

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BEAUCHAMP MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109692

Headteacher: Mr R. J. Stock

Reporting inspector: Susan Chamberlain  
7661

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> November 2000

Inspection number: 223910  
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: Hawk Drive  
Bedford  
Bedfordshire

Postcode: MK41 7JE

Telephone number: 01234 300900

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. J. W. Wallace

Date of previous inspection: 5<sup>th</sup> December 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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S. Chamberlain 7661	Registered inspector	Equality of opportunity	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school
		Information and communication technology	The school's results and pupils' achievements
			Leadership and management
			Key Issues for action
K. Patel 10481	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
			Pupils' welfare, health and safety
			Partnership with parents and carers
I. Addis 22949	Team inspector	Religious education	
M. C. Ash 4749	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
		Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	
T. Chipp 21954	Team inspector	Art and design	
J. Clark 27803	Team inspector	Physical education	
		Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
J. Dickins 6752	Team inspector	Geography	
T. Dodd 8859	Team inspector	Design and technology	
G. Hunter 31100	Team inspector	Mathematics	
P. J. Ingram 12183	Team inspector	Science	Teaching and learning
T. Osgerby 25744	Team inspector	History	
G. Price 19214	Team inspector	English	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Beauchamp Middle School is bigger than most schools with 575 pupils on roll, 304 boys and 271 girls. This is a 17 per cent increase in numbers since the previous inspection. It is a well-kept school situated in a pleasant area of Bedford. It has recently become part of an Education Action Zone. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is nearly 16 per cent, which is broadly average. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language amount to 15 per cent of the school's population; this is higher than in most schools. 30 per cent of pupils are identified as having special educational needs; this includes those with statements and is high. The proportion of pupils with statements is 4.5 per cent, which is high. Pupils' attainment on entry is average. The headteacher is leaving at the end of 2000 and his replacement has been appointed.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is a good school. The teaching is good and pupils' attitudes are very good. The school has been well led by a caring and egalitarian headteacher who demands high standards of behaviour. Pupils respond by behaving well and respecting one another and other adults. All pupils are looked after well but standards of attainment could be higher if their progress was more proficiently monitored and assessed. The school deals effectively with the higher than average proportion of pupils from a large number of ethnic minority groups as well as above average proportions of pupils with statements of special educational needs and English as an additional language. The school spends an average amount per pupil and provides at least satisfactory value for money that would be good if test results were higher.

#### **What the school does well**

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is overall good.
- Standards are enhanced by effective use of the literacy hour. The speaking and listening skills of pupils are very good.
- The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good; they relate well to each other and to adults and are aware of the impact of their actions on others. Pupils are enthusiastic about school.
- There is excellent provision for extra-curricular activities especially sporting activities.

#### **What could be improved**

- Assessment and marking, and monitoring of academic and personal progress are unsatisfactory.
- Although good, in pastoral terms, there is insufficient support for newly qualified teachers when teaching subjects outside of their specialism.
- Performance management procedures are not yet fully implemented and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching is too informal.
- There is insufficient homework in mathematics and English at Key Stage 3.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

There has been satisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection in December 1995. However, pupils' attainment is erratic and their progress satisfactory. It is now time to implement vigorous assessment and monitoring procedures, which are unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection teaching has improved and teaching time has been increased. Homework is inconsistent. There has been considerable development within information and communication technology (ICT), which is at the beginning of potential great improvement. The status of religious education is higher and the provision better. There is improved balance in the curriculum overall. Science has improved of late.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
English	C	D	C	C
Mathematics	C	D	D	D
Science	C	E	D	D

**Key**

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

Standards are variable. Although in line with national averages in 1998, there was a dip in 1999, the prior attainment of pupils in this latter group being below that of most year groups. In 2000 this dip has been almost recovered in all three subjects, English, mathematics and science when results reach the national average in English and are close to it, but still below, in mathematics, and are below it, but much improved, in science. In 2000, when compared with similar schools, standards are average in English and below average in mathematics and science. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for the subjects English, mathematics and science has been broadly in line with the national trend over the last five years. Most pupils, including those of ethnic origin, achieve reasonable levels of success. Girls' results are similar to boys in science; they score higher in English but lower in mathematics. The school does not have a satisfactory computerised system for the tracking and assessment of individual pupils and needs to focus on this to further raise standards; at present pupils' achievement is average.

By age 13 pupils are on track to reach levels of attainment in line with national expectations at the end of Year 9, at upper school, having made satisfactory progress by the end of Year 8. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. Overall pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve satisfactory standards but within this large group some pupils attain less well. Generally most pupils' achievements are average.

The work seen in exercise books and in lessons indicates that standards are average across both key stages and these approximately match results in tests in English and mathematics but are better than those in science. However, changes have taken place in the science department and results are improving. Standards are highest in history and physical education at both key stages and in music at Key Stage 2 and lowest, but improving, in science at Key Stage 2.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are very good. They are very enthusiastic about school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good; pupils show maturity and responsibility. There are occasional instances of misbehaviour resulting in temporary exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are good. Pupils are aware of right and wrong. Their personal development is effective and exemplified in their ability to take responsibility.
Attendance	Above average levels of attendance exist with minimal levels of unauthorised absence.

## 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.*

Teaching is of a similar standard in each key stage. In over two thirds of lessons seen teaching was found to be good or better; in all lessons it was at least satisfactory. In approximately one fifth of lessons teaching was very good or excellent. Both specialist and non-specialist teachers teach literacy skills well. They use the literacy hour effectively and pupils respond well to the variety of ways teachers put across the necessary skills. Teachers have enabled pupils to listen and speak very well. Teaching in English lessons is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8. Clear objectives help pupils take the expected learning steps. Teaching in mathematics is good, overall; pupils respond to the challenge they receive and learn effectively and exert themselves. In a small number of lessons teaching was less secure when taught by teachers outside of their specialism. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. New teachers in science require more support in Key Stage 3. Homework is given inconsistently, a view shared by parents, and marking is not sufficiently helpful in several subjects.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum offers a good range of learning opportunities and meets statutory requirements except the requirement to provide swimming during Key Stage 2. The range of extra curricular activities is excellent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall provision is good. The range of moral, social and cultural opportunities is good. Spiritual education is improved and strengthened by appropriate themes for morning registration and for assemblies.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Although pupils are cared for well, procedures for assessing pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. There is, however, some good practice that could be emulated.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school has a good partnership with parents although a few think it could be better. It has recently started to improve communications, an issue parents wish to be addressed.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has contributed a great deal to the success of the school since amalgamation and leads the school well. The senior management team is supportive but is in the process of changing personnel. Some important developments, such as assessment, have not been effectively implemented.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is satisfactory but the school could do more to evaluate its own performance and is in the process of introducing a computerised system that will enable more formal procedures of monitoring to be evaluated.
The strategic use of resources	Financial control is good and the strategic use of resources is satisfactory. The school seeks best value for all expenditure, large or small. Overall, there is an adequate number of teaching staff but there is an urgent need for a technician for ICT. The accommodation is good but there is little room for further expansion. Resources are good.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.</li><li>• Children like school.</li><li>• The school expects children to work hard and achieve their best.</li><li>• Their children are making good progress at school.</li><li>• They think the teaching is good.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school provides insufficient information about children's progress.</li><li>• The school could work more closely with parents.</li><li>• The amount of homework is inconsistent.</li><li>• Some parents think leadership and management is unsatisfactory.</li><li>• Some are concerned about behaviour.</li><li>• A few think the school is unapproachable.</li></ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views of the small proportion of parents who returned the questionnaire. They agree with parents that communication with some parents could be stronger and that a minority of parents find the school unapproachable. Inspectors also agree with parents that homework is inconsistently set. Generally inspectors judge that the school works sufficiently closely with parents. They do not agree that leadership and management are unsatisfactory, but are aware that the school is in a state of transition and some important developments are on hold. Inspectors found no evidence of any serious behaviour problems.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. Entering the school with average levels of attainment, pupils' attainment is average at age 11 and 13 and pupils' achievements are satisfactory throughout the school. By age 13, pupils are on track to reach levels of attainment in line with national expectations at the end of Year 9, at upper school, having made satisfactory progress by the end of Year 8.

2. A dip in statutory test results in 1999, for pupils aged 11, was almost fully recovered in 2000. Pupils' results are in line with the national averages in English and close, but still below, in mathematics and below in science. However, results have improved in all three subjects. The trend in National Curriculum point scores is broadly in line with the national trend in all core subjects English, mathematics and science.

3. The work seen in exercise books and in lessons indicates that standards are average across all year groups and both key stages. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is good. Those pupils for whom English is an additional language achieve satisfactory standards but there is some concern that support is not always aimed at those who need it most. Overall, pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

4. Girls' standards are higher than those of boys in English, lower in mathematics and equal in science. Most pupils, including those of ethnic origin, achieve reasonable levels of success. Those of Indian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani and non-white European heritage score well in all three subjects, English, mathematics and science. Those of Bangladeshi origin have mathematics scores that are particularly low despite satisfactory scores in English and science. The high proportion of pupils who need extra help with either English or have special educational needs, including the large number of pupils with statements of special educational needs, can have a negative effect on standards. Even though the school effectively supports such groups, and most pupils from these groups do well and some do very well, the extreme number of different needs make it difficult for the school to make rapid leaps forward in terms of standards.

5. Results of national tests in English at age of 11 are average and attainment is appropriate for pupils who will go on to achieve average levels at age 14. Pupils attain average levels when compared with those achieved by pupils at schools with a similar intake. In Year 2000 results show an improvement, the trend steeper than the national trend over the last five years. Standards of work seen are average, pupils' achievements being satisfactory. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress as do those pupils who have special educational needs make good progress. Overall pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

6. Standards of literacy are average throughout the school. Levels of reading are appropriate for pupils in each year and enable them to meet the reading demands in all subjects. Many pupils read for pleasure and are regular borrowers from the school library. They generally write in a satisfactory manner that is neat and in soundly punctuated sentences. However, standards of spelling for pupils at all attainment levels are frequently below average and this is clearly an area for additional attention.

7. Standards in mathematics are broadly average when taking into account work seen during the inspection. This results from the pupils having a good attitude towards their work and being taught well. Overall, their achievements are satisfactory. Pupils with special

educational needs achieve appropriately relative to their potential. Those who have English as an additional language achieve satisfactory standards.

8. Numeracy standards are satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils are confident in their use and understanding of number. The lack of a numeracy policy means that practice of numerical skills across the curriculum is a weakness although some attention to numeracy is paid in most subjects. Pupils are responding positively to mental arithmetic testing in mathematics and other areas, for example in music, where pupils evaluate musical patterns and sequences and in food technology where pupils learn about units of weight.

9. Standards in science at the age of 11 in national tests are below national averages. However, standards in 2000 are above those in 1999 and standards observed during inspection are average. At the age of 13, standards observed during the week of the inspection were in line with the national average and represented good progress. Overall attainment has improved recently.

10. Attainment in art and design is satisfactory in both key stages. In lessons seen pupils' attainment was good in Key Stage 2. There are strengths in colour work and design at Key Stage 2. There are weaknesses in drawing and knowledge and understanding of artists and their work. At Key Stage 3 the same strengths continue plus composition and emotive use of colour. Knowledge and understanding of artists is better still only satisfactory at best. Weakness in drawing continues. Weaker pupils are supported and given confidence by open-ended work by which they make satisfactory attainment for their ability. Gifted and talented pupils are not stretched so there are few examples of very high attainment.

11. Attainment in design and technology at ages 11 and 13 is broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils are making satisfactory progress across the years. Recent improvements in time allocation are contributing to improvements in standards. Observation of lessons indicates some development of independent learning skills. Some good quality innovative work in fabrics was shown.

12. In geography standards are in line with national expectations for pupils' aged 11 and at the point of transition at aged 13. Some older pupils demonstrate higher levels in their project work. For history there is no comparative data for Key Stage 2. The standards in the classroom of work seen are good, as is the progress of pupils. Attainment in both key stages is mostly in line with national expectations.

13. The decision to ensure pupils receive a distinct lesson in ICT skills has restricted opportunities for use of ICT in other areas of the curriculum. ICT lessons, however, cover other subjects and pupils make good progress when they create graphical designs and answer questions about places such as Paris, which they tour by use of a CD-ROM. Word processing is usually of a high standard. Pupils' attainment is close to national expectations by both age 11 and aged 13. Older pupils, are on track to reach level 5 by the age 14 in upper school whilst younger pupils are sometimes in advance of requirements. They make good progress, although, because of previous lack of provision, all ages start with similar tasks in accordance with school plans, to ensure a proper coverage of the programme of study.

14. Attainment in French has improved since the previous inspection. The most able pupils now achieve levels 4 or 5 in French by age 13, a year prior to their Key Stage 3 statutory tests; this is in line with national expectations. Pupils learned new material well in the lessons seen and are making at least satisfactory progress.

15. Standards of performing and composing in music are above average for those aged 11 and about average for pupils aged 13. Progress in lessons at both key stages is good and high standards are achieved in extra curricular activities.

16. Attainment in physical education is above average by the ages 11 and 13 even though on entry it is average. Good teaching in lessons and the high quality of extra curricular provision and participation ensure pupils make good progress as they move up through the school.

17. Attainment in religious education is broadly average in relation to the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus and represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection.

18. Most pupils with special educational needs make good progress. On entry to the school pupils are tested in a number of ways including reading and spelling tests. They are tested again in reading and spelling at the end of Year 5 when it can be seen that the majority of pupils have improved their scores.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

19. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and generally. This is a major strength of the school that makes a very positive contribution to their learning. Pupils are very enthusiastic and eager to come to school. They are highly involved in all aspects of learning and particularly in extra-curricular activities; they enjoy being school monitors and school counsellors.

20. Pupils are well behaved, particularly in classrooms. However, some misbehaviour was observed and a few fixed-term temporary exclusions have occurred in this academic year. There are very good relationships between pupils. In the playground, there is joyous interaction, co-operative play and sociable behaviour. The pupils generally display an air of confidence. They are courteous to visitors and many are keen to greet and ask questions; they are articulate in expressing their views. Around the school there is generally an atmosphere of order and discipline.

21. Pupils' relationships with teachers and other adults are good. In the classrooms, pupils are eager to learn and generally respond appropriately to teachers' requests. Sometimes, when the task or the pace of the lesson lacks sufficient challenge, some pupils are inclined to lose concentration and start to fidget or chat. However, the teachers are quick to correct these situations. Overall, the pupils are well motivated, show high levels of concentration, remain on task and make good progress.

22. There is no evidence of any oppressive behaviour, or behaviour of sexist or racist nature. The pupils respect others' values and feelings; the school is a harmonious place.

23. Attendance levels are above average and unauthorised absences are very low. For the first half of the autumn term, overall attendance was 94.5 per cent. The policy of first day follow-up ensures attendance remains high. Pupils are very punctual and lessons start promptly.

24. Pupils with special educational needs generally show a willingness to learn and respond well in lessons. They mix well with other pupils and are fully integrated into the daily life of the school. Their behaviour in class is usually good and the positive relations they have with their teachers give them confidence and encouragement.

## **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT**

25. The overall standard of teaching and of learning throughout the school is good. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and in over two thirds of lessons, teaching was good or better. In about one fifth of lessons teaching was very good or better. While there are no significant differences between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, the proportion of good or better teaching in Year 6, although still high, fell to sixty per cent. Pupils' learning is good overall. In all but one lesson, it was at least satisfactory; it was good or better in approximately two thirds of lessons and very good or better in a fifth of lessons. Learning follows closely the pattern of teaching with a comparative dip in Year 6.

26. Teaching was reported as being of a high standard in the previous inspection report in which eighty seven per cent of lessons were considered to be satisfactory or better. It has improved further by the school making good progress in addressing issues concerning the variety of teaching strategies which enable all pupils to make at least satisfactory progress whatever their capability. Although pupils' standards of attainment on entry are average and remain average on leaving at age 13, there is considerable improvement in their overall experience in the classroom, which so far, has not been fully reflected in examination results. A number of adverse factors, for example some long-term sickness and staffing cutbacks, have contributed to this situation that is now improving and both teachers' and pupils' efforts should reap better results in the future.

27. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subjects are satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and good for Years 7 and 8. Overall teaching is good in English. The acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding by pupils are good at both key stages. They are very good in English in Key Stage 3. Learning in Years 7 and 8 in English is enhanced by good use of the literacy hour in Key Stage 2. Here teachers' knowledge is very good, planning is effective, teachers have very high expectations and pupils are very well managed. Learning in English is characterised by very good acquisition of skills, pace of working and very keen interest by pupils.

28. The teaching of literacy in Years 5 and 6 is good. Teachers are well organised and use the literacy hour well to give pupils a balanced provision of activities focusing on word, sentence and whole text work and combining whole class group and individual activities. Pupils learn well in a positive and supportive learning environment. Tasks are challenging and the pace of lessons usually brisk. Support assistants ensure that pupils with special educational needs also make good progress. Teachers use alternative writing tasks to meet the needs of pupils working at different attainment levels. Classrooms are often well laid out with displays designed to encourage good practice in pupils' writing.

29. Teaching is good in mathematics and science. In mathematics, good use is made of numeracy lessons to reinforce basic skills of number work. In science, teaching is committed to an experimental approach by pupils, which enables pupils to predict outcomes, take measurements and draw conclusions from their observations. Despite the absence of a school numeracy policy both these subjects contribute well to pupils' knowledge of number skills and confidence in handling numerical concepts. Since September, science, French and English have started extension classes for higher attaining pupils enabling more challenging work to be attempted.

30. In most subjects, teachers' planning, class management skills and effectiveness of teaching methods ensure the ready co-operation of pupils. For example, in Years 5 and 6, pupils are taught basic skills well in art and design lessons. Teachers are hard working and are concerned that pupils succeed.

31. ICT lessons challenge with their pace of working and develops pupils' interest and demands intellectual effort. ICT is presently only provided in specified lessons with other subjects unable to make a full provision for ICT. This is due to computers not being fully installed for use in the school.

32. In several subjects, including English and science, there are weaknesses in assessment of pupils' learning and this is affecting standards adversely. Teachers' assessment is not always based on consistent and purposeful marking. Pupils lack or have a poor knowledge of their own learning in most subjects and are not often given definite targets for improvement. Although well meaning, teachers have inadequate systems for assessing the actual progress each pupil is actually making.

33. Teaching in subjects other than English contribute to pupils' good communication skills. Pupils' oral skills in French have improved by speaking in pairs. Pupils are keen to answer questions in whole class discussions and listen carefully to the teacher, tapes and each other. Pupils talk about music confidently and use appropriate terms from an early age. Good learning occurs when many pupils take part enthusiastically in an ongoing programme of concerts and other musical activities. Physical education provides for a wide range of learning opportunities through a strong programme of extra-curricular activities. Teaching of physical education in class is good. It leads to good physical efforts and pace of working by pupils. They work independently in the development of personal skills. In history, pupils worked independently and unsupervised in a lesson on Caesar's war. This situation represents an improvement for history, which was criticised in the previous inspection report for the lack of such opportunities.

34. The use of homework to develop and re-inforce learning is unsatisfactory, a view shared by some parents. Homework is not used consistently in those subjects in which it is set and in some subjects it is not set at all. This leads to opportunities being missed for example in extended writing in English and incomplete work in some exercise books in science. In English and mathematics in Key Stage 3, particularly, homework strategies need to be reviewed.

35. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of each pupil's needs. Lessons are well planned with a suitable range of teaching methods and teachers use a variety of resources. Teachers make effective use of support assistants, involving them in lesson planning and in team-teaching situations. Where pupils are withdrawn from lessons for extra help with basic skills, teaching is never less than good and is often very good. Teachers give much attention to the improvement of basic skills of spelling, listening and reading. Pupils' vocabulary is improved and they are encouraged to increase their understanding of the work. Individual education plans are provided including



those for pupils with behavioural problems and class teachers are fully aware of the needs of these pupils.

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

36. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The curriculum is broad and balanced and fully meets National Curriculum requirements, apart from that to provide swimming lessons for all pupils in Years 5 and 6. However, the provision for ICT has not been fully developed due to staffing and resource shortages. The school is now in a position to teach this subject effectively through the discrete time tabled lesson and is planning its implementation across the whole curriculum. The delivery of a daily act of collective worship is securely in place. There is a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education for pupils in each year, taught in a weekly lesson. Topics covered have real life relevance and include working on a handbook for Year 4 pupils coming to the school, exploring ways of developing a local site, finding out about democracy and elections, examining aspects of living with a disability and preparing for the future. Pupils follow a good programme of sex education in Year 7. The delivery of the personal, social and health education programme has been recently impeded by the extended absence of the co-ordinator.

37. Throughout the school, there is an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities, particularly in the areas of physical education, games and music. Less usual sports and musical activities are available to all pupils and many choose to take up these valuable opportunities for personal enjoyment and achievement. Those pupils who arrive early to school can participate before lessons start in tennis coaching or learning Italian. From next year an additional sum of £6,200 per annum will be available from the New Opportunities Fund to provide further out-of-hours learning experiences for pupils. The school library, augmented by the additional resources supplied by the schools' library service, provides further learning opportunities to enhance the curriculum.

38. Links with the community are good. There are strong links through the Falcons Gymnastic Club, which is based at the school and through the Holiday Club, which is available to other local children as well as pupils from the school. There are links with local Baptist churches through school governors. Links with local feeder schools are strong and include subject panels made up of teachers from lower and middle schools. There are sound links with the four main upper schools to which Year 8 pupils transfer but opportunities exist for closer ties. The Education Action Zone brings together a pool of sixteen schools amongst which important ties develop.

39. The literacy strategy is being effectively delivered especially through the provision in Years 5 and 6 of a literacy hour on four days of the week. The provision for numeracy is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum.

40. Since the last inspection, the school's development of the curriculum has been good. A coherent and effective personal, social and health education programme has been introduced, procedures for monitoring the curriculum have been further strengthened and the ICT programme extended to meet statutory requirements.

41. The school provides pupils with good opportunities for personal development. Since the last inspection the spiritual elements in the curriculum have been strengthened through the introduction of a weekly whole school theme for morning registration and assemblies. There are also additional themes for year groups. Spiritual aspects impact positively on pupils' learning when they are found in impressive and wonderful music, in physical

education and dance and in much English literature work, especially that arising from the study of poetry when pupils reflect upon meaning.

42. A strong moral thread runs through the personal, social and health education programme. Pupils are encouraged to reflect upon important moral questions. Elsewhere, in modern foreign languages pupils are given positive images of foreigners, which are designed to inform their own thinking about associated moral issues. In physical education there is strong emphasis upon the importance of the framework provided by rules. Pupils exercise responsibility in their creative musical work.

43. The opportunities provided for pupils' social development are very good. Pupils participate in a thriving school council and they enjoy regular residential visits both at home and abroad, such as the three-day French visit by Year 5 pupils or the annual week in France for pupils from Years 7 and 8. Music activities such as performances and productions provide valuable social experience for the pupils involved. The school based Holiday Club provides further opportunities for pupils from the school to socialise with other children. Much work in physical education involves pupils in important collaborative activities, where social interaction is a vital factor. Across the curriculum but especially in subjects such as English pupils are given frequent opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups, which helps to develop their social skills.

44. Opportunities for the development of pupils' cultural awareness are also good. In school assemblies non-Christian festivals, such as Diwali, are celebrated to give pupils better insight to the richness of our multi-faith community. Pupils make regular visits to local mosques. Displays of ethnic dancing provide further enrichment. Musical activities also make a very strong contribution to pupils' cultural experience.

45. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the national curriculum. Although assessment takes place at the end of each year, this is insufficient and more regular testing needs to take place, particularly of reading and spelling. Annual reviews, including statutory reviews, are held in line with recommendations of the Code of Practice.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

46. The school has satisfactory procedures for ensuring the health, safety, care and protection of all pupils. All teaching and non-teaching staff understand the child protection procedures and there is a named contact. Clear health and safety policies are in place and all fire equipment, electrical appliances and emergency lights are regularly checked. Fire drills are carried out effectively.

47. Pastoral systems of care are very good. Form tutors provide very good support to pupils. Subject teachers inform tutors on concerns about individual pupils.

48. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and behaviour are very good. The behaviour policy sets out clear expectations and most parents and staff reinforce these expectations. The positive approach of the school contributes to the good standards of behaviour of the pupils. Measures to prevent bullying, harassment and racial incidents are very effective, which gives rise to a very harmonious learning environment.

49. The school's systems for assessing pupils' academic performance and personal development are unsatisfactory and inconsistent across the school. There is no consistent application of the whole-school assessment policy by individual departments, and there is a failure to make use of assessment in planning pupils' progression through the school year. National Records of Achievement are in their infancy and, as yet, not fully developed.

50. There is a good and varied programme of personal, health and social education that covers a wide range of topics and raises pupils' awareness of wider aspects of life. There is an excellent provision of extra-curricular activities such as sports, pupil council and pupil monitor system, help enhance their personal development. Further funding has recently been approved for putting in place a programme of training and empowering pupils to support, counsel and monitor fellow pupils in the school who may require such support.

51. The school has good relationships with outside agencies, values their expertise and uses the support well.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

52. Most parents have a good relationship with the school but a few find the school unapproachable. Home-school agreements are in place and pupils' Day Book is well used as means of communication between parents and teachers. In order to consolidate these links further, the school has started to improve information to parents, and to raise the effectiveness of consultation. A number of surveys have been carried out to solicit parents' views and areas identified by these surveys as having low satisfaction are already being addressed.

53. A regular newsletter provides good general information about events and activities in the school. Regular, well attended parents' evenings provide parents with opportunities to discuss pupils' progress and annual reports give the parents a good and comprehensive on-going picture of their child's performance, attitude to work, and attainment and progress.

54. The school is well supported by the parents. Many parents are involved with the school, especially through sporting activities and school trips. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are fully involved in statement reviews and kept well informed of their children's progress. However, a number of parents do feel that they are not fully informed of their child's progress. Parents of pupils whose home language is other than English are not well informed.

55. Of the small number of parental returns (less than a third) to the Ofsted questionnaire, some parents were unhappy about homework, pupils' personal development, management, behaviour and communication with the school. They were happy about all other questions, for example, the interesting range of extra-curricular activities, the fact that their children like school; they believe their children are making good progress and the teaching is good. Inspectors agree that communication could be strengthened and homework is variable but they do not agree that management, behaviour and personal development are cause for concern.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. Leadership by the headteacher is good. He has had a single-minded approach to the direction of the school where care for well being and good behaviour feature highly. He led the school successfully through a 1991 amalgamation, which was not easy and he has continued to establish it as, in many ways, a successful middle school where pupils' attitudes are very good and a family atmosphere prevails. He has been involved in performance management training, which he is able to implement. Being aware of his own strengths, for example his perception, understanding and tolerance, he has realised that it is time for new blood to take the reigns and so he has retired. A newly appointed headteacher starts in January 2001. A request to join the Education Action Zone was prompted by the need for more funding and low results by pupils in 1999. With the increasing roll, 20 per cent higher than at the last inspection, high proportions of pupils from many different ethnic groups, high numbers of pupils with English as an additional language and statements of special educational need, the headteacher has ensured that results have improved in 2000, another example of the strength of his leadership. Point scores are broadly in line with the national trend and what could have been viewed as underachievement in 1999 has been reversed. The headteacher has had to make some difficult decisions regarding staffing at a time when the school was struggling with a financial deficit, which has also been recovered. The partly expedient, non-hierarchical style, the headteacher has tried to implement has strengths in the way it builds the self esteem of teachers many of whom have strong professional persuasions and who have had to cope with the consequences of a budget deficit. Delegation, although satisfactory, has been difficult as teachers operate very heavy teaching loads, staffing being cut to a minimum. Education Action Zone (EAZ) funding should enable the new headteacher to adjust this situation.

57. Overall, management is satisfactory. Senior managers are competent but not as effective as they could be if all members were fully established in their posts. Changes of personnel, however, have put extra pressure on the headteacher recently. The difficulties the school has encountered combined with new senior managers and the forthcoming change of headteacher, requires middle managers, and the staff as a whole, to continue to pull together for the best interests of the school, as they did during inspection week,

58. The governing body is effective and is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. On meeting problems, it reacts quickly and was instrumental in applying for Education Action Zone status. Governors represent a cross section of society. Many are able to offer expertise, for example in finance, commerce and law.

59. The aims of the school are reflected in its work. The school identifies appropriate targets and has been successful at reaching these in 2000. It was disappointed by low results in 1999, although it was well aware that this particular cohort of pupils was lower attaining than most. Priorities are clearly explained in the school improvement plan and many relate to those of the Education Action Zone, for example literacy and numeracy. There is some monitoring of teaching but this is not consistently implemented and many teachers have not been formally observed teaching. This is a critical area that needs urgent attention as does monitoring of pupils' progress and the curriculum.

60. The school is committed to equal opportunities and this is reflected in the way its intake, which is very culturally diverse, relates harmoniously, all groups being well integrated. Attainment is analysed by gender, age and race and the school has positive role models on the staff. There are black and Asian teachers and women teachers in positions of authority. Boys and girls participate equally in team games, for example, in rugby and Lacrosse.

61. The school has an adequate number of qualified teachers, with a range of experience, to match the demands of the curriculum. The ratio of pupils to teachers is above average. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects and are deployed appropriately. However, there are some instances of staff teaching inappropriately outside their specialism and this is having some effect on standards. If this is necessary then appropriate training must become available. The lack of provision of training for staff is limited by the allocation of financial resources and inadequate assessment of training needs. There is a wealth of good practice in the school, which could be used.

62. Recently the school has suffered a number of instances of long-term absence of teachers resulting in temporary arrangements being made and an inevitable impact on standards.

63. Induction systems and support for newly qualified teachers need to be reviewed and strengthened.

64. Good quality support is provided by available non teaching staff and appropriate line management systems are working effectively.

65. After some difficult years, in financial terms since the introduction of "Fair Funding", the headteacher and governors have now brought the school's budget into a position of having a small surplus. The current position and projections indicate that there is sufficient contingency built into the planning to ensure that the school will not be in deficit at the end of the financial year, and will again carry forward a small surplus. The rigours of planning to local education authority and Education Action Zone standards are having a positive effect on financial planning and target setting for the senior managers and governors. There is also a much better focus on educational outcomes, for example, examination results, built into the financial planning cycle now than was reported on at the time of the last inspection, although this remains an area where further attention to enabling formal monitoring of teaching to occur is desirable.

66. The finance officer runs a tight financial ship. The headteacher makes good use of purpose designed computer programmes to keep a close watch on day to day spending and on the budget overall. The previous inspection found that the finance officer was not sufficiently involved in setting the budget and did not attend meetings of the governors' Personnel and Finance Sub-Committee. Overall budgetary control and management are good. Specific grants allocated for designated purposes are appropriately used.

67. Administrative use of ICT is good. Appropriate safeguards are in place to comply with the data protection act and insure against data loss and contamination. Although the recent acquisition of over forty computers increases the provision and its availability, at the time of the inspection there were some areas in need of attention, for example the library is not computerised and in design technology some old computers lay idle. On a wider front lack of a computer technician is having a substantial effect on the curriculum the pupils receive. The decision to appoint one person to co-ordinate both mathematics and ICT, and look after the computers whilst understandable in budgetary terms, inevitably means that that teacher is fully extended.

68. The governors are focussed on subscribing to the principles of best value. Comparisons are made of school performance with other schools in the county and, to a lesser extent, nation-wide. All major contracts are subject to competitive tendering arrangements. Views from parents, pupils and all concerned are welcomed and sought when any major item of expenditure is under consideration.

69. In view of its satisfactory standards of pupil achievement, very good pupil attitudes, good teaching and learning, good leadership and satisfactory management the school gives at least satisfactory value for money. Good aspects are tempered by a lack of rigorous assessment which adversely affects standards and prevents the school providing a clear good value for money judgement.

70. The co-ordinator for pupils with special educational needs has a positive impact on the care and provision pupils receive. Staff are kept up to date with special needs issues; liaison with and organisation of the work of the learning support assistants is very good and the support offered by external agencies is well managed. Areas for further development include more regular contact with parents of pupils on the special educational needs register who do not have a statement of need and more regular testing of pupils' reading and spelling.

71. The high quality of accommodation and learning resources make the school environment very conducive to learning and makes a positive contribution towards achieving high standards. The buildings and the site are very well maintained and are in an excellent condition. There are a number of excellent specialist rooms; for example, in music, ICT, design and technology and art and design areas and sports' fields adequate for the number of pupils and for the range of extra-curricular activities. At times of period change and at break-times, however, the narrow corridors in some parts of the school can lead to some congestion. Display work is of a very high quality. The school library is bright and its layout lends itself to pupil's individual study and for teaching classes. There is good and diverse range of books that are regularly updated and the county library service is well utilised as an additional source of up-to-date books and other publications. There is an excellent media and reprographics resource room and all classrooms are very well stocked; there is ample supply of all the required materials in most areas. There are particularly excellent resources in ICT.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER

72. In order to improve the school, governors, senior staff and staff of the school need to take the following action:

- (1) Improve attainment by monitoring and evaluating pupils' academic and personal progress by:
  - introducing a computerised tracking system to aid assessment and records all the pupils' module test results and effort grades; (Paragraphs: 2, 3, 32, 49)
  - evaluating all data to ensure pupils make maximum progress; (Paragraph: 49)
  - identifying pupils who need specific attention; (Paragraph: 49)
  - ensuring all work is marked effectively and, where necessary, helpful comments are made; (Paragraph: 32)
  - introducing strategies that regularly inform parents of pupils' progress; (Paragraph: 54)
  - improving strategies to help pupils understand where they are as far as the National Curriculum levels are concerned and offering them useful ways to move forward; (Paragraph: 32)
  - introducing a personal profile for pupils. (Paragraph: 49)
- (2) Increase support for newly qualified teachers by:
  - ensuring they teach subjects with which they are familiar; (Paragraph: 61)
  - introducing them slowly to new subjects, giving training where necessary; (Paragraphs: 61, 63)
  - monitoring their progress; (Paragraphs: 59, 61)
  - providing mentors where necessary. (Paragraph: 61)
- (3) Introduce a full programme of performance management by:
  - monitoring and evaluating teaching; (Paragraph: 59)
  - following up results by arranging necessary training; (Paragraph: 61)
  - setting targets for teachers to meet. (Paragraph: 61)
- (4) Increase homework in mathematics and English in Key Stage 3. (Paragraphs: 76, 86)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	108
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	20	48	31	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	575
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	92

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	26
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	176

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	88

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	38
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	42

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	6.0

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.4

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



### ***Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2***

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	92	77	169

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	69	63	68
	Girls	63	46	56
	Total	132	109	124
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (65)	65 (60)	73 (66)
	National	75 (70)	71 (69)	84 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	61	62	72
	Girls	57	53	66
	Total	118	115	138
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (67)	68 (65)	82 (70)
	National	71 (68)	71 (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	27
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	42
Indian	39
Pakistani	8
Bangladeshi	20
Chinese	2
White	434
Any other minority ethnic group	2

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	6	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	2	0
Pakistani	2	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	18	1
Other minority ethnic groups	10	1

*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)	33.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y5 – Y8**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	233

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	87
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8**

Key Stage 2	23.7
Key Stage 3	22.9

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1 317 698
Total expenditure	1 309 772
Expenditure per pupil	2 231
Balance brought forward from previous year	9 904
Balance carried forward to next year	17 830

## ***Results of the survey of parents and carers***

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	575
Number of questionnaires returned	159

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	48	6	3	1
My child is making good progress in school.	28	57	4	3	8
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	59	8	4	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	17	62	13	6	2
The teaching is good.	20	62	4	2	12
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	45	21	8	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	41	42	12	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	37	53	3	1	6
The school works closely with parents.	23	42	24	5	6
The school is well led and managed.	27	41	16	6	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	23	60	8	2	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	47	3	1	5

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

### **ENGLISH**

73. Attainment in English is average. Results of statutory tests for pupils at the age of eleven, for 2000, are in line with national averages and with those achieved by pupils at schools with similar backgrounds. Results for 2000 show an improvement on those for the previous two years. The overall trend over the last five years has been more steeply upward than the national trend. The number of pupils achieving above the expected level has increased sharply to above the national average. Results are in line with those achieved in mathematics and above those in science. In 1999 National Curriculum tests boys performed better against national levels for boys than did girls against their national levels. Levels of attainment for pupils at the age of thirteen are average for their age and suggest that the pupils will go on to achieve levels in line with national averages at fourteen.

74. Taking into account pupils' progress across each key stage and the extent to which all pupils in each key stage are reaching their highest possible standards of work, the achievement of pupils in Key Stage 2 and 3 is satisfactory. The number of lower attaining pupils coming to the school with special educational needs has increased steadily in recent years but there is still a good proportion of the highest attaining students too. Standards of work seen during the inspection are in line with the average for pupils at the age of eleven and thirteen. Particular strengths in the work of pupils at the age of eleven include confident and well-structured speech and good general reading standards, enabling pupils to access a wide range of reading material. Written work, which is well presented, accurately punctuated and grammatically sound and a good grasp of basic parts of speech and figurative language are further strengths. Pupils are able to evaluate their own work and set targets. Higher attaining pupils tackle a wide range of writing including dramatic dialogue, biography, literary criticism and media reviews. Less strong features include limited imaginative writing by many middle and lower attaining pupils and below average spelling standards. There are particular strengths in the work of pupils at the age of thirteen, including mature and impressive oral work. Thoughtful and perceptive responses to Shakespeare's 'Macbeth' show good grasp of character, plot and themes. Long well constructed letters, stories and dramatic scenes make effective use of structural devices such as paragraphing. Drafting and re-drafting help to improve the quality of written work and Year 8 pupils, in particular, write with a good sense of audience. However, there is some lack of speed and fluency in the writing of middle attaining pupils and levels of accuracy in spelling are often disappointing across the attainment range.

75. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through valuable additional support in the classroom. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are also well supported and make good progress.

76. In the lessons seen teaching and learning in English for Years 5 and 6 are good. For Years 7 and 8 teaching and learning are very good. In four lessons out of five teaching is good or better and in almost half of all lessons teaching is very good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The best teaching has several notable strengths. Teachers clearly state lesson objectives to help pupils take the expected learning steps. Pupils' progress is regularly checked before teachers move on to the next stage of learning. Lesson materials are varied to meet the needs of pupils at different attainment levels in the same class. Basic support for literacy skills in classroom is good and includes displays of punctuation rules, common misspellings and tips for good writing. Lessons are usually challenging for pupils and the pace is brisk and stimulating. Teachers manage pupils very well with a minimum of fuss and they are keen to let them assume responsibility for aspects of their learning, such as choosing which character to write as or deciding what situation to describe. The tone is

friendly and supportive: 'What do the rest of the class think?' or 'I'm glad you brought that up.' Although most teaching seen was at least good, not all teachers are making the same demands of their pupils and the volumes of completed written work vary from class to class. Teachers' efforts to raise the standards of writing might be helped by giving pupils a more rigorous programme of homework. A significant weakness is the marking of pupils' work, which, at present, is inconsistent in usefulness and does not always help progress by making clear the levels at which pupils are working.

77. Most pupils are very enthusiastic about their work in English and class discussions see many pupils keen to contribute. Pupils' readiness to talk thoughtfully and maturely about their work, as seen when Year 5 pupils discussed the sinking of the Titanic, 'I don't think it's fair that...' is a striking feature of most English lessons. Written tasks are invariably completed conscientiously. Pupils are often keen readers and they greatly enjoy much of their work in English, especially poetry for which they often demonstrate a great affinity. Just occasionally pupils in Year 6 seem to have difficulty sustaining their interest and applying themselves consistently for a whole lesson and it is left to teachers to adopt additional strategies to keep them engaged.

78. English work is very effectively directed by an enthusiastic subject co-ordinator, sharing a common educational vision with other English teachers, who are well qualified and committed. Day to day administration is sound. The organisation of teaching in Years 7 and 8 to include extension groups is aimed at raising standards. Although drama is taught within the English timetable, a member of staff has recently been appointed to co-ordinate its teaching throughout the school, which should enhance the overall drama provision. Good schemes of work have due regard for the National Literacy Strategy but do not yet include use of ICT. The departmental development plan clearly identifies key areas for focus. All National Curriculum requirements are fully met. Methods of recording pupils' progress have been recently revised to give a clearer and more detailed picture. One important area for further development is to monitor marking standards and practice across all English teaching to ensure that pupils clearly understand where they are and how they can improve. Accommodation is good and the school library is a valuable learning area.

79. Across subjects the contributions made to the teaching of literacy skills are satisfactory. There is some reading aloud in art and design and sound skills are demonstrated in history and science lessons. Good reading occurs in geography lessons. In modern foreign languages pupils' reading includes magazines and fiction. Many classrooms display posters, which encourage pupils to punctuate their own writing accurately, or which give suggestions for improving the general quality of written work. Pupils write well in mathematics using accurate sentences. Science lessons show good development in pupils' writing from Years 5 and 6 to Years 7 and 8 demonstrated by the good extended writing in the later years. Lower attaining pupils with special educational needs are also able to write soundly constructed sentences. In history writing is generally well presented but levels of spelling are often low. In modern foreign languages there are good examples of personal writing and in music pupils command of technical vocabulary is above average. Here again pupils present their work well and construct sound sentences but there is little extended writing.

80. There has been good progress in standards of attainment since the last inspection. Results have considerably improved. There are now more opportunities for extended writing in Years 7 and 8 and English teaching in Years 5 and 6 is now generally more effective than it was at the time of the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

81. Attainment in mathematics is average. Results of National Curriculum tests overall, taken at the end of Year 6, were below the national average for 2000 for those obtaining grades level 4 and above and average for those gaining level 5 and above. Over the years 1996 to 2000, the Key Stage 2 results have been broadly in line with national averages, and improving at about the same rate. Broadly similar results are reflected when comparisons are made with similar schools. Results in mathematics national tests have proved similar to English and slightly better than science in recent years. Boys do better than girls in this subject.

82. The standard of the pupils' work as seen during the inspection was average in relation to national standards at both key stages. Retention of mathematical facts and principles are weak, other than for the high attainers. This means that work in books is almost invariably better than pupils' retentive powers would suggest.

83. By the age of 11, higher achieving pupils are confident in their use and understanding of number. Almost all know their multiplication tables thoroughly up to 12 times table and add and subtract numbers to two decimal places in columns. Average and lower attainers are also competent at number work. All pupils showed some facility in handling vulgar fractions. Higher attaining pupils can handle improper fractions and mixed numbers well. Middle attaining pupils also produced some good work in this respect but some did not fully understand the concept of equivalence; for example  $\frac{6}{12} = \frac{3}{4}$  which is, of course wrong. Lower attaining pupils could recognise and write down the values of fractions from shaded portions of circles and other regular shapes, and could glean information from pictograms and recognise lines of symmetry in straightforward examples. But a significant minority was in difficulty when subtracting four and larger digit numbers. For example, the last three digits of the answer to  $9995 - 2748$  were given as 250 rather than 247. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory at this level.

84. By age thirteen standards are average. Higher attaining pupils can use the four rules of number with vulgar fractions, including mixed numbers, in a satisfactory manner, although they do not always give their answers in lowest terms. They produce good work on the geometry of angles at a point and in a triangle and are actively involved in producing questionnaires, which will prove of practical use for the school bank or to the school's physical education provision. Middle attainers can round figures to two decimal places and three or more significant figures successfully. They have also made a good beginning with basic algebra. Lower attainers show that they have a good understanding of place value for numbers larger than a thousand, can round to the nearest ten or one hundred and can draw and measure angles correct to one degree. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory at this level.

85. There are a substantial number of pupils in the school for whom English is not their first language. Good support for these was available in one of the lessons seen. In no lesson including those where support was not available was there any evidence to suggest that they were not performing to their full potential. Similarly pupils identified as having special needs learn well and make satisfactory progress. Teachers are aware of their needs and take account of their individual education plans when planning and delivering their lessons.

86. The teaching seen during the inspection was good at both key stages and good overall. Of the twenty lessons seen, in seven teaching was satisfactory. In the remaining lessons teaching was either good or very good in twelve and excellent in one. Teachers manage the pupils well and lessons proceed at a good pace so that the pupils are challenged to work effectively and exert themselves. Most of the teachers have good knowledge of the subject. One or two, who are non-specialists, at Key Stage 2 are less secure. Work in the pupils' books is always corrected and in some cases very thoroughly marked with full and helpful comments that assist them in seeing how they can improve. The challenge here for the subject co-ordinator and teachers is to raise the standard of the satisfactory to that of the best. Homework is inconsistently given and this impacts negatively on standards particularly in Key Stage 3.

87. The effect of the National Numeracy Strategy could be seen in almost all mathematics lessons at both key stages, although the school lacks a numeracy policy. Numeracy is, in general, well taught. In particular there were many lessons, which began with activities which encourage the pupils to give quick oral and written responses to questions. Some good work is done but it is less effective than it might be because it is not co-ordinated. The contribution to the pupils' literacy skills made by teaching in mathematics and numeracy lessons is good. Teachers take care to introduce new vocabulary with care. Spelling is emphasised as being important. Most classrooms have lists of key mathematical vocabulary on the wall. The introduction of lessons using the cognitive acceleration (a mathematical initiative) has proved a powerful tool for enhancing pupils' reasoning, mathematical and literacy skills in other schools. ICT is an area of relative weakness. Elements of its use are included in the schemes of work but have not always been taught because of lack of access to computers. This position should now be remedied with the substantial acquisition of new machines. Overall, therefore, the department makes a good contribution to pupils' learning with respect to basic skills.

88. Curriculum provision is sound and includes regular testing, which shows how pupils are progressing against key objectives set for them. "Booster" classes are given to the year six pupils outside of lesson times as well as within the school day are valued by parents and pupils alike. Links with the National Personal Finance Education Group enhance the curriculum as does work rising from the older pupils working with the school bank. Pupils are not, however, sufficiently involved in their own assessment. Their levels would improve if they had a clearer understanding of what they need to do, in more precise terms, to improve.

89. The pupils' behave well and work hard. Relationships in class are also good both in the way in which they relate to each other and the way they relate to their teachers. When working in groups they discuss sensibly and share ideas readily and with confidence. In eight out of ten lessons attitudes and behaviour were good or better. There were no lessons in which they were less than satisfactory. This contributes well to successful learning.

90. Leadership and organisation of the mathematics department is satisfactory but has the capacity to be much better. The fact that the mathematics co-ordinator is also co-ordinating ICT means that he has too much to do. This especially the case when, as at the moment, there is no technician to manage the computer network. Central to this is the introduction of lesson observations, which will enable teaching to be improved. Day-to-day organisation of materials and stock is unsatisfactory.

91. The mathematics department has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. Teaching has improved; teachers' expectations of the pupils remain high. Standards have improved in line with national levels.

92. The school is employing the National Numeracy Strategy at Key Stage 2, and at Key Stage 3. This is having a positive effect on the pupils' ability to handle numbers. Regular short sharp introductory sessions to mathematics lessons in which the pupils are involved with mental arithmetic in various forms are also improving their skill levels significantly. These skills are satisfactorily employed in most curriculum areas. In music for instance pupils evaluate musical patterns and sequences. A significant number of the pupils work out note values numerically and a few explore creative ideas with texture in percussion rhythmically.

93. In general the lessons in subject areas, other than mathematics, numeracy is having a less positive effect than it could or should have. Some useful contributions to the pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding are made, as in food technology, for example, where pupils learn effectively about using a range of different weighing devices.

## **SCIENCE**

94. Attainment in science is average, overall. Pupils enter the school with standards of attainment in line with national averages. Attainment in science has varied during the last four years as measured by national tests at the age of 11. In 2000, results below national averages but this improved on that of 1999, when attainment was well below national averages. In 1997 and 1998, results were in line with national averages. At the age of 13, pupils' work as seen in class and in pupils' exercise books was in line with national expectations. Similarly, work observed during the inspection at the age of 11 was in line with national expectations and this represents an improvement on national test results in 2000. Pupils' achievements are greater than in the past two years and they are making good progress at both key stages.

95. Attainment of boys is slightly higher than that of girls at both the ages of 11 and 13. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their prior attainment due to good classroom support by staff, who know the aims of the lesson and the needs of the pupils. Pupils with English as an additional language have good support and all such pupils are able to take a full part in lessons.

96. Throughout the school, pupils' speaking skills are very good and they respond with confidence to teacher's well-directed questions using correct scientific vocabulary. Pupils listen carefully to teachers' questions and instructions. All pupils, including those who received support, have reading skills, which enable them to take part fully in lessons. At both the ages of eleven and thirteen, there is a considerable variation in writing skills. Teachers follow a common format for the presentation of experimental descriptions and pupils respond with accounts of paragraph length, single sentence and in some cases completing existing sentences. There is careless incorrect spelling of scientific words by some pupils, when the correct spelling is available to them; this requires attention. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 carry out research projects on the properties of metals and how they react with different substances, which require extended writing of a good standard.

97. In Year 5, standards in work seen are average. Pupils construct models to show the bone structure of the human hand and appreciate the function of simple joints. They discover the importance of the heart in the circulation of the blood, learn the different parts of the body and use counting skills in moving counters around the body. Pupils in Year 6 investigate forces including their own weight and the weights of common objects. They take readings on scales to one decimal place and know the equivalent fractions of their decimal readings.



Opportunities for number work in Years 5 and 6 are good and pupils' standards in finding out weights on other planets, measuring common objects to the nearest centimetre and drawing graphs are in line with national expectations.

98. In Year 8, there is further study of the function of the human skeleton and the action of different types of joints. Pupils found some difficulty in constructing models showing how muscles control the movement of the elbow. In Year 7 they carry out a series of experiments successfully to separate substances. These include obtaining clean from muddy water, and the production of their own substance, which will distinguish acids from alkalis. They discuss, with understanding, the importance of different forms of energy. Pupils plot graphs accurately to show the fall in temperature as a hot object cools, use percentages to represent the composition of the air and measure the time for friction forces to be overcome under different conditions. Standards in work seen are in line with national expectations.

99. Overall, attainment by the age of 13 is considerably higher than at the age of 11. Pupils' achievements are good particularly in the extension classes, formed this term for higher attaining pupils in Year 7, where they use a wider range of scientific vocabulary than those in other classes. Science teaching is not making any contribution to pupils' skills in ICT and has plans to correct this when there is greater access to computer equipment.

100. Teaching in science is good, overall, being satisfactory or better in all observed lessons. Approximately seventy per cent of teaching is good. There are four teachers of science, two of whom are in their first year of teaching and one who is in the fourth year of teaching. Science has an experienced subject co-ordinator. Teachers are committed to an experimental and investigative approach, which enables pupils to discover scientific facts for themselves. Teachers give clear instructions about experimental and safety procedures and are supported by a very good technician, who ensures that all the necessary equipment arrives on time at the start of lessons. The teaching of literacy and numeracy skills is good, and teachers' planning, effectiveness of methods and management of pupils is generally good. This is less successful when pupils are not given the opportunity to make their own observations but rely, in part, on information from an outdated textbook. Pupils' learning is good; they acquire basic skills and are challenged to think about the significance of their results. Pupils are interested in science and while most of the experimental work is conducted in pairs, pupils take responsibility for their own work. They understand the concept of a fair test, the importance of photosynthesis for life on earth and the wider universe we live in from the facts of astronomy. Although teaching is mainly good, teachers' marking of pupils' work is not consistent across the subject. Some marking is good with good work acknowledged, weaknesses corrected and indications to pupils as to how their work can be improved. In other cases, there are gaps in marking leading to weaknesses not being corrected and there is some unfinished work. Weaknesses in marking present difficulties for the monitoring of pupils' progress and the assessment of their work individually and for standards in the subject as a whole. Because of this, some pupils do not have sufficient self-knowledge of their learning and are not given suitable targets for improvement. Insufficient use is made of homework to ensure that written work is completed. Pupils with special educational needs learn well. They are given good support.

101. Leadership and management of science are good. The requirements of national curriculum are met apart from the use of ICT in science. Schemes of work support teaching well with lesson plan examples provided to help the two newly qualified teachers. The subject co-ordinator has clear aims for the development of the subject, which include the use of additional teaching time in which there is a focus on the raising of standards by the learning of scientific facts. Teachers are appropriately deployed and science has good resources apart from suitable textbooks. Work sheets produced by the subject co-ordinator for specific experiments facilitate pupils' learning. Accommodation is good. At present, timetable

problems restrict classroom observation of teaching by the subject co-ordinator and the opportunities for discussion of teaching methods by him with other teachers. Despite these problems, attainment during the week of the inspection shows an improvement on national test scores and are impacting positively on standards overall; the science department has made good progress since the last inspection.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

102. By the age of 11, pupils' standards are average for this age. They work well in colour and design but are less successful in drawing skills where there is a lack of subtlety in line and tone. In the lessons seen in Key Stage 2, the majority of pupils attained a good standard in their work. They demonstrated a good control of paint as they explored many variations of the colour blue and quickly grasped the concept of Aboriginal picture maps. Their overall knowledge of artists and the arts of other cultures, however, is limited. During lessons almost all pupils of this age were very well behaved, showed interest and enthusiasm in their work and worked well together. They achieve well and make good progress.

103. On leaving the school at the age of 13, pupils' standards of attainment continue to be at the levels expected for that age. In addition to their previous strengths, pupils of higher ability are developing a good sense of composition and the ability to communicate emotion through colour, as shown in some effective charcoal drawings on the theme of loneliness. Drawing skills are still under developed. Standards of attainment in the lessons seen were satisfactory. Pupils were well behaved and attentive though there was a lack of urgency in the work of some average ability pupils. Their achievements are average and they make satisfactory progress.

104. The quality of teaching is good overall and in both Key Stages 2 and 3, but there is an urgent need to improve assessment procedures. The teachers showed a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and gave lively, confident introductions that engaged the pupils and set the tone for the rest of the lesson. In addition to using appropriate technical terms the teacher showed his enthusiasm for the subject by explaining the origins of 'ultra marine' and having the pupils repeat and relish the sounds of "lapis lazuli" and "Oskar Kokoschka" as they began their work on colour. Careful questioning, bringing pupils closer to the images, changed pupils' view of Aboriginal art from just interesting patterns to coded maps and stories. The same strengths were seen in Key Stage 3 where teachers organised lessons well and pupils were well managed with good individual support being given to those who needed it. Clear expectations of standards of work, however, were not set and, while lower attaining pupils felt confident of success, there was little challenge in the work for the higher ability pupils. Very good provision was made for a visually impaired pupil who used a special learning pack to participate in a lesson on Van Gogh. She made confident contributions to the lesson with accurate information gleaned from an audio tape.

105. Procedures for assessment in art and design are ineffective. There is no collection of assessed work to support judgements at the end of Key Stage 2 or to unify teachers' expectations for each age group. Marking is inconsistent between teachers and focuses mainly on rewarding effort, leaving pupils with little idea of how well they are doing or how to improve. The amount of time allocated to art and design in Key Stage 2 is inadequate to ensure high standards. There are only two lessons in each three weeks and, for some groups, these are with two different teachers, which seriously affects continuity and the development of relationships. A well-structured scheme of work, including detailed plans for each week of each project, provides some stability and consistency for pupils and teachers. Although some of the plans include the use of computers no progress has been made in this area yet as the computers are not operational.

106. The subject co-ordinator is an experienced practising artist with a very good knowledge of artists and art and design techniques. He is very well organised in providing plans and resources for other teachers' lessons and supporting them with occasional workshops to demonstrate activities. The services of a non-teaching assistant are also effectively organised to provide materials and equipment for teachers in the co-ordinators absence. The non-teaching assistant also creates very good displays of pupils' work throughout the school.

107. Accommodation for art and design is very good. The well-lit and spacious studio impacts positively on standards. Very good resources, in the form of equipment, materials, books and visual resources, are well organised and well used. Good use is made of the Bedford Art Loans service to bring original works of art into the school and the art and design room.

108. Satisfactory improvement has been made in the subject since the last inspection. Planning is now well structured for progression in the development of skills and the use of appropriate technical language is encouraged. Introductions to lessons, outlining the work to be done, are a strong feature though expectations of standards are not made clear and pupils do not have clear targets. Procedures for assessment need to be firmly established with agreed standards of attainment against which pupils' progress can be measured.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

109. Pupils at age 11 reach at least average standards. A recent increase in time allocated to the subject has made an important contribution to raising standards. Pupils experience a range of tasks and assignments and are able to generate a range of ideas. They are developing key graphical skills, which are used in planning and presenting design products. Pupils gain a wide experience of manufacture and they are developing a range of practical skills. They use measurement and construct shapes and they work in two and three dimensions. Pupils are beginning to use a design framework within which they generate ideas and develop personal interests. Observation of lessons and evidence from books and folders indicates a sound awareness of safe working practice. There is insufficient use of ICT within subject studies largely because a lack of provision. Appropriate emphasis is placed on key words and the learning of a technical vocabulary and this is reflected in the quality of written work. Pupils' achievements are average and they make satisfactory progress.

110. At age 13 pupils reach average standards. They are beginning to handle design in their assignments. They are developing appropriate graphical skills but the range of presentational techniques needs widening. Simple mechanisms and control systems are used to introduce movement into working models and there are examples of innovation. Insufficient provision is available to enable pupils to use their ICT skills in the context of subject studies and hence these are under-developed. Pupils demonstrate a sensible approach to practical work and they are keen to develop their skills. The range of resistant materials should be extended to cover other kinds of metal, wood and plastics. Pupils gain important feedback of strengths and weaknesses from profiling and evaluation sheets. They contribute to assessments and are made aware of levels achieved. Good work and good development of independent learning skills is evident. The focus on key words and the use of a technical vocabulary is proving helpful. The quality on some practical work could be improved by placing greater emphasis on finish and presentation. Pupils' achievements are average and they make satisfactory progress.

111. Pupils show interest in practical activities and most demonstrate an ability to work sensibly and positively. Health and safety issues are given a high profile and pupils observe codes of conduct. Attitudes generally are positive and behaviour largely good. On rare

occasions a small number of boys lack concentration and interrupt lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are clearly identified and teachers have details of the general and specific aspects of Individual Education Plans. Appropriate targets and procedures enable these pupils to make sound progress but some pupils would benefit from having more learning support. Relationship between pupils and teachers is good and social and personal skills are well developed.

112. Teaching in design and technology is largely shared between two specialist teachers with support from two non-specialists. A competent and experienced food technology assistant is employed and makes an important contribution to the subject team. Teachers work hard and plan their lessons well and overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory and there are examples of good teaching. Lessons are best when objectives are clear and when pupils of all abilities are challenged. All teaching and learning seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory. Management of pupils and discipline has been good and extra curricular activities have added richness to the curriculum. A knowledgeable and enthusiastic teacher co-ordinates the design and technology activities. Schemes of work are detailed and well balanced and the organisation of subject studies well planned.

113. Accommodation is attractive and of good quality. Specialist rooms are well equipped except for the provision of ICT equipment. This aspect of the curriculum is under-developed and should be given high priority to ensure that pupils experience aspects of control, computer graphics and design. The quality of display is good and informs pupils' interests and assists in the generation of ideas. Emphasis has been placed on the improvement of graphics and presentation and this needs to continue. Non-teaching support is required in the workshop to ensure that the maintenance of machines and equipment, sharpening of tools, preparation of materials and the organisation of resources are not left to teaching staff. Financial resourcing is barely adequate and there are some shortages of materials and textbooks.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

114. Attainment in geography is average, overall. The last time the school was inspected, standards in geography were in line with expectations at both key stages. These standards have been maintained and there is evidence in the project work to show that some pupils, particularly in Key Stage 3, achieve higher.

115. By age 11, pupils' attainment is average overall. They can identify most countries on a world map and demonstrate knowledge of the food they produce. However the difference between the country of production and where goods are packaged for sale needs further exploration as this caused some confusion. Pupils have some understanding the impact refrigeration and different modes of transport have on the availability and distribution of food around the world. Pupils have good opportunities to learn that human activity can cause both improvement and damage to the environment. Where teaching is good teachers make effective use of an investigative approach to the subject and this means that pupils are developing enquiry skills effectively. This was seen to good effect in the lesson in Year 6 when pupils analysed land use on a farm. This lesson was enhanced by some dynamic questioning but would have been improved by giving pupils longer to reply. Pupils' achievements are average and they make satisfactory progress.

116. By the age of 13 the best examples of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the inter-dependence of different places is seen in the individual project work. At best this work shows pupils' ability to use and evaluate a range of resources to argue a coherent point of view. There was good use of ICT in the projects but less evidence of use in other work. The best teaching seen helps pupils understand that people's values and beliefs lead to

conflicting views about environmental issues and that evidence has to be tested carefully. The class debate in Year 7 when pupils explored the issues surrounding a planning application was of high quality. The teacher skillfully enabled all views to be heard without exercising undue control over the 'passion' the debate aroused. This lesson also made a significant contribution to pupils' literacy skills as they prepared their speeches, challenged each other and finally had to consider what each side had gained from the process. This is an important issue because there is also evidence from some pupils' books that weaknesses in writing limit the amount of recording. Pupils', including those with special educational needs, achievements are average and they make satisfactory progress.

117. Overall teaching in geography is satisfactory with some good teaching. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. Strengths include enthusiasm, lively methods that engage the interest of pupils and good use of resources although a number are well worn. However there is some lack of subject knowledge, which mean parallel classes have different levels of input and expectations for the amount and quality of work vary. Weaker teaching also results in some fussy behaviour as pupils take too long to settle to work. Pupils' learning, including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, is satisfactory. Subject leadership has been effective in drawing up a well-structured scheme of work that provides a secure foundation for teachers planning. The next priority is to set targets to make sure pupils always know how much work they are expected to cover in lessons and for homework.

## **HISTORY**

118. Standards of work seen in this subject are above average. At ages of 11 and 13 pupils, including those with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language, achieve in line with national expectations and make satisfactory progress. They understand well the basic historical skills of chronology and investigation from sources. They can effectively link cause and effect as shown, for example, by a lesson in Year 8 where the class worked out the reasons for joining the Roman army. Pupils' achievements are average and they make satisfactory progress.

119. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and lessons are well planned. Pupils understand clearly the aims of the lessons. Expectations of pupils are high and they respond with interest and enthusiasm. A good example of this was seen in Year 7, where some pupils constructed and tested models of medieval siege weapons. Classroom control is good and pupils work at a good pace, with effective teacher support. Learning is consolidated by good summary sessions at the end of lessons. Display work is good, particularly in Year 5, where the work on Ancient Egypt shows creativity. The learning of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall, although not all tasks have yet been matched to their attainment. Classroom support for these pupils is limited. Standards of literacy are satisfactory, written work is mostly neat and well presented. Checks for understanding of historical terms are effective, but there is limited reading aloud by pupils. Use of ICT is insufficient. The amount of homework set is satisfactory.

120. The department has improved a great deal since the last report. It has not only continued to build on the good practice commended then, but has also improved in areas, which were highlighted as weak. There are now good opportunities for independent learning, an example being a lesson in Year 8 on Julius Caesar, when a group of pupils were sent to the school library to carry out source work on their own and produced good results. More time is set aside in lessons for reporting findings. In response to the last report, appropriate extension tasks have increased the rate of learning, an example being written work in

Year 7 on the Norman Conquest. A wider variety of resources, such as video excerpts, are now used, which means less reliance on worksheets.

121. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator gives clear direction to the subject and documentation is thorough. Teaching schemes are securely based on the National Curriculum and the unusual choice of the study of the civilisation of Ancient Peru in Year 8 is used to stimulate moral and cultural debate among the pupils. There is regular consultation, both formal and informal, within the department. Opportunities to monitor teaching are restricted because of high teaching loads carried by all staff including senior managers. Opportunities for professional development are limited. Relations with both feeder and upper schools are good, with effective liaison meetings. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. There is no formal scheme with clear links to National Curriculum levels, but assessment is informal and continuous. At the age of 13, 'best fit' Grades are passed to the upper schools. Books are marked, but there are limited comments to support learning. The standard of classroom accommodation is good and resources are adequate. Extra-curricular activities are appropriate, including use of the locality. Tudor and Victorian 're-enactment' days in Years 5 and 6 increase the enthusiasm of pupils and have been well supported by parents.

122. The department is a good one, which is striving to improve standards and needs opportunities to monitor teaching and learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

123. In the work seen in lessons and in the limited work available to view in files and on walls, standards were average for pupils aged 11 and 13. ICT is under new leadership and at the time of the inspection there were no teacher assessments available in order to make a national comparison. Both age groups were working on similar assignments and were working around Level 4 and Level 5. The new equipment is enabling pupils to move forward quickly and those in Key Stage 3 are sufficiently on track to reach at least Level 5 by the end of the key stage. Most pupils log-on to programs without assistance and find little difficulty in following the teachers' instructions. Pupils' knowledge is good and they talk about multimedia and text with some understanding. Starting below average, because of a previous lack of appropriate equipment, pupils achievements are above average indicating satisfactory improvement over time.

124. The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory overall being good in half the lessons seen and satisfactory in the others. Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They relate well to pupils. Lessons are well planned and teachers ask some interesting and challenging questions. Teachers have planned many imaginative uses of the Internet, which is soon to be installed. There is virtually no assessment and this is a matter that requires urgent attention. Some teaching is dominating the time available, giving too little time for pupils to work uninterrupted. Pupils learn well. They consolidate the skills needed and are proficient at using CD-ROMs. The aims of lessons are usually achieved and relevant areas of National Curriculum covered. Pupils showed how they could use a mouse, and use different functions to draw pictures. They are encouraged to use technical language and are proficient at this. Pupils attitudes are good. They are very well motivated. Learning is supported by an excellent environment, which comprises of a first class room and new equipment. Some middle attainers, however, have difficulty focussing on the point of the lesson and in one lesson became distracted and did not make progress.

125. Leadership of the ICT area is good. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable, innovative and up-to-date; he is moving the subject forward. However, he is at present over-extended as co-

ordinator of ICT and mathematics as well as technician. Some adjustment to his workload would help to use his considerable ability and knowledge to better advantage.

126. Resources, now much improved, are very good. Accommodation is very good. The refurbished room is spacious, well laid out and well lit; it provides an excellent environment for learning.

127. There is very little happening in terms of ICT in other subjects. The time-tabled classes occupy the computer room for most of the week. This makes it difficult for other subjects to develop an ICT component within their subject. However, with planning the remaining time could be used to advantage using a rota system. There are some good examples of word processing resulting from English lessons in Year 5 that show how pupils can change font, size and style. An ICT module/ requirement needs to be embedded in the subject schemes of work.

128. A team of five, well-trained teachers teach the main ICT courses. As yet, little training under the New Opportunities Fund training scheme has occurred.

129. The school has in place the means for pupils to cover the programme of study and is implementing this, having started in September 2000. This is restricted to specialist lessons in ICT at this stage and ensures all strands of the National Curriculum are covered. The new computer suite serves the main ICT courses well. The use of "Success maker", a programme for low attainers, however, has been postponed whilst staff await appropriate training which will be available for January 2001.

130. To ensure the new computers are used to their fullest potential, the school requires a technician who is dedicated to ICT. Staff generally have insufficient expertise and need further training.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

131. Attainment in French is average. All pupils study French in Year 5-8. Some pupils also learn Italian outside the normal school day. The most able pupils in Year 8 have reached Level 4 in French in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Other pupils are working towards these levels. Standards in French are average at ages 11 and 13 and similar to most other subjects in the school. At age 13 in July 2000 a few had reached Level 5 in French in some of these skills. In lessons standards are slightly above national averages at both key stages. At Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils are stronger in Listening and Reading and weaker in Speaking and Writing. At Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils are stronger in Listening and Reading and weaker in Speaking and Writing. When speaking, Year 7 French pupils could pronounce numbers 1-100 and other vocabulary items well. When listening, Year 7 French pupils were able to recognise the location of objects in different rooms in a house. When reading a diary in French, Year 7 pupils were able to understand what the author had done. When writing in French, pupils could write about their family, home and hobbies. However, they made unnecessary errors in grammar and spelling. This is the greatest overall weakness throughout the school: pupils do not check their written work carefully enough. Boys usually attain as well as girls. There are no significant variations between pupils of different ethnicity, background, nor ability. Pupils have regular reading sessions: these contribute to their general literacy and develop their French skills and knowledge, including the use of dictionaries. Pupils spend most of their time using French in Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing: these are at lower levels than they would be in English. Pupils only use numbers occasionally. Pupils have little access to computers, and do little word processing. Overall, pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

132. The department has successfully addressed almost all the issues raised in the previous inspection report. Pupils have more opportunities to create language during pair work and when writing poems in French. More pupils are involved in whole class oral work. The more able in Years 7 and 8 are making better progress. However, there is still no regular monitoring of teaching in the classroom.

133. The overall quality of teaching is good. In Key Stages 2 and 3 the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory, and often good. The quality of teaching is improving standards and ensures satisfactory and sometimes good progress. However, if standards of teaching were always as high as during inspection week pupils' achievements would be higher. Pupils' learning is good. The teachers plan a sequence of activities, are proficient in the foreign languages, project their voices clearly, and have good accents in the languages they teach. They use French for large parts of the lesson, but sometimes use too much English. Pupils learn well when taught like this. They use overhead projectors, but could use them more. They use other resources effectively to increase learning. Standards of discipline are generally good. Time is used well, and some teachers are good at encouraging oral work in pairs: however, others do not use pair work sufficiently. Teachers display pupils' work, maps, posters, and other authentic material, which increase the students' knowledge of the languages and countries concerned. However, more maps and display are needed in some classrooms. Pupils' work is assessed regularly, and results inform subsequent teaching. Pupils respond well to teachers' comments and to the many strategies teachers use to make lessons interesting. Useful homework is set regularly. The teaching of those with special needs is satisfactory, and meets the needs of these pupils as well. Teachers manage classes well. For example, in a Year 5 French class, pupils were asked questions in French, and then spelled the answer using the French alphabet. The teacher then threw a soft toy at pupils, who had to say numbers from 21 to 31. In a Year 7 French class, the teacher discussed the formation of the perfect tense. Individual pupils read aloud the diaries of three French children then the whole class read the diaries aloud together. Next pupils answered written true/false questions about the diaries. In both these lessons the pupils were actively involved throughout, worked very well on the different tasks, and made very good progress.

134. The vast majority of pupils behave well. They show interest in their work, sustain their concentration, and develop good study skills. Their response is usually good in Key Stages 2 and 3. Many pupils show an obvious sense of enjoyment in lessons. They work well in pairs, and sometimes have opportunities to use their initiative in creating role-plays and working independently. Their positive attitudes are enabling them to improve their performance. However, a few pupils find it difficult to concentrate and achieve their potential.

135. The organisation of the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The co-ordinator for modern languages monitors the progress of pupils. The department is well led and organised, and has prioritised development plans, but lacks textbooks and dictionaries. Visits to France encourage social interaction and personal responsibility. The textbooks and other materials used, together with the visits abroad, help develop awareness of the diversity and richness of other cultures. The quality of most teaching, the attitudes of most pupils, visits abroad, and the leadership of the co-ordinator for modern languages have a positive effect on standards. However, insufficient use of pair work and overhead projectors, a lack of resources, and the errors pupils make in written work contribute to lower standards than necessary.

## **MUSIC**

136. Overall attainment is above average in music. The success of music in the school is rooted in the broad range of performing opportunities that are available for all. Many pupils enthusiastically perform music in an ongoing programme of concerts and other musical



activities. Good standards of teaching are encouraging pupils to be enthusiastic about music socially and culturally.

137. Standards of performing and composing are above average for pupils aged 11, and about average for those aged 13. Since the previous inspection, the standard of singing of older pupils has improved and they are now more enthusiastic about music generally. Pupils throughout the school use their voices confidently in singing and as instruments for expressing their musical ideas. Many of them, particularly younger pupils, sing well in tune with good clear diction. All pupils also follow a course of basic keyboard skills and make good use of a variety of other classroom instruments. Their understanding of the music they perform, compose and listen to, is above average compared to the expectations of the National Curriculum. Most pupils can talk confidently about their music making in appropriate musical terms. A greater number of pupils than in many similar schools, over 80 at the time of the inspection, have extra instrumental lessons. Those entered for Associated Board examinations do well, many achieving merit or distinction.

138. At the time of this inspection, a specialist supply teacher was undertaking the teaching of class music during the absence, due to illness, of the co-ordinator for music. The quality of teaching was good. Basic musical skills in composing and performing are efficiently and rigorously taught, using a variety of instrumental and vocal resources. Pupils get used to handling musical ideas and talking about them in simple technical terms from the start of their first term in the school. For example, pupils in a Year 5 class were using their knowledge of basic note values to support their composing of rhythmic patterns. Since the previous inspection, this inter-relationship of practical skills and theoretical aspects has been particularly well co-ordinated in the recently revised scheme of work, and lessons are well planned to progressively develop musicianship in this way. The effective impact of this approach was seen in a Year 7 lesson, where pupils were able to discuss the textures of their compositions in terms of chromatic notes, and major and minor chords. The teaching of singing is skilful, and the enthusiasm of particularly the younger pupils is well channelled towards good standards of performance. Pupils have a positive attitude towards music. Their enjoyment was evident when over 100 turned up voluntarily for a first choir practice! In lessons they are generally well behaved, and collaborate in sharing musical ideas productively. Most groups practise well unsupervised, and know how to make their own creative choices when composing. They take responsibility for preparing group performances of their compositions, many of which are then recorded. Expressive examples were heard in a Year 8 class, where pupils were synchronising music they had composed with a video of an advertisement for "Smarties". Other examples were heard in most lessons and in the recordings that pupils have made each year of their own Christmas songs.

139. Staffing and resources are good. In particular, there is very good provision for extra instrumental lessons on most orchestral instruments, piano, guitar and percussion. The quality of teaching in those lessons observed during the inspection was very good. Some of the peripatetic teachers make a massive input to the extra-curricular activities by directing groups like the band and string orchestra, and helping with concerts. The purpose-built accommodation is excellent. There are sufficient performing and storage areas and two well-soundproofed practice rooms. In view of the need to record pupils' work at both key stages, the quality of recordings heard at the time of the inspection was less than satisfactory, and not commensurate with the standards of performances. Further use of ICT to support the teaching of music generally is needed.

140. The department is well managed. It is aware of the current need to match procedures for assessing pupils' work to the new 'levels of attainment' in the National Curriculum.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

141. Attainment in physical education at ages eleven and thirteen is above the national average for both girls and boys, with a substantial majority of pupils, including special educational pupils, exceeding the expected standards. Pupils enter the school with average attainment but due to the excellent facilities and the good teaching they receive make rapid improvements in all areas of physical education except swimming. For all pupils up to the age of eleven, swimming is a compulsory part of the National Curriculum. There is no swimming for pupils in Key Stage 2 and the school is failing in its statutory duty to include this most important of life-skills in its physical education programme.

142. By the age of 11, pupils are already beginning to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their performance. In games situations, for example football, they can work in small groups with forwards planning tactics to outwit defenders. In netball, they understand the need to devise strategies to create space in order to receive a pass. In gymnastics, they can devise their own routines both on the floor and using apparatus. By the age of 13 these skills have been further developed so that a substantial minority of pupils are working at a standard well above the national average for their age. In lacrosse, pupils can catch and pass the ball using the stick with good technique and a fair degree of accuracy. In basketball they show good footwork to achieve a high degree of balance when anticipating receiving a pass. In rugby, pupils can catch, grip and pass the ball quickly and accurately when under pressure. Standards in badminton and tennis are particularly good. Pupils have very good racket skills and when playing doubles can devise strategies to outwit opponents using unexpected serves or returns of service. In addition most pupils can now comprehend and apply the rules to a number of games and activities. At every stage, pupils develop a good knowledge of safe practice, health, hygiene and fitness. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities helps pupils to extend and improve their performance. Pupils achieve well at both key stages.

143. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils in physical education overall are good. Pupils usually work hard, show confidence and use sports equipment safely and responsibly. They listen attentively to instructions, readily answer questions, think about what they are doing and make efforts to improve. They are willing to make critical comments about their work and to accept the comments of others. They have an awareness of fair play and sportsmanship when in competitive activities. When working in pairs or groups they help and support each other.

144. The teaching of physical education is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and the vast majority of lessons are good or very good. Pupils are taught by a specialist team of teachers who have a good knowledge of their subject and are able to help and challenge pupils to high achievement. Teachers expect pupils to work hard and make progress. Relationships are good giving pupils confidence to experiment and risk mistakes. Lessons are carefully planned, are varied and interesting and with clear demonstrations and explanations to keep pupils interested and motivated. Pupils are effectively managed so that rarely is learning inhibited by inappropriate pupil behaviour. A major strength of the teaching is the encouragement of independent learning skills through which pupils develop a greater understanding and knowledge, as well of skills, in the activities in which they are engaged. Whilst day-to-day assessment is good and appropriate records are kept, there is no whole-school assessment policy to guide and inform teachers in order to support pupils and help raise attainment. Non-participants are involved in the lesson where possible, sometimes helping with the organisation of equipment or studying the theoretical aspects of the activity.

145. The leadership of the department makes a significant contribution to the high standards pupils achieve and the good progress they make. Members of the department are

experienced, well qualified, enthusiastic and committed. The co-ordinator provides a clear educational direction for them that ensures that raising standards is a priority. In competitions, the school has achieved considerable success both locally and regionally, particularly in football, gymnastics and tennis and has been awarded Sportsmark Gold status. The annual Day of Sport, when more than a dozen outside coaches work with pupils from all years in a variety of sporting activities, helps raise pupils' aspirations and subsequent achievement. Planning and organisation are good. The department places a strong emphasis on safety and has undertaken a risk-assessment of facilities to ensure that pupils are taught without risk of injury from resources or equipment. Pupils, who are gifted, or with a particular talent, are encouraged and supported, sometimes through the good links the department has with community sports clubs. Support from parents is sought and encouraged and parents have been involved in umpiring and coaching. Areas which the department has recognised for further development include the formal monitoring of teaching and learning within the department, adopting the new National Curriculum assessment levels, the development of a departmental policy for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and developing a tracking system that will chart and record pupils' achievements as they progress through the school.

146. The facilities that the school provides for physical education including accommodation and learning resources are excellent and have a positive impact on the quality of pupils' work and the standards they achieve.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

147. Standards attained by pupils, including those with special educational needs, show a significant improvement since the last inspection and are now average at ages 11 and 13. Evidence from lessons seen, together with scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and interviews with pupils, indicates that the school is now meeting all the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.

148. By age 11, pupils have a developing understanding of the major world faiths. They are increasing their awareness of the importance of signs, symbols and ritual across the range of religions and can make informed comparisons. Many have sound knowledge of important festivals, such as Easter, Diwali and Eid, and of the special significance of artefacts like the rosary, menorah and diva. By the age of 13, pupils enjoy talking about their learning, recalling aspects of a topic on pilgrimages confidently and articulately. They can explain the importance of the Haj for Moslems and express their thoughts on the current divisions in the Arab world with clarity and compassion. Much of their written work contains thoughtful analyses of fundamental religious issues, such as that of personal belief, and many individual responses during lessons are mature and perceptive. They achieve satisfactory standards at ages 11 and 13.

149. In the lessons seen, teaching was good overall and ranged from satisfactory to good. Where the teaching was good, lessons were well planned with clear short-term objectives, delivery was confident and the teacher's subject knowledge sound. Pupils learned from and about religion through a range of strategies, including the effective use of their own experiences such as Christians recalling their first holy communion. Opportunities for pupils to participate in discussion have widened since the last inspection and improved resourcing provides a more effective 'hands on' approach. Many elements in the syllabus, particularly those relating to rules for living, contain a strong emphasis on personal and social education, enabling pupils to identify closely with issues raised. In most lessons tasks were appropriate and well matched to ability levels, however, where insufficient opportunities existed for pupils to work at an appropriate level, progress of the most able pupils remains unsatisfactory.

150. Class management is generally sound and pupils are encouraged to voice their opinion in a secure and sympathetic environment. There are some organised visits to places of worship, for example the Gurdwara in Queen's Park, and occasional visits into school by representatives of different faiths, but current provision appears to be somewhat informal. Sound use is made of assessment in monitoring pupils' progress and all pupils complete a formal assessment topic in the course of the year. Variations in amounts of work done within year groups and some inconsistencies in the quality of marking need attention. Where teachers' comments both encourage and help pupils to improve their work, the quality of presentation and content reflect that concern.

151. Pupils generally show a positive attitude to their work. In the observed lessons, behaviour was good, pupils were attentive during discussions, keen to answer questions and listened sympathetically to the views of other class members. Where learning is most effective, positive relationships create a climate in which pupils have the confidence to share very personal experiences with the rest of the class. Levels of motivation are generally high and most pupils, including those with special educational needs, settle quickly to independent work, sustaining their interest throughout sessions.

152. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and has been effective in raising the status of religious education throughout the school. The successful adoption and implementation of schemes of work, based upon the local authority's agreed syllabus, provides the continuity and progression, which was deficient during the previous inspection. The establishment of a

special classroom, containing colourful displays and appropriate resources, has also proved beneficial in raising the subject's profile amongst staff and pupils. Improvements in teaching and learning are directly attributable to the quality of planning, monitoring of delivery and outcome, and assessment introduced in the recent past. Effective use is made of in-service training, and regular meetings have increased collegiality, developing staff confidence and understanding of the subject.

153. While improvements in provision that meets the needs of the individual are noted, inspection evidence indicates that in some classes unsatisfactory levels of challenge are restricting progress for most able pupils.