

INSPECTION REPORT

**DANESFIELD C of E COMMUNITY
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Williton, Taunton

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123895

Headteacher: Mr I Bradbury

Reporting inspector: Mr Mike Young
4345

Dates of inspection: 30 October – 2 November 2000

Inspection number: 223803

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: North Road

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Somerset

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs L Greswell

Date of previous inspection: June 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Mike Young	4345	Registered Inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards – the school's results and pupils' achievements? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Angela Smith	13895	Lay Inspector		How high are standards – 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?
Roger Samways	16434	Team Inspector	English	
Robert Allan	19278	Team Inspector	Mathematics	
Andrew Stillman	14429	Team Inspector	Science	How well are pupils taught?
John Adams	8530	Team Inspector	Design and technology	
Diane Mitchell	15221	Team Inspector	Information and communications technology (ICT) Special educational needs	
Mary Higgins	16795	Team Inspector	Modern foreign languages	
Felicity Shuffle-Botham	30427	Team Inspector	History	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Danesfield School is a Church of England community middle school located in the town of Williton, north of Taunton. There are currently 504 pupils on roll at the school, between 9 and 13 years, with a good balance between boys and girls, except in Year 8 where there are more boys. The numbers of pupils at the school have risen from a low point around the time of the last inspection (1998) and the school is larger than the average middle school. The percentage of pupils taking free school meals is broadly average at 17.6 per cent, though other indicators point to a significant minority of pupils coming from less favourable socio-economic circumstances. The ability of pupils on entry to the school is below average; the proportion of pupils with low reading scores increased significantly from 1997 to 1999, though this is showing signs of improvement as overall numbers rise again.

There are no pupils for whom English is not their first language. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational needs is low, although the proportion of pupils on the register of special needs is above average at 24 per cent. No pupils come from other ethnic backgrounds. Most pupils on the register have learning difficulties, often literacy, but there are also a significant number with behavioural problems. Almost all pupils go on to West Somerset Community College, in the year prior to their Key Stage 3 tests.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Danesfield is a good school which is now managing its own improvement very successfully. It has dealt energetically and effectively with the serious weakness identified in the 1998 report. The pupils' attainment when they enter the school is below average, by the time they leave pupils achieve average standards in English, mathematics and science and in most foundation subjects. Results in the latest Key Stage 2 tests were well below average, but current Year 6 pupils are achieving better standards. The quality of teaching is good, while the quality of leadership and management is now a strength of the school. The school provides good value for money by spending wisely on what will make the most difference to the quality of education.

What the school does well

- Very positive attitudes to the school from most pupils.
- A good quality of teaching.
- Effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching.
- Good relationships with pupils and parents.
- Pupils' access to a good range of learning opportunities, including very good provision for extra-curricular activities.
- A clear direction supported by the school's governors, staff and parents.
- Good financial planning to meet priorities.
- Support for teachers and managers to improve professionally.

What could be improved

- The standards achieved in information and communications technology (ICT).
- The standards achieved in music.
- Provision for the spiritual development of pupils.
- The academic mentoring of pupils.
- Clear criteria for placing pupils with special needs on the right stage of the Code of Practice.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in 1998 it has made good progress in most respects, though the standards attained in the latest Key Stage 2 tests were disappointing. However, the standards achieved by pupils in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science have improved from this low point. The quality of teaching has significantly improved, with fewer unsatisfactory lessons and more good teaching. Behaviour and the attitudes of pupils to their school have also improved, the latter significantly. Parents are pleased to see these improvements and support the changes at the school. The school has tackled the issues identified in the previous report vigorously, making good progress except in respect of ICT, where aspects of provision remain weak.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
End of Key Stage 2 tests	E	D	E	E

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

In national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, in Year 6, pupils' attainment has been below average over recent years. In the most recent tests, attainment at the expected standard of level 4 was well below average for each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. The same was true when compared to similar schools. However, attainment at the higher levels was marginally better than this.

The current standards of work seen in Year 6 point to a more encouraging level of pupil achievement, with standards much closer to the national average in each of the core subjects. What pupils achieve has improved with recent improvements in teaching, setting and good use of the framework provided by the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall.

By the time pupils are in their final year at the school, Year 8, Danesfield pupils are achieving average standards in most subjects. They make good progress in most subjects from the time they enter the school to achieve this. What pupils achieve in ICT remains less than satisfactory at the end both key stages. The school has worked to improve this, but not yet sufficiently to reach national standards in all aspects of the subject. In music standards are below the expected level at both key stages, with most pupils working toward this level but few achieving it.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	These are very good and much improved since the last inspection. Many pupils are enthusiastic about their work, they co-operate well and concentrate on their work.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good for most pupils, both in lessons and around the school. There is a small number of pupils, mainly older boys who misbehave in lessons when the teaching is not strong enough.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good and contribute to a friendly ethos in the school. Pupils show respect for one another and support one another's efforts.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and in line with the national average. Unauthorised absence is slightly above the national average. Most pupils are punctual.

Most pupils have a very good attitude to their school, showing interest and enthusiasm for the activities they are involved in. Behaviour is generally good and much improved, except in the few lessons where a minority of boys misbehave. There is a marked absence of bullying and relationships are generally very good.

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. The overall proportion of unsatisfactory or poor lessons is low at six per cent, an improvement over the 1998 figures; 69 per cent of lessons were good or better. Twenty-nine per cent of lessons were very good or better, while three per cent were excellent. There was a greater proportion of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3.

Teaching in English is very good at both key stages, in mathematics it is good at Key Stage 3 but sound at Key Stage 2, while in science it is sound at Key Stage 3, but good at Key Stage 2. In no subject is teaching unsatisfactory, though there are unsatisfactory elements in music at Key Stage 3. Literacy and numeracy are both well taught, the national strategies being well used to boost the confidence and skills of pupils. Some of the best teaching was seen in English and in science, though there was also a high proportion of very good teaching in art at Key Stage 3 and in history in the same key stage.

Strengths in teaching throughout the school are typified by clear planning and good schemes of work, the sharing of clear learning objectives with the pupils, a good variety of teaching and learning activities and a good match of the work to the pupils' abilities and previous experience. These strategies have a positive impact on pupils' learning, by ensuring they are clear on the purpose of their lessons and by successfully keeping them engaged. However, there are weaknesses in a minority of lessons, for example too slow a pace and unclear explanations. Poor pupil behaviour slowed the learning in a small number of lessons. The teaching of pupils with special needs is satisfactory overall and frequently good on a one-to-one basis.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good quality and range of learning opportunities, major weaknesses have been addressed and there is a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Most pupils make satisfactory progress. Provision is also satisfactory, but there is a weakness in the way in which pupils are placed on the register and consequently the support they receive.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There is good provision for moral and social development. Cultural development is satisfactory, but spiritual development is unsatisfactory with insufficient opportunities for reflection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The personal support and guidance for pupils are good. However, the arrangements for monitoring and supporting academic progress are not satisfactory in all subjects or in all years.

The school works well with parents, who support it and are pleased with the improvements brought about. A good range of learning opportunities is provided, with very good provision for activities outside the formal curriculum. Pupils have good access to this range of opportunities and weaknesses previously identified have been dealt with, so that provision at Key Stage 2 is now a strength of the school. The setting system meets the needs of pupils much more effectively. The provision for ICT does not fully meet statutory requirements.

While pupils are personally well supported, the monitoring of academic progress is not consistent; some subjects do it better than others while, of the year teams, only Year 7 has systematically developed the tutor overview of individual progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is very good and a real strength of the school. A clear direction is well supported by realistic plans. Effective monitoring ensures a positive impact on teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are well informed about the school, have developed effective monitoring procedures and ensured that the drive for improvement has had financial support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	An increasing use of data to compare the school's performance with others helps shape good plans for improvement, while the monitoring of teaching has also improved quality.
The strategic use of resources	Since the last inspection this has become a strength and is now very good, with resources deployed well to raise standards.

The school's governors have invested in improving the accommodation and resources from a low base and these are now adequate. The accommodation for music and science remains unsatisfactory. The match of qualifications and expertise of teachers to the subjects taught in the school is now good. Very good leadership is provided through a clear plan for improvement supported by spending and informed by an increasingly effective use of comparative data. Best value principles are applied to ensure the money spent makes the most difference to the quality of education.

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 improved behaviour of most pupils. • The greater accessibility of the headteacher and his response to criticism. • Better lessons in most subjects. • The ethos of the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The behaviour of a minority of older boys. • The quality and consistency of homework. • The quality of information on pupil progress in Years 6, 7 and 8.

The inspectors support the parents' view that the behaviour of most pupils has improved and is now good, but that there is a residual problem with a few boys' behaviour. Inspectors found that homework is being consistently set and agreed that teaching has improved. The quality of information to parents is satisfactory and most, though not all, reports show clearly where improvement is needed.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. The pupils' level of attainment on entry to the school, in Year 5, is below average. In the national tests at Key Stage 1 there is a pattern of below average performance from the pupils who subsequently enter the school, a pattern confirmed by the evidence of reading tests. By the time they leave, the majority of pupils make good progress to reach an average level of attainment. Generally, the standards achieved by pupils are improving from a low point; rapidly improving in some subjects where improvements to teaching and leadership are having most impact on attitudes and pupil progress.

2. In national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment has also been below average. The most recent results were disappointing for the school. Attainment at the expected standard of level 4 was well below average for each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in the 2000 tests when compared with national averages. The same was true in comparison with similar schools. However attainment at the higher levels was marginally better than this, particularly in science, an improvement over previous years. Similarly, over the previous two years the pattern of attainment has been of a below average performance. The school did not meet its 2000 targets except in mathematics and has revised subsequent targets in the light of the better information now collected. The targets remain appropriately challenging, however, with English for example aiming at an increase of 12 per cent at level 4 in 2001. There are differences between the performance of boys and girls in English, but the gap is smaller than that found nationally. The trend in attainment at Key Stage 2 up to 1999 shadowed the upward national trend, but somewhat below it.

3. The current standards of work seen in Year 6 however, point to a more encouraging level of pupil achievement, with standards close to the national average in English and science and slightly below this in mathematics. What pupils achieve in English and mathematics has improved with recent improvements in teaching, setting and the framework provided by the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. This has resulted in a better rate of progress as pupils have responded to clearer learning goals, appropriate to their level of ability. There are parallel improvements in planning and teaching quality in science, but the difference between the standards attained in last year's Key Stage 2 tests and current achievement can also be explained by reference to the more stable staffing situation that now exists.

4. By the time pupils are in their final year at the school, Year 8, they are achieving average standards. A similar picture emerges from what Danesfield pupils achieve in Year 9, in their Key Stage 3 tests at the college. They make good progress in English, mathematics and science to achieve this, with the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies effectively extended to this age group. The summer literacy school helps the pupils who failed to reach level 4 to catch up, while the school's more able pupils are now more effectively challenged to achieve higher standards. In a few instances, the relatively limited development of particular skills holds pupils back, as in drama, in music or for lower ability pupils in mathematics.

5. In mathematics, pupils make good progress over their four years and are well prepared for the final year of their key stage in a new school. Pupils make sound progress in numeracy skills. Most can use mental skills well and handle data confidently in various forms, applying their knowledge of percentages and fractions to solving problems, though some of the least able still have difficulty in applying these skills. Pupil achievement is sound in English, with good progress in literacy. Pupils at both key stages are keen to participate in discussion. The quality of their speaking and listening can be very good by Year 8, while

standards of reading are generally satisfactory with good progress by lower ability pupils. The school's priority of improving standards of writing is having an impact on handwriting, spelling and the overall quality of work produced and by Year 8 all pupils have written in different styles for a range of purposes. Pupils make good progress in science, where pupils of different ability demonstrate their ability to plan and conduct investigations effectively, as well as having a good command of technical vocabulary thanks to an emphasis on this in teaching.

6. What pupils achieve in information and communications technology (ICT) remains less than satisfactory at both key stages. The school has worked to improve this, but not yet sufficiently to reach national standards in all aspects of the subject. Standards are better in the recently introduced taught lessons than across the other subjects of the curriculum. Standards do improve between Year 6 and Year 8, however, with the majority of pupils achieving the expected standard for their age in communication and data handling, but not in control technology or remote sensing, due to limited opportunities. In music standards are below the expected level at both key stages, with most pupils working toward this but few achieving it. There are weaknesses in composition and in pupils' ability to use the correct terminology.

7. The standards that pupils achieve in the other subjects of the curriculum at Key Stage 2 are generally satisfactory, though what pupils achieve is good in art and in physical education. Achievement in most subjects is similarly satisfactory for the oldest pupils, in Year 8. Pupils now achieve well in history, a weakness in the report of 1998, as well as in art, while lower ability pupils make good progress in languages. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Many special needs pupils make good progress in reading and spelling, but the achievement of some pupils with behaviour problems is much less satisfactory. Conversely, the achievement of other pupils suggests they ought not to be kept on the special needs register.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The pupils' attitudes to learning have improved since the last inspection and are now very good for the majority. Where teaching is good or better this has a positive impact on their progress and makes an important contribution to the standards achieved by many pupils. Many pupils work enthusiastically and co-operate well with each other and other adults in the classroom. The majority of pupils demonstrate good levels of concentration and motivation for the work they are doing. However, there is a minority of pupils in Key Stage 3 who can be disruptive during lessons when the teaching is not strong enough.

9. The school is an orderly and well-mannered community and most pupils display good standards of behaviour both in lessons and around the school. They are courteous and willing to help visitors to the school. There was no evidence of bullying, racism or sexism during inspection and the reasons for exclusions are appropriate. The number of fixed and permanent exclusions has dropped considerably since the time of the last inspection. This, together with the strategies now in place for promoting good behaviour, places the school in a strong position to address the difficulties caused by the small number of less positive pupils in the school.

10. The pupils respond positively to the opportunities to take initiative and responsibility. The teachers foster the development of the pupils' personal and social skills and pupils are given opportunities to reflect on the impact of their behaviour and actions in personal and social education lessons, religious education and tutor time. Many pupils are actively involved in school life as class monitors, members of the school council and house captains. Many are also active in fund-raising for local charities such as the RSPCA and participate in extra-curricular activities such as the school choir and many sporting events.

11. Relationships are very good and contribute greatly to the friendly ethos of the school. The pupils are open and friendly and are courteous towards staff, each other and visitors. They show respect for one another's views, beliefs and culture and are caring towards each other. Most are keen to work collaboratively both in the classroom and in other aspects of school life. They co-operate well with one another and are frequently supportive of one another's efforts. Older pupils are encouraged and willing to befriend those who are younger or lonely.

12. Attendance is satisfactory overall and in line with the national average. This is not as good as reported at the time of the last inspection. There are good and reliable procedures in use for maintaining and improving the level of attendance and the amount of authorised and unauthorised absence remains slightly above the national average. Most pupils are punctual in arriving at school and settle to lessons promptly. Recording and subsequent storage of attendance information is in accordance with legal requirements.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching is good. The overall proportion of unsatisfactory or poor lessons is low at six per cent, an improvement over the 1998 figures; 69 per cent of lessons were good or better. Twenty-nine per cent of lessons were very good or better, while three per cent were excellent. There was a greater proportion of unsatisfactory teaching at Key Stage 3.

14. Teaching in English is very good at both key stages, in mathematics it is good at Key Stage 3 but sound at Key Stage 2, while in science it is sound at Key Stage 3, but good at Key Stage 2. In no subject is teaching unsatisfactory, though there are unsatisfactory elements in music at Key Stage 3 and the rather patchy use of ICT across the curriculum represents a weakness in the teaching of most subjects. Literacy and numeracy are both well taught, the national strategies being well used to boost the confidence and skills of pupils, with further reinforcement from after school classes and, at Key Stage 2, SAT clubs to improve performance.

15. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good as are their expectations for pupil attainment and behaviour and their relationships with the pupils. The strengths in teaching throughout the school are typified by clear planning and good schemes of work, the sharing of clear learning objectives with the pupils, a good variety of teaching and learning activities and a good match of the work to the pupils' abilities and previous experience. These strategies have a positive impact on pupils' learning, by ensuring they are clear on the purpose of their lessons and by successfully keeping them engaged in a series of tasks that make increasing demands on them. In consequence pupils work at a good pace and show interest and in many cases enthusiasm for their work.

16. Some of the best teaching was seen in English and in science, though there was also a high proportion of very good teaching in art at Key Stage 3 and in history in the same key stage. Teachers' subject expertise is a strength in English and the incorporation of elements of the National Literacy Strategy into English lessons gives pupils the skills to succeed, as in a Year 5 lesson where pupils were able to reflect on what they had learned about the punctuation of direct speech. Effective strategies in art are characterised by the provision of supportive, step-by-step exercises, prior to and during units of work. This assists pupils and enables them to improve practical skills on an incremental basis. A very good Year 8 history lesson took pupils forward through questions, which in stages demanded more analysis from them of symbols in portraits of Elizabeth I. In science, a lower ability Year 8 class was asked to assign National Curriculum levels to their own and to the teacher's work and say how the latter could be improved to the next level. The pupils rose to this challenge. English also

provided good examples of pupils being set individual targets and teaching quality in both these subjects is supported by improved resources. A good mathematics lesson helped pupils understand algebraic operations through clear explanations and challenging questions which helped them identify underlying rules for themselves.

17. These teaching approaches help pupils to have clear ideas about their own progress and most can say what level they are on and what they need to do to improve their work, for example in English, science and art. However, there are weaknesses in a minority of lessons across a number of subjects at Key Stage 3. Too slow a pace was a problem in these lessons, as were unclear explanations, while in some drama lessons pupils themselves lacked the necessary skills. Poor pupil behaviour slowed the learning in a few lessons, though other lessons were seen where sufficient confidence and determination on the part of the teacher ensured behaviour remained good. Similarly there was a poor match of challenge to pupils' abilities in a minority of lessons, opening up the possibility for a lower level of pupil involvement. Parents expressed concerns about the level and consistency of homework set, but what inspectors found was sound practice across subjects.

18. The teaching of pupils with special needs is satisfactory overall and frequently good on a one-to-one basis; the only exception to this involved a particularly difficult pupil. Teachers and learning assistants are developing effective strategies to support pupils in class. Not all individual education plans provide a clear enough measure of progress to support this process, though they are currently being improved.

19. Since the last inspection it is clear that the good teaching at Key Stage 3 has been maintained and that the school has considerably improved the quality of teaching at Key Stage 2. Where teachers' subject knowledge and expertise was only "adequate" in the previous inspection, with weakness in English and physical education, it is now a strength. Teachers' knowledge of the pupils and relationships with them are still good and control of pupils' behaviour has improved considerably at Key Stage 2 where it was a problem. However, there are still difficulties with a few boys' poor behaviour in a small number of classes in Years 7 and 8, for example, in science, music and physical education. This has not yet been fully resolved in this minority of lessons.

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

20. A good quality and range of learning opportunities is provided for the pupils at Danesfield School, meeting their learning needs to a much greater extent than at the time of the previous report. A new curriculum has been introduced from this September which has increased the time available for learning, improved setting arrangements and greatly enhanced the activities available to pupils outside formal curriculum time. The provision for these extra-curricular activities is now a strength of the school, particularly in sport. However, the provision for ICT remains a weakness, and is the only respect in which the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements. The weakest aspects of the curriculum as it was in 1998, such as the provision for Years 5 and 6, the banding arrangements and the integrated studies programme, have all been replaced by much more appropriate provision for all pupils.

21. The provision at Key Stage 2, criticised in 1998 as meeting neither the educational nor the social needs of those two year groups, is now a strength. The strategies for literacy and numeracy have been successfully introduced and are having an impact on pupils' skills and confidence. Of the two strategies, the literacy has had the longest to have that impact and has begun to improve the quality of writing, which the school has identified as a weakness. The overall organisation of the curriculum in Year 5 helps pupils adjust to the new challenges of their middle school.

22. At both key stages improved schemes of work now provide teachers with a much tighter focus for their lessons. The unsuccessful integrated studies programme has been replaced by subject schemes of work and by a sound course of personal and social education. There are still weaknesses in the scheme for music as well as the provision for ICT across the curriculum, but these are now very much the exceptions. The practice of banding pupils has been replaced by a setting system for subjects. This latter, based much more carefully on performance data, provides a better means of meeting the learning needs of all pupils in the school, both through initial placement and the flexibility to move pupils up or down a set where this is appropriate. One pupil described how she was now in three different sets for three different subjects and how much better this was suited to her progress. Overall, therefore, the school's curriculum has been radically changed since 1998, and changed for the better as far as most pupils are concerned.

23. The school has done a good deal to improve the provision for ICT, including one taught lesson per week for each year group, but significant elements of the National Curriculum requirements for ICT are not yet fully met. This shortcoming also impacts on the ICT elements of science and design and technology, as it involves the use of remote sensing and control technology, though overall the requirements for the design and technology curriculum are now met.

24. The curriculum is now broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of most pupils. They have good access to the full range of opportunities it has to offer. Although satisfactory overall, there are weaknesses in the provision for pupils with special educational needs, however. The process by which pupils are placed on different stages of the Code of Practice is not rigorous, and this is reflected in the relevance of the provision which pupils subsequently receive. Providing better learning opportunities for able pupils at the school is a current priority and this has borne some fruit, in the improved performance at level 5 and above in the year 2000 end of Key Stage 2 tests.

25. Since the last inspection the school has introduced new provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE), including sex education and this area of the curriculum is now sound in both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3. There is appropriate attention to drug misuse. However, this area is still under-developed and would benefit from a revised and improved programme and an increase in input from outside speakers and agencies. At present the police visit the school to deliver drugs awareness and the community nurse helps with sex education and other related matters. This provision for PSE is complemented by work undertaken by pupils during tutor periods and the provision of a weekly drop-in centre for pupils wishing to discuss sensitive issues.

26. The school has established good links with the local community and since the last inspection these have become a strength of the school. The school, as a community school, shares the site with the local provision for community education. This enables many ongoing links with extra-curricular activities such as Youth Drama and local sporting clubs, such as archery. Pupils take part in performing for the community, for example, musicians from the school have entertained the shoppers in Williton during late night shopping and there are visits such as those to the Exmoor show and the London Festival of Dance. These, along with other links, enrich the curriculum and make very good contributions to the attainment and personal development of many pupils.

27. The school also enjoys very good working partnerships with the other local schools in the same educational group as Danesfield. Arrangements and provision for the smooth transfer of pupils between feeder schools and Danesfield are good, as they are with the upper school. The school has built many high quality links with local businesses and other employers and these have enabled considerable financial sponsorship for the school, other

projects to raise money and an increase in the number of extra-curricular opportunities available to pupils.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development

28. The school makes satisfactory provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils.

29. Provision for the spiritual development of pupils has improved since the last inspection, however it remains unsatisfactory. Assemblies provide opportunities for collective worship and reflection and so meet the requirement for an act of worship. They do not take place on a daily basis, however. Opportunities for spiritual development are provided in music lessons where pupils are encouraged to reflect on the feelings aroused by music. All pupils are involved in the school's celebration of the Christian festivals. Pupils consider the influence of belief, values and traditions on individuals, for example on the life of Nelson Mandela, in religious education. Opportunities to explore feelings and values are also provided in the personal and social education course. However, there are insufficient opportunities for reflection and wonder in other areas of the curriculum.

30. Provision for the moral development of pupils is good. There is a clear code of conduct displayed about the school and teachers have high expectations of behaviour. Achievement and effort are rewarded openly and the annual celebration of excellence is an opportunity to praise pupils' efforts. Moral issues are discussed in English and in personal and social education lessons, while in drama such issues are explored through role-play. Pupils consider inequality of wealth during geography when third world issues are considered and in textiles, shirts produced by pupils are sent to Africa via Oxfam. Pupils are encouraged to raise money for causes of their own choice, and to provide Christmas presents for children in deprived circumstances. Within the personal and social education course pupils discuss a range of contemporary issues including the dangers of the abuse of drugs and their responsibility to protect the rights of others.

31. Provision for the social development of pupils is good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and based on mutual trust. In personal and social education pupils explore feelings and relationships, while many departments make good use of paired and group work, encouraging pupils to work together. The newly introduced 'buddy' system enables pupils in Year 8 to take responsibility for the welfare of pupils in Year 5 and the school council chaired by the head boy and girl provides an opportunity for pupils to discuss issues relating to their interests. The school provides a wide range of extra-curricular activities and pupils are encouraged to participate in activities such as the Youth Public Speaking competition and the Year 5 trip to Great Wood.

32. Provision for the cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory. Pupils participate in the variety of music and drama groups, and performances are celebrations of their achievement. In English pupils explore the writings of Shakespeare and Keats, and groups study a variety of art forms in their visit to Bristol museum. Pupils have the opportunity to investigate their local history and study the development of the English parliamentary system. Pupils learn to value the culture of other countries, for example in dance where pupils in Year 6 participate in Indian dance and in music where pupils consider African and Javanese music. English folk dance was celebrated when a group of pupils took part in a folk festival in London. Pupils visit France as part of the town's twinning arrangement and during the humanities visit, experiencing French culture and exploring some of its history.

33. The school has made improvements in its provision for the moral, social and cultural development of the pupils, however the provision for spiritual development is still unsatisfactory.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

34. There are many aspects of support for pupils' welfare that make a positive contribution to improving the educational standards and since the last inspection many aspects of the pastoral system have moved from draft policies to firmly established practice. The school has a friendly ethos marked by the provision of a clean and ordered environment in which pupils can learn effectively and in which parents are made welcome. Arrangements to promote pupils' general well-being are satisfactory and pupils are offered a range of opportunities to receive help and support for personal difficulties including the provision of a weekly drop in lunchtime club. Health and safety around the school is mainly satisfactory, although there are unhygienic work surfaces in the food room and in the resistant materials rooms some machines are inappropriately connected to the electricity supply.

35. Good child protection procedures are in place. The headteacher is the designated person and although there is a weakness in that no member of staff has had recent formal training, liaison with the teaching staff and the statutory authorities provides a good level of monitoring of pupils at risk. The use of support staff contributes positively to the well-being and progress of all pupils and the recently introduced Focus Group aims to meet the needs of pupils with learning or other difficulties who are at risk of exclusion. The arrangements and records for dealing with first aid, child sickness, accidents and emergencies are good and understood by pupils. Several members of staff hold first aid qualifications. Fire drills are undertaken and accurate records kept.

36. The school has procedures that are well developed for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour. These now encourage high expectations and since the last inspection there has been a greater emphasis on positive behaviour management. All staff work to promote a consistent approach to behaviour throughout all aspects of the school life and this is reinforced in lessons and assemblies and by the example of all the adults who work in the school. There is very little bullying and harassment as through a policy of immediately involving pupils, teachers and parents, the school effectively avoids any serious escalation.

37. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is satisfactory, although at present there is still no overall whole school policy to encourage all pupils, regardless of ability, to improve and expand their personal development and to monitor this consistently and systematically throughout the pupils' school life. Each class tutor is responsible for the monitoring of pupils' progress in personal development during each school year. The monitoring of individual academic progress is unsatisfactory, as it is less well done in some subjects than others and the role of the tutor is relatively underdeveloped in most years. There are shortcomings in the monitoring of pupils' progress in history, geography, science and design and technology and ICT, in some subjects reflecting an inadequate record of attainment and in others insufficient use of the information available. While the tutor's part in this process, in taking an overview of the pupils' performance in all subjects and working with them on appropriate targets, has only really been developed in one year, Year 7.

38. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good overall. They are consistent and work well. Registers are completed and stored in accordance with statutory regulations. Unauthorised absences are followed up by one of the senior teachers and an educational social worker is helpful in reminding some parents of their legal duties and the educational consequences that follow pupils with records of poor attendance. During inspection lessons observed started on time and there was evidence of procedures to account consistently and accurately for all pupils arriving late and for those leaving or joining the school during the school day.

39. The pupils' work is usually marked and comments are often supportive. However, written comments do not always consistently offer advice on how pupils might improve their work. Although the school has a marking policy, this is not used consistently by all teachers in all subjects. There are individual education plans (IEPs) in place for all pupils with special educational needs (SEN), although the criteria for the initial evaluation of pupils who are to be placed on the SEN register are not sufficiently clear.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. Parents are generally supportive of the school, pleased with the friendly atmosphere and are satisfied with the education provided. This is an improvement over the last inspection where concerns were expressed over communication, behaviour and the quality of reports. Contact with parents prior to the inspection showed that parents welcome the attitudes and values that they feel the school now promotes. Some parents noted that they would like to see the quality and consistency of homework improved although inspection evidence suggests that the homework is appropriately set. The use of homework journals to record homework provides a home school link as these enable parents and teachers to monitor the progress of homework. Most parents feel that parents' evenings are very useful and they feel generally informed about their child's progress. Although parents feel that reports are informative, they would prefer the interim reports to be more detailed than they are at present. Parents are generally satisfied with the information they receive about the work of the school, trips and events. Most parents enjoy a good relationship with the headteacher and staff and feel that the school is approachable and handles complaints well. Parents are generally satisfied with what the school provides and the extra-curricular activities on offer to their children.

41. The quality and quantity of information the school provides for parents is satisfactory. Parents are provided with newsletters, letters on specific topics, curriculum information and reports on pupils' progress. The governors' annual report and school prospectus both offer parents other useful information, but neither of these publications totally complies with statutory regulations and have a few minor omissions. The school has offered parents a home-school agreement but not all have co-operated with signing and returning these to the school. The school has well-established routines for keeping parents informed of pupils' progress and achievement, with an annual cycle of full and summary reports. National Curriculum levels are indicated where appropriate, and most subject reports are sufficiently detailed to show where improvement is needed. The overall quality of reports is satisfactory, and some, such as English and design and technology, are very good.

42. The school has an open-door policy for parents wishing to discuss matters or make complaints. Although there is no active parent teacher association the headteacher, together with a teacher governor, arranges half-termly meetings of 'Partnership with Parents' and these meetings are open to all parents. Matters relating to the curriculum and major decisions on spending are debated and discussed with parents as well as arranging and organising social and fund-raising events for the school.

43. Parents of pupils with a statement of special educational need receive appropriate information through an annual review and are invited to attend meetings to discuss these. Many parents are very supportive of school productions and other activities. A few parents help in school with listening to reading for the younger pupils and a number are willing to help with transport and supervision for extra-curricular activities and sporting events. All these links between the school and parents make a positive contribution towards the quality of pupils' learning at the school and at home.

44. The parents' involvement in their children's learning is satisfactory. Although some parents feel that the school does not work closely with parents, the attendance of many

parents to the teacher-organised Partnership with Parents meetings provides evidence that the school is actively working with parents. A successful parental workshop on improving pupils' spelling skills recently enabled parents to help their children learn to spell better. Parents of Year 5 pupils are invited to a new parents' wine and cheese evening to meet teachers and to view samples of pupils' work. Many parents attend school concerts and dramatic productions, such as the recent Rocky Monster Show, sports days, joint partnership projects and open evenings in school with enthusiasm and enjoyment.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. Almost every significant aspect of the school's management was criticised in the previous report of 1998. Since the appointment of the new headteacher in January 1999 these failings have been systematically tackled, the new headteacher working together with the governors and the school's management team. The result is to transform a weakness into a real strength of the school, with some very good features. Notable among these is the clear educational direction that now exists in the school, a direction which is, moreover, shared by the staff of the school and the governors and parents. This clear route to improvement is expressed through the school development plan, which correctly identifies the priorities that will move the school forward into improved standards for pupils. Current priorities include standards at Key Stage 2, improvements to teaching and learning through staff expertise and better science accommodation.

46. The headteacher and governors of the school have also transformed the school's finances to ensure that spending backs these priorities. Good examples of what has already been achieved are provided by the creation of an English suite and the Year 5 block, the enhanced spending on learning resources and the investment in teachers with specialist subject expertise. Clear systems for monitoring both financial and educational performance have been successfully developed and implemented by the governors. A good plan is in place to recover the deficit that had previously accumulated, by making savings in aspects more marginal to the core task of the school. The school now provides good value for money and the principles of best value are applied to key decisions. The school's leadership considers very carefully the expenditure that will have most impact on improving standards at the school.

47. The school is using an increasingly rich range of comparative information on performance and expenditure to paint a realistic picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and so inform key decisions. Recently, for example, the performance of other middle schools nationally and other local schools have both been used to help the school to focus its efforts. A careful examination of this information has improved the process of target setting, though there are aspects of pupil monitoring and support which need further improvement, both by subject leaders and by three out of four year leaders. Teaching is monitored and work scrutinised by senior staff and, more recently, heads of department. This has directly benefited pupils through improvements to teaching quality. Both sensitivity and determination have been shown in tackling issues of the under-performance of teachers.

48. The lengthy list of key issues identified at the time of the 1998 inspection have almost all been successfully tackled; the exception to this is that the provision for ICT still does not fully meet statutory requirements. The governors are now much better informed, and clear, about their role, both through the quality of comparative information and their own monitoring reports. Surveys help keep them in touch with parents' and pupils' views. All governors have, as recommended, attended appropriate training and work as a team, with the headteacher, for the school's benefit. Significant steps have been taken to improve pupil progress and attitudes, not least through teaching quality, and the curriculum now meets the needs of pupils. Both the school development plan and financial planning are now strengths, as is the intelligent use of specific grants, such as the standards fund.

49. One particular strategy for improving management, whose full impact on attainment is still to be felt, has been the empowerment of subject leaders. Their responsibilities have been enhanced along with the budgets they control. Training in the National Standards for Subject Leadership has been provided to sharpen their understanding of their role. The result is good or improving leadership in almost every subject, though there are still weaknesses in music and in design and technology, where there has been insufficient progress in improving standards. The management of special needs has improved in respect of the clear handbook and the improved individual education plans now being produced by the co-ordinator, but there are still weaknesses in how pupils are placed on the register and in how learning support assistants are deployed. The support that subject leaders have received has ensured a consistency of quality in some key aspects of management, for example in the monitoring of teaching and in good plans to improve standards. Even where there are other weaknesses, as in ICT, teachers have a clear and realistic plan for improvement.

50. Since the last inspection the deployment of teachers and recruitment of specialists have been much improved. More teachers are now teaching their specialist subjects. They are more confident with the pupils and consequently standards are improving. The pool of non-teaching staff has been increased so that lessons are better organised in science, design and technology and ICT.

51. Newly qualified teachers and other new staff now follow a well-structured induction programme and have quickly become established in their new posts. Plans for professional development are now directly related to the school's development plan. This has helped the new headteacher to make a number of significant improvements in a short period. The school has piloted the new arrangements for performance management.

52. Opportunities for professional development have been well exploited, for example the training given to both teaching and non-teaching staff on the National Literacy Strategy has improved teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6. The training provided for the heads of department has helped them accept their responsibility for the standards being achieved. They have welcomed the opportunity to monitor teaching and this has led to improvements, for example in French.

53. Learning resources are adequate for the school's curriculum and range of pupils. At the time of the last inspection, funding for subjects had halved over the previous four years. Inadequate resources were having an adverse effect on the pupils' learning in most curriculum areas. Since the last inspection, the new headteacher has significantly increased funding to departments based on an audit of needs. Initiatives to improve standards in subjects have been encouraged through a bidding process. Stationery is now held in departments as part of a successful policy of empowering subject leaders to manage their own resources. English and physical education are well resourced. Shortcomings remain in the provision of specialist hardware and software for science and design and technology which is having an adverse effect on learning in both curriculum areas. There are also deficiencies for systems and control and resistant materials in design and technology. There have been recent improvements in the provision of instruments for music yet more xylophones and untuned percussion instruments are required. The library is now well resourced and provides a good quality learning environment. However it is insufficiently used to support learning, other than in English and history.

54. The school's accommodation allows the curriculum to be taught effectively. The new headteacher and governors have made good progress in improving the school's accommodation since the last inspection. Good planning and use of resources has resulted in a successful programme of redecoration and addressed the previous shabbiness and results of vandalism. In addition a new English suite, a second ICT room and a textile and

graphics rooms have been created to improve the previous shortcomings in specialist accommodation. The current accommodation for English, ICT, history, religious education, physical education, special educational needs and the library is good. Accommodation remains unsatisfactory for science and music. Poor accommodation for science limits opportunities for experimental work and small rooms for music limit teaching opportunities and provide inadequate space for practice and storage.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

1. Improve the standards achieved in ICT and meet statutory requirements by:

- implementing the school's own strategic plan, which would meet statutory requirements if fulfilled;
- continuing to improve the quantity and quality of resources;
- developing a system of assessment to feed back to pupils on a regular basis their levels of attainment;
- ensuring pupils can fully access ICT in control technology and the use of sensing;
- providing for staff training needs after a thorough audit;
- ensuring ICT is used fully across the curriculum.

(See paragraphs 6, 14, 23, 48, 107 and 113.)

2. Improve the standards achieved in music, by:

- ensuring pupils can use musical vocabulary;
- addressing the issues of behaviour which slow down learning at Key Stage 3;
- defining practical tasks to develop composing and performing skills progressively;
- improving the pace of lessons;
- improving the accommodation and resources available.

(See paragraphs 6, 14, 117, 123 and 124.)

3. Improve provision for the spiritual development of pupils, by:

- enhancing the opportunities for reflection throughout the curriculum.

(See paragraph 29.)

4. Provide for the academic mentoring of pupils, by:

- developing the role of the tutor in taking an overview of individual progress;
- ensuring that all subjects keep and use assessment information to monitor progress.

(See paragraphs 37 and 47.)

5. Ensure that the special needs of pupils are met by:

- developing clear criteria for placing pupils on the code of practice;
- better deployment of learning support assistants.

(See paragraphs 7, 18 and 24.)

Other less serious weaknesses should be considered by the governors in drawing up their action plan. These are:

- the health and safety issues identified in the design and technology food and resistant materials areas (see paragraph 34);
- the shortcomings in accommodation for science and music (see paragraphs 54, 79 and 124);
- the behaviour of a minority of mainly older boys in a few lessons (see paragraphs 8 and 17);
- the assessment systems in design technology, geography and ICT (see paragraphs 91, 92, 100 and 113).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	105
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	16

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	26	41	25	5	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	504	
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	81	

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	123	

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	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	6.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	70	61	131

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	33	40	46
	Girls	40	38	45
	Total	73	78	91
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	57 (66)	61 (56)	71 (76)
	National	75 (71)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	32	42	55
	Girls	47	39	51
	Total	79	81	106
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (64)	63 (58)	83 (63)
	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	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	504
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	32	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes**Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	23.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	308

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77%
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	24
Key Stage 3	26

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	945,870
Total expenditure	944,455
Expenditure per pupil	1,956
Balance brought forward from previous year	-
Balance carried forward to next year	1,415

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

476

Number of questionnaires returned

206

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	41	50	4	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	27	55	3	1	14
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	57	8	0	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	18	60	11	5	6
The teaching is good.	25	59	1	1	14
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	20	41	22	4	13
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	43	7	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	50	0	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	24	44	15	4	14
The school is well led and managed.	31	46	7	1	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	28	53	5	0	13
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	42	10	2	19

Other issues raised by parents

At the parents' meeting parents raised the following issues:

- The provision of information; some felt this was not as good in other years as it was for Year 5.
- The timing of parents' evenings, which some felt came too late for some years to be really helpful.
- One parent expressed misgivings about the quality of special needs support, though others disagreed.
- Parents expressed the view that there were still a minority of lessons in which some older pupils did not behave well.

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

ENGLISH

55. Standards at Key Stage 2, from the results of the 1999 and 2000 national tests were below the national average and well below by comparison to similar schools. The difference between the performance of boys and girls was similar to that found nationally. Teacher assessments showed a similar pattern for each year.

56. There is a significant improvement, however, in the achievement of pupils in Year 6, so that standards are in line with the national average. This is due directly to improvements both in subject organisation and the quality of teaching. Recent results of internally set tests of spelling and reading, for example, show significant gains in the number of pupils achieving at levels above their chronological age. Whilst girls are still achieving higher standards than boys are, the gap is less than in the national tests. Pupils in Year 5 are already making good progress and achieving satisfactory standards overall. Those with special educational needs are well supported both by carefully structured teaching and effective use of learning support staff. More able pupils are sufficiently challenged by the range of tasks set and by the quality of the texts used.

57. Standards achieved by the oldest pupils in Key Stage 3 also show an improvement when compared to earlier national test results. Here too, the pupils in both Years 7 and 8 are responding very well to the more structured, objectives-led teaching. This is particularly evident in the quality of work sampled in pupils' books and on display in classrooms. Inspection findings show that standards are now in line with national expectations. There is still a significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls but the English department action on targeting under-achieving boys is already having a positive impact on standards. The most able pupils are being well challenged by the pace and rigour of teaching. Pupils who failed to reach level 4 in the most recent national tests are making good progress following the school's successful introduction of a summer literacy school and the subsequent catch-up programme using National Literacy Strategy materials.

58. Pupils at both key stages are keen to answer questions in whole-class discussion. When given the opportunity to work in pairs and small groups the quality of their speaking and listening is often very good, as in the Year 8 lesson where boys and girls co-operated successfully to identify stylistic features in a well-written short story. Pupils are encouraged to share their work in plenary sessions, benefiting from the opportunity to address or read out loud to an audience. Year 5 pupils, for example, having investigated the use of dialogue in Dick King-Smith's 'Sheep Pig', enjoyed reading out their own work showing interesting examples of using verbs other than 'said'. Pupils work enthusiastically in drama lessons at Key Stage 2, but their limited knowledge and understanding of the range of drama conventions as yet restricts the quality of the outcomes. Teachers have yet, however, to exploit the full potential of speaking and listening in relation to the National Curriculum programmes of study.

59. Standards of reading are satisfactory overall. Pupils make good use of the well-stocked library and enjoy reading for pleasure. They review books they have read and are enthusiastic in adding to the suggestions list held in the library. Shared reading, particularly in Key Stage 2 lessons, provides all pupils with supportive experience of good quality reading aloud. Those with special needs in reading make good progress through the use of appropriately pitched texts in guided group work. All pupils are expected to reflect on their reading and the English department is successfully introducing the idea of reading logs to

support this. The school's newly developed literacy policy is having a positive impact across the curriculum. Key words in subjects are displayed and referred to in lessons; pupils are learning to skim and scan texts for information. In design and technology, Year 6 pupils were reading texts from history and Shakespeare as stimulus in their work on making puppets and pneumatically controlled animals.

60. The improvement of standards in writing is a priority in the school's action plan. This is already having a positive impact, on handwriting, spelling and on the quality of work produced. The processes of drafting and revising are well established, so that pupils take more responsibility for their writing, particularly in proofreading. Pupils in Year 5, for example, have written some good 'concrete' poems on what might be found in the attic or in the cellar. Year 6 pupils, of all abilities wrote biographies of each other, many of them using vocabulary adventurously and for effect, with a good awareness of the reader. Year 7 pupils have produced a good range of writing in a project on newspapers, successfully developing their knowledge, skills and understanding to write feature articles, persuasive letters and interviews. Year 8 pupils wrote in an informative style to produce a range of 'guides to fortune-telling'. A number of subjects are making good use of frameworks to support writing, particularly for the below average pupils. In geography there are good examples of diary and letter writing. Much of the writing by the older pupils shows very good command of computer skills to produce word-processed texts, often with striking use of graphics.

61. The quality of teaching is consistently good and often very good, characterised by carefully detailed planning, effective use of appropriate resources and secure subject knowledge. Marking of pupils' written work is thorough, both in picking up basic errors and in responding to the meaning of the piece. Pupils are able to see what they must do to improve and are set individual targets on 'post-its' in their exercise books. All lessons begin with explicit sharing of learning objectives, so that pupils understand what they are focusing on. This enables them to reflect on what they have learnt, as in a Year 5 lesson where learning about the rules for punctuating direct speech was successfully reinforced, or in the Year 8 lessons, where pupils were able to analyse the different elements of effective short story writing. Teachers use the Literacy Strategy framework effectively so that the pace of lessons is effectively brisk and challenging. There is good variation of teaching and learning styles to incorporate whole-class teaching, guided group work and independent activities. Pupils respond well in each mode of working and are thus able to make progress according to their needs. The setting arrangements introduced into Years 6, 7 and 8 enable teachers to pitch the work at appropriate levels, enabling pupils to make good progress in relation to their identified needs.

62. The management of English is very good. The head of department provides strong, supportive leadership, successfully achieving a positive team ethos, enabling teachers to plan their curriculum and share outcomes as they accommodate new ways of working. Monitoring and evaluation are established in the department, leading increasingly to the collection, analysis and use of data on pupil performance. This is clearly having a positive effect on both the quality of teaching, on standards and on pupils' achievement.

63. Since the last inspection there have been a number of significant improvements. The introduction of setting means that there is more appropriate challenge for more able pupils and that support for weaker pupils is more effectively focused. Teachers are more secure in their work since the introduction of schemes using the National Literacy Strategy framework. There is now no discontinuity of teaching because of shared classes, nor is there disruption of lessons by poor behaviour. Drama has been introduced as a separate subject at Key Stage 3, although it is still in its infancy and teachers need training to increase their effectiveness. Despite the lack of improvement in the most recent national test results, standards are improving and most pupils are achieving to their capability.

MATHEMATICS

64. Standards in mathematics are below average by the end of Key Stage 2. They rise steadily as pupils move through the school and are average by the end of Key Stage 3. Pupils make steady progress and achieve well. They leave well prepared for the next phase of their mathematical education.

65. Standards of attainment in mathematics on entry to the school are below average and have been well below average in some recent years. In 1999, the national test results for eleven year olds were well below both the national average and those of similar schools. This has been the picture in recent years, with low attainment at the end of Key Stage 2. Since 1996, there has been no consistent pattern of difference in attainment of boys and girls. The proportion of pupils attaining the highest levels is small. There has been a small increase in attainment in recent years, following national trends, but considering pupils' attainments at the age of seven, there has been a recent significant improvement in their achievement by the end of Key Stage 2. The work of current Year 6 pupils, including those with special educational needs, shows them to be responding to the recent improvements in the quality of teaching. Hence they are making sound progress and achieving close to the expected standards for their age.

66. At the end of Year 8, when pupils move to the local college, both boys and girls, including the highest attainers, reach standards in line with national expectations. They make good progress and so achieve well in Key Stage 3. Currently, Year 8 pupils are progressing well and the achievement of those with special educational needs is sound.

67. At Key Stage 2, the pupils make sound progress in their development of basic numeracy and literacy skills. Most use mental skills confidently and can employ formal techniques to calculate reliably. They acquire a sound specialist vocabulary that they can use to explain their reasoning clearly. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, a pupil explained how the commutative property of multiplication helped her to solve a number problem. They consolidate their understanding of number, such as the relationships between common and decimal fractions and percentages. They refine their competence in calculation and in their use of measures. They extend their knowledge of shape and lay the foundations of algebra. For some, particularly those who find the subject difficult, their level of understanding falls below their skills and knowledge of processes, often preventing them from avoiding mistakes. This is most evident when they attempt to apply their learning to solving problems.

68. By the end of Year 8, pupils are well prepared for the final year of the key stage and for the mathematical demands of other subjects in the curriculum. In geography, for example, they can tabulate and display data in various forms and interpret population statistics. They apply their knowledge of percentages to draw pie charts, and use ICT to represent data in scattergraphs and identify lines of best fit. In art, pupils apply fractions and proportions to the study of the golden mean. The least able pupils and those with special educational needs make steady progress developing, for example, basic algebraic skills with the aid of apparatus. However, their ability to apply skills in problem solving and to interpret representations of data is weak.

69. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In about half the lessons it is good, particularly in Key Stage 3. Many pupils benefit from well planned and managed lessons where teachers maintain a brisk and demanding pace and include opportunities for pupils to discuss their reasoning. In a Year 5 lesson during which pupils were expected to read, interpret and explain problems requiring addition, the teacher set realistic tasks and provided a challenging period for their completion. Pupils then had to use specialist language to

explain their working clearly to others. By the end, almost all pupils were accurately calculating answers, the most capable using decimals, the least capable working with two digit whole numbers. In a Year 8 lesson, the number of pupils successfully mentally calculating products of two digit numbers increased significantly after effective techniques were explained by other pupils and clarified by the teacher.

70. The least effective teaching is characterised by tasks that are poorly matched to pupils' capabilities such as when a teacher failed to take sufficient account of the low level of prior learning of decomposition of numbers to be used in column subtraction. This resulted in some pupils not understanding the work set and so making less progress than they should have. In another lesson, the teacher didn't provide a motivating context so pupils failed to be challenged by work on trial and improvement. They worked slowly and unconvincingly through an exercise whose purpose they did not understand. Teachers are diligent with marking and the setting of homework. They assess work effectively and regularly, checking progress towards targets for individual pupils.

71. Pupils generally have a positive attitude to learning. In all years, they concentrate well, pay close attention to their teachers and are keen to improve. There are very few instances of inappropriate behaviour, none of which seriously disrupts the work of others.

72. The department is well led. Effective steps have been taken to improve the quality of teaching such as specialist training and observation of good practice. Procedures for the routine monitoring of teaching are developing well. The National Numeracy Strategy has been fully incorporated in a useful scheme of work that gives clear guidance to all teachers. Co-ordinated planning in Year 5 has contributed to the progress now being made by pupils in Key Stage 2. Since the last inspection, the department has introduced improvements in assessment procedures and the monitoring of pupils' progress. Teachers now make better use of the information that this provides. There is not yet an established procedure for analysing progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 nor routine monitoring of the relative progress of boys and girls.

SCIENCE

73. The Year 6 pupils' science attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in the summer of 2000 was well below the national average and well below the results of similar schools. The results had fallen from those of the previous three years which had been just below the national averages each time and which had been rising in line with the national trend. The standard of pupils' work in the current Year 6, in contrast, is close to the national average. The poor result in 2000, which applied to both boys and girls, was not surprising, given the considerable disruption to the science teaching during 1999/2000. This resulted from the almost complete change of science staff and the lack of a scheme of work and appropriate assessment strategy to support the teaching. Since the start of this school year, however, there has been much more stability in the science staffing, with a good scheme of work and assessment strategy in place to support their teaching.

74. Current Year 6 pupils are now making good progress and their attainment is now much closer to national averages. Most pupils are well challenged by their work. They work hard and their teachers let them know how well they are doing and how they might improve. Their motivation towards known goals is good.

75. From work seen and conversations with pupils it is clear that the science attainment of the oldest pupils in the school (Year 8) is in line to meet national averages when they take their end of Key Stage 3 tests in 18 months' time in their next school, the West Somerset College. This is in character with the previous results achieved by ex-Danesfield pupils at the

college. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are generally making good to very good progress in their learning though the behaviour of a small number of pupils (mainly boys) in the lower sets in both Years 7 and 8 reduces progress where the teaching is not confident and strong. Where these groups experience really good teaching, their progress is equally good. Pupils of different ability demonstrate their ability to plan and conduct investigations effectively, as well as having a good command of technical vocabulary thanks to an emphasis on this in teaching.

76. Overall the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is good. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better and many were very good or excellent. At Key Stage 3 half of the teaching is good, or very good and some is again excellent. These lessons were typified by good teacher expertise being able to make the lesson both interesting and challenging, good relationships with the pupils, good control strategies, good pace and use of time, clear aims, clear introductions, useful summaries, and good use of assessment to guide the pupils. Some of the lessons were excellent and promoted excellent learning. For instance, in one low ability Year 8 set, pupils were working on investigations into heating and cooling. The teacher then asked them use the National Curriculum level criteria that they had been given in pupil language a) to determine how well they had done, b) to work in groups to look at a version he had written and to give a level to that, and best of all, c) to consider what had to be done to his version to change it from a level 4 to a level 5. The pupils rose to this challenge well and were then able to apply what they had learnt to their own work.

77. However, the interaction between weaker teaching and poor behaviour in a very small number of low sets leads to unsatisfactory lessons in which pupils make little progress and motivation and attitudes are unsatisfactory. In these few instances the interruptions slow and restrict the teaching.

78. The department offers a good broad and balanced curriculum with an appropriate modular structure which encourages good progression between lessons. The curriculum meets the needs of the National Curriculum in all respects apart from that of using ICT to make measurements (remote sensing). The new scheme of work is very supportive and is backed up by a new and good assessment strategy which provides both teachers and children alike with good information about the progress the pupils are making. However, the department has not yet used this good information to monitor pupils' progress either over time or across teaching groups and this should be the next step.

79. Leadership under the acting head of department is very good and developing at a very fast rate. A great deal of good work has been achieved in a very short space of time. There is a good, collegiate approach to taking the work of the department forwards and there is a strong common desire to raise standards. Given the recent disruptions in staffing this is a very healthy position to have reached. The department management is very well supported by the headteacher and senior management team and new monitoring procedures are helping teachers to move forwards. Both the laboratory accommodation and the level of resources are unsatisfactory and impoverish some of the pupils' learning when practical work cannot be carried out.

ART

80. Overall standards are in line with national expectations for pupils at the end of both key stages. Considering the below average standards of pupils' artwork when they enter the school, the achievement is good. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress as a result of teachers providing identified pupils with helpful support.

81. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils develop satisfactory drawing skills. They gain good understanding of the lives, philosophies and working practices of a variety of artists, mainly from the European tradition and they use this knowledge to inform and improve their own work. For example, each of the Year 6 classes have made studies of one of the following artists, Modigliani, Van Gogh, Picasso and Rousseau, as the focus of an in-depth analysis into the human form in art. Pupils regularly read extracts from books, aloud in lessons, about for example, Picasso's "Weeping Woman". Through making detailed comparisons of their own working practices and those of their chosen artist, pupils improve drawing skills and gain valuable insights into how artists see and represent the world about them. Pupils begin to use sketchbooks purposefully both in lessons and for homework exercises. This gradually builds into a useful visual resource which pupils refer to, when incorporating skills and knowledge learned, into larger pieces of work.

82. At Key Stage 3, pupils further refine and build on the accumulated skills, practised regularly in sketchbooks and are able to extract ideas and techniques learned when planning new work. For example, pupils in Year 8 made in-depth studies on "Reflections" influenced by the work of Escher. They demonstrate good skills of pencil control and tonal rendering. They also show good levels of drawing ability, by using sensitive graduations in their use of line to describe objects effectively and can convey their ideas well, graphically.

83. Pupils in Year 7 work collaboratively by combining individually produced pieces into large-scale works, for example, when exploring ideas of self-image they incorporate their own design of lettering with pictorial elements, using two chosen adjectives to show more personal and abstract aspects of themselves than the more usual portrait depictions would allow. Pupils show keen interest in this aspect of conveying more details about their spiritual, inner self but this has not been linked by teachers, to pupils' work in PSE lessons. This way of working, provides a good foundation for their subsequent introduction to more contemporary schools of thought in art, in future units of work. Pupils in Year 8 are currently well placed in their progress to reach the standards required by the end of the key stage.

84. The previous inspection findings indicated that there were behavioural problems in the subject, due to a minority of boys at Key Stage 2. There has been improvement in this respect and problems have been resolved. All pupils observed, participated fully and showed keen interest in the subject. The majority of pupils show real enjoyment in the practical tasks and take great interest in the more theoretical aspects of how established artists work. Pupils sustain prolonged periods of concentration and work at a brisk pace. At both key stages, pupils' behaviour is well managed by teachers through the provision of purposeful and stimulating learning activities and firm but supportive direction.

85. The quality of teaching at Key Stage 2 is consistently good, at Key Stage 3 it is also good with some very good features. This is good improvement since the previous inspection and the major reason why pupils are developing well. All teachers who contribute to work of the department have good levels of subject knowledge and importantly, are able to demonstrate good practice for pupils because of their own levels of expertise in drawing and in modelling. Teachers use a range of effective strategies, characterised by the provision of supportive, step-by-step exercises, prior to and during units of work. This assists pupils and enables them to improve practical skills on an incremental basis. Working in this manner also helps pupils to have clear ideas about their own progress and most can say what they need to do to improve their work. Teachers give good levels of verbal feedback in lessons and the quality and regularity of marking in sketchbooks is both encouraging and informative for pupils. Whilst links with literacy and numeracy are appropriately developed in the subject, some opportunities for pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, are lost because teachers do not link learning in art with that in subjects such as history and religious education, where the exploration of common themes, promotes relevance and reinforcement to pupils' wider

understanding of major world cultures and beliefs. Teachers have high expectations for pupils' commitment both personally and academically, they make these clear by continually sharing learning objectives with pupils and keeping the pace of lessons both brisk and well focused.

86. The head of department has very good strategic plans for the further development of the subject. The recent transition to a larger and more suitable room has been well managed and the priorities for its development and refurbishment are realistic and appropriate. A strong feature of the attractive and stimulating learning environment, is the excellent collections of artefacts used for close observation work, provided by the head of department. This has been effective in engaging and supporting all pupils' interest and attention in the subject. The monitoring process of both teaching and learning has been effectively implemented and the adoption of national planning guidelines is also proving to be a useful force for progression.

87. Generally resources are satisfactory and there are ample reproductions of artists work to support the schemes of work. At present, opportunities are lost for pupils to use ICT as either a research tool or an alternative method for pupils to generate and interact with visual imagery. The department has a good range of video tapes, containing accessible works of art from the major European art collections but there is very little evidence of pupils being taught to appreciate the richness and achievements of non-European cultures.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

88. By the end of Key Stage 2 and by the time they leave the school in Year 8, the pupils achieve standards that are generally in line with the national expectations. Standards of designing and making are higher in food and textiles than in resistant materials. The time spent on projects in resistant materials is often too short to develop the pupils' knowledge and skills and to produce high quality working products. Pupils, including the lower achievers, generally make sound progress at both key stages. However, there are some instances where the more able pupils could reach higher standards if the work was more challenging. The teachers recognise the need to further raise standards in order to reach the expectations of Curriculum 2000, for which all schools are now developing courses.

89. At Key Stage 2, the pupils successfully evaluate existing products and identify the needs of the user when designing puppets and photograph holders. They produce annotated drawings and models of their ideas which they confidently explain to others. Pupils plan their making well and they work confidently when making products with food and textiles and sheet materials. However, the pupils' ability to make products in wood is limited and their ability to use computers to research and design their ideas is below expectations.

90. By the time they leave the school, the pupils are able to use a variety of sources to research and develop their own ideas. They present their ideas well and are beginning to use their knowledge and understanding of materials and process to suggest ways of improving products. For example, pupils in Year 8 tested and evaluated commercial food products and suggested how their appearance and texture could be improved. The pupils have developed good manufacturing skills, particularly when making products in food and textiles, yet their ability to use computers to design and make is poor.

91. The quality of teaching and its impact on the pupils' learning is satisfactory in all instances and is good in half of the lessons. It is good in most lessons at Key Stage 3. The teachers have a sound knowledge and understanding and the pupils respond well to lively teaching. They enjoy their work and are keen to succeed. Lessons are generally well planned and expectations are shared with the pupils, which helps them understand what they

should achieve in the lesson. The teachers know the needs of the less able pupils and provide effective support for them. Where teaching is particularly good, expectations are high and lessons are well structured to provide pace in learning and develop independence in the pupils' designing and making. In one very good textile lesson, the pupils designed a bag for young children. The teacher organised a range of research and experimental activities to enable the pupils to decide on the materials, fastenings, size and load the bag should carry. At the end of the lesson the teacher enhanced the pupils' learning by encouraging them to review their progress against the targets set and used questions well to ensure that key learning had been established. Where teaching is less successful, lessons often fail to build on previous learning, which limits the pupils' progress. Less successful lessons also have insufficient pace, such as when the teacher introduced pneumatic control to small groups in turn. This reduced the teacher's ability to support the rest of the class as they designed ways to use pneumatics in their own products, which limited the progress they made.

92. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in forming a small team to teach the subject and in creating a room for textiles and graphics. However, insufficient progress has been made in improving standards. There are insufficient resources for systems and control, resistant materials and computer work, which is having a negative impact on standards. The return of the subject co-ordinator from maternity leave results in the subject now having good potential for improvement. She has clear strategies to improve standards through target setting and more effective monitoring and assessment of the pupils progress and for raising expectations in the lessons planned.

GEOGRAPHY

93. The standards being achieved by the oldest pupils in Year 8 are in line with national expectations. Standards of work currently being achieved by pupils in Year 6, at Key Stage 2, are also in line with the standards expected nationally.

94. By the end of Year 8 less able pupils can describe the physical and human features that give a place (Mozambique) its character. They can draw a simple annotated sketch map and are extending their geographical skills. Most pupils can identify causes and consequences of flooding in a country such as Mozambique. More able pupils can generate relevant geographical questions using photographs of a country. The more able pupils are beginning to write more extended pieces of homework describing the location and effects of volcanoes and earthquakes.

95. Most Year 7 pupils are also achieving appropriate standards for their age and can briefly describe the pattern of population in the British Isles. Less able pupils can draw a bar graph successfully. More able pupils can compare differences between two regions such as the north and south of England. The most able pupils are able to explain human processes such as population migration in Italy.

96. There has been a steady improvement in standards during this academic year, notably in the depth of knowledge and understanding in Years 6, 7 and 8. For example in one lesson Year 6 pupils were able to recognise and classify different types of land use in the local area. Year 6 pupils were also correctly identifying physical and human features in photographs. Most Year 6 pupils can recognise that different people have different views about environmental issues such as the effects of tourism on Dartmoor. Less able pupils can locate places on a map and give simple directions.

97. Year 5 pupils are developing their use of words connected with weather. More able pupils are able to briefly describe the reasons for the change in the seasons but were not sufficiently challenged by the task set. However, good links were being made between

literacy skills and strategies in all the lessons seen. Progress since the start of the year is good with most pupils being suitably challenged by the level of work. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress in developing basic geographical skills and are making at least sound progress in all lessons.

98. The teaching of geography is good. Teaching in Years 6, 7 and 8 is characterised by good specialist teaching. In one Year 7 lesson the teacher was using a very good range of teaching and learning activities to illustrate the pattern of population distribution in Italy. Pupils were stimulated and motivated by the range of activities, which had been produced by the teacher to a very high standard. Lessons were characterised by a brisk pace, enthusiastic explanation and demonstration by the teacher and plenty of visual stimuli to hold the pupils' attention. Pupils consequently gained a good deal of knowledge and understanding of geographical topics and places during each lesson.

99. Pupils responded well to all the geography lessons observed. They were keen to be involved, attentive and worked well, individually and in pairs. The vast majority of pupils were well behaved in class and only a small minority of boys were occasionally off task and not fully involved in lessons.

100. New co-ordination and teaching of the subject has addressed many of the issues raised in the previous report, including a better match of task to the more and less able pupils; marking pupils' work; and longer-term planning. The use of ICT is being developed by the present geography teacher who is being well supported by her humanities co-ordinator. Although there are plans to address assessment issues, the present system does not allow staff to monitor pupils' progress in the subject.

HISTORY

101. Standards in history at the end of Key Stage 2 and for pupils when they leave at the age of thirteen are in line with national expectations. No teacher assessments are available for pupils in Key Stage 2. Teacher assessments for pupils in Key Stage 3 are not the result of moderated formative testing. In work seen pupils are achieving standards of attainment expected for their age group.

102. Pupils in Key Stage 2 consider the living conditions of the rich and poor in Victorian England and recognise that attitudes to poverty may have changed. They gain first hand experience of research in their study of Watchet and the mineral line. In Year 6 pupils select and extract information from written and pictorial sources, which they use at face value to make simple observations. Pupils recognise sequence and put events in chronological order. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are developing the ability to make deductions using a variety of source material, and pupils of higher ability display their findings in extended writing that is clear and informative, supporting their judgements with evidence. This is a significant improvement since the last report. Pupils recognise the difference between primary and secondary sources, although most pupils do not yet evaluate between them or question their validity. Pupils of lower ability can use sources to provide information, but do not question or interpret the information selected.

103. Pupils with special educational needs have an understanding of the period studied and with support they develop written responses and compare different viewpoints of individuals. A good example is the comparison of paintings of Elizabeth I, by pupils in Year 8.

104. The quality of teaching is good overall, very good in Key Stage 3. Lessons are well planned with clear aims and objectives that are shared with the class. Teachers have high expectations of presentation and behaviour, and as a result pupils work in an orderly and

secure environment. Teachers make good use of question and answer to assess pupils' knowledge and understanding and to involve all pupils in the work of the group. Tasks are imaginative and a variety of teaching methods are used in order to engage the interest of all pupils. As a result pupils are actively involved in their own learning. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress is sound, in particular in Key Stage 3, and pupils are beginning to be introduced to the requirements of the different National Curriculum levels so they may take greater responsibility for their progress. End of year evaluation of the course by pupils in Year 8 has begun, however no self assessment of pupils has yet been developed.

105. A history specialist now leads the department, and review of the schemes of work is taking place. There is no established practice of a departmental record of pupils' attainment, or of whole year group formative assessment of key skills. As a consequence there has been no monitoring of pupils' progress or of the use of this monitoring to support curriculum development. Plans are being put in place for this to take place in the future. There is no planned use of ICT in the schemes of work other than for some research, however the library is well used. Teachers support the development of literacy in their pupils and the use of writing frames is being developed in order to support the development of extended writing skills.

106. Since the last report the department has developed its own identity and specialists deliver history from Year 6 onwards. As a result key historical skills are now being taught and there is far greater opportunity for investigation and enquiry. Standards of attainment have risen and the quality of teaching is now at least good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

107. Overall, the standards achieved by pupils are unsatisfactory at the end of both key stages. Standards achieved by pupils in ICT by the end of Year 6 are in line with what is expected nationally in the taught ICT lessons. However, overall standards are unsatisfactory due to a lack of resources for control and sensing and insufficient coverage of ICT in all subjects of the curriculum. Opportunities to develop the use of ICT are improving and all pupils have at least one lesson a week to study ICT as a subject. Some subjects do make good use of the technology available, as in English, for example, where older pupils display a good command of word-processing techniques and graphic effects.

108. The majority of pupils enter the school with well below nationally expected standards, this is linked to provision at feeder schools where only one school has sufficient resources. Some pupils have computers at home which helps them to work at a higher standard.

109. By the end of Year 8 the picture is better. Almost all pupils are achieving levels expected for their age in communication and data handling with at least a third achieving above average standards. At least two thirds of pupils understand how spreadsheets can balance expenses and control stock in relation to the purchase of fireworks in ICT lessons. However, opportunities to experience control and sensing are very limited so pupils are not able to achieve in this area of the curriculum. Achievement overall is unsatisfactory because of this. Links to subject teaching are often unclear and there is a lack of clarity about what levels individual pupils are achieving in their ICT work.

110. Teaching for the younger pupils is satisfactory. Lessons are planned well and linked to schemes of work but expectations are sometimes low and fail to build on what pupils can achieve. Some pupils achieve higher standards in English using ICT than they do in discrete ICT lessons. Teaching is also satisfactory for older pupils. There is good teaching of specific skills in ICT lessons, but very few teachers go on to ask pupils to apply the skills learnt in other subjects in the curriculum. Communication and data handling are well

developed, pupils create magazine pages using desktop publishing packages, downloading images from the Internet to supplement their work. Other pupils download data to use as a project on volcanoes in geography lessons.

111. All pupils are keen to use ICT and some pupils use computers in the lunchtime to explore the Internet, girls in particular have a real sense of purpose and create some interesting effects which are then used in projects. Pupils with special educational needs are able to improve their reading and spelling using computers in their teaching base.

112. Management of the subject has improved since the last inspection and there is a clear way forward for ICT. There is a forward thinking action plan, linked to staff training and to financial constraints. Monitoring is beginning to have an impact on improved performance in teaching and on standards for pupils. Good use has been made of additional grants to increase resources and the co-ordinator has recently taken advantage of regional training to become an ICT trainer. Technical support, provided by the new technician, is excellent and contributes to the effective use of new resources.

113. There have been improvements in the subject since the last inspection; there is now a comprehensive subject handbook, which clearly identifies how the subject could be improved linked to effective financial management. The school has also taken advantage of the standards fund grant NGFL (National Grid for Learning) to create an additional computer suite but the ratio of computers to pupils is still below that in many similar schools. The discrete ICT lessons for older pupils give better opportunities to use computers, but other subjects apart from English have yet to capitalise on the new resources and the assessment of levels and feedback of this information to pupils is not systematic enough. The subject still does not meet statutory requirements, due to the weaknesses in provision.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

114. By the end of Year 8, the majority of pupils are reaching standards that are broadly in line with what is expected nationally. Overall their progress is satisfactory, although progress in listening is much better than in the other skills. There are too few opportunities in the current scheme of work to reach the higher levels of which many pupils are capable. Many pupils can make short oral and written presentations about themselves and where they live, giving opinions and extended descriptions of family members. The most able pupils pay attention to the accuracy of their writing, for example spelling adjectives correctly and using the correct parts of verbs. The pupils in middle and lower sets tend to write less fluently. Their work can be difficult to understand as they often leave the verbs out of sentences. All pupils have well developed listening skills. They are used to hearing French throughout the lessons, for all aspects tuition and learning. Their teachers are very skilled at communicating their meaning, even to pupils who know relatively little foreign language. For example Year 5 pupils who have only been learning French for half an hour per week since September are confident in following all their classroom instructions in French. The more able pupils who start learning a second language in Year 8 are able to follow entire lessons in German from the first lesson.

115. The teaching is generally good and has a number of very good features. The teachers communicate the purpose and plan of each lesson very clearly, so that all pupils are sure what they will learn and what they have to do. The teachers have a wide range of lively teaching activities that provide variety and maintain the pupils' interest throughout the lesson. In several lessons pupils collaborated with energy and enthusiasm to compose songs in small groups. The teachers make good use of their resources, for example specially designed playing cards, to devise all kinds of games to give the pupils plenty of listening practice. In contrast, there are too few activities that give the pupils the opportunity

to speak or write at any length or for a real purpose. Each lesson ends with a very effective activity where pupils are asked to reflect on what they have learnt and can remember from the lesson. The pupils respond well to this challenge: at this point in a Year 8 lesson the atmosphere was electric with the pupils' mental effort as they strove to recall how to tell the time on the hour in French. The pupils clearly appreciate their teachers' efforts. They enjoy coming to language lessons and want to do well, for example the Year 8 girls overheard revising a French verb, in the corridor between lessons.

116. The department is a well-led and thoroughly committed team. Since the last inspection, the opportunity to monitor teaching has been used effectively to achieve more consistency in teaching styles. This has helped to eradicate the instances of unsatisfactory behaviour and improved the attitude and achievement of many boys. Schemes of work are currently being updated to provide more opportunities for the pupils to work at higher levels.

MUSIC

117. At the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 8 standards are below the average expected levels with most pupils working towards the expectation and a few achieving it.

118. At Key Stage 2 standards of singing are satisfactory with most pupils able to sing accurately in unison and with a pleasing tone. In instrumental performance pupils are developing correct techniques of playing tuned and untuned percussion instruments but only a few can play evenly and rhythmically with control. In composing pupils can select appropriate timbres for their work but control of structure is more limited and melodies lack shape. In listening and understanding pupils are able to describe musical elements but most do not use the appropriate terminology.

119. At Key Stage 3 most pupils in Year 8 are able to maintain their parts accurately when singing a round and they are able to play keyboards, xylophones and percussion when performing and composing. In Year 7 pupils' skills and techniques are limited for the stage of the course with most having difficulty in using and combining the musical elements satisfactorily and their ensemble skills are not well developed. In listening exercises most demonstrate understanding of instrumental sounds and can describe some effects but they do not use musical vocabulary accurately.

120. At both key stages pupils have opportunities to organise samples into compositions using music technology. This work is at an early stage of development.

121. In lessons at both key stages pupils' achievement in whole class activities is mostly satisfactory but their progress slows when they work in groups as the accommodation and behaviour of some pupils affects this. Most pupils work satisfactorily in lessons responding eagerly to questions and singing enthusiastically. Pupils of all abilities make equal progress in lessons.

122. Standards in instrumental lessons and in the extra-curricular music clubs are good and pupils make good progress.

123. At Key Stage 2 teaching is satisfactory and better. Good relationships with pupils and appropriate use of praise encourage learning and lessons are carefully planned and prepared with short-term timed tasks. At both key stages questioning is used to check prior knowledge and a variety of tasks linking different musical activities helps to maintain pupil interest. Songs are well chosen and appropriate to the age group with personal musical skills well used to demonstrate points of learning. Where there are weaknesses they particularly affect Key Stage 3 where challenging behaviour from a significant minority of pupils slows the pace

of learning. In practical work some tasks need to be more clearly directed at progressively developing performing and composing skills and techniques to ensure good pace in learning in lessons and progress over time.

124. Since the last inspection standards have remained broadly the same with the numbers of pupils learning instruments and joining extra-curricular activities sustained. There has been some improvement in resources with the purchase of new keyboards and tuned percussion but more tuned and untuned percussion instruments are still needed to further develop world music and one piano is in a very poor condition. The previous inspection noted no use of technology in music but the department now has a computer allowing pupils to organise existing sounds. This now needs to be linked to a keyboard and sequencing software to allow pupils to create their own sounds. The last two inspections have criticised the accommodation and although the music room has been re-decorated and re-carpeted it remains an inadequate space in which to teach National Curriculum music. Pupils cannot hear their own performances and compositions when working in groups and their progress is adversely affected. Accommodation for the peripatetic teachers is also unsuitable.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

125. Activities in physical education were observed at Key Stage 2 in gymnastics, health-related fitness and in dance; at Key Stage 3 in gymnastics and outdoor and adventurous activities. Standards of pupils by the age of eleven are in line with the expectations of similarly-aged pupils nationally in the key areas of performance, knowledge and understanding, although they are above expectations in dance. At Key Stage 3, standards by the end of Year 8 are also in line with the expectations nationally for this age group. The majority of pupils at both key stages achieve standards appropriate to their abilities, and there are no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls, although a minority of boys in Years 7 and 8 underachieve, principally as the result of inappropriate behaviour and attitudes.

126. In gymnastics lessons at Key Stage 2, pupils learn to devise, either individually or in pairs, a series of controlled and balanced movements using the floor and small apparatus. They show a satisfactory ability to put the movements into sequences and then perform them, operating productively in co-operation with each other. The majority of pupils also show the ability to reflect and evaluate upon their performance and refine it further. In health-related fitness activities pupils show a good ability to carry out a range of exercises to develop their strength and endurance whilst also displaying a good understanding of the impact of exercise on the heart and lungs. Pupils' performance in dance is good. The majority of pupils show a pleasing ability to interpret a theme in dance and understand the way in which dance can be used to convey a story.

127. In gymnastics lessons at Key Stage 3 the majority of pupils show the ability to move in and out of a series of balances in a more controlled fashion than at Key Stage 2, although a minority of pupils, mostly boys, do not achieve a satisfactory standard because of a lack of confidence or the inability to work consistently and constructively with their partners. In outdoor and adventurous activities pupils engage in a series of imaginative problem-solving exercises involving co-operative movement across a series of physical obstacles and construction of a bivouac. The majority show a satisfactory ability to think through problems and resolve them co-operatively, although as in gymnastics a minority of boys display an immaturity in approach which restricts progress in achieving objectives which depend totally upon team building for their success.

128. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress particularly in developing their performance skills.

129. The quality of teaching in physical education is good overall. It is always good or very good at Key Stage 2. Few lessons could be observed at Key Stage 3, but in these lessons the quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory, and is good in one out of two lessons. Where the teaching is good it is characterised by several features, at both key stages. The setting out of objectives to pupils and the explanation of key teaching points are very effective in giving pupils a clear indication of what they should be aiming to achieve. This is particularly evident for example in gymnastics lessons, where the objective of pupils achieving balance with the appropriate emphasis on style, control and changes of pace is frequently emphasised and reinforced by teachers through probing questioning and the use of pupils to demonstrate good practice. This helps to motivate pupils and gives them good models on which to develop their own routines. The display of good subject knowledge and explanation is also evident in dance, and gives the pupils the confidence to attempt imaginative and original interpretations. The good teaching is also characterised by regular feedback to pupils on their progress during lessons, and this also prompts higher-achieving pupils, for example, to refine their gymnastics routines.

130. The management of large classes in the relatively confined space of the gymnasium is also a feature of the good teaching: teachers make full use of the space, show a due awareness of safety factors and introduce a range of progressively more challenging activities, enabling pupils to make good progress, particularly at Key Stage 2. The imaginative use of limited resources to motivate pupils was seen particularly in a Year 5 health-related fitness lesson: the teacher, having transferred from an outside activity to the gymnasium because of the weather, used a combination of music and varied activities to keep all pupils on task for a long lesson, both channelling their physical energy effectively and giving them a good understanding, through periodic evaluations, of the effect of that exercise on their bodies. A consequence of these effective teaching methods is that the majority of pupils enjoy the lessons and work to the best of their ability, improving their skill levels and levels of fitness. This motivation is also seen in the good take-up of extracurricular opportunities.

131. The one aspect of teaching which is not satisfactory is the lack of an effective discipline strategy for dealing with a minority of disruptive boys at Key Stage 3, boys whose poor listening skills, poor concentration and inability to co-operative effectively over a length of time restrict their learning, particularly in activities such as team building.

132. The head of department provides effective leadership which is helping to raise standards of achievement. A detailed scheme of work provides good guidance in the wide range of activities. Committed teachers run a good range of clubs and teams outside lessons. A high percentage of pupils takes part in these clubs, which motivate pupils and help to raise standards. For example, the school has recently begun to enter local leagues and has had success in hockey, tennis and cricket, whilst success has also been achieved in a national dance competition in London. The department has also developed a detailed assessment policy, and is using its links with other local schools to develop a realistic understanding of standards and how to monitor them.

133. Standards in physical education at the time of the previous inspection were judged to be broadly in line with national expectations. This is still the case. However, there have been some significant developments. The overall quality of teaching has improved, principally because there is now very little teaching of physical education by non-specialists. The accommodation, principally the boys' changing facilities, has been significantly improved. There is now a more varied curriculum: although swimming can no longer be offered, the

development of dance and outdoor and adventurous activities has increased opportunities for pupils. Therefore overall there has been good progress in physical education since the previous inspection.