

INSPECTION REPORT

HERONSGATE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Lichfield Down, Walnut Tree, Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 110389

Headteacher: Mr D J Harper

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Greenfield
7070

Dates of inspection: 27th November – 1st December 2000

Inspection number: 224931

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

© Crown copyright 2001

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed primary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	8 – 12 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Lichfield Down Walnut Tree MILTON KEYNES Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	MK7 7BW
Telephone number:	(01908) 550811
Fax number:	(01908) 605273
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr A Ashmore
Date of previous inspection:	14 th – 18 th October 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Mrs J Greenfield (7070)	Registered inspector	Music Equal opportunities	The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership and management
Mr J Lovell (14756)	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development School's care for its pupils Partnership with parents
Mrs M Wallace (15011)		Science Physical education	Community links Relationships with link schools Staffing
Mrs C Balson (23958)	Team inspector	English Information technology	Learning resources
Mrs L Howard (7336)	Team inspector	Art History Modern languages	Curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils
Mrs B Thakur (5565)	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology English as an additional language	Assessment
Mrs M Sandercock (30669)	Team inspector	Geography Religious education Special educational needs	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

The inspection contractor was:

PPI Group Ltd
7 Hill Street
BRISTOL
BS1 5RW

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 8
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	9 - 11
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?	12 - 13
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?	13 - 16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	16 - 18
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	18 - 19
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	19 - 21
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	22 - 23
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	24 - 27
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28 - 41

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

With 484 pupils on roll, Heronsgate Middle School is a larger than average middle school catering for boys and girls aged 8-12 years. Since the last inspection, the school has changed its character from a combined school to a middle deemed primary school. The school is situated on the outskirts of Milton Keynes. The majority of pupils live in the vicinity of the school and come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, but with a relatively smaller proportion from economically advantaged backgrounds. There is a significant movement of families into and out of the area, which affects the school roll, and the opening of new combined schools in the area is having an impact on the socio-economic background of the intake. About 12 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is broadly average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. Ninety-six pupils, of whom 11 have a statement, have special educational needs, which as a proportion of the pupil population is slightly below average. The school has a designated unit for pupils with specific learning difficulties. These pupils are fully integrated into the work and life of the school. The proportion of pupils speaking English as an additional language at around 7 per cent is higher than in most schools. Seven out of the 35 pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition. The main home languages are Cantonese, Urdu and Gujerati.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Heronsgate Middle School provides a broadly satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. The school has many strengths, but also has several areas of weakness. Standards of pupils' work in English, mathematics and science are broadly average by the age of 11, showing an improvement over the test results in 1999 and since the last inspection. Although there are weaknesses in some of the teaching, more particularly in Year 4, much of it is good, enabling pupils to make satisfactory and often good progress in their learning. Under the positive leadership and direction of the headteacher, who took up post at the beginning of the term, the school is making steady progress in identifying and addressing many of these areas of weakness. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The good provision for information and communications technology, including the involvement of the Open University, enables pupils to make good progress in their learning and achieve above average standards.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs, and the quality of the support given to them, is good.
- The quality and range of the programme of extra-curricular activities, and pupils' involvement in them, enhance and enrich their experiences and learning.
- The provision for pupils' moral development is good.
- Governors play a strong role in supporting the work of the school.

What could be improved

- The quality of some of the teaching, particularly in Year 4, is not good enough.
- Insufficient time is given to the development of pupils' literacy skills, particularly their writing.
- Assessment is not used effectively enough to inform planning and teaching, or to inform pupils of what they need to do to improve their work.
- Standards in design and technology at Key Stage 2 and in music throughout the school are not high enough.
- Monitoring and evaluating arrangements, especially by subject managers in their areas of responsibility, are not systematic or rigorous enough.
- Some pupils do not behave as well as they might, particularly in the playground.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1996. Although satisfactory progress has been made in addressing some of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report, progress has been slower

than might have been expected and overall is unsatisfactory. This situation has been brought about by a period of considerable uncertainty following the departure of the previous headteacher and the appointment of an acting headteacher, a large number of staffing changes, as well as changes to the character of the school and an influx of children waiting to transfer into a new combined school. Satisfactory progress, which is reflected in the test results for 2000, has been made in raising the attainment and rate of progress of the higher attaining pupils through the setting arrangements. Schemes of work have been introduced or in some cases developed, although some of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work have not been fully adapted to meet the needs of the school. There are good schemes of work in geography, information and communications technology (ICT) and art, but no whole-school schemes for English or music. Some weaknesses remain in the rate of progress and the teaching of pupils in Year 4 as teachers' expectations of pupils' response and behaviour are not always high enough and the work is not sufficiently challenging. The roles and tasks of year and subject managers have been clarified but there is some inconsistency in the way they are carried out, especially by subject managers. Satisfactory progress has been made in the school's provision for pupils' spiritual development. The provision for ICT has improved and standards have risen significantly. The quality of teaching has improved and there is a much smaller proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Although further developments are needed, the new headteacher, through providing a clear sense of direction and impetus to improving standards and the quality of education in the school, is well placed to bring about further improvements in the school and in the standards pupils achieve.

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	D	E	C	C
Mathematics	E	D	C	C
Science	E	D	C	C

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

Standards in the school have improved over the past three years and the national test results for 11 year olds in 2000 in English, mathematics and science were average in relation to schools nationally and to similar schools. The school has exceeded its targets in English and mathematics for 2000 and 2001 by a considerable margin, suggesting that these targets were not ambitious enough. The work seen during the inspection indicates that by the age of 11 and in Year 7, standards in these three subjects are in line with the standards expected nationally, reflecting the test results in 2000. However, there are some weaknesses in the quality of pupils' writing in English, especially extended writing. Standards in ICT are above average, having improved considerably since the last inspection, and they are average in art, geography, history, physical education and religious education. In design and technology, although standards are broadly average in Year 7, they are below average by the end of Key Stage 2, with pupils failing to make sufficient progress. In music, standards are below average by the end of Year 6 and in Year 7.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Most pupils are keen to learn, undertaking their work with interest and enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. Most pupils are courteous and polite, behaving well in lessons and around the school.
Personal development and relationships	Satisfactory. Pupils work well together, especially the older pupils. They are confident in talking to teachers and to other adults.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance levels are similar to the national figures and unauthorised absence is lower than average.

Pupils accept responsibility willingly and show initiative when opportunities are provided. The attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils, particularly in Year 4, are not as positive as in other year groups.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 5-7 years	aged 8-11 years	aged 11 years
Lessons seen overall	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory

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.

Overall, the teaching in the school is satisfactory, although variable across the year groups. In 88 per cent of lessons, the teaching is at least satisfactory; in 39 per cent, it is good; and in 11 per cent, it is very good and occasionally excellent. In 12 per cent of lessons, mostly in Year 4, the teaching is unsatisfactory, due in the main to low or inconsistent expectations of how pupils should behave, a lack of challenge in the work that does not always meet the needs of all pupils in the class and a slow pace to lessons. The teaching has improved since the last inspection, with a reduction in the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Insufficient attention is paid to the development and reinforcement of pupils' literacy skills in subjects other than English. The teaching of pupils' numeracy skills is satisfactory. The most effective teachers provide challenging work to stimulate and motivate their pupils and help them learn. Some of the planning takes insufficient account of the range of attainment in the class and consequently some pupils make less progress than expected and is one of the main causes of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Not all teachers give pupils enough feedback on how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The rate and pace of learning are mostly satisfactory and are frequently good when teachers' expectations are high. Most pupils work hard and concentrate well in order to improve their skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and meets statutory requirements, but is insufficiently balanced. The quality and range of the programme of extra-curricular activities, and pupils' involvement in them, enhance and enrich their experiences and learning very well.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Provision throughout the school and the support pupils receive are effective in helping them make satisfactory progress in their learning. These pupils are fully integrated into all aspects of the school's work.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The small amount of additional support that is available is helping pupils to gain access to the curriculum and to develop, in particular, their language and literacy skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. The school makes good provision for pupils' moral development and satisfactory provision for their spiritual, social and cultural development. The school works hard at building good relationships, courtesy and respect.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Procedures for child protection, promoting good behaviour, and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory. The monitoring of attendance is good. Systems for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are developing, but remain unsatisfactory.

The time allocated to the curriculum is below that recommended and in English is less than that given to pupils of the same age in other schools, which affects standards. The provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. The contribution made by the Open University to pupils' learning is excellent. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The newly appointed headteacher provides positive leadership and direction to the work of the school and has successfully improved the morale and commitment of staff. The impact of subject managers in coordinating and influencing the work in their areas of responsibility is more variable, ranging from good to unsatisfactory.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governing body has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and plays a strong role in its strategic management.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of education are insufficiently robust, but are improving. Pupils' performance is analysed, but there are weaknesses in the monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum undertaken by subject managers.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. Financial expenditure is linked to the school's priorities and is carefully monitored. The school takes care to ensure that it obtains best value in its use of resources.

Staffing, accommodation and resources are used appropriately, but there are weaknesses in the provision of resources in some subjects, particularly in English, design and technology, and music, and in the adequacy of accommodation for science and design and technology. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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 are expected to work hard and do their best.• Their children make good progress at school.• Their children like school.• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils' behaviour is not as good as parents would like it to be.• They do not receive enough information on their child's progress.• A closer working relationship established with parents.• The provision of a wider range of activities outside of lessons.

Inspectors' judgements support the positive views expressed by parents, although they believe that some of the average attaining pupils could make faster progress than they currently do. They also agree with parents that the information they receive about their child's progress is not as helpful as it ought to be, but recognise that the school is already taking action to improve matters and to establish closer working relationships with parents. Most pupils behave well in the school, but a small minority do not behave as well as they might, as not all staff have consistent expectations of pupils' behaviour, particularly of the younger pupils. The range of activities organised outside lessons is, in the view of inspectors, very good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Standards in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved since the last inspection, although not consistently from year to year. Between 1996 and 2000, the school's average points score for all core subjects together has increased in line with the national trend. The majority of pupils enter the school with knowledge, skills and understanding that are typical of the standards expected of eight-year olds. They make satisfactory progress in their learning so that they achieve average standards by the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7. In the national tests in 2000, when all pupils are taken into account, the results in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science were broadly in line with the national average for all maintained schools and when compared with similar schools. Pupils' current work indicates that by the age of 11 and in Year 7, standards in the three core subjects are in line with the standard expected nationally, reflecting the picture found in the test results in 2000. This improvement since the last inspection is due, in the main, to better planning by teachers, clearer schemes of work to support the planning, although there are weaknesses in English and music, and in the implementation of the national literacy and numeracy strategies.

2. In English, the results of the national tests for 11 year olds in 2000, when all pupils in the cohort are included, were average when compared with all schools nationally and with similar schools. They were also average for the proportion of pupils reaching the expected Level 4 or above and above average for those reaching Level 5 or above. Pupils' performance on all three measures indicate a considerable improvement over the previous year when the results were well below average at Level 4 or above and for the average points score and were below average for those reaching Level 5 or above. Inspection evidence supports this improved picture and confirms that pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations by the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7. Pupils listen well. They speak clearly and express their ideas confidently. Standards of reading are satisfactory, and pupils use their reading skills effectively across other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils' writing skills are improving as a result of the school's arrangements for grouping pupils of similar levels of attainment, but they are less well developed than other aspects of English and standards of writing are currently below average. There is a lack of consistency in the presentation of work, including handwriting, and insufficient opportunities provided for extended writing. This applies to all year groups.

3. In the national tests for eleven-year olds in mathematics, the results in 2000 were average in relation to all schools nationally and when compared with similar schools and were also average for the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above and Level 5 or above. This is an improvement over the results in 1999 when they were below average. Evidence from the inspection indicates that pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations by the age of eleven, confirming the picture in the tests in 2000, and also in Year 7. Standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 have improved since the last inspection and have remained at the same level in Year 7. The successful implementation of the national numeracy strategy and improvements in teaching and learning approaches are resulting in pupils making better progress in developing and applying their mathematical skills. Pupils' numeracy skills are satisfactory throughout the school and they use them appropriately to support their work in other subjects, for example in science, design and technology and art. Although they use and apply mathematics to real life situations, pupils do not have enough opportunity for problem solving.

4. The test results in science at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2000 were in line with the average for all schools nationally and when compared with similar schools, showing an improvement over 1999 when they were below average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 or above was also average, but a lower proportion than average gained the expected Level 4 or above. This picture is similar to that pertaining in 1999, when the results at Level 4 or above were also below average. From the inspection evidence, pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their scientific knowledge and understanding and in experimental and investigative science so that their attainment by the age of eleven and in Year 7 is in line with the standards expected nationally for pupils of these ages. Their skills of recording their findings are not sufficiently well developed and remain an area of weakness.

5. In the Key Stage 2 tests in 2000, the girls' performance was better than that of the boys but not significantly different from the differences in their performance nationally. When compared with their respective national figures, the girls' performance was close to the average for girls in English, and slightly higher than average in mathematics and science. The boys' performance was close to the average for boys in English and slightly lower than average in mathematics and science. There were no significant differences seen in the performance and work of boys and girls during the inspection.

6. Standards in information and communications technology (ICT) have improved considerably since the last inspection and are now above average by the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7. Pupils make good progress in their learning and are confident users of ICT. In art, geography, history, physical education and religious education, pupils' attainment by the age of eleven and in Year 7 is in line with the standards expected nationally. In design and technology, although standards are in line with expectations in Year 7, they are below the standard expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 2, with pupils failing to make sufficient progress in their learning, particularly in the making of quality products. Standards in the subject are affected by the unsatisfactory condition of tools and equipment. In music, pupils' attainment is below the standard expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7. In this subject, the lack of a scheme of work and the unsatisfactory range of resources have an adverse effect on the systematic development of pupils' musical knowledge, skills and understanding.

7. Most pupils are generally making satisfactory progress in their learning over time, but their progress in some of the lessons seen during the inspection is not good enough. This is particularly so in Year 4 and to some extent in Year 5, although there are a number of examples of pupils in both year groups making good progress. Elsewhere, most pupils are making satisfactory and more often good progress as a result of the greater demands teachers make on them. The higher attaining pupils are making good progress through the grouping arrangements that the school has adopted and the improvements in the schemes of work and teachers' planning, in response to the key issues identified in the last inspection report. This enables them to have work that is appropriately challenging to meet their needs. Overall, pupils are achieving satisfactory standards in relation to their earlier attainment, but there is scope for many of the average attainers to be challenged further. This applies particularly to Year 4 and Year 5. The school is keen to improve standards and analyses the results of national tests and other information from standardised tests. The targets previously set for 2000 and 2001 have already been exceeded by a considerable margin, suggesting that these targets were insufficiently demanding.

8. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory and often good progress. In general, individual education plans are used effectively by support staff, who are well aware of pupils' individual targets and monitor their progress daily. Pupils with special educational needs usually work carefully and present their work neatly and the development of their skills in presenting work, spelling and writing accurate sentences and the mastery of mathematical skills, is steady and satisfactory. In a few lessons in each year group, pupils with special educational needs make unsatisfactory progress as there is insufficient support for their specific needs and lack of adequate intervention by adults. This is particularly apparent in some English lessons where teachers' planning for the use of support staff or classroom assistants is unsatisfactory.

9. Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is satisfactory and the majority attain levels similar to those of other pupils and broadly in line with expectations for their ages. Pupils in the initial stages of English acquisition generally lack confidence in speaking and taking part in group discussions and their achievement does not reach that of their peers because of the limitations of their English language skills. Over a longer period, in relation to their earlier attainment, they make satisfactory progress in most aspects of language and literacy, although the lack of individual targets limits their progress. Their progress is satisfactory in science and is sometimes better than this in mathematics. The school takes good care to ensure that pupils are not allocated to a lower set on account of their language difficulties.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' attitudes to learning and to school are satisfactory. The majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire believe that their children enjoy school and that it is helping them to become mature and responsible. Most pupils sustain their concentration well, undertaking work with interest and enthusiasm. There is also good support and enthusiasm for the range of extra-curricular activities available in the school.

11. Pupils' responses to teaching are usually satisfactory and frequently good or very good. They respond well to challenging work and display initiative when opportunities are provided. Many develop good, independent learning skills, for example in the way that they use the Internet to support research. In the most effective lessons, pupils listen very carefully to teachers and to each other, responding very well to work that motivates and inspires them. This was seen to good effect in a Year 6 English lesson in which pupils began to learn about the works of Shakespeare by preparing a class recording of the opening scene from *Macbeth*. Pupils usually relate well to one another and to adults and display consideration for their feelings, values and beliefs, taking pleasure in sharing in the celebration and recognition of each other's good work. When the management of pupils is unsatisfactory, a significant minority of pupils are not able to work independently for sustained periods and behave in a manner that can affect the learning of other pupils. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in Year 4 are not as positive as in the other year groups. Most pupils work effectively on their own and with others, sharing resources and co-operating well. As they move through the school, pupils become increasingly able to collaborate; for example, a group of Year 6 pupils, investigating solubility in a science lesson, collaborated very well in discussing how to re-invent instant coffee using coffee beans and hot water. Similarly, Year 5 pupils, creating a multi-media presentation, worked well together in pairs, organising themselves and effectively sharing and delegating tasks, recognising each other's strengths. Bilingual pupils are well integrated into the school community. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds mix well during their lunch and break times, and appreciate the diversity of cultures and value systems within the school. They take a keen interest in their learning and listen attentively to their teachers.

12. The behaviour of the majority of pupils is mostly satisfactory and more often good in classrooms, in the hall during assemblies and at lunchtime. However, a minority of pupils behave in an inappropriate manner, which also has an adverse impact on learning. For example, a group of pupils in a Year 5 design and technology lesson failed to share resources and equipment appropriately. Most pupils are orderly in their movement around the school and are courteous and polite, holding doors open for visitors. They are trustworthy and usually treat equipment and resources with care. There is no evidence of graffiti or litter around the school. Pupils know that bullying and oppressive behaviour are wrong and recognise that they can turn to staff for support. However, in discussion with inspectors, pupils made reference to name calling of a racist nature and to some aggressive behaviour. There was no evidence of any racist name calling within the school during the week of the inspection and some pupils suggested that it only occurs outside the school. There have been one permanent and eight fixed period exclusions in the current year. Pupils understand the school's seven simple 'Golden Rules' relating to the standards of behaviour expected and the sanctions that will be applied.

13. Throughout the school, pupils usually respond well to opportunities to assume responsibility and display initiative. Often these involve class responsibilities such as taking the register to the office or tidying up after practical activities. As pupils move through the school, they undertake wider responsibilities such as acting as a 'buddy' for younger pupils, helping in the library or volunteering to do jobs such as packing and labelling soft toy fish sold in aid of a national charity. Some pupils in Year 7 become monitors with whole-school duties. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously and seek the views of their class on issues affecting the life of the school, such as its environment and plans to develop a science laboratory. In Year 7, pupils respond very well to the opportunity to look after an electronic 'baby', called Juanita, that cries and needs care and attention. They spend lunchtimes cradling the 'baby' and take it home in a pram or baby carrier as part of their personal and social education programme. Throughout the school, pupils welcome visitors and are usually keen to show and discuss their work and share ideas. They respond well to visiting speakers and to a range of visits, identifying and supporting a range of charities such as the Willen Hospice and the Fishermen's Mission.

14. Overall attendance is satisfactory and in the last reporting year was in line with the national average. The level of unauthorised absence at 0.1 per cent is broadly average. The overall rates of

attendance are similar to those recorded in previous years. Staff and pupils arrive in classrooms punctually and, throughout the day, lessons begin on time. The good levels of attendance of the majority of pupils have a positive effect on their progress and attainment.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching in the school is variable across the year groups, with many examples of good and very good teaching but also examples of unsatisfactory teaching that fails to challenge pupils sufficiently to ensure that they make adequate progress in their learning. Across the school as a whole, the teaching is at least satisfactory in 88 per cent of lessons: good in 39 per cent; and very good and occasionally excellent in 11 per cent. In 12 per cent of lessons, mainly but not exclusively in Year 4, the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Because of this, the overall quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 is unsatisfactory, although the teaching in nearly half of the lessons is of good or better quality. In Year 7, the teaching is satisfactory. In the majority of lessons, pupils learn effectively, acquiring new skills and consolidating previous learning.

16. The school has improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection, reducing the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching from 24 per cent to 12 per cent and increasing the proportion of good teaching from 25 per cent to 39 per cent. The most successful teaching occurs in Year 6, with good or better teaching occurring in seven out of ten lessons and very good and occasionally excellent teaching in about a fifth of lessons. Nearly all the teaching in Year 5 is satisfactory and over a half of it is good. In Year 7, around half of the teaching is good or better and in a fifth of lessons it is very good, but there are occasional weaknesses, mainly because of a lack of challenge in the work. There has been some improvement in the proportion of satisfactory or better teaching in Year 4 since the last inspection, when some weaknesses were identified, but it remains insufficient to ensure that pupils make consistent progress and achieve the standards that they are capable of reaching.

17. Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding of the subjects they are required to teach are generally secure. In some subject teaching, for example in ICT, religious education and geography and also in physical education in Year 7, their subject knowledge is good and, in the case of modern languages, is very good. In the most successful lessons, teachers use this knowledge well to provide challenging work to stimulate and motivate their pupils and help them learn. The school is extending the use of specialist teaching to ensure that pupils have access to specialist subject knowledge and can be challenged further.

18. Lesson planning has improved since the last inspection, but weaknesses remain, particularly in Key Stage 2. However, there is some good planning in geography, ICT and in religious education. A lack of clarity in some of the planning results in some pupils making less progress than expected and is one of the main causes of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Planning generally takes insufficient account of the range of attainment in the class, even in setted groups, or of pupils' individual needs and, in too many instances, identifies activities to be undertaken by the pupils rather than the specific learning intentions of the lesson. The introduction of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work, together with the joint planning undertaken by teachers, ensures some consistency in the work across individual year groups, but does not ensure sufficient progression in the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding from year to year.

19. The teaching of English is broadly satisfactory across the school, with many examples of good teaching at Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 6, and a few examples of very good and even excellent teaching. Teachers' understanding of the requirements of the national literacy strategy is mostly satisfactory, but they are not consistently applied in lessons. Weekly planning is generally adequate. There are weaknesses in the teaching of literacy skills, both in English and across other subjects of the curriculum, particularly in Key Stage 2. There is not enough teaching of phonics, other than to pupils with special educational needs and guided reading and guided writing are neither planned for nor taught in the majority of lessons. Insufficient attention is paid in the teaching of subjects other than English to the development and reinforcement of pupils' literacy skills or to the presentation of work and to the development of their handwriting.

20. The teaching of mathematics is satisfactory throughout the school, reflecting some improvement since the last inspection. Teachers' explanations and demonstrations are mostly clear and they make good use of mathematical vocabulary. They have a satisfactory understanding of the requirements of the national numeracy strategy and the grouping arrangements for mathematics helps to ensure that the needs of the majority of pupils are adequately met. The teaching of pupils' numeracy skills is satisfactory and the quality of mental and oral work is generally good. The plenary sessions in individual lessons are not used sufficiently to assess what pupils have learned during the lesson.

21. The teaching in the majority of subjects is satisfactory. The teaching is generally good throughout in art and ICT, and it is also good in Year 7 in geography, physical education and religious education where there is some specialist teaching. The teaching of French in Year 7 is very good. The most effective teaching has some or all these features: good planning; lesson intentions that are clear and shared with pupils at the outset of the lesson; and high expectations of the quality and quantity of work that pupils are expected to produce and of their behaviour. In such lessons, pupils work hard and maintain their concentration throughout. The rate and pace of learning in these lessons are good as pupils are motivated by the challenge and quality of the teaching. The unsatisfactory teaching stems mainly from low or inconsistent expectations of how pupils should behave, work that is insufficiently matched to meet the full range of needs of pupils in the class, the lack of adequate challenge in some of the activities that they are given and the slow pace of the lesson. In these lessons, pupils fail to make adequate progress. The teaching was unsatisfactory in some lessons in English, mathematics, geography, ICT, music and personal and social education in Year 4; in mathematics in Year 5; in English in Year 6; and in English and music in Year 7.

22. In most lessons, the teachers' clear expectations of pupils' behaviour contribute to purposeful learning and the satisfactory and often good progress that they make in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding. Lessons, in the main, are calm and pupils quickly settle down to work. Pupils are motivated by the demands the majority of teachers make on them and concentrate well. In the most effective lessons, teachers give good oral feedback to pupils on how they are doing and what they need to do to improve and use this information to inform the planning of subsequent lessons. However, this practice is inconsistent and insufficient use is made of assessment to identify weaknesses in learning or to share them with the pupils so that they know what they have to do to improve. The marking of pupils' work is undertaken regularly, is positive and encouraging, but it is insufficiently diagnostic and gives insufficient guidance to pupils and to their parents on what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Teachers are not sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that pupils complete unfinished work and undertake corrections. Homework is used effectively to support and extend pupils' learning, but the setting of homework is not always noted clearly enough in pupils' homework diaries.

23. The teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, with some examples of good and very good learning. Individual education plans have clear targets, which are shared with pupils and reviewed regularly. When the teaching is good, teachers use these well. Good relationships usually exist between teachers, support staff and pupils and, when learning is effective, pupils are well supported in tackling the tasks set by teachers and are involved in high quality discussion with support staff. This is usually so in Year 6 and was particularly evident in Year 7 when a pupil was discussing the role of the priest in mediaeval times. Very careful attention to using appropriate vocabulary, together with a very positive relationship and clear explanations ensured that the pupil made very good progress. Although initially the pupil was unaware of the meaning of the word 'service', with patient, focused help, he eventually learned that the mediaeval priest had to pray for the soul 'to go to God'. He linked the work to a visit he had made to an old church where he had seen the tomb of a rich person, 'like a bed' and the session was very beneficial. Sometimes, however, precise attention to the requirements of individual education plans is not evident in teachers' planning and support is occasionally inappropriate, unfocused or lacking, with the result that pupils' learning is hampered.

24. The specialist teaching is effective in meeting the day-to-day needs of pupils in the early stages of learning English and in helping them to gain access to the curriculum at their level of need. Staff provide effective models of spoken and written language. There is a good level of collaborative teaching during the literacy hour. Class teachers meet informally with the language support teacher to review progress and are generally aware of the extent of the pupils' linguistic needs. Procedures for

assessment and for tracking pupils' progress on a regular basis are not effective, although new systems are being introduced. At times, this results in low expectations and in teachers setting work that is not sufficiently challenging.

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

25. The curriculum is broad, relevant and meets statutory requirements. In science, history, art and design and technology, teachers use the QCA schemes of work and, although they have not adapted them to meet the specific needs of the school, there is balance in the elements across the subjects. There are very good schemes of work in geography and ICT where the subject manager has adapted the published scheme. There is comprehensive coverage of the requirements of the programme of study in French and personal, social and health education and citizenship through schemes written by the subject managers. The school follows the local education authority's Agreed Syllabus for religious education. There is no whole-school scheme of work for English, which inhibits the systematic development of pupils' skills, particularly in writing. In music, the lack of a scheme of work means that there is no consistent approach to covering all the elements within the subject.

26. The school fully implements the national numeracy strategy. The subject manager has adapted the framework to the needs of the school. All elements of the subject are covered, although the use and application of mathematical knowledge is insufficiently integrated within the other elements. The school does not fully implement the framework for the national literacy strategy. There is little evidence of guided reading and writing or of the teaching of phonic skills and higher level reading skills. Literacy skills, especially extended writing, are not being developed sufficiently across other subjects of the curriculum.

27. The curriculum is insufficiently balanced. The total time allocated to the curriculum is below the recommended time for pupils at Key Stage 2 and is well below the recommended time for pupils in Year 7. At present, the headteacher ensures coverage of all subjects through the structured timetable. All lessons are planned to last between 50 and 60 minutes. Whilst this approach ensures that pupils have a broad curriculum, it nevertheless affects curricular balance and restricts the flexibility to adapt the time spent on specific curricular areas to meet the needs of pupils of different age groups, in particular the younger pupils in the school. The time allocated for English is less than that given to pupils of the same age in other schools, and less time is given to French than is usual for pupils in Year 7. A large amount of time is allocated to ICT. Twelve per cent of curriculum time is given altogether to personal, social and health education, circle time and golden time. The time is well spent on the comprehensive personal, social and health education and citizenship curriculum, but the time spent in circle time and 'golden time', used as part of the school's reward system, is not always used effectively. The values and morals covered in some circle time sessions do not always influence the behaviour of the pupils at other times and in other situations. In the golden time sessions seen, pupils worked on the computer, played hand held computer games, drew pictures, made Christmas decorations or drifted about. From the evidence of the inspection, golden time sessions are not a good use of time, although pupils say that they enjoy them, as they 'are a rest from the other subjects'.

28. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in all aspects of the work of the school and provision throughout the school is mostly good. A strong feature of the provision for pupils with special educational needs is the teaching of appropriate social skills and behaviours. Pupils who attend the school's designated special educational needs department are fully integrated into all aspects of the life of the school and curriculum arrangements also promote full inclusion of all other pupils with special educational needs. These pupils enjoy being at the school and appreciate the high level of inclusion. They are confident that 'being different and not the same is OK in this school'. They recognise and appreciate the high level of support in supervised groups, but sometimes report problems in the playground at lunchtimes, which they do not feel are always appropriately resolved. Appropriate individual education plans with clear learning targets are in place for pupils in Years 5 to 7, although plans for some Year 4 pupils, who have not yet had their first term's review, set targets that are somewhat broad for these younger pupils. Recommended levels of support as identified in statements are invariably given and in many cases are double the suggested allocation. Pupils are usually well

supported in class and sometimes they work with learning support assistants individually or in small groups in class or in work bays. This support is usually effective, enabling pupils to have specific help in particular areas of need such as spelling or mathematics, although on occasions classroom assistants are insufficiently focused on pupils' needs, leaving them too much to their own devices.

29. There is equal access to the curriculum for all bilingual learners. The small amount of additional support that is available is helping pupils gain access to day-to-day work and the curriculum, although the support is more focused in language and literacy. The language support teacher also makes a valuable and valued contribution in raising multicultural awareness within the school.

30. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. A wide range of 20 after-school and lunchtime clubs is open to most of the pupils. The majority of clubs are sport or music based but there is also provision for pupils interested in drama, computer, newspaper report writing, sailing, craft and learning German. Teachers and learning support assistants supervise pupils who go to the homework club held each lunchtime. Classes visit local places as well as further afield. Pupils in Years 4 and 6 undertake residential visits for outdoor activities and environmental studies. Actors, artists, local community workers and religious leaders, who support pupils' creative and social development further, enhance the curriculum through visits to the school.

31. The school is part of a mobile and changing community, with many families who are only part of the community for a short time. This means that there is not a real community for the school to serve. The contribution of the Open University to pupils' learning is excellent. The very good links with the local university contribute to the quality of computers and systems in place for ICT and have led to a considerable improvement in standards. Higher education institutions make a significant contribution to the computer programmes for pupils with special educational needs. The school works closely with the charitable trust based close to the school that offers after school and holiday care to local children. The club meets once a week at the school and at the community centre opposite the school on other days.

32. Links with contributory first schools are satisfactory. There are several new schools being built in the area. The school maintains good links with the local secondary school and there are plans to develop a resource bank for sharing resources for subjects such as dance. There are regular liaison meetings with the local secondary school, and Year 7 visit the local school for a familiarisation visit. The school shares training sessions with other local schools.

33. The last inspection report identified as a key issue the need to improve the provision for pupils' spiritual development and noted some weaknesses in the provision for their cultural development. These issues have been addressed appropriately so that provision for both spiritual and cultural development is now satisfactory. The detailed work that has been undertaken in the last year by the manager for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development puts the school in a good position to improve further.

34. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, with good opportunities provided in religious education. Pupils explore the values and beliefs of people of other faiths and gain considerable insight into the importance of festivals and the influence of traditional rites on their lives. In some subjects, such as English and geography, appropriate opportunities are sometimes provided for pupils to reflect thoughtfully on the beauty of poetry, literature and the environment. However, in spite of good guidance from the aspect manager, opportunities for spiritual development are seldom identified in teachers' planning, nor are they always recognised during all lessons. Acts of collective worship make an appropriate and at times a good contribution to pupil's spiritual development. The theme of *Strength*, taken throughout the inspection week, provides many different opportunities to reflect upon definitions of strength, in particular identifying inner strength. For example, the strength needed to tell the truth, the courage of David when opposing Goliath, or the strength to survive under adverse conditions, as Terry Waite did, were discussed and linked appropriately to the strength some find in their faith. An assembly on Ramadan encouraged pupils to consider the practice of fasting and the inner strength needed by Muslims to persevere. Pupils usually share a moment of quiet reflection during assemblies and a reverent atmosphere is created, allowing them to join in a prayer or reflect calmly for a short time during their busy day. However, in a few class assemblies, this opportunity is ignored. Teachers move on to the next task of the day too quickly and pupils complain that there are insufficient opportunities to think about the stories they hear and to share their ideas.

35. Provision for pupils' moral development is good and adults in the school make a positive and supportive contribution. Pupils clearly know what is right and what is wrong and the school's Golden Rules for acceptable behaviour are clearly displayed. Circle time is viewed by Year 6 pupils as 'a time to unwind and share feelings' and they recognise it as 'a good time.' The support given for the moral development of pupils with special educational needs with regard to behaviour is very good. Guidance for these pupils is a high priority within the school and many behave very well, particularly when supervised. They are involved in discussions about the impact of their behaviour on others, and work together in small groups at the lunchtime club under the accomplished supervision of learning support assistants. Adults rightly use time to explain the rules of the school as a caring society and to clarify pupils' responsibilities for others when making decisions. A game devised to give opportunities to speak about feelings and learn about right and wrong, also encourages pupils to think about making each other smile and feel good. In discussion, pupils are very clear about the school's Golden Rules. They know that adults should be approached to sort out problems when rules are broken and that a series of increasingly severe sanctions will be imposed for inappropriate behaviour. They also recognise that a few pupils do not do conform to the rules and feel that the Golden Rules should be reinforced more regularly to remind everyone about appropriate behaviour, particularly before lunchtimes. Pupils recognise that 'golden time' is a fair reward for sticking to the Golden Rules and accept that it is just and right that those who do not comply lose this privilege. However, pupils are happy for 'golden time' to be reinstated if pupils earn it by behaving well.

36. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' social development and some areas of provision are good. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility, and pupils with special educational needs are included, accepting jobs such as being monitors and 'Buddies'. In lessons such as geography and religious education and sometimes in English, particularly in Year 7, pupils are positively encouraged to take responsibility for the smooth running of lessons, by helping to give out books or equipment. Many pupils display considerable respect and consideration in their dealings with others, particularly in group discussions during lessons and, although some have not yet learned these skills, teachers intervene well to promote them. Appropriate role models and good relationships amongst teachers and support staff usually promote good relationships between adults and pupils, which are often confident and friendly. The lunchtime club provides good opportunities for pupils, including those with special educational needs, to develop their social skills. Four pupils with special needs, playing the *Wellington Square* game with their friends, were very well supported and patiently encouraged to take turns, to share and to play fairly. The relationship between the supporting adult and pupils was of a particularly high quality. The school makes appropriate provision to ensure that pupils understand the responsibilities of living in a community. Teambuilding visits to the Caldecotte Activity Centre and Hazard Alley, and the school council give appropriate opportunities to discuss the impact pupils can have on improving relationships, particularly within the school community. Opportunities to support local, national and international charities like Willen Hospice, Children in Need, or Plan International, through sponsoring an Indian child, are provided and serve to remind pupils of their responsibilities in the wider community.

37. Provision for pupils' cultural development is generally satisfactory, with religious education, assemblies and geography making a good contribution. Study of the Hajj and an assembly on Ramadan give opportunities to study the rules by which other societies live and the study of St Lucia and Chembokoli, together with the school's sponsorship of an Indian boy, enhance pupils' cultural development well. Satisfactory opportunities for pupils' cultural development are evident in art and English, with examples of Islamic art and the work of European artists on display, and when Year 6 pupils study the work of Shakespeare, but in some subjects it is insufficiently promoted. Theatre visits, library visits, visits to the local church, a pilgrimage to St Albans Abbey and a visit to the Stables art centre at Wavendon to enable Year 5 pupils to study the music of Japan and Africa, are all used appropriately to enhance their cultural development. Pupils in Year 6 have good knowledge of the religious celebrations, rites and traditions of Christianity and other major world faiths.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school's care and support of its pupils are satisfactory. At the time of the previous inspection it was good. The school is effective in monitoring pupils' personal development and support and guidance assist in raising their levels of achievement.

39. Child protection arrangements are satisfactory and the procedures comply with requirements. The headteacher has recently reviewed arrangements, introducing more effective record keeping and a robust structure in which the acting deputy has responsibility for child protection. He also monitors the implementation of the procedures. The headteacher has made arrangements to update his own training and for his acting deputy to attend training. Child protection procedures are included in the staff handbook and are reinforced as part of induction arrangements and within the guidance provided to supply teachers. Staff are familiar with the procedures to be followed in the case of any concerns. There are sound liaison arrangements with outside agencies and the school exercises its responsibilities with care and sensitivity.

40. Arrangements for health and safety are satisfactory overall, although there are some weaknesses that are recognised by the headteacher. For example, formal risk assessments are not completed and further training is necessary to enable staff to implement the plans to develop a structured portfolio of risk assessments over a period of time. Regular safety audits are completed and the headteacher is closely monitoring the completion of work orders that are raised. Evacuation procedures are tested regularly and equipment, including electrical appliances, is regularly tested. Equipment is checked visually and any defective equipment is taken out of use immediately.

41. There are sufficient staff trained as first aiders with current qualifications, ensuring that support is available throughout the school day. Satisfactory care and support are provided to those pupils in need of attention. Accident records are satisfactory but there is insufficient formal monitoring of the records to ensure that potential risks are identified. Parents are appropriately advised of accidents and contacted in the event of any concerns about a pupil's health.

42. Procedures to monitor and promote attendance are good. Registers are marked efficiently and accurately at the start of each session. Attendance details are regularly analysed and parents are contacted on the first day of absence if the school has not received an explanation. When the school has concerns about the attendance or punctuality of a pupil, it involves the education welfare officer and external agencies in appropriate cases. Good attendance is recognised through the award of certificates and, in cases of concern, parents are encouraged to ensure regular attendance of pupils through a series of colour coded letters and direct contact.

43. The school has a satisfactory behaviour policy, which is currently under review. The policy is based on the 'Golden Rules' that have been negotiated and agreed with pupils, staff and governors and form part of the home-school agreement. Teachers apply strategies to promote and monitor good behaviour consistently. They are successful in encouraging a significant majority of pupils to be self-disciplined and to attain satisfactory or good standards of behaviour in and around the school and during lessons. At midday, pupils are often very boisterous and their behaviour is less well managed. The school has difficulty in recruiting midday assistants and has redeployed learning support assistants to provide the necessary supervision. The behaviour policy is well understood by pupils and is supported by the programme of personal and social education, which helps pupils to understand the impact of their actions on others. Pupils respond positively to the praise of others and to rewards, such as stickers and 'super student' awards which are presented in assemblies. They recognise that the sanctions, such as loss of 'golden time', are applied fairly. The effectiveness of the strategies employed and the monitoring by teaching and support staff, contribute to the satisfactory standards of behaviour and personal relationships that, together, have a positive effect on the progress and attainment of the majority of pupils.

44. Pupils and parents express concerns about bullying. However, the school has strategies to address any concerns and mediate in the case of difficulties that arise in relationships. These are not always successful. The draft behaviour policy includes a section on anti-bullying. Staff endeavour to involve parents when incidents involving bullying or oppressive behaviour are identified.

45. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic performance and for tracking pupils' progress over time are unsatisfactory at present. The use of assessment to inform curricular planning in different areas of the curriculum is also unsatisfactory. Pupils are assessed and tested, but the resulting information is not consistently used to adapt plans of work for different groups of pupils. As a result, the work does not always match the individual needs of pupils or the range of attainment within the class. The results of National Curriculum tests are reported to parents, but progress reports do not indicate the precise standards that are achieved in different aspects within subjects. All this shows a different picture from the previous inspection, when the procedures for assessment, recording and reporting pupils' progress were said to be good and serving useful purposes. Assessment has been identified as an area for development in the school's plans. In order to raise achievement over the longer term, the school is taking part in the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS) Project as a means of monitoring and tracking pupils' progress,

46. There is a clearly written policy on assessment, recording and reporting, offering a sound basis for practice, but it is out of date and needs revising in line with more recent national developments. The policy on marking provides useful guidance on marking work and providing feedback to pupils. As a result of its use, there has been some improvement in marking, but practice across the school is inconsistent, particularly in relation to guiding pupils as to how they might improve. The school has recently piloted a system of setting personal targets for improvement, which is presently on hold because the targets set are too general and the system is proving too time consuming. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory, as they are inconsistently applied across the school and are insufficiently robust. The school is aware of the weaknesses and is in the process of reviewing its systems.

47. Arrangements for the assessment and monitoring of progress of pupils with special educational needs are good. Individual education plans are clear and identify targets that are appropriate to pupils' needs. The nature of the provision within the school, particularly the high proportion of pupils at Stages 3 and 5 of the Code of Practice Register who have specific learning difficulties, requires targets which are often related to improving behaviour or to the development of literacy skills. Learning support assistants are fully conversant with each pupil's needs and make detailed and daily assessments of progress, although these are not always shared with pupils and occasionally lack fine detail relating to skills that have been learned and what pupils can do. Regular termly reviews are undertaken with teachers utilising the high level of expertise of the special needs manager and learning support assistants, so that targets can be appropriately revised. The school uses the services of support agencies well in determining what further help is needed and available for pupils with special educational needs. The special needs manager is effective in ensuring that pupils' needs are met.

48. Procedures for assessing and monitoring the progress of pupils with English as an additional language, and who are at the earlier stages of English acquisition, are mostly satisfactory. Pupils' results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 1, as well as results in the standardised tests taken at the end of Year 3 in the previous school, are analysed in order to assess the level of need for additional language support. Often, additional support is targeted at pupils who have arrived recently from another country and there is some tracking of progress at the early stage of joining the school. This policy is helping pupils to make rapid progress in English at a basic level and proving useful in gaining access to the curriculum as a whole. However, there is some scope for improving achievement through individual target setting and through tracking progress on a more regular basis.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. The school's mission statement is 'raising achievement through partnership and commitment' and, since his appointment at the beginning of the term, the headteacher has sought to improve the effectiveness of the school's links with parents through good newsletters, clear information about the curriculum, the development of a web site and e-mail address and the involvement of parents in the life and work of the school. He has reviewed other information for parents and has already planned in-service training for staff to improve the quality of pupils' annual progress reports provided for parents.

50. Parents generally express satisfactory views of the school, although there are some significant areas of concern. Over one-fifth of those parents who responded to the questionnaire, sent out prior to

the inspection, stated that they do not believe that behaviour is good and a similar number expressed concerns about the information which they receive about their child's progress and the partnership which exists between school and parents. Inspectors recognise that the behaviour of a minority of pupils is unsatisfactory and that, currently, progress reports are inconsistent in quality and often contain inadequate information regarding progress and standards and frequently fail to include any specific targets.

51. Overall, parents play a satisfactory role in the life and work of the school. Since the previous inspection, the Friends of Heronsgate has been disbanded, but a small and hardworking group formed Parents of the School (POSCH) in 1998 and has successfully organised activities to raise funds to support the work of the school. Through these fundraising activities, equipment has been bought to help in many areas, such as scales to support work in mathematics, musical instruments and a tape recorder to be used in the teaching of French. In addition, subsidies have been provided for the Year 5 visit to the multi-cultural music workshops at 'The Stables' and for the Year 7 'leavers' day. Currently, POSCH are raising money to provide equipment for the science laboratory which will be developed next year. A small number of parents help in classrooms, under the supervision of teachers, by hearing pupils read, supporting pupils in changing their library books and assisting with practical activities such as baking pizzas in food technology. Parents also assist with the supervision of pupils on educational visits. Staff and pupils value the support of these parents, which benefits pupils' learning.

52. Many parents provide good support for the work that pupils are expected to do at home, encourage their children in their homework and hear them read on a regular basis, contributing to the homework diary. This support is inconsistent. Year 5 teachers are piloting personalised homework sheets, which explain what homework has been set and how parents can assist in their child's learning, to try and encourage all parents to become involved in their children's learning at home, particularly when pupils fail to record homework in their 'diary'

53. The overall quality of information provided for parents, particularly about progress, is satisfactory. Parents are involved at an early stage if the school has any concerns and most parents respond very well to requests to meet staff to discuss issues concerning their child. Each term, parents receive good information about the curriculum that is being covered within each year group, together with an outline of topic work, homework arrangements, setting and staffing. This helps parents to support learning at home or when making family visits. The school has already planned to review the style and format of annual reports to parents. Currently, the annual reports provide information about the work which pupils have undertaken, but frequently contain inadequate information regarding progress and standards and often fail to include any specific targets. These reports are supplemented by parents' evenings each term, the first of which provides parents with the opportunity to meet their child's class teacher and find out how they are settling in. Parents evenings are supported by about 80 per cent of parents and a greater number have signed and returned the home/school agreement which has been developed to reinforce a partnership to benefit pupils' learning. The language support teacher provides useful information to class teachers about the kind of additional support she is providing for pupils at the initial stages of English acquisition and the level of progress pupils' have made, before progress is formally reported to parents at the parents' evening. She has no direct links with parents; parents, however, find different ways of communicating to teachers about difficulties their children might be having with their homework.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

54. Since his appointment at the beginning of the Autumn Term 2000, the headteacher has brought positive direction and leadership to the work of the school and has raised the morale of staff from quite a low base. The school has been through a period of considerable uncertainty, with the result that improvements that were introduced in response to the last inspection report have not been sustained. In addition, there has been a high turnover of staff over the past two years, mainly as a result of promotion to other schools, which has affected continuity of progress. Therefore, some areas of weakness have not been addressed or improved as effectively as might have been expected. With the support of the governing body, the headteacher is providing a clear course of direction to the school's work and addressing the key areas of weakness in a systematic and planned way. As yet, not all of these developments have had sufficient time to lead to consistent improvement and practice across the

school, but the evidence from the inspection strongly suggests that the progress achieved so far will be sustained and lead to further improvements. The newly appointed acting deputy headteacher, who is also the special needs manager, provides good support to the headteacher and undertakes her role in a calm and methodical way. Most of the efforts of the senior management have been devoted to improving consistency in the work of the school in order to raise standards, establishing appropriate systems and structures to bring about improvement. They have clarified the roles and responsibilities of year managers and the senior management team, issues that were identified in the last inspection report, and attempted to build their capacity to improve the quality of the planning and the curriculum provided for pupils across classes in the year group. This is having a good impact on the consistency of what is being taught and on the quality of the curriculum that is being offered.

55. Most subject managers are providing appropriate and, in some subjects, good leadership in their areas of responsibility. For example, subject leadership is good in mathematics, geography, ICT, French and religious education. Other than in English and in music, where the subject managers do not provide enough leadership to ensure consistency of approach in their subject, the quality of leadership is satisfactory in the remaining subjects. Staff have a commitment towards providing the best possible opportunities for pupils to learn and develop, and team work is improving through the year group meetings that have been established. This approach has a number of benefits in that it brings a range of expertise to the discussions. The role of the subject managers in coordinating the work in their subject throughout the school and their responsibilities in relation to the year managers are not yet clear enough. This results in some lack of continuity in the work from year to year and in the focus of work within the year in relation to the subject scheme of work. Schemes of work, based on the QCA proposals, in some subjects have not been adapted sufficiently to meet the needs of pupils in the schools and in music, for example, the scheme of work is inadequate to ensure the consistent development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding from year to year.

56. The governing body undertakes its role in the governance of the school effectively and plays an influential role in its strategic management. It fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and, through their working practices, are effective in holding the school to account for the quality of education it provides. The governing body is currently revising its committee structure to make its work more effective. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher, with whom they have established good relationships. Many of the governors are actively involved with the school and undertake planned visits to monitor aspects of the school's work according to an agreed agenda. This gives them a good insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governor responsible for special educational needs monitors provision and performance closely. Pupils' needs identified in their statements and the provision are checked termly and pupils' attainment is discussed to ensure that the pace of learning is good. The designated governor is fully aware of the targets for attainment in the national tests and monitors results closely, with the result that the performance of pupils with special needs has improved over time.

57. The school's procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of its work are insufficiently robust and, although improving, are unsatisfactory. In the short time since his appointment, the headteacher has analysed the test results for this year, reviewed teachers' planning, undertaken some lesson observation and a scrutiny of pupils' work and also introduced a standardised testing system to provide a baseline on pupils' attainment and to enable the school to track the performance of individual pupils in a more systematic way. Year managers have been allocated some release time, which is beginning to be used for formal monitoring. The roles and responsibilities of subject managers in monitoring the work in their subject areas are insufficiently developed. Because of financial limitations subject managers do not currently have any planned release time to monitor the work in their subject areas, although this has happened in the past, for example in mathematics. Although subject managers are encouraged to look at pupils' work, this has not happened.

58. There are no formal methods of monitoring the provision for pupils with English as an additional language. The monitoring of work in school is mainly through informal meetings with the acting deputy headteacher, in her capacity as the special needs manager. Communication is good between the class teachers and the language support staff, in relation to the planning of work and collaborative teaching within the classroom. The language support teacher is well aware of the language and learning needs of the pupils who speak English as an additional language and remains focused in meeting their needs.

The school makes good use of her knowledge of the pupils' earlier attainment and the extent of their needs in grouping pupils in Year 4. This is useful in matching pupils to the appropriate group for both English and mathematics. However, there is insufficient documentary evidence of assessment and of tracking pupils' progress over time. This affects the pace of progress in different areas, particularly in English, where progress is slow in developing pupils' speaking skills.

59. The school is clear about its priorities and the school development plan, to which governors and staff have contributed, sets out how the school intends to address its priorities. The plan, which the headteacher inherited, is a helpful management tool and, with the exception of a clear indication of the costs associated with the activities, includes most of the features normally found in effective plans.

60. The school has an adequate number of suitably qualified teachers to deliver the National Curriculum and religious education. There is a good balance of age, gender, experience and expertise. There has been a major turnover of staff in the last year with many staff moving to posts of further responsibility. The school has been subject to many changes since the last inspection. Many of the teachers are in newly defined roles and the headteacher has ensured that specialist knowledge is appropriately deployed. Specialist teachers have been appointed for physical education, music, science and French. The school makes appropriate use of expertise that exists among the staff to support colleagues with planning and in the classroom. A good example is the support the science co-ordinator has given to colleagues in Year 7. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

61. There is good provision of support for pupils with special educational needs and for whom English is an additional language. Support staff are well qualified, experienced and make an effective contribution to the quality of learning. The number of learning support assistants, many of whom have increased their knowledge and qualifications by attending major in-service training courses such as the Specialist Teacher Assistant course, is high, but their skills are not always used adequately especially during the literacy hour. All learning support assistants have received training for behaviour management and literacy and numeracy. Some make a significant contribution to the school, for example taking a lunch time club for line dancing and undertaking projects such as organising pupils to plan and plant the hanging baskets and decorating the quadrangles. The school administration staff and bursar are effective in supporting the day-to-day routines of the school.

62. The school is committed to the professional development of all staff. There are good opportunities for professional development and the school is proud of its ability to promote teachers' career aspirations. The school has gained the *Investor in People* award. There is a detailed policy for performance management and areas of responsibility are clearly identified. New teachers, including those newly qualified, have satisfactory support structures and comprehensive documentation. Newly qualified teachers do not always receive sufficient guidance on the teaching of some subjects, including English, art and history.

63. The overall accommodation for teaching the curriculum is broadly satisfactory, although there are weaknesses in the provision for science and design and technology in Year 7. Work is planned to provide these facilities in spring 2001. There are no toilets or water available to pupils within the four temporary classrooms, restricting practical activities as well as creating security issues, which the school manages very well. The library is located within the centre of the building and provides a good focus for independent learning and research, together with the multi-media library. Since the previous inspection, shelving for the limited book stock has increased. The hall provides good accommodation for physical education and other activities such as drama. A music room and a small teaching room support class work and individual music tuition well. The external play areas and field, together with the environmental area, offer good facilities for pupils' physical development and provide a resource to support areas of learning such as science.

64. Learning resources are satisfactory overall and are adequate for the school's curriculum and range of pupils, although there are weaknesses in some areas, particularly in English, design and technology and music. In English, there are not enough books for guided reading, Big Books for shared text work, or collections of authors, genre and poetry. The range and quality of tools and equipment in design and technology are unsatisfactory. Resources for music, other than musical instruments, are also unsatisfactory. The range and quality of resources for ICT are a particular strength. Resources in

school are adequate to meet the needs of bilingual learners and shared with the language support staff within the classroom. Access to additional multi-cultural resources from the Multicultural Centre is available when necessary.

65. The management of the school's finances is good. The governing body, through the finance committee, monitors expenditure carefully, particularly in the light of changing numbers of pupils, which have been considerable until recently. Financial controls and procedures are well established. The recent audit report identified that, in the majority of cases, key controls were operating effectively, but made some recommendations to strengthen control in a few areas. According to the chair of finance, these have all been implemented. The school uses its resources to good effect to support pupils' learning. Funds allocated to support pupils with special educational needs, in addition to the large amount of money the school allocates from its own resources, are used appropriately, as are other specific grants. The school takes care to ensure that it obtains best value in its use of resources. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

66. To improve standards, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

(1) improve the quality and consistency of teaching, particularly in Year 4, by:

- improving the quality of planning and identifying the learning intentions of lessons more clearly;
- providing more challenging work for pupils and work that is more appropriately geared to their needs;
- having higher expectations of what pupils can be expected to achieve in lessons and of their response;
- using assessment more effectively to inform pupils of what they need to do to improve their work.

[Paragraphs: 15; 16; 18; 21; 72; 81; 88; 97; 119; 120; 126; 131]

(2) improve the teaching of pupils' literacy skills, by:

- implementing the national literacy strategy more effectively and consistently;
- increasing the amount of time allocated to the teaching of English;
- developing a scheme of work to guide teachers' planning;
- improving the range and quality of pupils' writing, including extended writing, its presentation and handwriting;
- improving the range and quality of books available for pupils;
- ensuring that pupils' literacy skills are developed consistently in other subject areas.

[Paragraphs: 2; 19; 25; 26; 27; 28; 61; 64; 69; 73; 74; 76; 103]

(3) improve the school's assessment procedures, by:

- assessing pupils' work more thoroughly and giving clearer guidance to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work;
- marking work more diagnostically and ensuring that work is always completed;
- monitoring pupils' academic progress in a more systematic way and setting clearer targets for improvement;
- ensuring that reports to parents give clear indications of the standards achieved by pupils.

[Paragraphs: 22; 45; 46; 47; 48; 53; 58; 74; 81; 88; 112; 121; 126; 131]

(4) improve the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures to make them more systematic and rigorous, by:

- monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching more frequently and regularly;
- requiring all subject managers to monitor and evaluate the work in their areas of responsibility more effectively, including the work in lessons;
- using the outcomes of the monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's provision and to secure improvements.

[Paragraphs: 55; 57; 58; 75; 89; 99; 100; 104; 108; 121]

- (5) improve standards in design and technology in Key Stage 2 and music throughout, by:
- developing a more structured scheme of work in music and providing more opportunities for composing, performing and appraising music;
 - establishing higher standards of what pupils are capable of achieving in both subjects;
 - improving the quality and quantity of resources in both subjects;
 - monitoring more closely the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in both subjects.

[Paragraphs: 6; 25; 55; 64; 95; 96; 98; 118; 121]

- (6) build on the progress already made for managing some pupils' behaviour, particularly in the playground, by:
- having higher expectations of what is acceptable behaviour;
 - ensuring that all staff implement the school's behaviour management strategies in a consistent way.

[Paragraphs: 11; 12; 43; 50; 80; 120]

In addition to the key issues above, other less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan.

- Extend the opportunities for problem-solving in mathematics; *[Paragraphs: 3; 26; 79]*
- Improve the quality and quantity of pupils' written work in science, especially in recording their conclusions. *[Paragraphs: 4; 85; 87]*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	88
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	10	39	38	12	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	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	486
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	26

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	11
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	95

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	39

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	61
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	56

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.3
National comparative data	5.2

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.5

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	58	57	115

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	42	44	46
	Girls	46	46	48
	Total	88	90	94
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (59)	78 (65)	82 (75)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	41	44	45
	Girls	46	47	48
	Total	87	91	93
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76 (63)	79 (70)	81 (75)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	80 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	5
Indian	11
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	12
Chinese	14
White	421
Any other minority ethnic group	14

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y4 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25.4
Average class size	28.5

Education support staff: Y4– Y7

Total number of education support staff	11.0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	241

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	8	1
Other minority ethnic groups	1	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	1999/00
	£
Total income	905,840
Total expenditure	860,737
Expenditure per pupil	1966
Balance brought forward from previous year	37,947
Balance carried forward to next year	83,050

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	486
Number of questionnaires returned	113

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	32	53	9	4	2
My child is making good progress in school.	34	54	12	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	23	42	19	4	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	55	11	4	2
The teaching is good.	33	47	4	1	14
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	45	19	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	35	14	0	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	46	4	1	3
The school works closely with parents.	26	50	17	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	30	48	5	1	15
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	33	50	5	3	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	46	12	4	17

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

ENGLISH

67. Standards in English are broadly in line with national expectations by the time the pupils leave the school in Year 7. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning overall and good progress in those classes that have fully implemented the national literacy strategy. The results of the National Curriculum Tests in 2000, which show an improvement over those in the previous year, indicate that standards in English are rising. The results in the national tests in 2000 at the end of Key Stage 2 were close to the national average and when compared with similar schools, with a higher proportion of pupils than average achieving higher than expected levels. This performance shows some improvement since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language make satisfactory progress at both key stages.

68. By the age of eleven, pupils' speaking and listening skills are above average. They speak clearly, ask questions, follow instructions, sequence events and have a good vocabulary. They appropriately alter their speech according to the context and audience, for example when pupils in Year 6 read aloud the play script of *Macbeth*, taking on the roles of the three witches. Most pupils express themselves clearly and confidently when sharing ideas. For example, in history, when recalling a visit to St. Albans, some pupils were extremely articulate when remembering facts about pilgrims. In Year 7, most pupils communicate fluently, express their ideas confidently and adapt their form of speech to their audience's needs. When explaining the process of designing a web page, they communicate ideas clearly to one other and to adults, demonstrating maturity of thought. Pupils use Standard English and grammar correctly. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in developing their speaking and listening skills.

69. By the end of Key Stage 2, the majority of pupils attain satisfactory standards in reading. The higher attaining pupils read with fluency and expression and talk confidently about books, authors and characters. They are able to explain how to find a book in the library and research a topic. The lower attaining pupils rely heavily on help when unable to read unfamiliar words. They have little understanding of phonic strategies. These pupils are uninspired by the limited range of books to be found in the classrooms and the weekly library visit is insufficient stimulus to sustain their needs. All pupils rely heavily on books they bring into the school. In Year 7, the most fluent readers pronounce complicated words correctly, compare books and authors, discuss plots and characters and express opinions about how the story influences the listener. The lower attaining pupils receive insufficient direct help in acquiring new skills. Throughout the school, pupils are rarely heard to read by their class teacher. Teachers keep unsatisfactory reading records and those that are used are a record of what has been read, not how the pupils can improve. Where the literacy hour is well planned and taught, guided reading is used effectively to improve pupils' reading skills. Higher attaining pupils use a dictionary and thesaurus confidently. Pupils use their reading skills well across other subjects of the curriculum, using the Internet, for example, to research the River Nile in geography and Modigliani in art.

70. By the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7, standards in writing, especially in the range and quality of extended writing, are generally below average. There are recent signs of improvement, reflecting the practice of grouping pupils by their levels of attainment, thus enabling more appropriate tasks to be set. The systematic development of pupils' writing skills is affected by the lower than average amount of time allocated to the teaching of English and to the lack of a comprehensive scheme of work to guide the teaching. The scrutiny of pupils' work showed little evidence of extended or guided writing. Many pupils in Year 6 form letters accurately, spell many words correctly and express themselves clearly but the quality of handwriting and the presentation of work overall lack consistency. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 use joined handwriting effectively, and some use pens. However, too many pupils, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6, use a pencil rather than a pen for their writing tasks. Pupils' spellings are largely correct and non-fiction writing, for example about Ancient Egypt, is well structured and uses a good range of vocabulary. Stories and poems read to pupils have begun to influence their own style of writing. For example, when learning the conventions of writing poetry, rhyming couplets and verse, many pupils use dictionaries successfully to find unknown words. Pupils'

words are imaginatively chosen and used with precision. When writing biographies, they are beginning to use interesting starts to sentences. Lower attaining pupils make unsatisfactory progress because the tasks that they are given do not match their needs sufficiently. In Year 7, the higher attaining pupils write in a range of forms and use punctuation, paragraphs and speech marks. Examples of this can be found in the diary-writing pupils produce after caring for the programmed doll, Juanita. Average and lower attaining pupils are less secure in their use of correct punctuation and their handwriting is not always well formed. Pupils' skills in writing are developing well across some subjects. For example, in history, Year 7 pupils write about the contenders for the throne in the Norman Conquest, preparing addresses for each king to give to the people. In Year 6, pupils write good descriptive passages, in the style of Dickens, about the conditions poor children lived in. Pupils in Year 5 use graphics and word-process the information they have researched on schools in St. Lucia, comparing this information with their own school.

71. In Key Stage 2, pupils' attitudes to their learning are good and sometimes very good. They settle quickly to the tasks set, concentrate well and value each other's efforts. Their behaviour is good and pupils have good relationships with their teachers. They enjoy the literacy hour, particularly the discussion with adults and other pupils. In Year 7, pupils' attitudes to their learning are satisfactory. Many pupils are aware of their own weaknesses but are not given any clear targets for improvement.

72. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, both in Key Stage 2 and in Year 7, with a few examples of very good and excellent lessons and also a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. In the most effective lessons, planning is good and teachers use their subject knowledge well to set clear objectives for pupils' learning. These learning objectives are referred to and pupils are encouraged to repeat these aloud. Expectations are outlined clearly to pupils, the work is challenging and the pace is brisk. Resources are well used, and a plenary session is always used to consolidate learning and discuss pupils' achievements. In these lessons, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, establish good relationships and value pupils' contributions. The best lessons are characterised by teachers providing challenging introductions and moving pupils effectively through the learning objectives. For example, in a Year 6 higher attaining set, the teacher used very good resources and questions to challenge and improve pupils' knowledge of play scripts and to compare modern and Elizabethan language. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, planning is usually poor, the arrangement of pupils in the classroom is inappropriate and resources lack imagination. In such lessons, expectations for pupils' work and behaviour are not made clear, the pace is slow and the challenge of the lesson is insufficient. Throughout the school, teachers consistently give pupils positive encouragement but often fail to identify areas for development when marking work. They sometimes use effective questioning to assess pupils' levels of understanding, but do not make sufficient use of the information gained to support future learning or to set achievable goals.

73. The school has implemented the national literacy strategy, but its impact is patchy, as not all teachers are implementing it successfully. Weekly plans for the literacy hour are broadly satisfactory. Guided reading and guided writing are neither planned for nor taught in the majority of lessons. There is no evidence to show that phonics are taught, other than in special needs groups, or that higher order reading skills are taught to the more able readers. The use of learning support assistants during the literacy hour is sometimes unsatisfactory as their work is insufficiently focused.

74. There is no whole-school scheme of work for English; nor is there a curriculum plan to indicate which groups are being taught what and when. Insufficient time is given to the teaching of English to enable the programmes of study, particularly in relation to writing, to be covered adequately. The assessment of pupils' work, the tracking of their progress and the setting of targets for improvement are unsatisfactory. The marking of work lacks consistency and teachers' comments generally refer to the effort pupils have made rather than what they need to do to improve their work.

75. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. Although subject managers are committed to raising standards, especially in writing, there is no overall leadership of the subject and only limited monitoring has taken place. No regular moderation of work takes place; nor is there a collection of assessed work in order to ensure consistency across age groups. Subject managers are aware of the need to challenge the higher attaining pupils and have written an action plan to ensure that school-based concerns, especially those relating to writing, are addressed.

76. Resources for English are unsatisfactory overall. There are insufficient packs of guided reading books throughout the school for teachers to use in guided reading or for pupils to make satisfactory progress. Classroom collections of fiction books are poor and fail to motivate pupils to read. In Year 7, there is little evidence of fiction books in any of the classrooms. The library accommodation and book provision are unsatisfactory. This shows little progress from the last inspection report. There are insufficient fiction books of good quality and these are stored in such a way as to make their accessibility by pupils difficult. The quantity and range of non-fiction books are unsatisfactory and the collection of videos, cassettes and posters appropriate to curriculum areas is limited. The Librarian has worked hard to catalogue all the existing stock onto the Dewey system and has encouraged Year 7 pupils to become actively involved as monitors. The development of the library is hampered by the current practice of using the area for some pupils in need of supervision during lunch or break times. Plans to computerise the system for the registration of books and resources and recording loans and returns will help to improve the record of missing books.

MATHEMATICS

77. Pupils' attainment in mathematics by the age of eleven is broadly in line with national expectations, reflecting the results of the national tests in 2000, which were close to the national average and also average in relation to similar schools. The test results in 2000 show an improvement over previous years and, since the last inspection, in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 or above, and at the higher levels. There was no significant difference between the performance of girls and boys. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in their learning during Key Stage 2, although the rate of progress of the younger pupils is somewhat slower than that of the older pupils. Pupils in Year 7 continue to make satisfactory progress and their attainment is in line with the standard expected nationally, having remained steady since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress in relation to their prior attainment. The successful implementation of the national numeracy strategy is resulting in an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The setting arrangements in mathematics are successful in raising standards.

78. Pupils in Year 6 work out division and multiplication facts rapidly and use their knowledge of multiplication and division to complete their multiplication grids accurately. Over time, they develop a sound understanding of place value. They calculate the area and perimeter of simple and more complex shapes well and are able to interpret a table, graph or a pie chart. They use the language of probability appropriately and measure carefully the angles of a triangle. Pupils in Year 5 solve mathematical problems and puzzles and are able to explain number patterns and relationships. They recognise and extend a given number sequence. Pupils in Year 4 are able to extract information from a table and read digital and analogue time, recognising the relationship between the two. Pupils in Year 7 read and plot co-ordinates in all four quadrants. They understand the use of negative numbers and solve problems involving decimals and simple equations using algebra.

79. Standards in numeracy are satisfactory throughout the school. Pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well through the numeracy lessons, but there is little use of writing. The curriculum for mathematics is generally broad and pupils work across all attainment targets of the National Curriculum. However, pupils do not have enough practice in the use and application of mathematics in real life situations through problem solving activities. There are good examples of mathematics being integrated with other subjects such as art, design and technology and science; for example, through measuring, data handling and exploring patterns in shapes.

80. Pupils' attitudes to mathematics are positive and they enjoy exploring patterns and relationships in numbers and shapes. They enjoy mental and oral work, which provide them with good opportunities to develop an awareness of size and position of numbers. During the concluding part of lessons, they are keen to show what they have learnt and understood. Pupils generally behave well during lessons and concentrate well on their tasks. In a minority of lessons, however, their behaviour falls below satisfactory levels and the pace of learning becomes too slow.

81. The quality of teaching, although variable, is satisfactory overall, with many examples of good and very good teaching and a few examples of unsatisfactory teaching, especially in Key Stage 2. The teaching has shown some improvement since the last inspection. There is a high proportion of direct teaching and the teachers give clear explanations and demonstrations. Teachers make good use of mathematical vocabulary and encourage pupils to use the correct form of notation. Pupils are fully involved in lessons through appropriate questioning. Teachers make good use of time, resources and their learning support assistants to meet pupils' needs. The quality of mental and oral work at the start of the lesson is generally good, but the plenary session is not always used effectively to assess what pupils have gained from the lesson. In the best lessons, assessment is used well to inform the next stage of teaching and learning and to match work to pupils' needs. However, in a number of lessons, assessment is not used well to inform planning and to meet the needs of the full range of abilities within the class. In some cases, teachers' expectations are too low and the work provided is not sufficiently challenging. The teaching is consistently better in Year 7, where the teachers' expectations are higher.

82. The subject manager provides good leadership in developing the subject and has a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses. There is an appropriate action plan to improve the subject and, as a result, there has been a steady improvement in standards over the past three years. A newly developed whole-school policy guides practice in school. The subject manager has undertaken some monitoring and evaluation of teaching in the past, but not recently. The school analyses test results to track pupils' progress and to raise standards. Individual target setting, however, is not well developed, and the whole-school targets for 2001 are not sufficiently challenging, having been exceeded in 2000. The school's systems for the regular assessment and recording of pupils' progress are underdeveloped.

83. The school is well resourced in mathematics; resources are easily accessible and used well by staff and pupils alike. Teachers make good use of the white board, number lines and number squares to support their lessons and to facilitate pupils' understanding. The use of ICT to support and extend pupils' experiences in mathematics is under-developed. Homework is set regularly, consistently applied across the school and helps to consolidate and extend pupils' mathematical knowledge and understanding.

SCIENCE

84. From the work seen during the inspection, the majority of the current Year 6 pupils are working at the levels expected for their age, with a minority attaining above average standards. This shows some improvement over the test results at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2000, which were below the national average for the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 or above. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels was close to the average, indicating an improvement since the last inspection. When compared with similar schools, the results were close to the average. The new booster classes for pupils studying science in Year 6 are having a beneficial effect on improving the standards achieved by all pupils. Pupils' attainment in Year 7 is broadly in line with the standards expected nationally. Throughout the school, pupils, including those with special educational needs and who speak English as an additional language, make satisfactory progress in their learning. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls in the work seen.

85. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a secure knowledge of materials and their properties. Pupils in Year 6 give examples of dissolving every day substances such as coffee and pot noodles. They have a good understanding of factors that affect the speed of dissolving substances, such as heat and the amount of stirring. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 are able to decide on a suitable method for making instant coffee from coffee beans. In preparation for a practical investigation, average attaining pupils devise procedures to make a solid dissolve more quickly in liquid. In the more effective lessons, pupils collaborate well with each other, resulting in a good level of discussion, for example, on how to reinvent instant coffee. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs are supported effectively by adult helpers in this task. Pupils have a secure knowledge of living things and are able to talk about food chains, correctly defining herbivores, carnivores, omnivores and predators. Their knowledge of physical processes is satisfactory. In Year 5, most pupils know that the earth spins around an axis and rotates each day, causing day and night. Higher attaining pupils know that the tilt of the earth is twenty-three and a half degrees. Pupils explain why Norway has darkness during the daytime in the winter months. They know and explain how shadows are formed. Analysis and

interpretation of data are well established and, in Year 4, pupils analyse temperature recordings from around the school. Higher attaining pupils explain how to draw a bar graph to record their findings. There are weaknesses, however, in the way pupils record their work as there is a lack of consistency in recording scientific investigation and procedures. New guidelines for pupils in Year 6 and Year 7 are having a positive effect and leading to some improvement in this aspect of the work.

86. Pupils in Year 7 achieve standards that are in line with those expected nationally. They have a good understanding of how to use alkaline solutions to neutralise acid solutions and are able to explain how they use the universal indicator solution to test the pH factor of alkaline solutions. They make good connections with their scientific understanding. For example, pupils explain clearly how to use alkaline stomach remedies to improve an acid stomach. Pupils know the pH factor of the stomach is pH3 and they test four alkaline substances. They explain their prediction that solution B will require one hundred drops before it will neutralise the acid solution. Higher attaining pupils predict correctly that the solution with the highest pH factor will neutralise the solution better and are beginning to interpret data from graphs well. They evaluate their own and others' work, giving sound reasons for their comments. Conclusions in their written work are limited in scope. Although pupils record their results, they do not explain what they have learnt and they do not always mention the importance of a fair test. The work of lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs is not always completed.

87. Standards have remained broadly similar to those at the time of the last inspection, although there has been an improvement in the number of pupils reaching the higher levels. Standards in the quality of written work are insufficiently high. Standards in Year 7 have improved, but there is still room for improvement in the quality and quantity of written work. The quality of the teaching has remained satisfactory.

88. The teaching is satisfactory overall. There are, however, weaknesses in the standard of pupils' written work; expectations in standards of presentation are not high enough. Teachers are beginning to use the guidelines for investigating and recording work in Year 6 and 7, but these are not applied consistently. Work was planned for different abilities during the inspection week, but was not evident in the written work where there were many examples of unfinished work by lower attaining and pupils with special educational needs. In Year 6, written work does not reflect the quality of oral work in lessons; for example, pupils do not fully explain in writing the reason for solids not evaporating. In the more effective lessons, such as Year 7 science, the teacher maintains a good pace and uses questions well to encourage a debate and evaluation of work at the end of a session. The teacher challenges the pupils to explain what has happened to the solution and why the changes occur. Pupils respond to the expectations and time targets set for completion of their work. This results in an industrious working atmosphere with all pupils working well to complete their work in the allocated time available. Pupils enjoy the challenging pace. In a few lessons, pupils are allowed to work at a leisurely pace and the teachers do not make sufficient demands on them to improve the quality and quantity of their work. Plenary sessions are often rushed and do not capitalise on learning in the lesson. A weakness in teaching occurs when the lesson is comprised mainly of numeracy work such as analysing and interpreting temperature data in Year 4. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the scientific content of the lesson and the focus of the lesson is developing numeracy skills such as how to use data to draw bar graphs. The use of an additional teacher in the Year 6 booster classes to improve standards of literacy and numeracy in science is having a beneficial effect on pupils' knowledge and this new initiative is helping to raise standards in pupils' knowledge, but not in their ability to record in a systematic way. The school has identified the need to increase the opportunity for more investigative science across the school. Links with other subjects, such as physical education and literacy, are weak. The school has not yet developed systems for assessing pupils' scientific knowledge, skills and understanding on a regular basis.

89. The co-ordinator, who has been fully responsible for science only since the beginning of the term, has made good progress in a short time, developing an adequate supply of resources and ensuring that they are easily accessible for all staff. The co-ordinator has not yet been able to monitor the teaching of science across the school. Science has a very low profile and is not evident strongly enough around the school.

ART

90. By the age of 11, pupils' attainment in art, as at the time of the last inspection, is in line with the standard expected nationally. Only a small number of lessons were seen in this key stage during the inspection. Judgements are made on the basis of these observations, work in the pupils' sketchbooks, in the school portfolio and on display. Pupils learn to mix colours and understand that some colours are primary colours and can be mixed to make secondary ones. They mix colours on a palette and use the word 'grade' or 'gradated' to describe a family of colours. They know which are cold and which are warm colours. They use this knowledge of colour mixing to paint flowers with watercolours. They use the right size of brush to get the effect they need and blot the paint to help dry it before applying another shade on top. They show perspective and depth in these paintings and share their feeling of achievement with each other.

91. Work in the pupils' sketchbooks shows good progress over time. This is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils show a greater understanding of how to show depth and three-dimensional effects. This is achieved through the direct teaching and from the teacher's comments in their sketchbooks. These comments give specific instructions and advice to help each pupil improve. Pupils gain a knowledge of the major European art movements. They learn to copy the styles of artists such as Mondrian, Kandinsky, Monet and Seurat. They use computer-generated art to good effect. They say which artists' work they prefer and why and evaluate their own work in the light of these comments. Pupils are taught how to use a wide range of media such as charcoal, gouache, pastels, pencils, poster paints and watercolours. Their sketchbooks show how they become more adept with each medium.

92. Teaching is good in two out of the three lessons seen in Key Stage 2. This is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Teaching strengths lie in the clear instructions that teachers give about the techniques to be used, the individual help pupils are given and the verbal assessment teachers make. Pupils listen carefully as the teacher points out ways in which they can improve their own work and then act upon it. This makes progress in lessons good. Where teachers allow pupils to continue with work without specific teaching to help them improve, as in the Year 4 class who were making chairs for a special person such as Father Christmas or Barbie, then teaching and learning are only satisfactory. Pupils enjoy the lessons and their attitudes and behaviour are always good.

93. Pupils in Year 7 achieve standards that are in line with those of pupils of the same age. This is the same as at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils build on the skills they have learnt in previous years and widen their use of media to include clay modelling and making wire sculptures. They expand their knowledge of artists to include the work of Modigliani. Again, the teacher in the lesson seen encouraged the pupils to look at their work carefully and to adapt and improve it through pertinent comments to individual pupils. Therefore, pupils continue to make good progress. This is better than at the time of the previous inspection. Teaching continues to be good. This is the same as at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.

94. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The subject manager has been coordinating the subject for a year and has recently adopted the QCA scheme rather than the school's existing scheme of work. This has yet to be adapted to suit the needs of the school. She has upgraded all the resources, started a school portfolio to illustrate progression of skills and looked at pupils' sketchbooks. She monitors year group planning and helps individual teachers who are less confident. She then encourages them to plan alone and come to her only for specific support. The strength in the curriculum lies in the teaching of basic skills and the revisiting of them each year to ensure progression. Resources are now satisfactory and the range of books in the library supports pupils' own research.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

95. Only a small number of lessons were seen during the inspection. These observations and a small amount of pupils' work on display around the school indicate that standards in design and technology are variable. During Key Stage 2, pupils make unsatisfactory progress overall in developing their knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject so that their attainment by the age of eleven is below the standard expected nationally. They make better progress during Year 7 and their attainment is broadly in line with the standard expected of pupils of this age. In Year 7, pupils have a satisfactory

understanding of how to design, plan and evaluate their finished products and are able to solve problems they encounter during their practical work. However, pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school are restricted because of the unsatisfactory condition of tools and equipment, some of which need replacing. There has been some improvement since the last inspection, mainly because there are more planned opportunities for designing, making, evaluating and for exploring materials and joining techniques.

96. An analysis of pupils' work, teachers' planning and lesson observations shows evidence of satisfactory progress in designing, that is in generating, developing and communicating ideas, but unsatisfactory progress in working with materials and tools to make quality products and to improve particular features that are less successful. Pupils in Year 6 demonstrate satisfactory designing skills through designing models of a bus shelter. They discuss their choices of materials, giving reasons for their choices and are able to evaluate each other's designs. Pupils in Year 5 design musical instruments, follow their own step-by-step plans and evaluate each step. Pupils' dexterity and ability to handle tools for cutting purposes, however, are unsatisfactory. They are unsure of the comparative advantage of using a screw as opposed to a nail. Samples of work from Year 4 provide good examples of pupils designing money bags, using stages of planning they had discussed earlier with their teacher. There is evidence of some finished money bags and of pupils' work in sewing, but no evidence of their written evaluation of the finished product. Pupils in Year 7 design a prototype of a chosen medieval siege machine at home, using pieces of straw to assist construction of a three-dimensional model in the technology room. Pupils are able to measure accurately and cut fine pieces of wood, card and other materials and join the corners, learning in the process what works well for their purpose, and modifying original designs when things do not work out as planned.

97. The quality of teaching is broadly satisfactory in both key stages, although it is better in Year 7, where the teachers' expectations are higher and the management of pupils in practical lessons is better. The sound planning of the work has improved the delivery of the lessons, although the work is insufficiently matched to meet the wide range of attainment within the class. Teachers have secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, and actively encourage pupils to evaluate and improve their work. There is due emphasis on safety rules and the need to work quietly when handling tools, but insufficient emphasis on developing specific vocabulary. There are few displays of pupils' completed work around the school.

98. The quality of learning, which is unsatisfactory overall, is affected by the quality of tools and resources that are available in the technology room; for example, some of the tools are not sharp enough for cutting wood accurately and pupils have difficulty in securing a piece of wood onto the bench. This results in a slow pace to lessons, which adversely affects pupils' progress over time. Pupils are generally enthusiastic about designing and making their own models, which adds to the climate of learning. They co-operate well and share resources readily, sharing ideas and solutions to the problems as they complete their work. This was particularly evident in a Year 7 class, where pupils worked collaboratively on designing their medieval siege machines, suitable for battering castle defences. However, they lost concentration during the later part of the lesson mainly because of the lack of opportunity for implementing their ideas.

99. The whole-school schemes of work have been agreed and adopted for the subject, and this is an improvement from the last inspection. However, the monitoring and evaluation of the subject are not yet sufficiently developed to ensure systematic learning and progress of skills, knowledge and understanding. The range of resources in school has improved, although there is still a long way to go. There is better access to food technology for all pupils.

100. The new subject manager has developed a new policy and has a clear plan for action, which includes plans for developing the use of information and communication technology within the subject, monitoring the use of the new schemes of work and providing suitable resources to support the programme. The weaknesses in the subject include the underdeveloped role of the subject manager in relation to monitoring teaching and learning and in developing a whole school approach to assessing pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding over the longer-term.

GEOGRAPHY

101. When the school was last inspected, standards in geography were below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 2 and in line with expectations by the end of Year 7. Some unsatisfactory teaching was evident at Key Stage 2. Standards have been improved and the work of pupils in Year 6 now matches the levels expected for their age. Although no geography lessons were seen in Year 7, an analysis of pupils' work indicates that standards are average for twelve-year-olds. Teaching at Key Stage 2 has improved. Although one unsatisfactory lesson was seen in Year 4, the overall standard of teaching is satisfactory, with some good teaching in Year 5 and Year 6. This improvement is mainly due to a very good scheme of work devised by the recently appointed subject manager, which supports lesson planning extremely well and identifies challenging tasks for pupils at all levels of attainment.

102. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have reached the standard expected for their age. They read maps with confidence and follow the paths of rivers accurately. When discussing the progress of the River Rhone from source to mouth, they are able to identify changes made by the river over time and to describe how the river has affected the lives of those who have lived or now live near the river. They recognise that people living along the River Rhone have a different environment and life style from their own and discuss reasons for this thoughtfully, identifying the significant differences in the physical features of the countries well. An average attaining pupil described the rain cycle in clear pictorial terms, using accurate terms such as condensation and precipitation, whilst a higher attaining pupil used sentences like, 'The sand is permeable. If the water doesn't go through, some evaporates, but some runs into the sea.' Pupils are making satisfactory progress in developing their geographical skills. In Year 5, pupils studying the contrasting world location of St Lucia successfully argue the pros and cons about developing the island and the effect it will have on various categories of worker. They show empathy with each group, clearly understanding the consequences and writing persuasive letters to the President of St Lucia, which also show good attention to the conventions of letter writing. Appropriate emphasis is given to developing their map-work skills. Lower attaining pupils in Year 4 use accurate mapping symbols on a simple map whilst higher attaining pupils use theme park plans to locate specific sites and use the Ordnance Survey maps to locate local villages and towns, listing locations using 4-figure co-ordinates. These skills are consistently developed through the school so that Year 7 pupils use the 16 points of the compass, 6-figure grid references and contours to locate sites and identify the advantages and disadvantages of particular locations for the site of a village or town.

103. The teaching at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory with many good features evident in Years 5 and 6. In Year 7, both teaching and learning are more consistent, and are good. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subject and understand the skills that children need to learn. Two teachers in Year 5 have visited St Lucia and speak from personal experience about the development of the tourist industry and its impact on the environment, which enlivens lessons and increases pupils' understanding well. Lessons give opportunities to develop an appropriate range of literacy skills, although these are insufficiently extended for older pupils. Much of what is written by pupils in Years 6 and 7 is presented in simple lists and represented pictorially. Short reported paragraphs are occasionally used, but opportunities to develop literacy skills are often missed. However, when pupils are encouraged to change listed information into paragraphs, they do so accurately. Teachers' planning is usually good, and, when firmly based on the lesson plans that support the scheme of work, it is very good. However, in the unsatisfactory lesson, planning is a significant weakness. The majority of lessons present good challenges to all pupils. Pupils learn quickly as a result of skilled questioning which engenders great enthusiasm; and discussion and debate are used to good effect so that pupils generally show an appropriate level of interest in their work. The management of classroom behaviour is usually good, although in an unsatisfactory lesson, when the individual task lacked the appropriate level of challenge and involvement, pupils responded in a desultory way, completing the unchallenging colouring task with little enthusiasm. Some teachers mark work carefully and with attention to accuracy, giving praise and encouragement, but others mark in a cursory way. The quality of information and skills mastered are seldom evaluated in marking. Lessons are enhanced by regular use of information and communication technology and this assists pupils' enthusiasm for learning. In several classes, homework is well planned to support and extend learning and is given regularly. It is appropriate to the needs and capabilities of pupils, setting different challenges so that pupils need to use research skills. Many use the Internet and information books, finding out, for example, the names of major rivers in the world or information about the development of Milton Keynes.

104. Very good long term and medium term plans are in place and are based on the scheme from the Qualification and Curriculum Authority. The new subject manager, who has only recently taken on responsibility for the subject, is extremely knowledgeable and enthusiastic and has had considerable influence on planning at Key Stage 2. However, no time has been allocated to enable the subject manager to discover how the subject is taught in other classes and to address the problems of weaknesses in teaching in some lessons in order to raise standards further. A modest range of field trips and visits enhances teaching, with pupils visiting the river, the recycling factory in Milton Keynes, the landfill site at Calvert, and at Wavendon to conduct a traffic survey. Visits are usually recorded using photographs or video and these are appropriately used to support learning.

HISTORY

105. Standards are in line with national expectations by the time pupils are 11 and for pupils in Year 7. This is the same as at the time of the previous inspection. Only a small number of lessons were seen in history so judgements are based on the work in pupils' books and on display, as well as that seen in the lessons. Pupils understand that evidence about the past comes from primary and secondary sources. This is stressed throughout the Key Stage 2 so that, by the time they are 11, pupils are secure in their understanding and all can classify a range of sources into primary or secondary. They use phrases such as 'was around at the time of', 'was built in those days' to explain their knowledge. They understand that even a primary source may not be accurate and that most written evidence has a bias. This was seen when a group of pupils studied the hieroglyphic manuscript *The satire of the trades* by Dua-Khety and reflected on the bias shown towards the importance of being a scribe. They learn about the work of archaeologists by searching through a sand tray of objects and devising a list of questions to ask about each object. Pupils learn what an artefact is.

106. Pupils in Year 7 build on the knowledge they have gained in Key Stage 2 and extend their understanding of sources and chronology. They develop a subject-specific vocabulary and in the topic 'Medieval Realms' know and use terms such as 'feudal system', 'bailiff' and 'steward' correctly. They have a good understanding of religious belief in the Middle Ages. They sift through a range of evidence, including pictures from a book printed in 1385 *The Triumph of Death* by Hieronymos Bosch and *The Road to Canterbury* by Ian Serrailler to find out how rich people get to heaven. Pupils say 'pay their way into heaven', 'buy pardons from the pardoner' and discover that poor people 'go to purgatory' if no one is left alive to pray for them.

107. Teaching is satisfactory overall, with several examples of good teaching in Year 6 and Year 7. Pupils enjoy lessons and make good progress in the lessons where the work is well matched to their ability and where the work interests them. This was seen in a Year 6 lesson where good planning clearly showed what each group had to do. The lower attaining pupils were supported in an open-ended task of interpreting hieroglyphics, while the higher attaining pupils worked with the teacher, comparing reference sources on hieroglyphics to highlight different interpretations and bias. The quality of teaching and the overall satisfactory progress made by pupils during Key Stage 2 are both better than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils in Year 7 find that working with a range of sources not only interests them, but also supplies them with a wider evidence base from which to make deductions. Plenary sessions are well used to reinforce the learning objectives and to share knowledge. In both the Year 7 lessons, teachers persisted in questioning pupils about their understanding of the subject, making all pupils think hard and justify their answers. This helped pupils' learning. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in Year 7 is the same as at the time of the last inspection.

108. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The subject manager has concentrated on improving planning through the use of the QCA scheme of work throughout the school. Although not yet secure, this has helped teachers to teach the key skills of the subject and to reduce the amount of content taught. He provides effective support to staff in their planning, but has not been able to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in lessons. He realises that he needs to look at progression of the teaching of key skills to ensure that pupils make as much progress as they can. Assessment is built in to every topic. This is sharpening teachers' understanding of what pupils can do, rather than what they should be able to do. Resources for the subject are satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

109. There has been a significant improvement in the provision for ICT since the last inspection. The main features are shared computer bays throughout the school, a high number of sophisticated fast computers and a projector linked to a computer. There is also a designated wireless link to the Open University. This allows more efficient and effective teaching of the subject and is having a clear effect on pupils' progress. Pupils now achieve above average standards in ICT by the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 and progress is good overall. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when the standards achieved by the age of eleven were satisfactory, and progress made at Key Stage 2 slow. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of various applications and are fast and confident

keyboard and mouse users. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported; for example, one pupil with a statement has dedicated use of a palm top computer, and, with support, was able to work on a writing task.

110. By the age of eleven, the pupils know how to save, retrieve and alter documents and files. They use the computer to search the Internet for information, compose carefully word-processed text, and make links between documents using images. They are able to plan a presentation comparing schools in St Lucia with their own school. This will develop into a web page that will eventually add to the school's very good existing one. The work is of a good standard and pupils are proud of their achievements.

111. In Year 7, pupils know the various tool bars and navigate their way round a text. They use a range of CD ROMS and the Internet to find information, for example, to find out which website from a number of given addresses gives the best information about Modigliani portraits. They develop and refine ideas by assembling and organising both text and tables, for example in organising and designing their own web pages around the topic of Medieval Realms. The pupils' work in control technology and multimedia presentations culminates in pupils creating and editing their own movies. A very good example of this involved a university researcher using the technique to motivate disaffected boys to write.

112. The quality of teaching and learning is mostly good. The school has a good quality scheme of work that covers all strands of the subject and modules of work are carefully structured. Step-by-step teaching, good questioning and encouragement develop pupils' confidence, leading to high levels of motivation, interest and concentration. Occasionally, some of the teaching lacks confidence or sufficient knowledge, which results in unsatisfactory learning. Many pupils in Year 7 are independent learners who are able to tutor their peers. Good cross-curricular links are made with many subjects and there are further plans to integrate ICT into literacy and numeracy lessons. Assessment is not used in planning to target pupils needing further teaching and consolidation of skills. When pupils have hands-on experience they work with real intensity and focus and work well together. They speak enthusiastically about their work and show very positive attitudes to their learning.

113. Some of the oldest pupils have the opportunity to attend the extra-curricular Newspaper club which extends greatly their computer knowledge and skills. These same pupils continue to benefit from links with the Open University and researchers. The contribution made by these researchers is a significant factor in the provision of high quality equipment and in the teaching and learning of pupils. These links, which are valued by the school, have been sustained over a considerable period of time and are of benefit to both institutions.

114. The subject is very well managed and the subject manager has good knowledge and experience. A well thought out and detailed action plan is being implemented. He has worked hard to improve standards of provision and teaching. The school is aware that some teachers need further training to increase their expertise and build their confidence to extend pupils' learning and deliver higher levels of teaching. The school is also aware that an above average amount of time is given to the teaching of information and communications technology.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

115. A specialist teacher teaches French to pupils in Year 7. Overall, pupils are achieving standards that are in line with those expected of pupils of this age. This is not quite as good as at the time of the last inspection as the time currently allocated to French is much lower than average. During each lesson, pupils have opportunities to listen to French spoken with an excellent accent and to copy this pronunciation. They do this very well and their speaking skills are good. Many are developing a good accent. A few pupils, including those with English as a second language, do not join in when the whole class is repeating phrases. Pupils are building up a vocabulary that includes numbers, days of the week, months of the year and common classroom objects. They know sentences such as *je voudrais*, *je m'appelle* as well as common greetings and farewells.

116. Pupils read aloud from the board, overhead transparencies and their textbook. Again, their accent is good. They copy lists of words into their books and learn them for homework. The quality of

teaching is very good. The good quality of the planning ensures that lessons have a variety of activities to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. The good variety of teaching approaches helps pupils to remember and recall vocabulary. The teacher is skilled in using French throughout the lesson and this promotes the pupils' learning. Pupils concentrate hard and make considerable intellectual effort throughout the lesson. Therefore, their progress in lessons is very good. Pupils' attitudes to French are good. The vast majority of pupils enjoy the challenge of a new subject, but a few find it hard to listen to a whole lesson spoken in French. They lose interest and then do not keep up with the rest of the class.

117. The very efficient subject manager promotes the subject within the school through links with a French school, a day visit to France and a celebration of Bastille Day. She has adapted the QCA documentation to meet the needs of the school. Although no evidence was seen of this being put into practice, she has also written helpful advice for the teachers in Key Stage 2 to introduce pupils to French in such ways as learning to count and to answer the register. Pupils have their own textbook to use, which is an improvement in resources since the last inspection. At present, each Year 7 class has one lesson of approximately 45 minutes each week. This is insufficient to maintain the very good progress that is made in lessons as much time is used in recapping the work learnt in the previous week. Therefore, progress over time is satisfactory. The manager has very good links with other French teachers of Year 7 pupils and with the high school to which most pupils transfer. This ensures that pupils have at least the same experiences as pupils at other schools and are able to continue the good progress they make when they transfer to the high school.

MUSIC

118. Only a small number of lessons, two in Year 4 and one in Year 7, were seen during the inspection. On the basis of this evidence, teachers' planning, discussions with pupils and observation of some extra-curricular activities, pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 is below the standard expected nationally for pupils of these ages. The progress that pupils make in lessons in developing their musical skills, knowledge and understanding is very variable, ranging from unsatisfactory to very good, although overall it is unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection, when pupils' attainment was in line with national expectations, standards in music have declined. In part, this is due to the absence of the subject manager for an extended period of time on secondment to another school. However, the lack of an adequate scheme of work to guide teachers' planning limits the school's capacity to ensure the systematic development of pupils' musical skills. Throughout the school, pupils are given insufficient opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding across the aspects of performing, composing and appraising and consequently the music curriculum lacks adequate depth and breadth.

119. Pupils in Year 4 have satisfactory understanding of musical terms such as ostinato, pulse and beat, and an awareness of the different sounds that untuned percussion instruments can make. Their percussion playing skills are underdeveloped and very tentative and their skills in clapping rhythms are weak, as are their skills in appraising both their own and each other's work. Pupils in one Year 7 class understand about different musical structures, such as a round. Most sing in tune, but the singing lacks sparkle, showing little awareness of dynamics and phrasing. The majority are able to maintain their part when singing a round. They have some understanding of musical terms, but this is not extensive or secure. In two out of the three lessons observed, pupils make insufficient progress in their learning, as teachers do not expect enough of them.

120. The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to very good and overall it is unsatisfactory. Much of the teaching lacks challenge and the management of pupils' behaviour is not always effective. Consequently, pupils do not learn as much as they are capable of doing. At times, the poor behaviour of a small number of children in a Year 4 class affects the learning of others. In general, insufficient attention is given to improving the quality of the pupils' work, either by giving opportunities to repeat and practise or through specific guidance from the teacher. In the other Year 4 lesson, where pupils made very good progress, the teacher's lively, enthusiastic approach was transmitted to the class so that they were fully engaged in the activities, which were challenging and interesting. His good subject knowledge was used well to explain to pupils the different characteristics of the percussion instruments and to become more familiar with musical terminology. Plenty of time was provided for them to repeat and practise their rhythms and their eventual performance was of an above average standard. Their skills of

appraising and evaluating were also effectively developed in this lesson. Some of these characteristics of good practice are absent in other lessons.

121. Pupils are able to participate in a range of music activities, including recorder, choir and orchestra, and some receive additional instrumental tuition. Pupils in the orchestra are very keen and interested and work hard at maintaining their part and keeping in time. Music is used effectively to accompany pupils into and out of assemblies to set a calm atmosphere, but no reference is made to the name of the music or its composer. Singing does not feature in assemblies, thus depriving pupils of an opportunity to develop their singing skills. The school has an adequate range of percussion instruments, including keyboards, but other resources to support pupils' musical education are very limited. The role of the subject manager, who also has year manager responsibilities, in coordinating the subject throughout the school is unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection, when they were identified as weaknesses, the school has made little progress in developing a scheme of work or in implementing a systematic and consistent approach to assessment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

122. Pupils' attainment in physical education by the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 is in line with the standards expected nationally for pupils of these ages. Since the last inspection, standards have been maintained. Only a small number of lessons were seen during the inspection and none in dance or swimming, which take place at other times of the year. Judgements are based on the lessons observed, discussions with pupils and with teachers and a scrutiny of the planning.

123. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make satisfactory progress in the control and performance of their gymnastic sequences. Pupils in Year 5 demonstrate balancing, jumping and landing from apparatus. In the better lessons, pupils perform a range of bridge-shape balances, co-operating well with a partner. Higher attaining pupils hold bridge shapes with their partner showing good control. Knowledge of gymnastic terminology is satisfactory. Pupils understand the difference between mirroring and matching and leading and following because the teacher explains the difference clearly, using demonstration by pupils to identify the main features. Pupils show good levels of concentration and motivation as they work well to perform bridge shapes with elements of matching or mirroring. Pupils in Year 4 and Year 6 swim at the local pool and most pupils can swim 25 metres by the time they are eleven. Their knowledge of dance terminology is limited and they lack a clear understanding of dance as an art form. Pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of the attack and defence strategies in a game and explain clearly how to regain and maintain possession of the ball. Their knowledge of the importance of exercise is weak. Higher attaining pupils are hesitant with their explanations about the effect of exercise on their bodies and the value of exercise to health and fitness.

124. Pupils in Year 7 make good progress in their games skills. They learn to dribble and control the ball using both feet and to communicate effectively with each other. Pupils are able to select an appropriate practice to improve aspects of their own performance, such as attack and defence tactics of directional play, controlling a ball thrown from an overhead pass, or improving the speed of their passing. They evaluate each other's performance well, for example, using a stopwatch to time the number of passes and give helpful feedback. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate good control of the ball using a variety of body parts appropriately. Average attaining pupils practise shuttle runs, working hard to improve the speed of their performance. In hockey, all pupils hold the stick correctly and demonstrate good control, dribbling and using the push pass to send the ball to their partner. Pupils stop and receive the moving ball well. They have good levels of concentration.

125. A significant number of Year 7 pupils attend the gymnastics club. They are given challenging work, for example, exploring simple sports acrobatics balances with a partner. Higher attaining pupils perform cartwheels, handstands and forward rolls with good control. Pupils make good progress performing a variety of balances. The newly formed club generates good levels of enthusiasm and the teacher is well organised, giving feedback and extending pupils' gymnastic experiences. The line-dancing club held during the lunchtime is well attended and the clear instruction of the learning support staff successfully extends pupils' knowledge, enjoyment and enthusiasm for this style of dancing.

126. Teaching throughout the school is satisfactory overall and occasionally good. Class control and discipline are good, but insufficient guidance is given in some lessons to improve the quality and extend the range of movement. In one of the more effective lessons, pertinent teaching points help to improve the pupils' performance considerably and the teacher's good organisation ensures that the lesson proceeds at a brisk pace. Pupils respond well to the brisk organisation and work with interest throughout the lesson. The teacher gives appropriate feedback to pupils to help them improve their performance. The teacher maintains a good level of activity during the lesson, despite the unpleasant weather conditions, and comments are supportive and informative. The same pace and organisation are evident in a Year 7 hockey lesson, with the teacher using demonstration well to illustrate the importance of non-verbal communication when playing a game. A significant strength in some lessons is the good use of pupils not able to take part in the practical part of the lesson. They are involved in valuable evaluation and observation, including writing tasks related to the lesson; for example, designing a simple practice to improve hitting skills or identifying the rules for goalkeepers. They demonstrate good knowledge of these rules. There is no consistent assessment in physical education throughout the school and this is an area of weakness. There has been no monitoring of physical education.

127. Extra-curricular clubs and activities extend the curricular provision and are very good. These include football, netball, hockey, cross-country, gymnastics, line dancing and sailing. The clubs are well attended and give good opportunities for pupils to extend their skills, knowledge and understanding. The school takes part in inter-school competitions for netball, football and cross-country and hockey is also being developed. Physical education has a good profile within the school and very good links have been made with national sporting personalities. A significant number of teachers are involved in clubs after school

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128. Standards by the end of Key Stage 2 and in Year 7 are in line with the expectations of the local agreed syllabus. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have a clear understanding of the symbols of Christianity and speak about the world's leading faiths with confidence. They understand the significance of the Hindu festival of Divali and remember the story of Rama and Sita. They explain that 'Sikhs do not cut their hair' and that Muslims offer prayers to Allah and fast during daylight hours in Ramadan. Year 7 pupils show a deeper understanding of the influence of religious practice on some peoples' lives. Their work on pilgrimages demonstrates a clear understanding of the value of these special journeys to some members of all faiths and the significance of special places like Lourdes, Mecca and the Holy Land.

129. The majority of pupils work at an appropriate level and achieve satisfactory results, with a significant minority achieving well. Pupils in Year 4 writing about rules and relationships are given different challenges and respond well. A higher attaining pupil is able to distinguish between the physical characteristics of 'My Perfect Friend' and the feelings engendered within the relationship, writing 'she laughs when I tell her a joke'. In contrast, a pupil with special educational needs, considering the same theme, selects positive adjectives from a list, choosing 'honest' and 'loyal' as examples. In Year 6, in a discussion about Christian symbols which requires some lower attaining pupils to be given careful explanation about the purpose of church furnishings, learning support staff and teachers provide good support. Meanwhile, other pupils who already know the function of particular artefacts are challenged to find proper nouns and devise good questions to ask on a forthcoming visit to the church. In some classes, however, this attention to ensuring that all pupils learn appropriately from their tasks is lacking. The same task is set for all pupils with the result that some pupils do not finish and others find they are expected to repeat work they already know. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils' knowledge of the celebrations and life styles of people of other faiths develops well. In this area of learning, the school fully meets and in some aspects exceeds the standards set by the local agreed syllabus, giving pupils opportunities to study all major world faiths in some depth.

130. In Year 7, pupils' knowledge of Christian traditions and the rites and traditions of other faiths continues to be extended in their work on pilgrimages. Challenges and tasks ensure that pupils consider very carefully the fundamental beliefs and feelings of others. When discussing the feelings of a young man during a pilgrimage to the Holy Land as expressed in his Internet report, one higher attaining pupil wrote sensitively, 'I think his faith was strengthened by the experience'. Pupils recognise that,

although they may not personally wish to go on a pilgrimage, others find pilgrimage spiritually uplifting. Pupils with special educational needs, presented with a simpler version of the account, discussed the reasons for pilgrimage thoughtfully with their teacher. Afterwards, giving his reasons for going on a pilgrimage in a group with like-minded people, one wrote, 'I think it is a very good idea, because when people need help they can ask'.

131. The teaching at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory, with examples of some good teaching. In Year 7, where some specialist teaching takes place, the teaching is good. There has been some improvement in the provision and in the teaching since the last inspection. Teachers follow the local agreed syllabus carefully and in many classes, lesson plans ensure that time is well used, although sometimes it is difficult for younger pupils to sustain their interest and concentration for the whole session. In many lessons, work is well suited to pupils' different needs so that pupils sustain interest and concentration. In Year 6, the end of module summary on world faiths entailed a lower attaining pupil matching jigsaw pieces to form correct statements like 'the lotus flower is a symbol of the Buddhist way', whilst higher attaining pupils were expected to compile their own answers to specific questions. Most lessons are well managed and pupils are given opportunities to discuss, to research and to record what they have learned. The level of discussion in lessons is invariably good, with pupils exchanging views confidently and thoughtfully. In a very good lesson in Year 6, the teacher's own knowledge of the symbols of Christianity was very good, so that information could be shared confidently and accurately. Pupils, who were preparing for a visit to the local church, were keen to share their knowledge, and use artefacts and photographs to learn more about the furnishing of the church and Christian symbolism. The majority of lessons contain good challenges with time to consider points thoughtfully, but as noted in the last inspection report, there is still a lack of consistency in the level of challenge in tasks and the expectations of teachers. When tasks lack challenge, the pace of learning is less assured. The majority of pupils present their work very carefully, for example illustrating feelings with delightful faces showing happiness and sadness when writing about how the comments of others make them feel. Teachers' marking is generally encouraging and gives praise for effort. However, sometimes, work is scant in quantity, pupils do not take a pride in its presentation and marking is cursory. Homework is appropriately used throughout the school, with examples of pupils' research from the Internet and homework investigations being used well to further and reinforce learning.

132. The locally agreed syllabus provides a sound basis for the study of the Christian religion, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Islam. The provision of artefacts for pupils to learn about world faiths is sufficient and these resources are well used to support learning. The recently appointed co-ordinator has established good links with the local consortium of schools and has produced good guidelines for promoting pupils' spiritual development through the teaching of religious education. As a result, religious education contributes well to the school's existing spiritual, moral, social and cultural programme. The subject manager has monitored provision and teaching in religious education and produced an analysis of needs in each year group, together with advice for raising achievement. However, although this provides a good basis for further improvement, the advice has not been implemented in all year groups.