if one of them is delayed.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is good, with no differences between the two key stages. Nearly all lessons seen were at least satisfactory with just under half of these good and a further quarter very good or excellent. Pupils are enthusiastic and interested learners and they take full advantage of the good teaching they receive. This enables them to make good progress in lessons and to maintain above average standards in most subjects of the curriculum. In nearly all subjects teaching is good, with particularly good teaching being observed in art, geography, science and textiles. Elsewhere, in French, physical education and religious education it is satisfactory overall but with some good and occasionally very good teaching observed. All this represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection with a higher proportion of good or better teaching being seen.
16. All teachers manage pupils well and their good subject knowledge is a strength in most lessons. In the best lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge very well to help pupils achieve the highest possible levels of learning. Skilled questioning encourages pupils to think hard about what they have found out and learnt and to arrive at their own conclusions and understanding of the topic being studied. This gives the most able pupils opportunities to understand more complex ideas whilst making learning more secure for everyone in the class. For instance, in geography the teacher's very good questioning made pupils think very carefully about how tribes who live in rain forests grow food and adapt to changing circumstances. Pupils clearly understood what was happening and gained additional insight into environmental issues.
17. The very best lessons are well planned, with good pace and high expectations of pupils. In an excellent textiles lesson on making puppets, the teacher's planning clearly identified all the areas that needed a full explanation. This helped pupils to produce the best possible results and provided opportunities for the most able pupils to attain levels well above those expected for their age. The best lessons also have a varied range of time related tasks that maintain pupils' interest throughout the hour-long session. For example, a Year 6 mathematics lesson started with an oral discussion that recapped quickly and effectively previous work on congruent shapes. It then moved onto practical activities and group work and finished with a short mental arithmetic test. Pupils remained focused throughout the lesson and made very good gains in learning. Successful teaching matches tasks to pupils' previous learning and abilities, both supporting the weakest pupil but providing work sufficiently hard enough for the most able pupils. Teachers often do this by preparing worksheets at different levels of difficulty which enable all pupils to undertake successfully the work required.
18. In the few unsatisfactory lessons observed in French the lack of expertise in how to teach the subject most effectively was the main weakness. However, in all subjects non-specialists are generally given good support by subject co-ordinators. A weakness in a significant number of otherwise satisfactory lessons was insufficient attention to matching tasks to the learning needs of the pupils. For example, in physical education pupils were being introduced to forward and backward rolls, but it was evident that many could not only perform these competently but already knew the correct terminology. Occasionally the hour long sessions do not contain enough variety in the tasks to sustain pupils' interest fully and as a result the pace of work slows.

19. Planning and support for pupils on the special educational needs register is good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The lower English and mathematics groups in Years 5 and 6 have additional teacher support. Learning support assistants provide good help in lessons for pupils with learning difficulties and those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. They show initiative in ensuring that helpful notes are in pupils' books and they adjust homework tasks to meet specific learning needs. The learning assistants also provide short well-planned one-to-one sessions to meet individual pupils' reading, spelling, and speaking and listening needs as identified in their individual education plans. There is no support for pupils in other subjects of the curriculum, for example, in practical subjects, such as design and technology. Here pupils with learning needs generally receive appropriate support, but the teacher is able to do this because other pupils are keen and hardworking and are able to work independently. This reduces the time to talk with these more able pupils about their work and to pose those questions that enable them to make additional leaps in learning, particularly the most able pupils.
20. Teachers regularly mark pupils' books, but written comments for pupils on how well they are doing and how they can improve their work are very limited. Most comments are restricted to 'good' or 'you can do better'. The marking seen too often consisted of only ticks, a few books were unmarked, and some comments were predominately negative giving little support and encouragement, in one case for less able pupils. However, instances were observed of teachers giving appropriate feedback to pupils in lessons on how to improve their work through the recap of previous work or one to one comments. Few subjects use any grading system to indicate the level of work seen, even for the older Key Stage 3 pupils. Not all subject areas use National Curriculum levels to check pupils' progress and to help pupils to know what is expected of them, although in art good practice was observed.
21. Homework is regularly set and clearly supports the good standards pupils achieve. The amount set is appropriate. Pupils in discussion indicated that they spend a suitable amount of time on it, often more because they want to do well. Parents are overall satisfied with homework arrangements and commented how well their children respond to the expectation to do further work at home. They were particularly pleased at how the new youngest children had adapted and one parent commented that her child was 'lapping it up'. However, a few parents commented that the timetable was not always kept to, resulting in too much on one night. Pupils interviewed also commented on this, but inspectors did not judge this to be a major difficulty, especially if parents informed staff of the circumstance.
22. The national literacy and numeracy strategies at both Key Stages 2 and 3 have been well implemented. In mathematics there has been a particularly positive effect with a greater focus on teaching mental calculation skills improving pupils' attainment and national test results. However, in English there has been an over-emphasis on aspects of grammar, particularly at Key Stage 3 such that teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write creatively and at length. In most other subjects teachers take good advantage of opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils are introduced to the correct technical language, as in a Year 8 bottom set science lesson where careful planning helped pupils to acquire a good understanding of the meaning of 'conduction' in a scientific context. In a textiles lesson pupils had the opportunity to use their mathematical knowledge for finding the circumference of a circle when making patterns for their puppets.
23. The school rightly places a high focus on the continued improvement of teaching and learning. In-service training activities and the recent appointment of a teaching co-ordinator to work with the advanced skills teacher reflect this. There is a programme of paired observations in place, which is useful for individuals. The well-constructed development plan of the advanced skills teacher will now systematically monitor the quality of teaching across the school as a whole and will support the school's continued development of work in this area. Given the very positive attitudes of pupils to learning and the good subject knowledge and teaching skills of staff a greater proportion of very good and excellent lessons might be expected.

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

STUDENTS?

24. The school provides good learning opportunities for pupils and an appropriate programme of personal development. A broad and balanced curriculum, to which all pupils have good access, is well supported by a wide range of visits and extra-curricular activities. However, there are areas where provision is not fully meeting statutory requirements. The amount of religious education provided is less than that required by the locally Agreed Syllabus. In information and communication technology the use of computers to support work in subjects of the curriculum in both key stages and to control systems in Years 7 and 8 is not yet sufficient to meet new National Curriculum requirements introduced in September 2000 (Curriculum 2000).
25. The curriculum has many positive features. It is mainly taught by subject specialists; above average time is given to lessons; an accelerated learning programme enriches science; and there is good provision for drama and media studies. Whilst French is taught at Key Stage 2, not a national requirement, the one lesson a week and the skills of the staff available at this level do not provide the best learning opportunities for pupils. Opportunities in expressive arts are particularly rich with, for example, a strong emphasis in music on performing and musical appreciation. This extends beyond the classroom, where music features prominently in extra-curricular activities. An annual drama production provides opportunities for all pupils in Year 8 to become involved, on and off stage. Sport is another strength of the extra-curricular provision and there is an extensive list of fixtures. A good range of visits, such as that to the British Museum in history, field trips in geography, and a week in France give pupils good first hand experiences to support their learning in the classroom. The use of curriculum time-lines in many classrooms informs pupils of where their studies are leading and the range of work they will do.
26. The school is committed to making links across the different subjects of the curriculum, where these will improve pupils' learning. A curriculum co-ordinator has been appointed to promote these, but this role has yet to be fully developed. In information and communication technology a particular weakness is the limited use of the good skills gained in specific subject lessons in other subjects of the curriculum in order to support pupils' knowledge and understanding in these areas. There are excellent curriculum links with other local schools, which support well continuity of learning between middle schools and the local upper school. Links with the community are good. The local police officer, for example, visits regularly and talks to the pupils in assemblies.
27. Most schemes of work take account of pupils' different needs and are appropriately under revision to meet new National Curriculum requirements. However, insufficient progress has been made in developing that for physical education since the last inspection. Subjects give good attention to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, especially art, science, history and geography, even though there is no whole-school literacy policy and the numeracy policy has yet to be shared across the curriculum.
28. The Code of Practice³ is in place for pupils with special educational needs, including revised statements for pupils with a statement of special educational need. This was not the case during the last school year where not all pupils' individual education plans were fully in place. Procedures are now sound, but the needs of some pupils require further review to ensure the appropriate support is in place: for example, the monitoring and sharpness of targets in pupils' individual education plans.
29. An appropriate programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) extends the curriculum for all pupils. This is known as the PRASE programme. It has been developed

³ Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the 1993 Education Act.

principally by the co-ordinator and the heads of year and is taught by form tutors. The overall content of the programme is satisfactory. It includes a drugs education programme for the older pupils and discussion on aspects of sex education, with a focus on relationships. Anti-bullying awareness is also dealt with and careers education for pupils of 11 years and older is addressed in partnership with the upper school where it forms part of the Year 9 programme. The scheme of work for PRASE lacks clarity and detail but pupils nevertheless enjoy the variety offered by the scheme and benefit from a range of visiting speakers. The school is beginning to take into account aspects of the PSHE programme outlined in Curriculum 2000.

30. The school places a high emphasis on pupils' personal development where pupils are valued as individuals and their different abilities and talents celebrated. Its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall and it succeeds in promoting positive values such as respect for self and others, tolerance and consideration.
31. Opportunities for developing pupils' spiritual awareness are satisfactory. The key issue from the previous inspection about improving the quality of planning for the provision for spiritual development across the curriculum has not been addressed sufficiently. Spiritual awareness is best supported through religious education, within the PRASE programme where topics include why and how people worship and the importance of prayer within different religious traditions. Opportunities within art and music to consider aesthetic responses and human creativity are also taken and in geography where a sense of loss to the world following consideration of the dangers to the rain forest is sensitively discussed with Year 8 pupils.
32. The school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship since there is one day in the week when pupils do not have the opportunity to take part in an act of collective worship. Nevertheless, pupils have opportunity to attend, and help lead, a varied assembly programme that focuses on issues of social and moral concern. The majority of the programme is of a broadly Christian character but other faiths and views on how one should live one's life are appropriately included. Opportunities for pupils to reflect on or pray about issues raised are given but these are sometimes too rushed and rather perfunctory.
33. Pupils' moral development is well supported through the good values that run through the life and work of the school. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and understand what is expected of them. Moral development is well supported within a number of subjects. For example, in English, moral issues arise out of various texts, and are sensitively developed.
34. The social development of pupils is very good with a wide range of opportunities given for them to relate positively to each other, adults within the school and the wider community, through visitors coming into school and visits taking place out of school. Relationships are very good, and pupils, particularly but not exclusively in Year 8, have many occasions when they take responsibility for themselves and others. The house system promotes opportunities for different age groups to work together and makes a positive contribution to the overall social development of pupils providing a good balance between working together and competition. Pupils are very confident, polite and helpful.
35. Provision for pupils to appreciate and understand their own and other peoples' cultures is good. School productions, music groups, trips and visits, as well as visitors into school all make positive contributions to giving pupils access to a good range of cultural experiences. The yearly activity week, held in the summer term, complements general provision well and has included recently African dance and theatre workshops. In religious education various religious celebrations and festivals are discussed. In art and music the work of a range of different cultures is studied and in geography respect for cultural differences is encouraged through units of work which study how different ethnic groups live and work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school provides a very caring and supportive environment. Provision for pupils' health, welfare and guidance generally makes a satisfactory contribution to their personal and academic development, although there are some areas of concern. The class tutors, subject specialists and the year heads know their pupils well, and act quickly when they see a need. The school seeks to ensure that pupils have equal opportunities, including those with special educational needs. Although the school rarely has pupils who are at the early stages of learning English, one parent could not speak highly enough of the support given to his two children who did not speak English when they first came to the school. There are very good links with partner institutions. The entry process from the lower schools and the later transition to Sharnbrook Upper School are well planned for and handled sensitively. They help pupils to continue to progress well in their learning.
37. Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are very effective and are reflected in the orderly atmosphere in the school. The comprehensive policy for encouraging positive behaviour focuses on developing personal responsibility through self-organisation. Clear guidelines and procedures for promoting good behaviour, and dealing with any unsatisfactory or disruptive behaviour are clearly identified, with various discipline options available to staff. The use of the *praise/concern* slips, minus house points, detentions etc are effective strategies for promoting and rewarding good behaviour or dealing with forgotten homework or equipment, and any disruptive influences in classes. The school takes the issue of bullying seriously and addresses it through special lessons, bringing in outside experts and training the older pupils as counsellors. Parents report that any incidents of bullying which do occur are generally handled sensitively and effectively.
38. Procedures for promoting good attendance are satisfactory. Parents are kept well informed regarding their responsibilities for ensuring pupils attend school regularly and arrive promptly, and the need to inform the school if their child is unwell and unable to attend. The school is aware that procedures for monitoring the registers need tightening up, to ensure that the official documents are kept fully up-to-date concerning authorised absence. Appropriate links have been established with the education welfare officer, who gets involved in following up cases where necessary.
39. Monitoring of individual pupils' work and personal development is good. The *praise/concern* slips are used to record good effort and achievement in class or the development of personal skills, as well as unsatisfactory behaviour. There is also a space for sharing concerns about pupils. Because there are three copies, both the pupils and their form teachers have a copy, which enables pupils to share achievements with their parents and for the information to be included in pupils' Records of Achievement. As a result form teachers can give good personal support and guidance to pupils as they are well informed about the pupils in their care. By sharing information with pupils and their parents teachers reinforce the partnership with the school, and pupils' progress is recognised and praised. Equally importantly the slips pick up difficulties that pupils experience. Often this results in the agreement of targets with pupils to improve performance or personal attitudes. There is space on annual reports to record such targets. A house points system is used well by teachers to reward significant effort and achievement both in academic work and personal development. House points can be lost also, for example, when pupils do not give their best effort or their behaviour is inappropriate. The system includes class competition for house points. This system emphasises the need for teamwork to achieve success in the house point competition. Pupils of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, gain recognition in whole school assemblies. This is through the award of certificates and badges for work and effort both in their studies and other activities, particularly sport. This encourages all pupils to try their hardest.
40. Procedures for assessing pupils' standards and progress in individual subjects are not consistent. The school properly gives much attention to assessment in English, mathematics and science,

predicting the levels to be aimed for and preparing pupils thoroughly for the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. Assessment in these subjects is also good in Key Stage 3. In other subject areas there are annual tests, which provide good information for staff on how well pupils are achieving in relation to other pupils in their year group. However, these are not clearly linked to National Curriculum levels to ensure pupils are achieving as well as or better than expected and where teaching might need to improve. There is close liaison with upper school staff in the period leading to transfer at the end of Year 8, when pupils' attainment is matched against National Curriculum levels, in some subjects for the first time.

41. Assessment practice is good in subjects such as art, music, geography and information and communication technology, where pupils' progress is linked to National Curriculum levels. However, in history and in design and technology assessment is not linked to National Curriculum levels. In physical education and religious education no assessment is undertaken. This results in pupils not building sufficiently on work previously done and achieving the best possible standards. Target setting is in place for pupils, but because marking and feedback to pupils is not sufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels it is not as well used as it might be to raise standards further. Pupils are not given enough guidance on what to do to improve. Although there have been improvements in assessment procedures since the last inspection, there are still weaknesses that need to be addressed.
42. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported on an individual basis both within one-to-one teaching situations and in class. Good use is made of specialist support from the local authority, particularly where pupils have reading and writing difficulties. This helps pupils to make good progress, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, where additional support staff are used. The best subject practice takes individual pupil's targets and adapts them to the learning requirements of the subject, but this does not happen in all subjects. Support is better for pupils with learning difficulties than those with behavioural and emotional difficulties. The management of support for these pupils is less well developed and teaching staff require further training in strategies to support and manage this very small, but nevertheless important group of pupils.
43. The school's procedures for child protection need updating. The school follows the local authority's policy and guidelines for child protection, with the headteacher as the designated contact point. However, there is currently nobody who could undertake responsibility if he is away. There is no information regarding child protection included in the staff handbook and some members of staff are not aware of the procedures should an incident occur. The headteacher has recently attended a course on current requirements. He acknowledges that there is a need to appoint a female member of staff to deputise in this area for him, and plans to update staff with the latest information.
44. Systems for ensuring pupils' health and welfare are sound. Well-established systems are in place to take care of pupils who may fall ill during the day. Two members of staff have received first aid training, and there are effective procedures to meet the medical needs of pupils. There are appropriate links with the relevant outside agencies, whose staff visit regularly.
45. There is an appropriate health and safety policy, with procedures to ensure the safety and security of pupils in the school. Regular health and safety checks and risk assessments are

undertaken by members of staff and the governors, who take an active role in fulfilling their responsibilities for health and safety. However, despite this there are a number of health and safety issues around the school which give cause for concern. Health and safety issues raised during the last inspection have been dealt with effectively. Parents raised the issue of the inadequate changing facilities and the state of the toilets. The changing facilities are insufficient and because of the antiquated plumbing systems in the school the showers do not work properly, so few pupils use them after games lessons. In the food technology room there is effectively no hot water for pupils to wash their hands, or wash up – the one tap has to be run for 15 minutes before any hot water comes through. The girls' and staff toilets need attention to repair broken seats and cisterns.

46. There is also a safety issue at the end of the school day for pupils who live in the village or who are collected by parents as they leave the school. During the inspection a number of these pupils were observed running out of the entrance, darting behind and between the parked school buses oblivious to a reversing bus or passing cars. The bus driver was unable to see these pupils and the potential for an accident was very apparent. Consideration has been given to this by the school and local authority, with plans to reduce the parking nearby through the introduction of yellow lines. However, this is unlikely to be as effective as having somebody controlling the traffic or supervising pupils once they leave the premises.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. The partnership with parents is one of the strengths of the school. The school has worked hard to foster strong links with parents and to establish effective liaison between home and school. Parents are very supportive of the school and play a very effective part in helping their children do well. They have high expectations of the school and whilst nearly per cent of parents who responded to the questionnaire felt the school was very approachable, only 79 per cent felt that they were kept sufficiently informed about the progress of their child, or that the school worked closely with parents. Parents consider that the school has continued to maintain its high standards since the last inspection. They recognise the good teaching and high expectations of staff, although some concern was expressed about the opportunities for the less gifted pupils to feel valued. A few parents questioned the amount of homework given – too much in Year 6 and not enough in Year 8.
48. Inspectors judge the school to provide good information for parents, through detailed information about the school and its activities in the school prospectus, the governors' annual report to parents and an information book on the curriculum. Parents have good opportunities to visit the school and meet staff before their children join the school. They can attend open evenings, or visit during the day and be shown round the school. Once pupils start school regular contact is maintained through newsletters and parents can easily arrange times to meet staff over a particular issue. Consultation evenings are well attended and provide an appropriate opportunity to review pupils' progress and achievements. Parents receive exam week profiles as well as the comprehensive annual reports. These are very detailed, providing information regarding what has been covered, progress and achievements, plus targets for improvement. Parents have the opportunity to comment and contribute to the target setting process. Open meetings, consultations about the national tests and occasional workshops are held to keep parents updated and suitably informed about new initiatives.
49. A small number of parents of pupils with special educational needs expressed significant concerns about the lack of information and procedures for setting targets for their pupils over the last school year. This was justified, but inspection evidence indicates individual education plans are now in place, and that parents are kept suitably informed, and involved in the review processes. The school management must carefully monitor the effectiveness of the new procedures to ensure this position is maintained and continues to improve.
50. The school offers frequent and appropriate opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's learning. Pupils have a regular homework timetable as well as the opportunity to borrow

books from the library. Parents are encouraged to support the homework schedule, and the pupils' planners become a regular day-to-day link with the school. Parents are required to sign them each week. A small number of committed adults help in the school and often assist by listening to pupils read. Parents have been effectively involved in consultations regarding issues such as the home/school agreement. The parent/teacher association although very active in the past, has currently been put on hold. The school is establishing year group forums, which include pupils and parent representatives from each class, alongside staff members. The forums offer an opportunity to discuss all aspects of school life, as well as becoming a focus group for future social and fund raising activities to be taken up by the parent/teacher association. Parents are very enthusiastic about the opportunities these groups offer.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. Harrold Priory is a popular and successful school, which has a high profile in the local community. The clear aims and ethos of the school promote value and respect for each other, and are reinforced by the good role models provided by the staff. Throughout a difficult period of staff absence at senior levels over the last two years the headteacher and his staff have maintained good standards. This is due to their high commitment and hard work, which are well supported by the high level of enthusiasm and interest pupils bring to their studies and the good support of parents. There are considerable strengths in the leadership provided by the headteacher and other senior staff. They are reflected in the stable and purposeful learning environment, the clear focus on high quality teaching and learning and the best possible standards for pupils. However, some areas of the work of the school currently require a more rigorous oversight. The school is not monitoring closely enough how policy is being translated into practice, for example, the marking and assessment policy, which is not being well followed by all staff. Where there are weaknesses in the school's provision these have not all been fully addressed. New senior staff responsibilities aim to improve the school's oversight of its work, but the detail of how this is to be accomplished is not yet fully in place.
52. The school clearly and appropriately places good quality teaching and learning for its pupils at the centre of its work. This has clearly helped pupils to achieve above average standards in most subjects. The commitment has been well incorporated into the new school development plan, developed by a working group of staff, governors and parents led by the deputy head. The overall plan is much more focused and explicit than previous plans and appropriately takes account of national initiatives. For each action plan the responsibility for implementation, the completion dates and the resources needed are now clear. However, each individual plan is still not sufficiently linked to the expected outcomes for the pupils' learning and the school's performance to judge its success.
53. Leadership and management by subject heads of department are good overall. However, the long-term absences of the head of English and head of science this term, plus previous absences, are beginning to affect adversely longer term leadership and development in these areas. Nevertheless the day to day running of these departments is still well-managed and pupils' progress is not suffering. In subject areas such as mathematics, where there is stable good leadership and teachers can share ideas together, developments are being very effective in continuing to raise standards. Where heads of department are the main or only teacher in the department subject management is more variable. Confident and experienced heads of department are well able to identify their priorities and take action to achieve them, for example, in geography and history. This is shown by well-thought out subject development plans based on the school development plan. Although there are many informal and useful opportunities for staff to seek support and discuss their work with colleagues, including meetings with staff in other middle schools and the upper school, there is no clear, regular process for senior management to agree, discuss, support and monitor departmental priorities. This is not helpful to new heads of department, however good they are, or to ensure required action takes place. For example, schemes of work in physical education were not put in place after the last inspection, although identified as an area for improvement.
54. Standards and pupils' progress in the core subjects are well monitored. Predicted grades for performance in national tests for 11 year olds are provided by the headteacher for staff. In

subjects, other than English, mathematics and science, although an individual pupil's progress is well documented this information is not yet used to compare overall standards in these subjects with those expected nationally, particularly for 11 year olds at the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils enter the school with above average attainment and are interested and enthusiastic learners. The school's procedures do not yet fully ensure that the progress being made is at the highest possible level in all subjects, in particular French, physical education and religious education and in the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.

55. The school has a clear commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils. This is shown by the sustained good progress made by pupils in lessons including those with special educational needs. However, weaknesses in the management of special educational needs by the school over the last year, after the previous co-ordinator left, meant that until recently a significant number of pupils on the special educational needs register did not have appropriate individual education plans in place. As a consequence some parents of these pupils feel that the school does not value their children as well as those who achieve highly and always behave well. However, documentation seen during the inspection indicates that statutory requirements are now in place for pupils with a statement of special educational need and the Code of Practice is being followed for other pupils on the special educational needs register. This is due to the hard work in recent months of the special educational needs co-ordinator and the learning support assistants. However, it is too soon to comment on the effectiveness of the new systems that have been put in place for ensuring all pupils receive their entitlement.
56. The special educational needs co-ordinator now has sufficient time to undertake the role and is to be given suitable opportunities to develop his skills, having taken up the post with no specialist qualifications. Last year, when new in post, he had insufficient time to undertake the task whilst retaining other responsibilities, such as head of physical education. This was a consequence of the budget deficit requiring a reduction in staff, but the school did not manage this situation well enough. A number of areas require further development. The computerised database is not fully complete: procedures for monitoring pupils' progress, including feedback from class teachers, are in the early stages; and a review of the use of available support to match individual pupils' needs is required. These have clearly been recognised and outlined in an appropriate development plan. Staff training in additional strategies for managing the behaviour of the small number of pupils who find it difficult to settle in the classroom would also be helpful. The senior management of the school and the governors must support and monitor more closely, through the development plan, the effectiveness of the school's new procedures in special educational needs to ensure all pupils receive appropriate support and make the progress required.
57. Governors' minutes and discussions with the chairman of governors indicate governors take their responsibilities seriously. There is regular contact with the school by the chairman of governors. However, the school does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship and the delivery of the locally Agreed Syllabus for the teaching of religious education. It was unfortunate that there were few opportunities to meet a range of governors during the inspection to discuss their work.
58. The school's commitment to all pupils receiving teaching by subject specialists results in a good match of staffing to curriculum needs. The school also has lower than average class sizes. Both these policies effectively support the good standards pupils achieve, although resulting in some

teachers having limited free time during the week. Where non-specialists teach a subject, the head of department provides good guidance. Most teachers have good opportunities to develop their skills through both in-school and out of school training opportunities. There are weaknesses in the teaching of French, where the teachers do not have sufficient understanding of the very specialist teaching skills required in this area. The school's performance management policy is in place, but has not yet proceeded further because of the national situation. Three of the four heads of year are new in post. They are conscientious in undertaking their new responsibilities, but this is quite demanding where they also have subject responsibilities. They have attended appropriate training but continued support from the senior management is important to ensure their task is manageable. The newly qualified teacher has been well supported. Practical subjects lack sufficient technical support. As a consequence teachers spend valuable planning time in organising their rooms and equipment, often with very few free periods. This issue was raised at the time of the last inspection.

59. The school makes good use of its limited accommodation for the number of pupils on roll. Well-equipped specialist rooms for information and communication technology, design and technology and science support pupils' achievements well in these subjects. The library area is a particularly well organised and valuable resource to support pupils' learning. It is used well during lesson times and pupils use its facilities, especially computers, to a significant extent during the lunchtime break. Although some classrooms are quite small in size these usually do not affect pupils' learning. However, the school has only one large space for assemblies, lunch, physical education in wet weather, and drama and dance. Where drama took place in a small classroom pupils' learning was hindered. Parents rightly complain about the lack of lockers, as bags left in corridors and outside classrooms present a safety hazard. However, it is difficult to see how this problem can be easily resolved given the small size of some of the older classrooms and the narrow corridors. There are a number of health and safety issues which have been noted on pages 19 and 20. These primarily relate to inadequacies in the accommodation.
60. The school seeks to achieve good value for money, and appropriately compares its standards and costs with other schools. Specific grants are appropriately managed. The finance administrator obtains best value for money when purchasing goods. The school's own catering service is cost efficient, although accounting procedures are not tight enough. Overall the school makes satisfactory use of its staffing and accommodation, although money allocated to subject areas is not always sufficiently well targeted to meet the requirements of new developments, for example, the new PRASE course. However, the budget at the end of the last financial year was overspent. The exact amount has still to be agreed between the school and the local authority following the school's change from grant maintained status, only attained in 1997, back to foundation status in April 1999. Some of the overspend is due to long term staff absences and increased short absences that require supply cover, as most staff teach a very full week. The governors' finance committee, in spite of meeting regularly, has yet to ensure its forward planning maintains tight enough control of the current budget situation. However, given the well above average results obtained by pupils in National Curriculum tests, the good teaching they receive and the very positive attitudes shown by pupils towards their learning, the school does give at least sound value for money in spite of the budget deficit.
61. Improvement since the last inspection five years ago has been satisfactory overall, with pupils' standards in most subjects and teaching better. However, some issues are still outstanding, in particular a lack of rigour in reviewing the work of the school.
62. Leadership and management in the school are overall sound. Given its difficult circumstances over the last two years the school has continued to function well. This has put considerable pressures on staff: in particular the headteacher and the deputy head, who have, for example, provided additional teaching and management support for the science department during the

absence of the head of department. This has to some extent weakened aspects of the school's work, such as control of the budget, and less rigorous monitoring. The chairman of governors and other governors are aware of the current difficulties, but must continue to keep a close oversight on how these are affecting the work of the school and to support the school in developing strategies to overcome these.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to improve the achievement of pupils in all aspects of the curriculum and to maintain and develop further the good quality of education it provides the school should:

- (1) Improve standards in French, physical education and religious education by
 - in French
 - developing the teachers' skills in delivering the required curriculum in French at Key Stage 3
 - reviewing the effectiveness of current practice and organisation at Key Stage 2*(paragraphs 5, 15, 18, 25, 58, 118-125)*
 - in physical education
 - putting in place schemes of work that allow pupils to build on previous learning
 - matching the work to the pupils' previous learning by developing systems that record what pupils know and can do*(paragraphs 5, 15, 18, 53, 133-138)*
 - in religious education
 - ensuring appropriate time to deliver the locally Agreed Syllabus
 - matching the work to the pupils' previous learning by developing systems that record what pupils know and can do*(paragraphs 5, 15, 24, 31-32, 56, 139-145)*
- (2) Put in place more effective systems for reviewing the work of the school to ensure all is well by
 - the senior management team regularly reviewing with staff with responsibilities their priorities and their achievements
 - providing appropriate support for staff new in post
 - linking all subject development plans clearly to the school development plan with predicted outcomes related to pupils' achievement
 - evaluating the overall standards and progress of pupils in the foundation subjects and religious education as well as the core subjects of English, science and mathematics
 - governors keeping a closer oversight on the work of the school, including the management of the budget*(paragraphs 9, 23, 41, 51-57, 60-62, 65, 84, 101, 106, 124, 137-138, 145)*
- (3) Provide better feedback to pupils on how they can improve their work by
 - using National Curriculum levels in all subjects to help pupils know how well they are doing
 - through ensuring the school policy for marking pupils' work is implemented fully.*(paragraphs 20, 40, 41, 51, 66, 83, 98, 111, 135, 141)*
- (4) Keep a clear oversight of the management of provision for pupils with special educational needs by
 - the regular review with the special educational needs co-ordinator of the effectiveness of the appropriate actions identified in the development plan
 - ensuring the new special educational needs co-ordinator receives the appropriate training and support already identified

- helping the special educational needs co-ordinator to monitor and evaluate how all staff are meeting the needs of each pupil on the special educational needs register and implementing targets in individual education plans, including those for addressing emotional and behavioural difficulties

(paragraphs 19, 28, 42, 49, 55, 56)

- (5) Increase opportunities for pupils to use their information and communication technology skills in all subjects of the curriculum as required by the new National Curriculum orders put in place in September 2000 by

- providing opportunities for pupils in science and in design and technology to use computers for control
- helping all staff to develop their computer skills
- increasing subject access to computers for whole class groups

(paragraphs 4, 24, 25, 64, 75, 85, 92, 97, 112, 113-117, 123, 131, 144)

The school also needs to address:

- the requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils
(paragraphs 32, 57)
- the health and safety issues identified during the inspection including procedures for child protection
(paragraphs 43, 45, 59, 102, 137)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	91
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	23	43	29	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	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	416
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	18

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	75

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

Attendance (98/99)

Authorised absence

	%
School data	1.0
National comparative data	6.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	46	58	104

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	39	40	46
	Girls	54	51	58
	Total	93	91	104
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (81)	88 (79)	100 (96)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	36	42	43
	Girls	52	44	48
	Total	88	86	91
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	84 (83)	83 (82)	88 (89)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	2
Black – other	0
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	2
White	409
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	21
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	78

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	80
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	23.8
Key Stage 3	21.2

Financial information

Financial year	99/00*
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	£
Total income	887054
Total expenditure	862649
Expenditure per pupil	2125
Balance brought forward from previous year	-31310
Balance carried forward to next year	-6905

* Final figures have yet to be agreed and confirmed with the LEA

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

416

Number of questionnaires returned

209

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	43	6	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	44	47	3	2	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	52	3	1	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	26	56	9	5	4
The teaching is good.	54	40	3	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	56	12	5	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	55	33	7	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	26	2	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	32	46	12	5	5
The school is well led and managed.	65	28	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	36	2	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	39	9	4	8

Other issues raised by parents

Parents expressed particular concern about the inadequate state of the school toilets and changing rooms.

A small but significant group of parents with children on the special educational needs register considered that the school had not in the last year put in place fully statutory requirements and had not responded sufficiently well to their concerns.

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

ENGLISH

63. In the national tests for 11 year olds, taken at the end of Year 6, the school's results are well above the national average, and in the most recent tests they were above average for pupils in similar schools. Pupils bring good levels of attainment in English when they arrive at the school in Year 5. They are articulate speakers, with reading and writing skills that are above national averages. Throughout their time at Harrold Priory pupils continue to achieve well and evidence from the upper school, including results from tests for 14 year olds, confirms that they leave Year 8 with appropriate skills at a good level in all aspects of English.
64. Work seen on the inspection largely confirms pupils' good test results. Standards are above average for 11 year olds and for the oldest Key Stage 3 pupils. Speaking and listening skills are good and used well in lessons, in whole class discussion with the teacher, and when pupils work in pairs, or occasionally in groups, to explore ideas together. In most other subjects of the curriculum pupils have good opportunities to practise these skills supporting their understanding of quite complex issues such as the effect on the climate of felling trees in the rain forests in geography. There are many opportunities in English, and in other subjects, for pupils to develop their reading skills, and pupils at all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, make good progress here. Written work is well presented, in clear handwriting, with good standards overall in spelling and punctuation. However, in English, most pupils do not use skills of drafting and redrafting as well as they might, and most of them are not at present gaining the experience they should in writing at length, particularly in Years 7 and 8. However, some outstanding written work was seen in science and pupils have good opportunities in art to write at length. Many pupils have considerable skill in working with computers, although work in English gives little opportunity for their use.
65. The teaching of English is good. Lessons are well managed and relationships are very positive; a class in Year 6 enjoyed a grammar exercise on active and passive moods in verbs because of the teacher's lively approach. All the teaching rooms are well organised and stimulating, with very good displays of pupils' work. Most lessons are well paced and carefully planned, following the thorough scheme of work used by the whole department. Teachers use a full range of activities, ensuring full concentration and engagement by pupils for the whole lesson period. For instance, pupils in Year 8 reading *Machine Gunners*, a novel set in World War II, wrote log books in the voice of one of the characters, made models of Anderson shelters, and did their own first hand research by collecting memories from older relatives. Similarly, Year 7 pupils, in the project *Escape from Kraznir*, worked in groups inventing aspects of the story within a given outline. In Year 5 a lesson on adjectives was skilfully based on pupils' own experience and own writing, so that pupils at all stages of attainment were working at appropriate levels, including those with special educational needs who were supported by an extra teacher. The department has effective systems for recording pupils' progress and the levels they reach in the National Curriculum skills.
66. Teachers are putting much of their effort into the teaching of grammar and technical skills and while, for the most part, they do this well, there is overall a lack of focus on pupils' creative and imaginative work. As a result pupils are not at present developing a sufficient range of writing styles, and are particularly missing opportunities to write at any length. When teachers mark pupils' writing they give too little detail on strengths and weaknesses and on how writing can be improved.
67. The department has suffered particularly from the problems experienced by the school through absence of senior colleagues. However, although they have missed the leadership and support of their head of department, the teachers have worked hard and successfully to maintain the high standards noted in the last report.

Drama

- 68. Pupils' attainment in drama is good. They make good progress in developing their skills of speaking and listening, and their confidence is increased by the opportunities they have to present their work to each other.
- 69. Teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory, and most of it was good. Lessons are well planned, with a good range of activities, and this generates great enthusiasm in the pupils. A class working on ideas from T S Eliot's poetry and the musical *Cats* worked very well in their groups and were skilful in depicting characters through movement and voice. When groups present their work, pupils are a very supportive audience. In Year 7, classes move into using scripts and gain further skills in interpreting text into drama.
- 70. A drama specialist, who also covers some of the classes in Year 6, undertakes the main part of the work in Years 7 and 8. She has produced a scheme of work, which successfully supports other teachers who are not specialists. The scheme is well structured and adds to the experience of the pupils, particularly by exploring multicultural themes, such as African dance and poetry by black writers. At present work is hampered by the lack of a drama studio. Although the school hall is available for some lessons, drama often takes place in classrooms, and this smaller space limits what can be achieved.

MATHEMATICS

- 71. Performance at the end of Key Stage 2 in the National Curriculum tests was above average in 1999 and well above the national average in summer 2000. The latter result reflects the improvements that have taken place in mathematics teaching following the introduction of National Numeracy Framework at Key Stage 2 and the good preparation of pupils for the tests by the school. However, results are only in line with results for similar schools, compared with those for English and science which are above. This is because pupils, although doing well, did not do as well at the higher levels overall, even though two pupils gained the highest level possible.
- 72. Standards for pupils currently at the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 8 are above the national average overall. The most able Year 6 pupils are working at levels above those expected for their age, confidently adding and subtracting decimals and able to convert measurements such as 0.076 km to 76 cm. The good standard of teaching is sufficient to maintain these above average levels of attainment, with pupils continuing to achieve well throughout their time in the school. Pupils in the top sets in Year 8 find volumes of cylinders and the areas of circles with confidence and success, achieving levels expected for pupils at least one year older. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress through both key stages, although standards are below expected levels for their ages. Support for these pupils, including the use of an additional teacher or learning support assistant, is targeted efficiently through the setting arrangements, which also benefit the gifted and talented pupils. Appropriate teaching matches work well to the previous learning of all pupils.
- 73. The regular mental work in mathematics lessons is a significant factor in improving pupils' number skills, which are above those expected nationally. Although a whole school numeracy policy is not yet fully in place, there are good opportunities for pupils to use and apply their numeracy skills in other subjects. These contribute to the above average standards pupils achieve in most curriculum areas. In science the opportunities are well-planned, with pupils able to use graphical skills effectively to plot their results. Pupils use their measuring skills to good effect in design and technology to produce accurate and quality objects. They effectively use proportion in art such as when studying the size of the Angel of the North in preparation for constructing a large scale collage of an angel for the Christmas concert. In history and geography pupils competently construct graphs and interpret data.
- 74. Teaching is good overall and good in both key stages. There is no unsatisfactory teaching.

Approximately half the teaching is good and approximately one fifth of the teaching is very good. Good planning and teaching of basic skills is at the heart of the good teaching. Short term goals are used well. It is the enthusiasm of the teachers and the good pace of lessons that result in pupils making good gains in knowledge and understanding. Pupils respond well to their teachers with enthusiasm and a desire to do well. As a result they work hard and behaviour is good. They play a full part in whole class discussion and work well in pairs. For example, one pupil explained how to work out four multiplied by 16 to another as four multiplied by 15 together with four multiplied by one. Such exchanges increase levels of understanding well.

75. Pupils are encouraged to explain their ideas and all enjoy the humour present in a number of lessons. Mathematical vocabulary is taught well. The use of homework is good. The use of the Internet to research into *pi* is the one good example seen of the use of computers. Computers are not used sufficiently in the teaching of mathematics although the information and communication technology department covers the required elements of the National Curriculum. The time in lessons is not always used well, pupils spending too long on one task at times. Challenges to pupils are not always as high as they could be, and some opportunities for further extension are lost. Substitution of numbers in formulae is not always well set out by pupils.
76. The leadership and management of the department are good. The teachers form a committed team and work closely together. All have had appropriate numeracy training. The department's handbook is thorough and detailed. Since the last inspection standards have improved at both key stages, particularly in number work. This reflects both better teaching and learning. Schemes of work are well developed and effectively help teachers build upon pupils' previous learning. Overall the improvement is very good.

SCIENCE

77. Pupils reach high standards in science. Over the past few years, results in the national assessment tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have been well above the national average. In 1999, the percentage of pupils reaching at least the expected level 4 was well above average, as was the percentage reaching the higher levels, 5 and above. In 2000, every pupil reached at least level 4 in science. When comparison is restricted to similar schools, results remain above average.
78. Standards observed in lessons and through written work were a little lower than indicated by these test results, but were nevertheless good in comparison with national expectations. The apparent discrepancy can readily be explained as teachers are skilled at preparing pupils for the national tests and there is considerable expertise on assessment at this level in science among the senior management team.
79. Pupils make sound progress as they move through the school and the above average standards evident in Key Stage 2 are maintained in Key Stage 3. By the end of Year 8, pupils have experienced a well planned curriculum, with good emphasis on practical skills. This significantly contributes to the good standards they achieve. They have also been encouraged to think about underlying patterns in science, particularly through a nationally published project in Key Stage 3 (Thinking Science). Pupils respond well to such challenge and to opportunities for individual research and extended writing. This enables the pupils, particularly the most able, to speculate about results, evaluate their work and suggest improvements, developing above average understanding and good skills in scientific enquiry. Projects are given to higher attaining pupils for homework in Key Stage 3 and the quality of the work produced is high, sometimes outstanding.
80. Pupils are co-operative and well behaved in the laboratory and respond with enjoyment to lively teaching. Given the opportunity, they are able to discuss how best to set up an experiment and

how improvements might be made. In Year 8, an upper ability set competently carried out an investigation involving the time taken for heat to travel along wires of different metals. They were not challenged to think about the technique, however, whereas a lower attaining set in the same year was encouraged to do so. Pupils made very good progress in this lesson, appreciating the subtleties of the experiment, and one boy was able to suggest a novel approach that would take away the need for a clock. The extent to which teachers take advantage of pupils' own experimental results varies, partly because hour-long lessons are rather short for practical work to be completed and discussed. Nevertheless, while some teachers bring lessons to an effective conclusion, others sometimes miss opportunities to highlight clearly what has been learned.

81. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of science is good. Many bring ideas to the lesson which they have gained through reading and television and are able to discuss these in an articulate way. There is good emphasis in the teaching upon appropriate technical vocabulary. Pupils take pride in their work and exercise books are often very well presented. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties, achieve well throughout their time in the school.
82. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons and good, or very good, in nearly two thirds. At best, the teaching is very effective, combining confident mastery of the subject with an ability to delight and enthuse pupils. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils were entranced as the teacher held a full jar of water inverted above the head of a volunteer, with only a piece of cardboard as lid. This led to a lively debate on why the boy had not been drenched, as pupils began to appreciate something of air pressure. There are different styles of successful teaching, but all include good relationships with pupils, skilled classroom management (particularly where practical work is involved), and the shrewd use of questions. Specialists teach the subject, not normally the case in Key Stage 2, and this has a positive impact on learning.
83. Greater attention in some lessons should be paid to the fundamental aim of the activity. It is not always clear from written work exactly what pupils were attempting to discover. Some marking is also less detailed and up-to-date than it might be, and opportunities, through marking, to show pupils how to improve are frequently missed.
84. The head of science was on sick leave during the week of the inspection and has been for some time, occasionally returning for short periods. With help from supply teachers, the science staff, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, have covered the vacancy and standards have not been allowed to deteriorate. Monitoring and longer-term planning have, however, been affected and revisions in schemes of work are behind schedule. The management of the department has been effectively assumed by the deputy head, inevitably weakening the senior management team.
85. The science accommodation is good, particularly compared to the norm at Key Stage 2, and has a positive impact on the quality of practical work. Technician help, although efficient, is only available part-time and teachers frequently have to give time to preparing apparatus and materials. As yet the department does not use information and communication technology sufficiently to support and develop pupils' knowledge and understanding in science, for example, the use of sensors in experimental work. However, overall improvement has been good.

ART

86. Standards in art by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 8 are considerably above average, with a significant minority of pupils achieving at very high levels. Most pupils on entry to the school are working at below nationally expected levels, but by Year 6 they are attaining in line with national expectations continuing to make good progress to reach the high standards currently being achieved in Year 8.
87. Pupils achieve well at both key stages. At Key Stage 2 pupils of all abilities are confident in the use of a range of materials from pastel to clay and produce detailed work based on natural forms. They display skill in pattern making and have a strong sense of composition. There is good detailed drawing and pupils' work shows a strong awareness of balance and shape. At Key

Stage 3 all pupils display skill in papier-mâché sculpture and are confident in the creation of texture and distortion in their work. Their weaving with wire and clay and three dimensional skills are creative, and display their ability to represent images and movement. At both key stages the pupils produce sensitive written work on the styles of established artists whose influence is often reflected in their own compositions and creations.

88. The quality of teaching is very good overall, ranging from satisfactory to mainly very good. It encourages high educational standards. Teaching is enthusiastic and this ensures a strong commitment from the pupils. Lessons are well paced and assessments are sensitively communicated to pupils. This sensitivity is often reflected in pupils' approach to their own work and that of others. Questioning involves all pupils and motivates them to be eager to answer and to feel that their views will be respected. Teachers are aware of pupils with special educational needs, are always encouraging and supportive to them and set appropriate tasks, such that these pupils make good progress in their learning. Demonstrations from teachers and explanations of tasks to be undertaken are clear to all pupils and motivate them to do well. One teacher's demonstration regarding the manipulation of clay and explanation of how to ensure rigidity in the model making was much appreciated by the pupils and increased their confidence when handling the medium. Teaching is planned to build on pupils' abilities and give them the courage to experiment, make their own decisions and develop their creativity. The pupils respond positively to this approach and work with dedication and care.
89. Pupils have a good range of learning opportunities in line with National Curriculum requirements. The schemes of work are revised, from time to time, in the light of pupils' response and the need to improve standards further and to ensure commitment from the pupils. The emphasis on artistic awareness and the development of skills supports smooth progress through the key stages.
90. At both key stages, assessment is undertaken conscientiously at the end of units of work and is linked appropriately to National Curriculum levels. These are fed back clearly to the pupils who have simplified copies of the levels in their workbooks to help inform them of their progress. Strategies for future development are indicated. Assessments are carefully recorded and analysed to ensure work builds on previous skills learnt. They are also used to set targets for the department.
91. The department is in the very safe hands of an acting head of department. The present post holder has wide experience of teaching in secondary schools. This has informed her work and enables her to develop pupils' approaches and skills base in preparation for their transfer to the local upper school. It would be helpful if the head of department's teaching expertise could be observed by others.
92. Resources in the department are adequate, the art room is light and airy and contains some very stimulating displays of pupils' work. A personal computer for the department and the provision of a second sink would improve further the work of this very successful department.
93. The department has addressed well the recommendations of the last inspection report. The quality of teaching is much improved and sketchbooks are used effectively. There is more consistency of achievement at both key stages and pupils have a greater command of the language of art. Improvement has been very good.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

94. At the end of Key Stage 2 standards are in line with those expected nationally. On entry to the school most pupils are better at designing than making, although pupils' design and technology skills reflect the expected range of attainment overall. Pupils have made good progress in

developing their practical skills in both resistant materials and textiles. The National Curriculum levels for attainment are not formally recorded and reported at the end of Key Stage 2 but inspection evidence shows that some pupils in textiles are attaining standards above those expected for their age.

95. At the end of Year 8 in summer 2000 pupils' work was assessed against National Curriculum levels and approximately a fifth of the year group were attaining levels above those expected for their age. However, lesson observations suggest that a high proportion of current Year 7 and Year 8 pupils are working at higher levels and some at the very highest levels, especially in textiles. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress particularly in practical lessons and the higher attainers are developing very good designing skills. Standards in design technology have improved since the last inspection.
96. Pupils are achieving well in Key Stage 2. They make good progress in developing new practical skills using a range of tools and equipment competently. In both resistant materials and textiles they are developing accurate skills in measurement, for example, when making their mobiles in Year 5. The teachers' high expectations and their clear guidance enable the pupils to produce quality products in both resistant materials and textiles. A few pupils in Year 5 find cutting and shaping wood and fabric accurately difficult but with good support they succeed. The wooden birds and the pencil holders made by Year 6 and Year 5 pupils are good examples of products where priority is given to the production of a high quality finish.
97. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3 and at the end of Year 8 are achieving standards above those expected for pupils of a similar age. They have developed a good understanding of the design process and can clearly specify the requirements of their proposed design ideas. Good research skills, particularly in the puppet and hat projects in textiles, help the pupils to develop some very creative and workable ideas. Pupils' good knowledge and use of equipment and tools enable them to plan confidently and develop a wide range of ideas into reality. They recognise the need to evaluate their work to improve results. Numeracy skills are developed effectively through calculating the quantities of materials required, for example, in the Year 7 cube project. Pupils can explain their designs thoroughly and some pupils record detailed modifications for improvement in their evaluations. There is a lack of computers within the department but good library and home use of computers enables pupils to acquire information for their designs from CD-ROM and the Internet. Teachers and pupils use library books extensively at the designing stage of projects. Higher attaining pupils in Year 7 and 8 are producing very good design ideas and are highly motivated. Average ability pupils and lower attainers are developing their creative talents well though occasionally, especially with lower attainers, their recording of ideas is not as detailed. Verbally they can communicate their ideas in detail.
98. Teaching is nearly always good and in Key Stage 3 textile lessons the teaching seen was very good and excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The activities are well planned, build upon previous learning and develop practical skills. Assessment is not an integral part of planning at both key stages. Pupils' work is marked against the school marking scheme but pupils are not fully aware as to how well they are achieving against the National Curriculum design and technology levels of attainment. When marking is very thorough the improvement and progress being made are very evident. Although no food technology was being taught during the inspection, photographic and folder evidence show that the planning is thorough and that pupils from Year 5 to Year 8 have opportunities to learn about different types of food, including those from a range of cultures, and to study nutrition.
99. The pupils' enthusiasm for design and technology and their keenness to work is a result of the teachers' dedication and carefully structured courses. Each year group has a specially designed course booklet covering all material areas. It gives guided help with the layout of projects, and promotes opportunities for pupils to be creative in their ideas especially in Years 7 and 8. Pupils are encouraged to present work neatly and use appropriate sketching and colouring techniques. The teaching of graphics in Year 7 raises the pupils' designing skills and highlights the need for

accuracy. Homework is set regularly at Key Stage 3 and it is generally used well to reinforce learning in lessons or for investigation and research to help pupils develop their design ideas.

100. The department is soundly led with priorities for spending managed carefully. The three highly dedicated teachers work very hard to manage their specialist rooms. There is some good technical support in food and textiles for one day per week, but none in resistant materials. The teachers already have limited free time and the lack of technical support puts extra demands on valuable planning time. The very good links with the other local middle school and the upper school have helped to moderate and plan work at Key Stage 3 to ensure a smooth transition at Year 8 and ensure pupils can attain high levels at the end of Key Stage 3. Unfortunately, the department does not receive a record of their pupils' successes.
101. There is no formal system in place to oversee the work of the department nor does formal monitoring of their teaching take place. Informal paired observations have taken place in the past and some of the teachers' training needs have been identified but lack of time has prevented the best use being made of these observations. Teachers in the department have benefited from some in-service training opportunities and the termly meetings held with the high schools. A more formal monitoring system would ensure that those aspects of the department's work that need further improvement, such as assessment, take place.
102. Improvements since the last inspection have been considerable. There is now an overall manager of the department, the rooms have been improved and made bigger. Health and safety issues identified were addressed but the current lack of instant access to hot water in the food technology room is a health concern. Schemes of work have addressed the need to develop more investigative skills and improve designing and making skills. The challenge and pace of lessons have increased and standards are now above national expectations by the time pupils leave the school.

GEOGRAPHY

103. Much improvement is seen in this subject since the last inspection. By the time pupils reach the end of Key Stage 2 in Year 6 they attain above national expectations in the subject. Pupils maintain these good levels of attainment by the time they transfer to the upper school at the end of Year 8.
104. Pupils achieve well. They learn the importance of locating places precisely. In Year 5 they use six figure grid references accurately to find information on maps. Pupils have good knowledge of a range of symbols used on Ordnance Survey maps and use them confidently. They are highly motivated, for example, when asked to find features on 'Dragon Island' using grid references. In Year 6 pupils understand how the Amazonian Indians make clearings in the forest to grow crops, and that the forest regenerates when they move on every few years. Pupils in Year 8 use this area again when they consider the issue of deforestation. By analysing rainfall and temperature statistics they make good progress in understanding why this region is special for the growth of hard wood forests, and provides habitats for rare wildlife. Pupils learn how exploitation of the earth's natural resources has far-reaching consequences, for example, why the deforestation in Brazil is affecting distant parts of the world through changing climates. Pupils have good opportunities to do individual research for homework tasks. They use the Internet and books at home to gather information on such topics as plants and animals of the rain forests. Pupils develop appropriate skills in obtaining first-hand evidence through fieldwork. For example, during a residential visit they learnt how the sea changes the coastline of North Norfolk. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils and make good progress in meeting their individual education targets.
105. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. A key strength of the quality of teaching is very thorough planning. In the best lessons the teacher uses very good subject knowledge to select the geographical learning pupils should acquire from the lesson. The teacher organises pupils' learning in stages, and provides suitable resources to work with. All pupils receive a clear introduction to a topic so they can do their own work individually or in pairs with minimum help. For example, in a lesson about different ways of managing traffic the teacher first ensured pupils

understood how to classify. She used different vegetables and fruit and asked pupils to select the 'odd one' in the group. Pupils then grouped similar traffic management terms and identified those that did not fit. The work was graded so pupils with special educational needs tackled the same task, and higher achieving pupils moved rapidly to more demanding tasks. Those who worked very quickly had to create a classification task for another pupil.

106. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Teachers emphasise the importance of knowing subject words and using them precisely. Teachers ask pupils probing questions to explain the meaning of such terms as *rapid transport system*. They have high expectations of the amount of effort pupils will make and their standards of presentation. Much trust is placed on pupils when they work outside the school. For example, Year 7 pupils behaved very responsibly and showed every courtesy to other people when they undertook traffic surveys in the village. Teachers organise time well and give pupils enough time to complete their work. Teachers motivate pupils with interesting work so behaviour is very good.
107. The head of geography is an energetic and enthusiastic leader and manager of the subject. Through good organisation and the setting of high standards geography shows much improvement. Fieldwork now features in all years and strongly supports work in class. Most teachers of geography are non-specialists. The head of geography gives good support and guidance to them and where a class is shared between two teachers this is well managed. The use of display in the teaching of the subject is a particular strength and the presence of the subject in displays around the school is a positive advantage. Work is regularly assessed with the accurate use of National Curriculum levels being well supported by graded samples of past work. However, records of what pupils know and can do are not used sufficiently to give an overview of standards in relation to nationally expected levels, to assist planning and to raise achievement further.

HISTORY

108. Pupils in Year 6 at the end of Key Stage 2 attain above national expectations for their age in history. They continue to achieve well in Key Stage 3 such that when they leave in Year 8 their standards remain above national expectations. Boys and girls achieve equally. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in addressing the targets in their individual education plans. Standards and achievement show good improvement since the previous inspection report.
109. Pupils sustain good progress throughout their time in the school. Pupils' awareness of the passage of time improves through the study of particular periods of history. In Key Stage 2 pupils learn effectively how inventions and industrialisation changed the way people lived in Victorian Britain. Pupils in this key stage also gain a good understanding of the characteristics of Ancient Egyptian society. They learn how to use time-lines to place events accurately in sequence and acquire a basic understanding of hieroglyphics. Through a visit to the British Museum pupils gained a clear understanding of this society's belief in preparing for the after life and knowledge of the process of mummification. In Key Stage 3 pupils understand quite complex ideas such as the characteristics of an absolute monarch and parliament and use first hand evidence to make judgements, such as when studying the Bayeux Tapestry. Throughout both key stages pupils gain good skills in historical enquiry using a range of sources of information including the Internet and CD-ROMs.
110. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They understand well how pupils should learn from history and the skills they need to interpret the past through a variety of evidence. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject therefore supports them in the use of effective questioning. Pupils respond well to probing questions, and they enjoy searching evidence for answers. Using a photograph of a section of the Bayeux Tapestry a teacher prompted a Year 7 class to find evidence to identify who was the most powerful person shown in the illustration. Pupils came back with symbolic evidence of Duke William seated on a

throne, in robes, and holding an upright sword. Teachers encourage pupils to evaluate evidence by such questions as "Who made the Tapestry?" and "Whose point of view is given?" Pupils respond well to opportunities to work in pairs. For example, Year 8 pupils enjoyed sharing their ideas of how to raise money in contemporary Britain, and relating them to the revenue problems of Elizabeth I. Pupils assessed their answers with the policies the Queen actually pursued. They recognised that ways of raising money in Tudor times were practised today.

111. In many lessons work is carefully planned to provide tasks that are well matched to pupils' previous learning. In such lessons pupils with special educational needs are well motivated and succeed in understanding the historical issues. Higher achieving pupils have good opportunities to explore further and write fuller answers. In a few lessons observed tasks did not always match pupils' needs sufficiently. For instance, pupils with reading and writing difficulties in Year 5 struggled to copy a written description of a Victorian bicycle called a 'hobby horse'. Higher achieving pupils spent time on low level activities of cutting and pasting illustrations of bicycles and were not appropriately challenged. Teachers do not always take opportunities to relate topics to their historical context, for example, by using a time-line already in pupils' exercise books to show the development of the bicycle relative to other events in Victorian Britain.
112. The head of history provides good leadership and works conscientiously to maintain good standards in the subject. She strongly supports a team of teachers who are not history specialists. She plans many of the lessons and provides introductory sessions when two classes join together. Pupils get opportunities to observe and handle artefacts when they visit museums and historical sites. A local museum loans artefacts to the school. History is brought to life, for instance, when museum staff work with pupils to recreate a "Victorian Day". The department has three computers and plans to increase teachers' competence in the use of information and communication technology as a tool for historical investigation, such that the good computer skills many pupils have can be more effectively used. The department is not yet using National Curriculum levels sufficiently in its assessment of pupils' work. Samples of work are not retained and moderation with other schools has lapsed. Consequently assessment is not used as it could be to help with planning that would raise achievement further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

113. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below expectations. Some pupils have appropriate basic skills; others cannot do the simplest of operations. They make good progress through Key Stage 2 and by Year 6 reach nationally expected standards. Pupils follow a media course in Key Stage 3, completing a series of projects on a variety of topics such as advertising, creating a newspaper and the manipulation of sound. Standards are maintained in Key Stage 3 with some pupils attaining well above national expectations. Contributions to the development of pupils' information and communication technology capability from a significant number of the other subjects are limited which is why there is some underachievement throughout this Key Stage. All aspects of the National Curriculum are not sufficiently covered, particularly control. Pupils with special educational needs progress as well as other pupils throughout both key stages. Most can use the paint shop programme to construct simple pictures, copy, cut and paste.
114. The teaching in specific information and communication technology lessons is good in both key stages. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Some two-thirds of the teaching seen was good with the balance satisfactory. Pupils are managed well and this encourages positive attitudes towards their work. The effective use of question and answer techniques at the start of lessons results in a good knowledge of basic skills. Pupils know what to do and how to go about it. Subject knowledge is good. The teaching supports well the individual needs of pupils. This is why learning is good overall. The planning of lessons could be improved as some pupils lose concentration in some of the long sessions at the computer. The use of homework is good as many parents support pupils by providing computers for them to use at home.

115. Support for the development of pupils' information and communication technology skills from other subjects is not satisfactory. Lack of access to computer equipment is the main cause in design and technology, English, mathematics and science. Staff training was delayed due to circumstances beyond the school's control. In art, history, geography and music computers are used appropriately, restricted to some extent by this lack of training. The media work in Key Stage 3 covers much of the National Curriculum but there are no opportunities for pupils to use control technology. Research on the Internet contributes satisfactorily to pupils' research skills in history and geography and provides good opportunities for their cultural development.
116. Leadership and management of the subject itself are good. The strategic use of resources, concentrated in one main suite, is appropriate and focuses on a basic provision, which is done well. There is no technician support, which is unsatisfactory. Pupils cannot write easily in the computer suite as accommodation is cramped and not suitable for further expansion. Resources are not adequate for the school as a whole. Whilst the number of pupils per computer is close to the national average, there needs to be additional hardware and software for some aspects of the work, such as control technology. Although used appropriately for specific topics, a significant number of machines are out of date.
117. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection. The quality of the teaching has improved, as has the scheme of work in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 3 the media projects have improved the standards of attainment, removing some of the inconsistencies mentioned in the last report. The school now needs to develop further the use of information and communication technology across the subjects of the curriculum in line with new National Curriculum requirements.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

118. Standards in French are in line with national averages by the time pupils leave the school. However, pupils are not attaining the above average standards one would expect given their above average attainment on entry to the school and in other curriculum subjects.
119. In general during Key Stage 2 pupils progress more slowly than might be expected, although the teaching of French is not a national expectation for pupils of this age. All pupils learn French in a single weekly period during Key Stage 2, which is a very limited experience. Many therefore find it difficult to remember what they have learnt in the previous lesson. As a result few are able to take part with confidence in a short conversation. Often pronunciation is too influenced by English because they rely too much on the written word. They copy vocabulary and short phrases accurately and many can use these in simple question and answer work with a partner or the teacher. A few higher attainers are beginning to understand more complex language, for example, when a teacher explains a task in French. Overall, however, listening comprehension develops only slowly. In some Year 6 classes there is appropriate progression in written work. Pupils can write three or four sentences about themselves, whilst higher attainers are able also to describe a relative. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are well known and these pupils make satisfactory progress.
120. Achievement is better in Key Stage 3 partly because French is taught to all pupils for two periods per week, usually by the specialist teacher. By Year 8 pupils have begun to learn how to use simple forms of past tenses and average and high attainers can write a short paragraph to describe their last summer holiday. Many pupils are able to work independently, reading a simple picture story or producing a guided piece of writing about their school day. There are, however, few comments on written work to help pupils improve its quality. In listening and speaking there is evidence of underachievement. Pupils do not use French routinely in class to express their needs. A few are able to make longer statements, for example, giving reasons for their opinions, but in general pupils do not practise spoken language intensively enough in class to acquire

confidence and fluency. The higher standards in reading and writing mean, however, that overall standards are broadly in line with national expectations.

121. Teaching quality varies from good to unsatisfactory. It is at its best when, as in a Key Stage 3 class, pupils are given a variety of materials well matched to their different abilities on which they work at their own speed individually or in pairs. In this context the learning of many pupils, including some with special educational needs, is good or very good. Teachers use a variety of resources such as video and flashcards but do not often exploit these in such a way as to allow pupils to get the best benefit from these chances to use the language itself. For example, pupils are asked to take part in question and answer work without first having had adequate opportunity to revise or recall the necessary language. This results in a loss of pace, although frequent changes of activity do help to maintain interest. Visual stimuli are not sufficiently used to reinforce meaning and help pupils use spoken language. Oral work in general needs to create more opportunities where pupils are genuinely seeking to find out information.
122. Pupil behaviour is good. With very few exceptions pupils are positive in their attitudes to work and do readily what is asked of them. They apply themselves well to class tests of vocabulary and to work set individually. They are patient if instructions are unclear; once a task is explained, however, they often work quickly with only a small minority taking time to settle. The few less-motivated pupils are not disruptive. On occasion pupils show interest in the language by asking questions about how it works. In general pupils are willing and compliant rather than enthusiastic about language learning and oral work in particular. When their imagination is caught as in a competitive Kim's game, they respond quickly and with enthusiasm.
123. The curriculum meets statutory requirements with no pupils disapplied. The use of information and communication technology is, however, restricted to the pupils using computers at home, although an e-mail link to a French school is being investigated. About half of Year 7 pupils each year visit Normandy and its landing beaches for a week, giving appropriate opportunities to develop further their oral skills. Apart from access to computers, resources are good as is accommodation.
124. The department is well led. The highly organised head of department is committed to her subject. Appointed since the previous inspection she has made good progress on several of the issues raised then. For example, she supports very well the other non-specialist teachers who are responsible for almost a quarter of the French lessons taught. There is effective liaison with the upper school, which provides some opportunities for the head of department to discuss the teaching of French with other modern foreign language teachers. Detailed assessment data has been gathered on pupils' attainment; this now needs to be analysed so as to plan departmental targets. The unsatisfactory quality of oral work remains a key issue.
125. The priority for the department is to improve the quality of teaching and learning through enhancing its knowledge and practice of specialist methods. Additional training and support are required for the head of department in order for this to be achieved. The situation is complicated further by the head of department's recent appointment as head of year. The school needs to provide secure support to help her manage both these roles. The school should review the position of French in the curriculum and on the timetable in order to match it to the staffing resources available.

MUSIC

126. Pupils make good progress in music at Key Stage 2 from below average standards on entry to the school. By the end of Key Stage 2 most are attaining at nationally expected levels. A significant minority is achieving above. Good progress is maintained throughout Key Stage 3 and by the end of Year 8 standards for most pupils are above the national expectation for pupils of this age with a few achieving very highly indeed.
127. At Key Stage 2 there is some confident work in composition accompanied by clearly illustrated

graphic scores. Pupils sing accurately in unison and can sustain their parts in rounds. They play keyboards successfully and use the language of music well when writing about their compositions. At Key Stage 3 pupils were observed working on complex 12 bar blues compositions and presenting them, with confidence, on keyboards and tuned percussion instruments. Pupils work successfully in small groups. They are able to create some very atmospheric compositions based on a Space Suite theme and create mood, atmosphere and emotion through varied musical techniques. They perform and evaluate their work with confidence.

128. The quality of teaching is generally good and at times very good. Clear questioning involves all pupils and there is strong individual support for pupils. Repetition of accurate musical vocabulary enables pupils to use the language of music effectively in their own evaluation and analysis. Comments on pupils' work clearly indicate progress and set attainable targets. The teachers are aware of the learning needs of the very able and those with learning difficulties and provide different and appropriate material that challenges and extends both groups. The teachers' high expectations of the pupils allow the pupils to experiment and produce music that appeals to them within a secure framework. As a result of this, pupils show positive attitudes to their work and behave very well. The teachers' knowledge of their subject and high quality musicianship is much appreciated by the pupils who respond very well to the teachers' demonstrations and performances. Good classroom management enables pupils to organise themselves efficiently into their groups when required.
129. The curriculum meets national requirements and there are some exciting units of work which explore, in a pupil friendly way, various approaches to composition and encourage a strong appreciation of musical forms. Performing and appraising are carefully integrated. Assessment is built well into the schemes of work, with written and listening tests at the end of units of work, which are carefully recorded. The recorded practical work provides good evidence of pupil achievement. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are graded in accordance with the National Curriculum levels and these are communicated to them. This year, at the end of Year 8, pupils are to be jointly assessed by the staff at the school and a representative from the upper school. This is to ensure that pupils continue to build upon their good standards when they change schools.
130. Management and leadership of the department are very good. Although only working for three days a week the head of department liaises regularly with the other member of the department by telephone and through formal meetings. They use these times well to discuss and improve assessment procedures and methods of approach to classes. The head of department has been in post since September 2000 and has instituted a 'music for all' policy, which is having a positive influence on the work of the department and the standards achieved by all pupils.
131. There is very good support from the county music staff and the extra-curricular work is strong. The band is tackling some particularly difficult music with skill and the choir sings with accuracy and enthusiasm. Accommodation and resources are good. However, the present computers are rather out of date now and the department is unable to run on them some of the new, exciting programs that are available. The head of department also requires some in-service training in music technology to prepare pupils for this aspect of the work at the upper school.
132. The department has addressed well the recommendations of the last inspection report. The composition issue has been addressed and both assessment and recording of pupils' achievements are more rigorous. Improvement has been good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

133. Standards in physical education are in line with national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2, and for the oldest Key Stage 3 pupils in Year 8. Attainment in games is better than gymnastics. This reflects a substantial and uneven bias for the former in terms of curriculum time allocation.

Overall standards in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 gymnastics are below national expectations. Work lacks variety and appropriate technical difficulty, especially tasks requiring weight on hands. A lack of control and appropriate gymnastic knowledge and performance of sequential routines restrict pupils' achievement. Planning identifies appropriate games' skills, and pupils acquire a sound grounding in the principles of a wide range of games.

134. Pupils make satisfactory progress across both key stages. Teachers are well aware and sensitive to pupils with special education needs, although potential progress is hampered by a lack of recognition of their individual targets. Pupils are involved in a wide range of curriculum experiences and satisfactorily adapt their skills and understanding in games. However, many pupils are not performing to their true potential in lessons. Restricted teachings styles and narrow planning mean that performance in relevant game contexts is not suitably developed for the most able pupils. Tasks do not require them to find solutions as members of small teams in attack and defence, nor to adapt skills to progressively more difficult situations. A substantial number of pupils do not make the progress expected in line with their abilities on entry to the school and their achievements in other subjects. Talented pupils who achieve success in external competitions are not stretched in lessons.
135. Standards of teaching are satisfactory. In some instances they are good and very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. They effectively organise and manage their lessons enabling pupils to remain on task and to complete their work efficiently. When teaching is good clear explanations and effective questioning result in good gains in relevant skills and understanding. The teaching of cross-country running allows pupils to determine their own endurance capacity through personal pacing and greatly improves their knowledge of how the body copes with exercise. Relationships are good and most pupils respond positively to the collaborative partner and group work expected by teachers. In a Year 8 gymnastic lesson pupils made good progress because teaching improved their self-awareness of achievements and the required next stages in learning. However, planning and assessment procedures are generally poor. There is a lack of judgement by teachers about the levels of pupils' achievement. Planning and teaching is not accurately reflecting relevant next stage targets for improvement across the range of abilities. The pace in some lessons is slow with repetitive and unchallenging tasks restricting the opportunity to move pupils on further. Progress is considerably restricted by a lack of planned activities that cater for the most able pupils.
136. The climate for pupil participation in the department is very good and is a reflection of the enthusiasm of the teachers and the very good breadth of curriculum experiences they receive. Standards improve as a result of a very good range of extra-curricular practices and inter-school competitions. Strong feeder school and community links further improve motivation and participation in sport and the continuity in some pupils' learning.
137. The department has made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection and has not addressed a number of identified key issues. Recent developments to produce relevant planning and assessment criteria to improve achievement are making a significant impact. This has yet to impact on overall standards. There has been an absence of strategic thinking and planning to evaluate reasons for underachievement, teaching weaknesses and an absence of procedures for developing relevant department policy. A lack of a department handbook and minimal staff training have been significant factors in the failure to keep abreast of National Curriculum developments. Previously identified inadequacies in changing and showering facilities have not been rectified and, along with doors that open outwards onto the yard, constitute a health and safety hazard.
138. The new head of department has a clear vision of the necessary key action points and is providing good leadership since her arrival. Newly developed planning has outlined suitable progressions in learning and has identified relevant assessment criteria to judge performance. However, the lack of clear school procedures for helping heads of department to identify priorities and a lack of structure for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating performance is presently restricting further development. Lesson efficiency is hampered by cramped storage spaces and the school has unsatisfactory indoor teaching areas for physical education during bad weather.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

139. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment is at the levels expected in Bedfordshire's Agreed Syllabus for religious education and by Year 8 pupils continue to achieve at expected levels. The majority of pupils make satisfactory progress in the work they do. However, the lack of time for religious education and the lack of focus on the standards that pupils are capable of achieving means that some, particularly higher attaining pupils, do not develop the breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding they are capable of achieving.
140. Over Key Stage 2 pupils develop a sound basic factual knowledge of the religions studied and are able to make simple comparisons of religious beliefs and practices. For example, in Year 5 pupils study the Hindu festival of Divali and are able to explain something of the symbolism of light within the celebrations. They also make comparisons with the role of light in both Christian and Jewish festivals. In Key Stage 3 they are beginning to use their knowledge of religious practices to explain some of the beliefs reflected in them. For example, in Year 7 pupils have the opportunity to discuss the significance of prayer within the Christian tradition. They explore the beliefs contained in the words of the Lord's Prayer through group discussion and individual reflection. Ideas are expressed confidently in discussion but the quality and depth of written work is less well developed.
141. Teaching is satisfactory in both key stages. Teachers use questioning effectively and have good discipline and management of their pupils. Relationships between teachers and pupils and pupils themselves are good. This encourages positive attitudes in the pupils and these with their good behaviour contribute to satisfactory learning. Pupils show interest and are always prepared to answer questions posed them by their teachers. Teachers usually adapt activities to suit the needs of pupils with special educational needs but higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged. Small group and paired work is used well to enable pupils to learn from each other.
142. Teachers lack detailed subject knowledge. The quality of the planning of units of work and individual lessons is unsatisfactory and assessment procedures are poor. Planning does not take sufficient account of the learning outcomes laid down in the Agreed Syllabus. Assessment issues have not been addressed and marking does not help pupils to know either what they are achieving or how to improve their work.
143. The development of literacy is satisfactorily supported, particularly through discussion and by the correct use of religious terminology. Recent guidance provided by the local educational authority on religious education and literacy has not yet made any impact on what happens. The new co-ordinator is aware of the document and has plans to develop this area further. The use of the Internet for information gathering and word processing for presenting work happens within religious education but schemes of work do not identify such opportunities. Homework is not used to extend learning in class or to prepare for the next stage of learning.
144. Religious education makes a good contribution to the school's provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. The content of the curriculum focuses on issues of spiritual and religious concern and pupils are encouraged to think and question for themselves. In Year 5 pupils were asked, "What is a small thing that can fill a room?" "A torch" was the answer and this led to consideration of the power of light as a religious symbol. In Year 6 pupils' own poetry is used to help them consider the significance of poppies on Remembrance Sunday. Cultural practices such as the way in which special foods are used to help in celebrating festivals also encourage pupils to develop respect for the beliefs and feelings of others.
145. Unsatisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection due to staffing changes and

changes in the way in which the subject is delivered within the curriculum. Religious education is now part of the PRASE programme but within it there is insufficient time to meet in full the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. Consideration has been given to how this can be improved but as yet no firm plans are in place. Management of religious education is unsatisfactory. There is a new PRASE co-ordinator in post since September 2000 who recognises the need for further development. Heads of year are involved in planning the religious education content for their year group and form teachers who teach it. However, with little subject expertise their efforts and commitment have yet to find direction. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and of the standards achieved by pupils is under-developed. There is no development plan and subject documentation is not yet helpful in supporting teaching and learning. Resources are inadequate. There are a few text books which match some units of work but no religious artefacts and few posters or videos to provide further stimulus for learning.