

INSPECTION REPORT

**ST MARY and ST GILES C of E MIDDLE
SCHOOL**

Stony Stratford

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 110472

Headteacher: Miss Margaret Griffiths

Reporting inspector: Mr Tom Shine
24254

Dates of inspection: 30th October – 2nd November 2000

Inspection number: 224930

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 primary
School category:	Voluntary
Age range of pupils:	8 to 12
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	King George Crescent Stony Stratford Milton Keynes
Postcode	MK11 1EF
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Father Ross Northing
Date of previous inspection:	28 th – 31 st October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Tom Shine 24254	Registered inspector	Science Physical education Special educational needs Equal opportunities	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
John Chapman 8933	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Vivien Wilson 25775	Team inspector	English Art and design Music	
Andrew Hicks 25778	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
Richard Boatman 4361	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages History Geography	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The school's foundation dates from the beginning of the seventeenth century, although the present building dates substantially from 1937. Since then there have been many improvements, including a new classroom last year. St Mary and St Giles is a voluntary Church of England two-form-entry middle school, but is classed as primary. The roll is 213, with the gender balance being fairly even, and is smaller than other middle schools. Pupils enter Year 4 at age eight and transfer to secondary school at age 12. Many parents prefer to transfer their children to secondary school at age 11 and choose to send them to schools in neighbouring local education authorities where this is the policy. Approximately half of the age group tend to so transfer and, consequently, there are only sufficient pupils to make one class viable in Year 7. The school serves the town of Stony Stratford and, as the population is falling, children also come from further afield. Attainment on entry is broadly average. There are only 17 pupils from ethnic minorities, almost all of whom are fully fluent in English. There are 49 pupils on the school's register of special educational needs (SEN) which, at 23 per cent, is slightly above the national average. Most have moderate learning needs and two pupils have statements of SEN. Almost 14 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Mary and St Giles is an increasingly effective school, achieving standards that broadly meet national expectations, and is doing its best to meet the needs of all its pupils. Pupils with SEN and from ethnic minorities are fully integrated. Since the appointment of the headteacher and deputy head last April, appropriate measures have been implemented to improve teaching, which is good, overall. This effective teaching and the senior management's positive leadership, assisted by a very supportive governing body, is set to raise standards further. The school provides sound value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching is generally good, especially in English and science, with two out of three lessons being good or better, overall; this is the main reason that, in the lessons seen, pupils made good progress.
- The headteacher provides good leadership and is well supported by her senior colleagues.
- Provision for pupils with SEN is good and this contributes to their good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good; they make an effective contribution to a positive learning environment.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities that enrich the pupils' opportunities for learning.

What could be improved

- The quality of teaching across all year groups is not consistent.
- Pupils' attainment in information and communication technology (ICT) and some teachers' knowledge of the subject are unsatisfactory, overall.
- Some teachers do not use their knowledge of what pupils already know when they plan their lessons.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory improvement on most of the action points identified since the last inspection in October 1996. The school improvement plan is now firmly rooted on issues of standards and pupils' progress. Teaching is now good overall, as a result of recent measures that have led to substantial improvement. This is having a positive influence on standards; in Year 7 in French for example, standards are at the expected level, when four years ago they were unsatisfactory. The curriculum is better balanced in terms of teaching time allowed for each subject. Progress in ICT since the last inspection is unsatisfactory, overall. Whilst there is evidence of good short-term progress, this is quite recent and dates from the opening of the ICT suite last September. It is not surprising that the

use of this technology to support other areas of the curriculum still needs to be developed. Teachers' use of their knowledge of what pupils already know, in their planning, is still an issue for some teachers. Taken together, the overall improvement in standards in English, mathematics and science in the school has kept pace with the national upward trend in these subjects as measured by the results in the National Curriculum tests. Under the current leadership, the school is well placed to improve further and is on course to achieve its targets.

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	B	C	C	C
Mathematics	B	B	D	D
Science	C	C	B	A

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

These results show that, taking account of the performance of *all the pupils* in the year group, standards in English are in line with the national average. They are also in line with those in schools in similar circumstances, that is, *schools with a comparable proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals*. In mathematics, results are below the national average and those of similar schools. However, in science, they are above the national average and are well above compared to similar schools. The *overall* upward trend in these subjects broadly reflects the national picture.

Inspection findings broadly reflect these results. In English and mathematics, standards are in line with those expected nationally. The apparent inconsistency in mathematics is explained by an analysis of the 2000 results. This shows that they were just marginally below the national average and very small changes to the proportion achieving the higher grade or even receiving a low measurable grade would have raised the average of the year group in line with the national average. In science, inspectors found that pupils' attainment by age 11 is above average, broadly reflecting the standards represented by the published results. In terms of the percentage of all pupils achieving the expected standard (Level 4) or above in 2000 compared to the results from 1996, the school's trend very closely mirrors the national picture. The school's targets for English and mathematics were challenging in 2000 but were not reached. These targets were set by the previous headteacher and the school believes they became unrealistic and over-ambitious, taking into account the abilities of the year group and the absence of some staff in the Spring term. In other subjects, standards in history, geography, French and physical education meet the standards expected of pupils by age eleven, and in Year 7, although no geography was seen in Year 7. In art and design, standards are good in both key stages and are very good in music. In design and technology, attainment meets expected standards overall, but design aspects are not always developed as well as they could be. In ICT, standards are unsatisfactory by age eleven, but there is evidence of improvement since the opening of the ICT suite. With the recent improvements to teaching, it can be expected that standards will rise further.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. They show interest in their lessons and enjoy school, which helps their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This is good in and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	These are good. Pupils have good relationships with each other and with members of staff.
Attendance	This is good. There is very little unauthorised absence.

Pupils' very positive attitudes and general good behaviour are influential factors in their learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 8-11 years	aged 11-12 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 good overall, with over 92 per cent of lessons being satisfactory or better. The proportion of good or better teaching has risen to 66 per cent, of which a similar proportion to the last inspection, just over 9 per cent, is very good or better. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has reduced to 7.5 per cent, and most of this is centred in one class.

Teaching has improved since the last inspection when it was satisfactory overall, but was unsatisfactory in 11 per cent of lessons and good or better in 54 per cent of lessons. The teaching of English to the 8 to 11 year olds and to pupils aged 11 to 12 is good, overall. Literacy skills are taught well overall, but not consistently so. There was some unsatisfactory teaching of these skills observed, for example, in one class in Year 6. In mathematics in general, and in numeracy in particular, teaching to the 8 to 11 year olds is sound, overall, but some unsatisfactory teaching was also observed in the same class. The teaching of mathematics and numeracy skills to the 11 to 12 year olds is good. Throughout the school, teachers are increasingly meeting the needs of all pupils effectively. The teaching of pupils with SEN is good and the school makes good use of setting arrangements (*that is classes in year groups formed on the basis of pupils' attainment in the subject*) to meet the needs of different ability levels.

In other subjects, teaching is generally good in science throughout the school and it is also good in art and design, history and music. Some of the music teaching is of a high standard. It is sound overall in ICT, and good in Year 7, but some teachers are insecure in their knowledge of this subject. Teaching is generally sound in physical education throughout the school and also in design and technology. The teaching of French is good in Year 6, and is of a very high standard in Year 7, which is taken by a French specialist from a neighbouring secondary school.

A feature of the best teaching is the pace at which the teacher moves the lesson along briskly, maintaining pupils' interest and concentration. The best lessons are effortlessly managed, as pupils respond to their teachers' high expectations that they will do their best, and children are fully aware of what is expected of them through clear learning objectives in their teachers' planning. Teachers and classroom assistants work well together. In unsatisfactory lessons, ineffective class management, lack of challenge or unclear learning objectives impedes pupils' progress. For most teachers, marking is very perfunctory and does not identify gaps in pupils' knowledge or what they need to do to improve.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum covers all subjects for the right amount of time and meets statutory requirements. It is supported by a very good range of out-of-school activities. ICT not used sufficiently in other subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school identifies the needs of children early and support provided by teachers and classroom assistants is good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is good, overall. Areas of the curriculum, such as music, drama, art, poetry and extra-curricular activities, have a positive impact on pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Assemblies and acts of collective worship contribute satisfactorily to pupils' spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a secure and caring environment in which pupils feel safe.

The school works satisfactorily in partnership with parents. The quality of learning opportunities are sound, overall. Much is of a high order, such as music and sport, including extra-curricular activities, but these are counter-balanced by weaknesses in areas such as ICT and some aspects of design and technology.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The recently appointed headteacher and deputy head provide good leadership and effective management in working to raise standards in teaching and learning.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors are very supportive and fulfil their statutory responsibilities soundly. They are interested in the work of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This is sound overall, but, since the appointment of the headteacher, is improving and is helping to raise standards. The governors could do more to call the school to account for its academic performance.
The strategic use of resources	This is good. The school makes effective use of specific grants, including funding for ICT development.

The number, qualifications and experience of the teaching and support staff are good. Learning resources are good, overall. The school's premises are very good, with spacious accommodation and attractive grounds. The school had been through a difficult period at the beginning of the year due to the illness of the previous headteacher, and was compounded by severe staff absence during the Spring term. The current head, appointed on a fixed-term contract, has done well to raise staff morale and is focused well in raising standards in teaching and learning. The school applies the principles of best value well in its use of resources.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like school. • Children make good progress. • Behaviour is good. • Teaching is good. • The school is approachable. • The school has high expectations. • The school helps pupils become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right amount of homework, especially in Year 7. • More information about academic progress. • Links are not close enough with parents. • The range of activities outside of school.

Inspectors generally agree with parents' positive views. The quality of homework varies considerably. In Year 7, some pupils found the spellings given were too easy and generally higher attaining pupils could be given more demanding work. This needs to be related to the attainment of pupils however, as other pupils found the homework too hard and said it was not properly explained. Many parents felt that more homework is given in Year 6 than in Year 7. The school should bear in mind how much homework the pupils would be receiving had they transferred at age 11. Inspectors found that the information provided to parents and links with parents were satisfactory (*although reports contain too much jargon*) and do not agree with parents. Inspectors also found the range of out-of-school activities to be very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Attainment on entry is average, overall. This judgement is based on an analysis of the 1997 national test results of the pupils in the current Year 6, at age seven. This reveals that pupils achieved standards that broadly mirrored the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The most recent National Curriculum tests taken in 2000 when pupils were 11, show that standards in English reflect the national picture in the proportion of pupils achieving the expected Level 4 and above. If the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 is considered, the school is doing well, as it is above average. They are in line when compared to similar schools, that is, *schools with a comparable proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals*. This is an improvement on the results in 1999 when, compared to similar schools, they were below average. The national test results in mathematics show the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level 4 and above is in line with the national average and is also in line for those achieving higher levels. However, if the performance of *all* the pupils in the year group is considered, it is below the national average and is also below when compared to similar schools. This is slightly misleading, however, as a marginal change to the proportion achieving the higher level or even achieving the lowest measurable level would have raised these judgements about the performance of *all* pupils to average. In science, the results were above average when taking account of those pupils reaching the expected Level 4 and above; they were well above average for pupils reaching the higher Level 5. Taking account of the performance of *all* the pupils in the year group, these results are above the national average and are well above compared to similar schools. The school is on course to achieve its academic targets.
2. Inspection findings paint a similar picture. Pupils' standards of attainment in English by age 11 are in line with national expectations, overall. In *speaking and listening*, pupils' standards are good at this age. Pupils benefit from the opportunities provided for discussion in most lessons. When pupils enter the school, they lack confidence in their speech; they are diffident and very quiet. As they move through the school, there is measurable improvement. Pupils gain in confidence and express their ideas clearly, learning to adapt their form of speech to their audiences' needs through poetry, play reading and drama. Pupils benefit from their teachers' encouragement to develop specialist technical language. They listen well in most lessons, paying good attention to what is being said and are ready to answer questions. These listening skills are less in evidence on the few occasions where teachers fail to plan their lessons adequately or manage their class unsatisfactorily. As pupils enter Key Stage 3, in the year in which they are 12, their speaking and listening skills are good.
3. There is evidence that pupils entering the school in Year 4 have comparatively higher standards in reading and writing than their counterparts, currently in Year 6, had at the same age. This is attributed to the benefits of having experienced two full years of the Literacy Hour before they enter the school. *This suggests that attainment on entry is rising*. By age 11, standards in reading are in line with national expectations. Lower attaining pupils, and pupils with SEN, read simple texts adequately and are able to use initial letters and sounds to identify words. Higher attaining pupils read well and expressively, but the general standard of pupils of this age is average. Pupils read accurately but are not as fluent as they might be. They are eclectic in their choice of authors and enjoy a wide range of books. They have sound research skills and use the library well. In Key Stage 3, standards are in line with those expected. By age 11, standards in writing are satisfactory, overall. Pupils use grammar and punctuation appropriately and their writing covers a wide range, including letters, poems, reports and play scripts. The school is aware of the need to provide further opportunities for pupils to write at length and to improve the overall quality and teachers have received in-service training for pupils for this. By age 12, pupils' writing is appropriate for their age. An analysis of pupils' work at this age shows good use of vocabulary in some poetry and prose texts. All pupils write in a clear, joined style of handwriting. Much work is neatly presented, but standards of presentation are not consistent throughout the school and the

general standard of spelling is not up to an acceptable level, although the school improvement plan includes measures to address this. The school has given good attention to the Literacy Hour, but, until recently, pupils' progress in English and literacy has been no better than satisfactory. This is because there has been room for improvement in teaching which the current headteacher has taken positive steps to address. Pupils benefit from the arrangements of grouping by ability in English. Overall, the school is well placed to raise standards further, but, currently, pupils' competency in literacy only matches that expected for pupils' ages. Pupils with SEN are well supported and make good progress compared to their prior attainment. Literacy is used well to support learning in other subjects, such as science and history.

4. In mathematics, at age 11, pupils' standards of attainment are in line with those expected for their age. Teaching has improved since last year and there is stability in staffing with few staff absences, the presence of which, the school believes, was a contributory factor to slightly lower standards last year. Most pupils are secure in their mental recall of whole numbers; they are also secure and accurate working with the standard written methods for addition, subtraction and multiplication. In division, some pupils are weak working with answers that include remainders. Most pupils use decimals correctly when adding money and in measuring. Lower attaining pupils work with smaller numbers, particularly in multiplication and division, but their work is not consistent in standard. Higher attaining pupils are confident converting measurements into metres or centimetres. Most pupils are secure in identifying the appropriate fractions for halves, quarters and eighths. Higher attaining pupils can relate these fractions to their percentage equivalents. In working on *handling data*, pupils complete tally and bar charts and some higher attaining pupils draw travel graphs to illustrate the progress of a sponsored bicycle ride and to calculate the journey's speed. In Year 7, pupils' standards are appropriate for their ages. Most pupils add and subtract whole numbers and decimals accurately working on money and measurement, although lower attaining pupils are less secure when subtracting larger numbers or decimals. Most pupils have secure skills in using mental calculations. Pupils work well using algebraic formulae and equations. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well and pupils' secure numeracy skills are used effectively in other subjects, for example in science and in history and geography. Most pupils throughout the school make satisfactory progress, including pupils with SEN. Standards have improved since the last inspection.
5. In science, standards are above average by age 11. By the time of the inspection, a limited amount of work had been undertaken, but an analysis of pupils' previous work reveals that the full programme is covered. Lessons in this year group were observed in *Life processes and living things* and *Materials and their properties*. In studying *micro-organisms* and *changing materials* respectively, pupils showed good understanding of the concepts and an ever increasing understanding and confidence in the scientific process and in the use of scientific language. They record their findings clearly, spelling excepted. In Year 7, standards are also above average. By the time of the inspection, they had spent the first half-term on *Physical processes* studying *Forces*. They show good understanding of the place of pulleys in the construction of mechanisms to transport given weights. Pupils enjoy their lessons and the enthusiasm of pupils, along with generally good teaching, contributes to the good progress of all groups of pupils in both these year groups.
6. In ICT, standards are below national expectations by the time pupils are aged 11. There was insufficient evidence to make firm judgements about attainment in Year 7, although pupils' skills in word processing are sound. Overall, pupils have made unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection and ICT is insufficiently used in supporting learning in other subjects. Since the opening of the ICT suite in September, however, pupils' progress has improved and in some lessons was good. However, there has been insufficient time since the opening of the suite for it to have had a material impact on standards and it will not be fully effective until the general level of expertise amongst the staff is raised. In the lessons observed, most pupils are working on *word-processing* and *graphics*. There is some, but insufficient work on *data handling* and other aspects such as *computer control*, *measuring* and *monitoring* are under-represented. Pupils' basic operating skills, for example, loading and running computer programs, are appropriate for their age. These pupils, in Year 6, have recently begun to develop multi-media presentations on themes linked to topics in history such as *The Aztecs*. At the last inspection, standards of attainment

were unsatisfactory and there has been insufficient progress since then.

7. In other subjects of the curriculum, standards in music are well above average and reflect the commitment of the school to the subject. The judgement in the last report was that attainment was in line with national expectations. On that basis, the school has made significant improvement in the subject. Attainment in art and design has also improved and is above average in Years 6 and 7. French is taught in both these year groups. At the last inspection, standards were satisfactory in Year 6, but did not meet national expectations at the beginning of Key Stage 3 (Year 7). In this inspection standards were satisfactory in both year groups and speaking in Year 7 is good. The improvement in Year 7 is the direct result of outstanding teaching. In history and physical education, attainment meets the standards expected for pupils' ages. In design and technology in Key Stage 2, standards are in line with national expectations. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards in Key Stage 3. In geography, in the few lessons observed, standards were in line with national expectations. In the questionnaire and at the meeting, most parents were broadly happy with the standards in the school and with their children's progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. The attitudes of pupils towards their school and to their work are very good. They are enthusiastic and respond well to their teachers' questions, especially where they are challenged. They settle down and concentrate on their work with minimal supervision within a positive ethos. There is a good climate for learning in which pupils are happy to work and do not see it as a burden. The vast majority of parents feel that their children like school and this opinion was reflected by the pupils who showed obvious enjoyment in school. They were particularly enthusiastic about the wide range of extra-curricular activities available.
9. Behaviour generally is good but deteriorates on the few occasions when teaching fails to maintain pupils' interest. Whilst pupils are lively and enthusiastic, their behaviour in and around the school buildings was good at all times, but especially when queuing for tables at lunchtime and when leaving at the end of the day. No sign of oppressive behaviour was observed during the inspection but pupils reported occasional incidents, which the school was aware of and dealt with successfully.
10. Pupils' personal development flourishes within the climate of the school and, by the time they reach Year 7, they are confident, articulate and self-assured. Relationships are very good. Pupils show a high regard for each other and develop a friendly, yet mutually respectful, relationship with their teachers and the other members of staff. They see faith and beliefs as very personal matters and show each other due respect and tolerance and expect the same in return. They are considerate, caring and supportive of each other and celebrate each other's successes, especially in sporting matters. They are willing to exercise their initiative and take on responsibilities, although opportunities to exercise personal initiative are provided mainly in Year 7.
11. Attendance is above, and absences are below, the national average. Lateness is not a serious problem and appears to reflect more the vagaries of the local bus service than a failing in pupils. It does not affect the punctual start of lessons. There is no record of exclusions and registers are kept in accordance with the regulations.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

12. The quality of teaching is good overall; over 92 per cent of lessons is satisfactory or better. Sixty-six per cent of teaching is good or better. This is an improvement on the last inspection. Just over nine per cent is very good or better and this is similar to the last inspection. The improvement in teaching means that the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has reduced to 7.5 per cent. This improvement has been relatively recent and has not been consistent in all subjects. For example, it has been more marked in English than mathematics and even then there has not been sufficient time for this improved teaching to raise standards significantly. This is partly the reason why,

- during the inspection, in many lessons, pupils' progress over the relatively short period of the lesson was good but attainment was often no better than satisfactory. Teachers and classroom assistants work well together and have good relationships with their pupils. Under the direction of the class teachers, these assistants give appropriate but sensitive support and ensure that selected groups of pupils who need more individual help, including those with SEN, learn effectively and make good progress.
13. Whilst teaching is good overall, in both key stages, such a judgement masks variations between subjects. For example, it is good in English overall, in both key stages, although some unsatisfactory teaching was seen in Year 6. It is also good in science, overall. In mathematics, it is satisfactory in both key stages. Most teachers are technically competent in teaching phonics and the other basic literacy skills and in teaching the basic skills in numeracy.
 14. In English and science, most teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to ask probing questions to which pupils respond well. In a literacy lesson in Year 5, for example, the objective is to convert a poem into a narrative. "*What is a narrative?*" asks the teacher. "*It's basically a story*", replies a child. In this instance, the teacher assures herself that the pupils' understanding of the concept, essential to the purpose of the lesson, is secure. This, and other similar questions, also focus the minds of her pupils and they respond enthusiastically. In these good lessons, the teacher's high expectations ensure that pupils are sufficiently challenged and they know that they are expected to do their best within limited time. In response, pupils apply themselves well and work hard and this response contributes very effectively to their learning.
 15. Similarly, in many good lessons in mathematics and science, good plans that contain clear learning objectives ensure that pupils are made fully aware of them and what they have to do to achieve them. The teachers set a brisk pace that allows realistic but challenging amounts of time for their pupils to complete each element of the plan and pupils know they have to stay on task in order to complete it within the time allowed. Pupils respond well to these challenges and make good progress.
 16. The best lessons are very well managed. In a very good music lesson for the whole of Year 4, for example, the teacher used very effective methods and resources to teach this large group. An overhead projector was used well with clear writing which pupils could read easily when singing, and notation which they could follow effectively when playing their recorders. The teacher used her very good knowledge and skill in music to demonstrate what was needed to be done and her high expectations of what they could achieve led her to select a very challenging and demanding song for the group to learn. The response of the whole group was excellent and pupils were encouraged to improve still further by the teacher's helpful and sympathetic feedback, "*Well done, that was very clear. I could hear every word.*" Behaviour management was not an issue as the pupils were fully involved in this lesson and all were focused on following the teacher's directions to improve their quality of tone, diction and clarity in singing. Not all lessons were managed to this high standard, but the overall quality of pupil management, with some exceptions, is good. This is an important factor in creating a productive learning environment in which effective learning can take place. In the questionnaire responses, most parents were happy with the quality of teaching.
 17. In some lessons, particularly in English and mathematics, teachers spend too much time consolidating earlier work to confirm pupils' understanding and this prevents them from making good progress over time. The quality of homework varies from class to class, but is not consistently related to the needs of pupils. At the meeting, some parents felt that homework was not given regularly and consistently in Year 7. There is some evidence to support this view. The quality of marking is not sufficiently informative to help pupils to understand how they can do better.
 18. Support staff and resources are used well, with the important exception of ICT. Whilst there are computers in the classrooms as well as in the ICT suite, they are infrequently used. This is because most teachers are unsure about the subject and are lacking in confidence and skill.
 19. The unsatisfactory lessons contained a number of weaknesses:

- class management and control is ineffective; teachers speak in a very quiet voice that does not attract the pupils' interest and does not impose any authority by waiting for the class's attention. Pupils do not listen and progress is unsatisfactory;
 - teachers' planning lacks challenge and fails to develop pupils' understanding adequately;
 - lesson plans are ineffective and do not identify clearly what pupils are expected to learn.
20. The headteacher is aware that most of the unsatisfactory teaching is in one class and urgent action is required to improve this.

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

21. The quality and range of learning opportunities across the school are satisfactory. Recently the school has considered its entire curriculum needs effectively, establishing it as broad and relevant. It has taken national initiatives in English, mathematics and ICT appropriately into account. The time allocations for all subjects are in line with national recommendations, giving the curriculum a satisfactory balance. Pupils in Year 7 learn French, in line with the requirements for Key Stage 3, and also in Year 6. Schemes of work for all subjects have been developed to follow new national and local guidelines, and the curriculum meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum. Both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been satisfactorily implemented in the last two years.
22. The school has successfully addressed planning weaknesses identified in the last report. A new system for long, medium and short term planning has recently been introduced. Plans are satisfactory overall and help ensure that pupils build steadily on their increasing knowledge and skill levels as they progress through the school. Literacy and numeracy lessons follow the recommended framework and half-term plans in other subjects give satisfactory detail about what is to be taught. However, on occasion, some teachers fail to identify specific learning objectives in their planning. For example, in ICT plans for Year 6, assessment criteria such as "*use of Dazzle*" (a graphics program) is imprecise and does not enable teachers to assess whether learning objectives have been met.
23. The school ensures that all pupils have equal access to the curriculum, including pupils with SEN who are fully included. Provision for these pupils, both by their class teachers and the three learning support assistants, is good. At the parents' meeting, parents were happy with SEN provision.
24. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' personal and social development, and for health and sex education, and drug awareness. A formal programme of work in sex and health education is linked to science and physical education in Year 6. In Year 7, the "*Keep Safe Keep Well*" programme raises pupils' drug awareness and helps them learn how to cope with increasing pressures as they get older. Although younger pupils are encouraged to help in day-to-day tasks around the school, they are given more opportunities in Year 7, where pupils play a major part in organising events such as an annual "*Charity Bazaar*" and "*The School Sports Day*" for the First School, that uses the school's playing fields.
25. Pupils' personal development, overall, is good and is supported well by the moral, social and cultural provision in the school. Spiritual development is satisfactory. Spirituality does not permeate the curriculum as much as might be expected in areas such as music, poetry, art and drama and, whilst assemblies and acts of collective worship provide satisfactory spiritual experiences, the school provides few moments for reflection. Pupils' moral development is supported well in a number of ways. They are actively taught the difference between right and wrong, class rules are prominently displayed and these are reflected in the pupils' good behaviour and respect for individuals and property. All adults who work in the school provide good role models and, together with their good relationships and good example, enhance pupils' moral development effectively. Cultural development is promoted well through art, music, poetry, drama,

dance, history, geography and through the very good range of out-of-school activities. Good provision is made for social development. Pupils work well together, and the wide range of extra-curricular activities provides further opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills. Residential trips in Years 6 and 7, when pupils learn to share and live together also provide positive experiences.

26. The school has good links with the local community, including the Church, local businesses and other primary and secondary schools. Services are regularly led by local clergy and Christmas concerts in the local church give pupils good opportunities to share their music making with their families and friends. Pupils also regularly join in other events in Milton Keynes. They attend the Saturday Music School, for example, and both the choir and instrumentalists take part in concerts. The school is well supported by the local business community, mainly through financial awards to improve school facilities. For example, new lighting equipment and remodelling of the school hall has improved facilities for drama.
27. The school's very good range of extra-curricular activities are well supported by many pupils. These include a wide range of sports such as cross-country running, football and tennis, music, including a school choir, orchestra and bell-ringing, chess, computing and gardening in the summer term. Good additional curriculum support is provided by visitors to the school, such as the recent "Clash" dance group and by visits to places of interest such as *Whipsnade Zoo* and *Sulgrave Manor*, where pupils take part in "Living History" activities.
28. The school has good, constructive relationships with other local schools, which help pupils both when they transfer into the school at Year 4 and when they leave at the end of Years 6 or 7. Before pupils first enter the school, they spend a number of days visiting at the end of the previous summer term and join in the school's sports day. In Years 6 and 7 pupils have special "link" visits to their chosen secondary schools. These include science lessons to take advantage of the facilities that the secondary schools can provide. Staff have good professional links with colleagues in other schools. Regular meetings of the headteachers, deputies and subject co-ordinators all play a part in helping to ensure that the curriculum meets all pupils' needs and prepares them well for transfer to the various schools in the local liaison group.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

29. Procedures and arrangements for Child Protection and for ensuring pupils' health, safety and welfare are good. The head is the nominated Child Protection Officer who is trained appropriately. Staff know the children well and are alert to changes in patterns of behaviour. The school buildings are maintained and cleaned to a high standard. Entry to the school is controlled by good security arrangements and the grounds are secure and safe. Health and safety procedures are good. The school has a medical room and good procedures for dispensing medicines and recording accidents and incidents of sickness. Overall the school displays great concern for the health and safety of the children.
30. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance and good behaviour, and for eliminating oppressive behaviour, are all sound. They are reviewed regularly and operated efficiently and effectively. The school monitors pupils' personal development satisfactorily.
31. Procedures for the assessment of pupils' work throughout the school are satisfactory overall, showing some improvement since the last inspection. National statutory tests are supported by the use of optional tests and the school compares the progress of girls with boys and between different ability groups. Teachers' monitoring of standards in English has shown that improvements were needed in the quality of writing. Subsequent in-service training has helped teachers to examine how this can be developed and they are beginning to see some improvement in writing standards. The school implements assessment procedures to identify pupils with SEN well and complies effectively with the Code of Practice. There are consistent procedures for placing pupils on the SEN register *and also for removing them from the register when they have made sufficient progress*. Information is used to plan appropriate ways of meeting their particular

behavioural or learning needs.

32. The school's use of assessment to plan for pupils' future learning is unsatisfactory. Whereas teachers identify suitable assessment methods in their lesson plans to monitor whether learning objectives are being met, some teachers do not use this knowledge of what pupils already know in their planning for the next stage. Observation of lessons and of completed work indicates that too much time is spent on revision of earlier learning rather than moving forward and less progress is made than otherwise good teaching would suggest.
33. The school is aware of the need to further improve its assessment and planning procedures. Local Education Authority (LEA) advisory services are currently providing thorough and valued support to address this issue. Effective steps are now being taken to link assessment and marking more closely with curriculum planning and to extend teachers' and pupils' knowledge of what has been learned. This is likely to lead to more accurate focused planning for the next stage of learning and help pupils to make more rapid progress, together with the improved teaching.
34. The recently introduced '*progress books*' for pupils to record their work in all subjects each term are a useful means to help pupils know how they are progressing in their own learning. Subject co-ordinators work with teachers informally and in staff meetings to advise on curriculum planning, but assessment of work in the foundation subjects is left to individual teachers to record in their own way. Evidence from this inspection suggests that these are not detailed enough to ensure that work is set at appropriate levels to meet the varying needs of pupils.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

35. Parents were generally supportive of the school and appreciate what it does for their children. However a large number of concerns were recorded in the meeting with parents and in the parents' questionnaire about the level and amount of homework, information about their children's progress, working closely with parents and the level of extra-curricular opportunities. However, although critical in many ways, the parents were also supportive of the school. Inspectors generally felt that the criticisms were unjustified, although more homework, better targeted to the needs of pupils, could be given in Year 7, and reports to parents contained too much educational jargon. Extra-curricular opportunities were found to be very good.
36. No evidence was found to sustain the complaint that the school fails to work closely with parents. On the contrary, the school has an open door policy and attracts a very high level of attendance at parents' evenings. Weekly newsletters are informative and provide timely reminders of school events. The school prospectus contains helpful information and is well written. The annual reports on pupils mentioned them by name frequently and contain information about attainment levels and suggest areas for improvement. Taken together, the information provided to parents is good.
37. The contribution of parents to their children's learning is sound. Compared with many other schools, the level of participation of parents in activities within the school is low and declining, but those few who do assist the teachers in various ways are effective and make a sound contribution to the life of the school. A *Home-school Agreement* has just been concluded after extensive consultation with parents; the intention is to encourage more parents to take an increasingly active role in their children's education. Support for homework ranges from very good to none at all, some pupils having to catch up with their homework at lunch and break times. *The Parent Teacher Association* plays an active role in the social life of the school and raises funds effectively to purchase additional items such as books and stage curtains, which enhance the general climate for learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

38. The school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides effective leadership and clear educational direction for the school and is well supported by the deputy head. She has been appointed by the governors as headteacher on a fixed-term contract to provide continuity, having previously been deputy head. She is determined to make her time in the post an effective one and

"wants this school to be a tightly run ship". The governors hope to appoint her successor to take up the post from the beginning of the summer term.

39. After her appointment, the headteacher reflected thoughtfully on the work of the school, *"We looked at ourselves very carefully."* She is keen to promote high standards in teaching and learning and realised that the latter could not be achieved without improvements to the former. This has involved the LEA which has been very supportive. A programme of support was implemented that included in-service training, visits from LEA advisors and improved monitoring of teaching, which focused on lesson observations of literacy and numeracy. The improvement in teaching since the last inspection, therefore, has been relatively recent and there has not yet been sufficient time for it to have had a full impact on standards.
40. Another priority was the raising of staff morale. This had been severely dented by the uncertainties surrounding the absence of her predecessor which went on for many months due to illness, before his subsequent departure. There were also a large number of staff absences during the Spring term. She has involved all staff in decision making and it reflects very well on the headteacher's leadership that she has succeeded in forming a very supportive team in which morale is now high. Her own approach to the inspection has been very positive, *"We welcome OFSTED at this stage in the process, in the hope that it will contribute positively to the next stage of the school's development"* and this approach has had a beneficial influence on the staff. She has made a good start to developing medium and long term planning, although there is still some way to go.
41. The School Improvement Plan (SIP), drawn up by the headteacher and approved by the governors, is a useful document that sets out the school's aims and values and shows the way forward effectively. It is divided into three main sections, *site management*, *management objectives* and *curriculum objectives* and the cost of these developments are appropriately itemised. The school monitors and evaluates its performance satisfactorily and this evaluation is reflected in the appropriate priorities identified in the SIP. Its refrain is *"Poised for Excellence"* with achieving excellence as its key target. This is an ambitious aim and the school is not yet there, but under the leadership of the present head, well supported by the deputy and the governors, it has begun to take strides in the right direction.
42. The governing body is very supportive and did well to appoint the current headteacher on a fixed term contract before her retirement, in order to provide continuity and restore morale. Appropriate committees are in place for the main areas of responsibility and the governing body meets on a regular basis to ensure it is fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. It could do more to call the school to account for its academic performance. For example, by the time of the inspection it had not met to discuss last year's (2000) National Curriculum Test results. The annual report to parents is prepared by the publications committee and approved by the full governing body. Many governors visit the school frequently and give of their time willingly. Relationships between the staff and governors are good.
43. The governing body takes its responsibility to appoint the school's next headteacher very seriously. It realises how important it is to get the *right* appointment and has decided wisely to re-advertise the post in order to attract an effective short list. The school is well staffed in terms of the numbers of teachers and classroom assistants in the school. The match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is satisfactory overall and would have been judged as good, but for some unsatisfactory teaching, and weaknesses in many teachers' knowledge and expertise in ICT.
44. The school's accommodation and resources are good, overall, and the library is an inviting area that is well used. However, some of the books are very old and unattractive to children.
45. The school's finances are managed well; the financial plan includes proposals to reduce the planned over-spend from last year. Spending decisions are linked effectively to the educational priorities identified in the SIP. Specific grants and additional funding, for example for the ICT suite, are used effectively. The governors apply the principles of best value well in their use of resources.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

46. To raise standards and improve the quality of education, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

i. raise standards in teaching so that it is consistently good for all pupils by:

- improving class management and control (*paragraphs 19, 55, 66*);
- planning lessons that challenge pupils and extend their knowledge and understanding effectively (*paragraphs 19, 66*);
- improving lesson planning to identify clearly what pupils are expected to learn (*paragraphs 19,22, 63, 66*).

ii. raise pupils' attainment in information and communication technology by:

- improving *all* teachers' knowledge and expertise in the subject to ensure it is taught to a satisfactory level throughout the school (*paragraph 18, 97,99*);
- providing more monitoring of teaching (*paragraph 101*);
- replacing old computers in classrooms (*paragraph 101*).

The school improvement plan contains priorities to renew hardware, to extend the use of ICT to all curriculum areas and to develop the ICT skills of staff to improve teaching.

iii. improve the rate of pupils' progress by:

- using all teachers' knowledge of what pupils already know when they plan their lessons (*paragraph 56,67*);
- speeding up plans to improve spelling throughout the school (*paragraph 3*).

The school improvement plan contains intentions to analyse annual spelling tests and identify children who need additional support.

OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL:

- The quality of marking is inconsistent; much of it is not very informative and does not show pupils how they could improve their work (*paragraph 17, 56, 65*);
- Homework in Year 7 could be better targeted to meet the needs of all pupils (*paragraph 17*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	53
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	7.5	56.5	26.5	7.5	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

	Nursery	Y4– Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	213
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	0	31

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	0	49

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	11

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	16

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.8
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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	32	35	67

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	25	30
	Girls	26	24	31
	Total	50	49	61
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75 (77)	73 (74)	91 (78)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	25	26	27
	Girls	27	27	25
	Total	52	53	52
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	78 (78)	79 (78)	78 (85)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	1
White	205
Any other minority ethnic group	6

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y4– Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	23.6
Average class size	30.4

Education support staff: Y4– Y7

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	82.5

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
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	£
Total income	428,692
Total expenditure	423,832
Expenditure per pupil	1,989
Balance brought forward from previous year	-20,143
Balance carried forward to next year	-5,865

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	213
Number of questionnaires returned	147

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	45	52	2	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	27	63	4	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	57	3	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	47	21	4	1
The teaching is good.	28	59	3	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	43	23	3	7
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	35	4	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	41	51	3	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	22	50	20	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	28	52	6	4	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	32	58	5	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	14	39	25	7	14

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents were positive about most aspects. A large minority were not happy with homework, how they were kept informed about their children's progress, how closely the school works with parents and the range of activities outside lessons.

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

ENGLISH

47. The 2000 National Curriculum Tests taken when pupils were aged 11 show that standards were similar to the national average and were also comparable to those of similar schools. The number of pupils attaining standards at the higher Level 5 is above the national average and is also above that of similar schools. Taking the four years 1996 to 2000, test results have risen steadily, in line with the national trend. The standard of boys' writing has recently shown some improvement in the tests, but, overall, the girls achieve higher standards than the boys. The gradual improvement in standards is linked to the successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. The school has also introduced grouping by ability for this subject to direct teaching more accurately to pupils' particular learning needs.
48. Inspection findings reflect the recent test results and show that standards of work for pupils aged 11 are in line with national expectations. Standards of work seen for pupils in the first year of Key Stage 3 (*when pupils are aged 12*) are also similar to those expected for their age group, but spelling is below the standard that would be expected for most pupils. Throughout the school, pupils with SEN are well supported and make good progress.
49. In *speaking and listening* throughout the school, pupils benefit from the good opportunities for discussion built into most lessons and pupils make good progress. At the end of Key Stage 2 and in Key Stage 3, standards are above the national average. Pupils gain in confidence in expressing their own ideas clearly and learn to adapt their speech to different audiences and to the disciplines of poetry, drama and play reading. Most pupils listen very attentively to their teacher's questions and explanations and to each other's ideas when working in pairs and in groups. In a drama lesson in Year 5, pupils concentrated with interest as each member of the class took turns to describe the characteristics of a special box. *They varied the volume and tone of their voices to express fear, anger, joy or concern as they acted their own interpretations of the box as an heirloom, a gift or the stolen crown jewels.*
50. Pupils currently in Year 4 read well and show the benefits of two years experience of teaching of the Literacy Hour. However, the general standard of reading in Year 6 is not as high as that in Year 4 might suggest. Most pupils attain satisfactory standards of reading by the time they are eleven and in Key Stage 3. Standards can be expected to rise with good teaching. However, there is no common recording or evaluation system that would help teachers, pupils and parents understand and keep track of progress. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with SEN are able to read simple texts adequately using initial letters and sounds to identify words. The reading programmes for the pupils with SEN are suitably related to their particular reading needs. Pupils enjoy books by new writers, such as J K Rowling, as well as longer established authors such as Roald Dahl and Dick King-Smith. Higher attaining readers read with good expression and attention to punctuation. By age 11, pupils have acquired reasonably sound library skills. They are able to locate books according to subject and use the index and contents pages to focus their search for information. In Year 7, standards in reading are in line with national expectations, overall.
51. By age 11, standards in writing are broadly in line with national expectations. Pupils have a sound understanding of grammar and punctuation and write in forms for a range of reasons, including letters, poems, reports and play scripts. The school is aware of the need now to extend the quality and quantity of pupils' writing, following the earlier concentration on raising reading standards. An analysis of pupils' work revealed some good examples of imaginative writing in Year 6's study of Alfred Noyes' *The Highwayman*. In their re-writing of one verse, the ostler's pale face is creatively described as *'mouldy as lumpy as mash'* and *'his face like a penguin's chest'*.

The standard of writing by pupils in Year 4 is better than that in Year 6 might suggest. An analysis of previous work shows good use of descriptive vocabulary. Writing about an imaginary world, one pupil wrote, 'Somehow you would smell the stars as they twinkle in the dark, gloomy sky'. Examples of older pupils' writing cover appropriate subjects, but do not indicate above average learning.

52. In Key Stage 3, pupils achieve standards of writing in line with what is expected. An analysis of work shows a good variety of writing suitably directed to different audiences. Challenging poetry and prose texts provide colourful descriptions to extend pupils' vocabulary. A battlefield poem being studied included colourful lines such as the '*rat-infested faggot who guarded the slain*'. Pupils with special educational needs are given very good support leading to lively discussion and good understanding of the text.
53. Most pupils write in a clear, joined style of handwriting. They practise joining of their letters carefully and this results in some very neat work, but this is not consistent throughout the school. By the end of the Key Stage 2 and when pupils are aged 12 in Key Stage 3, spelling is weak, with many examples of mis-spelling such as '*wrighting*' for *writing* and '*sor*' for *saw*. Pupils know initial combinations of letter sounds such as *sh* and *ch* but need more practice in spelling.
54. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is predominantly good; however, unsatisfactory teaching is adversely affecting the progress of one year group. Teachers' good subject knowledge and well-chosen learning activities enable them to ask incisive questions and ensure that pupils gain well-balanced experiences to develop their use of English. "*What is missing in this sentence? If we move the adverb does it change the meaning?*" When this is supported by helpful resources, pupils make good progress, as seen in their re-arranging the order of individual '*adverb cards*' in a *sentence washing line*, which helps their understanding of the parts of speech in sentences and stage directions. The brisk pace of teaching, allowing a suitable but challenging amount of time for each element in the lesson, helps to maintain pupils' attention and interest. For example, pupils worked hard, in a limited time, in response to their teachers' high expectations that they would do their best, when converting the poem *The Owl and the Pussycat* into prose.
55. The good teaching and effective class management ensure that most pupils make good progress in their lessons. They enjoy their work and behave well, working in groups effectively. Teachers' encouraging response to pupils' efforts helps them to gain confidence and try harder. "*That was a good idea, could you say a bit more?*" The very clear role given to class assistants enables them to give valuable support to small groups of pupils. Where the teacher's management of the class is weak, pupils are inattentive and lose interest in the lesson and do not make the expected progress.
56. Pupils' standards by the end of Key Stage 2 do not reflect the good teaching and good progress within lessons. Teachers' over-consolidation of earlier work to confirm pupils' understanding is preventing them from making the progress they should over time. Teachers' assessment of what pupils have learned needs to be more carefully focused, to ensure that planning of subsequent lessons is sufficiently precise to take pupils' learning a stage further. This needs to be supported by more informative marking to give pupils a better idea of how to improve their work. There is no consistent method to record and evaluate pupils' reading so that teachers and pupils are better informed about how they are achieving. A parent/school recording notebook would help to involve families more in supporting their children's reading.
57. Teaching is judged to be good in Key Stage 3, on the basis of one lesson observation, discussions with the class teacher and pupils and an analysis of pupils' past work. Pupils respond with interest to their work and make good progress.
58. Although pupils' literacy skills are satisfactory, overall, the co-ordinators for English and Literacy are aware of the need to improve progress, particularly in spelling. They have involved staff in effective in-service training in order to improve standards in writing and staff believe this has contributed to the recent improvement in boys' writing. ICT, overall, is insufficiently used to support English and literacy throughout the school. Since the last inspection, the Literacy Hour

has been thoroughly established across the school with each year group using setting in order to develop pupils' differing abilities.

MATHEMATICS

59. The 2000 National Curriculum tests for pupils aged 11 were below the national average and those of pupils in similar schools. However, this judgement does not give a full picture of pupils' attainment and needs further analysis. Until 1999, standards rose in line with the national trend since the last inspection and, in 1999, results were above the national average, although they were below average for similar schools. Results in the 2000 tests were very similar to those in 1999. The proportion achieving the expected level was in line with the national average. Fewer pupils reached higher levels of attainment than in similar schools and a very small number of pupils did not reach the lowest measurable standard. As a result, overall average levels attained *of all pupils* were just below the national average and those attained by pupils in similar schools. The school believes a number of teacher absences in the Spring term may have had a detrimental effect on the progress of some pupils at this crucial time. Inspection findings show that pupils aged 11 are working at nationally expected standards. Pupils' standards at age 12, in Key Stage 3, are also in line with national expectations.
60. An analysis of pupils' work for this term reveals a focus on *number*, with work in *shape*, *space*, *measures* and *handling data* also seen. Pupils of all abilities have made satisfactory progress since the start of the school year. Most pupils have secure mental and written calculation skills when working with whole numbers. They use the standard written methods for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. Work is accurate except for division, where some pupils are weak coping with answers that include remainders. Pupils use decimals correctly when adding money and in work on measurement. Higher attaining pupils express metric measurements in different forms, such as 5.34 metres and 534 centimetres. In a lesson seen, lively discussions about their work helped pupils develop their skills in estimating. Most measured accurately, although some pupils could not always interpret the small divisions on weighing scales accurately. Higher attaining pupils relate fractions to their percentage equivalents. For example they know that 75 per cent is the same as three-quarters and they find quantities such as 75 per cent of 36. However, they do not yet understand the connection with decimals. In work on *handling data*, pupils complete tally charts and bar charts to illustrate information such as the results of tuck shop sales.
61. In Year 7, pupils have made satisfactory progress since the start of the school year in the limited range of topics taught so far. In work on number, pupils add and subtract whole numbers and decimals accurately, although lower attaining pupils are less secure when subtracting larger numbers or decimals. Most pupils use decimals accurately in work on money and measurement, and readily express metric measurements in different forms. They have secure recall of multiplication facts and mental calculation skills. Development of algebra is good and all pupils work confidently on tasks involving algebraic formulae and equations. They use brackets and powers correctly when substituting numerical values into algebraic expressions such as $3(a + b) - 2(b + c)$.
62. Pupils make satisfactory use of their numeracy skills in other lessons. For example, they display the results of science investigations using graphs, grid references in geography map work and timelines in history to help develop a sense of chronology. They measure materials in design and technology prior to cutting and assembly. Pupils' grasp of numeracy skills are satisfactory, overall.
63. The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to unsatisfactory and is satisfactory, overall. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully implemented and this provides a sound planning framework. However, teachers do not consistently plan using their knowledge of what pupils know, understand and can do and this impedes their progress over longer periods of time. Although the overall quality of teachers' planning is satisfactory, some medium term plans contain unclear learning objectives such as "*to quicken the ability to calculate using various strategies*". It is not clear what strategies are to be developed and it is not, therefore, possible for the teacher to

assess how much progress has been made.

64. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are allocated to one of three teaching sets, where pupils are taught with others of similar ability. This helps teachers to ensure that work is set at appropriate levels of challenge and contributes satisfactorily to pupils' progress. Particular care is taken to ensure that work for lower attaining pupils and those with SEN is well matched to their abilities. Most teachers question pupils effectively and explain work well in whole class teaching. For example, at the beginning of an algebra lesson in Year 7, the class teacher engaged pupils in an interesting discussion about how to "solve" a range of algebraic equations. This developed pupils' understanding just sufficiently, so that further work presented a good, but achievable, challenge. Pupils responded well and made good progress over the lesson.
65. Teachers and classroom assistants have good relationships with all pupils. They are sensitive to the needs of pupils with behavioural difficulties and manage them well. The close attention that classroom assistants give to pupils with SEN makes an important contribution to their overall good progress. The combination of effective class management and good pupil attitudes combines well to produce purposeful lessons that proceed at a satisfactory pace and where pupils learn well. The quality of marking is variable. Marking usually consists of ticks and crosses and does not show sufficiently how pupils could improve their work. There is a significant amount of unmarked work. Some books contain encouraging comments, but marking is unsatisfactory, overall.
66. One unsatisfactory mathematics lesson was observed during the inspection. This was due to unsatisfactory lesson plans which did not identify clearly what pupils were expected to learn, ineffective class management which led to inattention and restlessness and an unchallenging activity that failed to develop pupils' understanding as much as it might have done in the time available.
67. The co-ordinator has developed a satisfactory development plan for mathematics which focuses on raising standards, through improved monitoring of teaching, developing new assessment procedures, which currently are unsatisfactory, and staff training, to identify strengths and weaknesses in pupils' knowledge. She liaises well with other schools, which helps pupils settle as they transfer to other schools. Learning resources are satisfactory, overall. There is good support for mathematics from the school's new computer suite. This was well used in a lesson in Year 4, to develop pupils' understanding of number patterns. However, insufficient use is generally made of ICT. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the development plan is clearly set out to raise them further.

SCIENCE

68. By age eleven, pupils attain standards above those expected for their age in all areas of science (*scientific enquiry; life processes and living things; materials and their properties; and physical processes.*) These standards reflect the 2000 national test results; these also show that standards were well above average compared to similar schools. They show an improvement since 1996 when, taking into account the standards of all pupils in each Year 6, attainment has been broadly in line with the national average, although along with the national average, the trend has been broadly upwards. Standards are improving and pupils benefit from an additional teacher who provides additional support for booster groups.
69. In *materials and their properties*, pupils in Year 4 sort materials into groups according to their properties, for example solids and liquids. They are developing the concept of grouping well. Pupils are fully involved in the lesson and respond well to good teaching, making good progress. They are developing good insights into the concepts. For example, the teacher had provided good resources for the lesson, including an apple. One boy recognised this not just as a solid but also as a container - *for apple juice!* In *life processes and living things*, pupils in Year 5 study *life cycles* focusing on the growth of seeds into plants and fruit and how different conditions affect the way seeds germinate. All pupils listen well and respond enthusiastically to the teacher's good questions, progressing well in their learning. By the age of 11, pupils separate materials in a variety of ways. They know that when a solid, such as salt, dissolves in water, a clear solution is

formed and cannot be separated by filtering. They also know that a solid such as salt can be recovered from a solution by evaporation. They enjoy learning and are increasing their knowledge, acquiring the notion that the scientific process is a series of sequential steps and that scientific ideas are based on evidence. Pupils make good use of bar graphs to record their observations. In another lesson in the same year group, pupils learn that yeast is a living organism needing nutrients to grow. They study the effects of heat and air on the growth of organisms and respond well to good questioning which the teacher uses to assess their current level of knowledge. They are confident using scientific vocabulary such as *respiration*, *micro-organism*, *solution* and *sediment*.

70. In Year 7, an analysis of pupils' work shows that, during the first half of term, pupils have studied a series of modules on *Forces*. They work out what forces are acting on a toy car when it is pushed at a constant speed. When making a simple balance they investigate the connection between weights and distances from the *fulcrum* which they know is the *pivot*. They record their findings neatly and clearly. In the one lesson observed in this year group, pupils work well on simple pulley systems and show a good grasp of the concepts of load and effort. They are at ease using technical vocabulary such as *friction* and *prediction*. Spelling throughout the school is consistently below the standard expected.
71. In most lessons, pupils make good progress. This includes pupils with SEN, who are well supported and generally make the same rate of progress as their peers. There are no discernible differences between the performance of girls and boys.
72. Teaching is good, overall. This is based on teachers' good subject knowledge that enables them to ask probing questions, assuring them that pupils have understood and remembered the concepts learnt in the previous lesson and are ready to move on to the next steps. At the same time they challenge pupils to think and to recall the knowledge they have previously learned. "*What are nutrients?*" The class thinks for a moment and a shoal of hands is raised. "*Food*" says one pupil. "*Can you give me some examples for yeast?*" continues the teacher, pointing to another pupil. "*Sugar – flour – and water,*" she replies. In Year 7, good questioning encourages the use of scientific language: "*What is the downward force in the pulley system called?*" "*Gravity*", replies a pupil. In the best lessons, good planning ensures that they move at a brisk pace, maintaining pupils' full involvement and concentration. Where the pace is slow, such as in one lesson which consisted mainly of copying from information from an overhead projector, pupils become restless, writing so much with little learning taking place, and lose interest in the task. There is evidence of little marking and when work is marked it is not informative and does not show how pupils could improve further.
73. Pupils' ability to use ICT to develop their scientific knowledge, skills and understanding is poorly developed. This is because most teachers' confidence and expertise in the subject is insecure and they do not provide the opportunities. The use of ICT in most areas of the curriculum, including science, is included in the school improvement plan.
74. The school has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection and good progress in the last year. The co-ordinator has had the opportunity to monitor teaching. Resources for science are good.

ART and DESIGN

75. Pupils attain standards above those expected for their ages nationally at the end of Key Stage 2 and in Key Stage 3. This represents an overall improvement on the standards at the last inspection.
76. Pupils have very good opportunities to develop their observational drawing skills. In their study of a range of *Victorian artefacts*, including a *shoe last*, *kitchen utensils*, *lamps* and *china*, pupils in Year 5 use soft pencils very well to record detail. Their sensitive drawings show very carefully observed form, pattern and texture. *Colourful self-portraits in pastel* made by pupils in Key Stage 3 show similarly detailed work and recognisable likeness to their subjects. Sketchbook studies of

their individual features prepared them effectively for this activity. This ability to develop a theme is seen in pupils' *impressions of a flowering plant*, represented in drawing, followed by painting and then as a lino-cut design. The finished prints show very good use of cutting tools and a lively interpretation of subject matter.

77. Corridor displays contain well-constructed models illustrating work in other subjects. Pupils' individually designed *papier-mâché masks to represent Aztec gods* provide good links with their geography studies. Their *marionettes of 'Beowulf' characters* show evidence of costume and weapon research for the Saxon/Viking period of history. Good opportunities are given for co-operating in shared pieces of work. Year 4 pupils are very proud of their large *Batik textile hanging*. Each pupil contributed a wax pattern with a *tjanting*, revealing individual designs in white after the fabric was dyed.
78. The quality of teaching is good overall. This has been supported by a resident artist working with pupils to create patterns on stained glass. Their individual designs are incorporated into some attractive *window panels* in the school. The competent co-ordinator uses her expertise to demonstrate lessons and to advise teachers informally. Good, clear instructions encourage pupils to think carefully about their interpretations and designs. Interesting tasks and materials help them to express their ideas with a variety of tools and media. The pupils enjoy the subject and are totally absorbed in their artwork.
79. Pupils' copies of *Van Gogh's 'Sunflowers' and of Monet's 'Water Lilies' and 'Houses of Parliament'* display appropriate characteristics of the artists' work. However, the fact that few pupils are able to name or discuss the work of well-known artists would suggest that this aspect of the curriculum needs more development. ICT is used appropriately in art and design.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

80. Throughout Key Stage 2, the standard of work is broadly in line with what is expected for pupils' ages. Standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection. Insufficient evidence was available to assess pupils' standards overall, in Year 7. However, pupils had just started work on a new project and in the first lesson the standard of their design work was at an appropriate level.
81. In Year 4, pupils make recorder cases from *Batik* fabric. A small selection from last year's work was of good quality. Some pupils evaluated their products well, for example describing how their finished work matched what they intended. In Year 5, pupils design and make moving toys as part of their study of the Victorians. The frames are robust and accurately constructed. In one lesson seen pupils work safely with a range of tools. They measure, cut and assemble their work accurately and incorporate extra card corners in their construction to stiffen the whole framework. In Year 6, pupils make electrically controlled "buggies", using driving mechanisms such as elastic bands and pulleys. However, as no finished products were available from last year for inspection, it was not possible to evaluate the overall quality of their work. Work from last year in Year 7 shows pupils designed and made models of a pneumatically powered hoist to rescue a cat from a tree. These were well constructed and included appropriate use of simple pneumatic apparatus to control the lifting mechanism.
82. Work in the design strand is less well developed than the making strand. Most design work tends to consist of an illustration of design intentions, although some full size scale drawings of the underlying frames being made were seen in pupils' work in Year 5. The main weakness in design work is the lack of detail such as labelled sketches to show how the product will be constructed, and the absence of further development to show how products change in the light of pupils' work so far. In a lesson in Year 7, a good start was made on the design of fabric books for a baby. Pupils chose imaginative titles for their work such as *The Seasons* and *Who, What, Where am I?* They understood well what materials are safe to use and they developed good initial illustrations of their intentions.
83. The quality of teaching ranged from good to unsatisfactory and was satisfactory overall. Where it

is good, teachers have good subject knowledge and use a good mix of class discussion and demonstration, backed up by effective use of resources to extend pupils' design and practical making skills. In a lesson in Year 4, the teacher drew out pupils' existing knowledge of different types of stitching, skilfully. She pretended not to know what to do and questioned pupils about different stitches, such as *running stitch* and *backstitch*. The effective discussion developed pupils' understanding of basic sewing techniques well. In a design lesson in Year 7, the teacher made good use of a range of commercially produced *rag books* to develop pupils' understanding of the design requirements of such products. By contrast, in the unsatisfactory lesson, model vehicles were provided for pupils to dismantle, the intention being to show how they were constructed. However, the teacher only allowed the body shell to be removed, severely restricting pupils' further analysis of features such as how axles and wheels were attached, making it difficult for them to draw illustrations to show the construction.

84. Although most lesson plans are satisfactory, the unsatisfactory lesson was partly due to unsatisfactory planning. Insufficient detail about the lesson aims and activities showed lack of preparation and led to a slow lesson, where pupils quickly lost attention, and contributed to the poor choice of model vehicles available for analysis. Both these factors led to unsatisfactory learning over the whole lesson.
85. The scheme of work has been developed from a commercially available source. It provides a satisfactory range of learning experiences and helps teachers to ensure that work is appropriate for pupils in their classes. A new assessment system is being introduced. It is too early to judge its effectiveness at present. Learning resources are satisfactory, but ICT is insufficiently used to develop design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

86. During the week of the inspection it was only possible to observe Year 4 studying geography. Based on these observations, pupils make sound progress overall, including those with SEN, and their standards are in line with expectations for this year group.
87. In one class, children study the daily life of a girl in the Indian village of Chembakolli and show an awareness of the differences and similarities between their life and that of the Indian girl. They consider pictures of life in the village and talk about their interpretations of the pictures and what they tell them about the life in Chembakolli. They offer reasons for some of their observations. When they work in groups to put the events of the girl's life in sequence, they collaborate well, often with a good level of discussion. As they have already charted their own daily life in a previous lesson, they are able to make comparisons with their life. In a parallel class, the pupils work well and made good progress on the same topic. In the higher attaining group, there is a good level of discussion and their work is very well presented. Pupils organise themselves well, and choose one of their group to write up their work. The lower attaining group, in particular, made very good progress.
88. There was insufficient teaching seen to make an overall judgement. In both lessons the work was well differentiated and the planning was good. Objectives were clear and tasks were clearly explained to the children, but in one lesson, the objectives were not realised in the time available, as the lesson lacked sufficient pace. In both lessons, there was good open-ended questioning, to stimulate children to respond well to the topic and tasks. In one of the lessons, there was a good range of resources used, including ICT. In the other one, however, the worksheet was inadequate for the task. The teachers had good knowledge of the subject and they were clearly enthusiastic about the study of geography. In both lessons, there was an effective review of learning at the end of the lesson.
89. The school offers a broad curriculum for geography, which meets the requirements, and the subject is well managed. Good use is made of visits such as field trips in Year 6 to the Isle of Wight and to France in Year 7. Resources are good.

90. The skills and concepts are planned across the year groups and the co-ordinator has developed an effective planning framework. The co-ordinator has a good picture of what is taught in the various year groups and monitors planning and pupils' work effectively.

HISTORY

91. During the week of the inspection, lessons were seen in Years 5 and 6. Standards in history broadly match those expected for pupils' ages. There was insufficient evidence to make judgements about standards in Year 7. In Year 5, pupils study *The Victorians*. They watch a video about school in the Victorian period and pupils show a good recall of what they have seen and made notes on. They work well in groups, recognising similarities and differences between the Victorian period and the present day and begin to think about the reasons for the differences. In a lesson in Year 6, on *Early American Civilisations*, many pupils are developing an understanding of how aspects of the past are represented and interpreted. In preparing a timeline of events pupils show that they are developing a good grasp of chronology. In a lesson in Year 6 in the ICT suite, pupils showed good levels of research skills. An analysis of pupils' work in Year 6 reveals some good examples of informative and communicative writing.
92. Teaching and learning in history are generally good. Pupils are interested in history and they make good progress. It makes a very positive contribution to pupils' personal development and it is not surprising that their behaviour is of a high standard. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about history. Lessons are well planned in line with the scheme of work. Teachers use a good range of open-ended questions to stimulate learning. In the lessons seen, there was effective support in writing for pupils with SEN and these pupils made good progress.
93. The scheme of work ensures effective coverage of the National Curriculum. History often stimulates work in other areas of the curriculum, such as extended writing in English and, in art, the designing and making of *Aztec* masks. The co-ordinator manages the subject well and has established a good planning framework.
94. Good use is made of local history; visits to places of interest such as the *Cecil Higgins Museum* in Bedford provide useful experiences that extend pupils' knowledge and understanding, effectively. Display on *The Victorians*, including an interactive display where pupils can decide on a sequence of pictures, is good. The previous year's display on *The Aztecs* is also good.
95. The curriculum for history is broad and well planned. The positive developments noted in the last inspection have been maintained and standards are improving. There is a good range of resources for the subject.

INFORMATION and COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

96. Standards in ICT are below national expectations by the time pupils are aged 11. There is insufficient evidence to judge standards of attainment in Year 7, although standards in word processing are at the level expected for pupils of their age and they benefit from the preparation to gain an accredited qualification from a commercial business organisation. Standards are similar to those reported in the last inspection, since when there has been insufficient improvement, overall.
97. Most pupils in all years have made sound progress this term, overall, and some have made good progress since the new computer suite has been available. They learn new skills through work that has been well linked to other subjects in the curriculum, but these links are not continued or developed in pupils' own classrooms. However, standards of attainment overall and long term progress across the whole school are unsatisfactory because pupils have not been taught all aspects of the subject consistently in the past. Most work seen during the inspection has centred on *word-processing* and *graphics*. There was a small amount of work seen in *data handling*, for example in using computers to draw graphs of data, but pupils have had insufficient opportunities to develop this, or other aspects such as *computer control*, *measuring* and *monitoring*.

98. Pupils have appropriate operating skills for their age and use the new computer network confidently. They load and run computer programs, open and close work files correctly and save work at the end of the lesson. In addition to developing multi-media presentations, pupils in Year 6 have produced newsletter-style reports of a visiting dance group called "*Clash*". In one lesson, pupils develop a range of posters including text and illustrations on various aspects of *Aztec* daily life. In Year 7, word-processing is linked to English and literacy through the topic of writing letters of complaint. These are well set out and pupils edit work successfully, using suitable letter styles and spellcheckers to eliminate spelling mistakes. This work was of a satisfactory standard.
99. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory in Key Stage 2 and good in Key Stage 3. There are effective arrangements to teach ICT to half the class at a time in Year 7, with the remainder working on other subjects. This allows each pupil to have access to a computer, ensuring full participation in the lesson. Lessons are taken by an experienced visiting teacher, who has secure computer skills and who plans well with the class teacher. Because the group is small, both the teacher and support assistant give effective individual support to each pupil. In Key Stage 2, teachers learn new operating and computer skills, as they become more familiar with the new computer suite. In some lessons this is only just sufficient to enable them to teach satisfactorily. In one lesson, for example, the teacher was unable to resolve a technical difficulty and was unable to teach what had been planned. In the circumstances, she made the right decision to change the lesson plan to continue development of earlier work. As a result, pupils made less progress than they might have done. In a very good lesson in Year 5, the teacher's secure knowledge of the software was instrumental in developing pupils' skills and understanding. She made clear at the outset what pupils were expected to do and demonstrated new techniques required in the lesson. This proceeded briskly and, at the end of the lesson, she referred back to the learning objectives, enabling pupils to assess how much progress they had made. Some teachers lack confidence in ICT and are unsure how to support learning in other subjects, although some good work took place in the computer suite supporting numeracy.
100. In Key Stage 3, pupils have an excellent attitude to their work and want to learn and all pupils make good progress. In Key Stage 2, pupils are well motivated and show keen interest in their work.
101. The co-ordinator has prepared a new scheme of work that addresses all aspects of the subject effectively and provides a good framework support for teachers. There is a new assessment system for teachers but this has yet to be implemented. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable and skilled. She is aware of what needs to be done to raise standards and has set up effective support for other staff to raise their expertise. Monitoring of teaching of this key subject is not yet adequate. The new computer suite is excellent, but other computer systems around the school are old and are reaching the end of their useful life. The ICT improvement plan is good and the school is set to raise standards further through improvements to provision, staff training and development of the curriculum.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

102. French is taught in both Years 6 and 7, with twice as much time given to Year 7. The aims and objectives of the French programme are clear, and the pupils are making good progress in speaking and listening at both key stages. They are enthusiastic and motivated in their French studies and take part readily in the broad range of activities provided by the teachers, such as team games, guessing games and songs.
103. Many of the pupils in Year 7 use French spontaneously and most are confident about asking for meaning in French, when for example they learn new vocabulary for pets and ask "*comment dit-on en français, parrot?*" They make very good progress in short conversations, as in pair work, asking and answering questions about pets. When introduced to new vocabulary, they show very good understanding of the teacher's clues, which are generally spoken at near normal speed. They identify and employ their understanding of key words to infer the meaning of what is being

said.

104. Pupils in Year 6 respond enthusiastically to an activity in French to revise their colours, using a numeracy technique of holding up cards in different colours, thus showing their understanding of what the teacher is saying. The large majority of pupils show they have retained the vocabulary from previous lessons. They are confident of responding to basic questions about themselves, such as their name, age and whether they have brothers or sisters. They are also able to use basic negative forms such as "*je n'en ai pas*" and all pupils are making good progress.
105. In Year 7, in particular, they are introduced to the written form of new vocabulary and are not confused by the mismatch between spelling and sound. They develop good pronunciation. Attainment is broadly average in Year 7, but in speaking, such as their ability to use French spontaneously, they are achieving an above average level. They have good understanding of the spoken word when they listen to the teacher's language when spoken at near normal speed. The emphasis is on speaking and listening and, therefore, there is less evidence of achievement in reading and writing. Overall, pupils, including those with SEN, are making very good progress. Pupils are given the opportunity to visit Normandy in Year 7 and this develops their knowledge in geography and history, as well as in French. This also effectively promotes their cultural development and the booklets and work produced as a result of the visit are impressive.
106. Teaching ranges from good to excellent and is very good, overall. In Year 6, a non-specialist teaches French well, using the language throughout the lesson, and developing pupils' understanding of the spoken word and their confidence in responding to basic questions, effectively. In Year 7, a specialist French teacher from one of the local secondary schools provides a very good model of French teaching and her lessons are always lively and are taught at a good pace. All pupils are engaged in the activities, which range from the introduction of new vocabulary, to work in pairs and enthusiastic team games, which often end with the enthusiastic and spontaneous shout of "*nous avons gagné!*" The teacher also develops their understanding and use of the correct gender effectively and most are confidently using "*le, la, les*" appropriately. She encourages and praises their efforts and often leads a class response to particularly good work with "*tu es très intelligent(e)*". Lessons are well planned, although thought needs to be given to meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities in Year 6. This is the first year that the teacher in Year 7 has taught French in the school. Both teachers need to ensure that, when pupils go from Year 6 into Year 7, there is not too much repetition, whilst ensuring that there is reasonable revision so that they can build upon their strengths.
107. Both teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection, when standards in Year 7 were unsatisfactory.

MUSIC

108. Throughout the school, pupils' standards of attainment, overall, are well above those expected for their age and very good in singing and for pupils who play in the school orchestra, as reported in the last inspection. The school continues to build on its strong musical tradition.
109. All pupils, including those with SEN, make satisfactory progress in composing music, learning basic music notation and use percussion instruments to create their own rhythms. The pupils sing very well as a whole school, in unison and simple two-part songs. Pupils in Year 4 demonstrate their understanding of *tempo*, *pitch* and *dynamics* in '*Kumala Vista*', a song in which pupils echo to the lead of the teacher. Tuneful singing, using a full range of high and low notes, with good phrasing and diction, was heard in their singing of such widely contrasting songs as '*Mr Mistoffeles*' and '*Gloria, Gloria, in excelsis Deo*'. All pupils learn to play the recorder effectively and are improving their reading of musical notation.
110. The quality of teaching is good overall, with very good teaching by the music co-ordinator. Class management is very good, supported by very helpful feedback on pupils' achievements. Pupils respond well to this encouragement and make good progress in singing and recorder playing. They gain confidence in their skills and work co-operatively in pairs. Pupils show high standards of

concentration and very good behaviour. Their very good attitudes enables music to make a very positive contribution to pupils' personal development. The expert tuition provided by peripatetic teachers enables a good proportion of pupils to play *brass*, *woodwind* and *stringed instruments*. The musicians perform together very well in an orchestra, trained by the co-ordinator and perform at venues locally and in the wider community.

111. Although teaching is good, average standards of playing pupils' own compositions would suggest that planning is not taking sufficient account of previous musical attainment to move pupils forward. An enjoyable, very well planned and organised lesson in Year 5 involved pupils in clapping rhythms to match the syllables of a rhyme. Their competence in this activity and in playing a simple *ostinato* accompaniment (*when a musical pattern is repeated many times in succession*), suggests that they are capable of more advanced work.
112. Pupils in Key Stage 3 have made a good start to their handbell ringing in preparation for various school and local performances throughout the year. The musical experience of pupils in Year 6 culminates in a major school musical production, such as '*The Mikado*'. Music is very well co-ordinated throughout the school, with good use made of an interesting range of percussion instruments and a separate music room.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

113. Lessons were observed in Years 4, 6 and 7 in dance and games. However, swimming is also taught in Year 4, and pupils throughout the school enjoy gymnastics and athletics. Pupils in Year 6 have the opportunity to experience outdoor-adventurous activities. Standards of attainment are broadly in line with those expected for pupils' ages. By age eleven, most pupils are able to swim at least 25 metres unaided. These standards generally reflect those reported at the last inspection.
114. In one class in Year 4, in *dance*, pupils learn to explore the character movements in response to a stimulus provided by the teacher - a puppet of the character *Pinocchio*. The pupils are immediately drawn to this stimulus and the teacher has succeeded in attracting and subsequently maintaining their interest. The children practise their movement patterns as they imitate the responses of the puppet they have seen on a brief extract from the *Walt Disney* video, as he realises he is no longer controlled by strings. Whilst their performance is in line with that expected for their age, all pupils, including those with SEN, make good progress as they listen well to their teacher's instructions and approach the lesson with enthusiasm. In the parallel class, pupils were taught their *games* lesson in the hall because of extremely inclement weather. They practise throwing, catching and passing small balls and their skills are also in line with those expected. The teacher was right to amend her plans when she felt the pupils were not ready for the intended *small sided games* and, as the pupils were consolidating their skills, progress was satisfactory for all.
115. In Year 6, in *dance*, pupils are set the task of dancing with a partner, using reflecting images. Some groups work well in teams and perform their exercises to music rhythmically and symmetrically. However, these are the exception. Most pupils' performance is below the standard expected by age 11. This is because, in this lesson, they did not listen sufficiently to their teacher and did not follow instructions and the majority of pupils make unsatisfactory progress. In Year 7, pupils are taught the basic techniques of volley-ball such as *The Dig*, *The Volley*, and *The Smash*. Pupils listen well to their teacher's instructions and their performance is up to the standard expected for their age. All pupils make satisfactory progress.
116. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to good and is satisfactory, overall. In the best lesson, good planning ensures that the lesson moves on at a brisk pace, maintaining pupils' interest throughout the lesson. It is taught enthusiastically and good questioning stimulates their imagination: "*How do you think Pinocchio felt when he found he wasn't controlled by strings?*" Suggestions such as *surprised*, *shocked*, *happy*, *amazed* and *excited* are all forthcoming. Even in this otherwise good lesson, the teacher did not provide a warm-up session. In the unsatisfactory

lesson, poor class management fails to attract the attention of the class for much of the lesson and most pupils make unsatisfactory progress.

117. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of out-of-school activities related to physical education, including cross-country running, athletics, gymnastics, football and tennis.