

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTHWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Milton Keynes

LEA area: Milton Keynes

Unique reference number: 110363

Headteacher: Mr Bryan Schram

Reporting inspector: Mr John Burnham
5020

Dates of inspection: 5th – 8th November 2001

Inspection number: 230520

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	8-12
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Bryony Place Conniburrow Milton Keynes
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Susan Semple
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd February 1998

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
5020	John Burnham	Registered inspector	Design and technology; Modern foreign languages; Music; Special educational needs	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11104	Michael Fleming	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12956	Geoff Allport	Team inspector	Science; Information technology; Physical education; English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
18214	Elizabeth Lewin	Team inspector	English; Art; Religious education; Equal opportunities	
3694	Margaret Riley	Team inspector	Mathematics; Geography; History	How well are pupils taught?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Southwood Middle School is located in north Milton Keynes. The school serves an area of comparatively high social and economic disadvantage. There are currently 286 pupils between the ages of eight and twelve years, of whom 135 are boys and 151 are girls. Pupils arrive at school with standards that are well below those expected nationally for pupils aged eight. Six pupils (two per cent) have English as an additional language, which is just above average, and 89 per cent of pupils come from white ethnic backgrounds. The school has identified 102 pupils (36 per cent) as being entitled to free school meals, a figure that is well above average and one that has risen in the past year. A significant proportion of the pupils (19 per cent) either joined or left the school during the last year at other than the usual transfer times. 90 pupils (31 per cent) are identified as having special educational needs, which is above average. Five pupils have statements of special educational need, which is marginally below average. Nearly two thirds of the teachers, including the headteacher, have been appointed since the previous inspection

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good and improving school with several significant strengths. Standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average by Year 6. Results in national tests at this age are at least in line with those of similar schools and, with the exception of Year 7, are steadily improving. The teaching is often good and has a beneficial impact on learning. The climate for learning is very positive: pupils are keen to learn and work hard. The headteacher is an excellent leader and manages the school well, supported by an effective team of staff and governors. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and has established a very positive climate for learning.
- Pupils' personal development, relationships and attitudes to learning are very good.
- Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good.
- By Year 5, pupils' behaviour is consistently very good.
- Moral and social development are very good.
- There is a very good range of extra curricular activities
- There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs.

What could be improved

- Standards in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) by the age of eleven, and in all core subjects and information and communication technology by the age of twelve.
- The level of challenge in work provided for pupils in Year 7.
- Taking better account of what pupils of different abilities can already do in setting the next challenge in work, particularly for the most able.
- The approach to timetabling extra tuition for pupils.
- The provision of a daily act of worship.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection in February 1998. Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved in relation to schools in similar contexts, and the school now sets demanding targets for the pupils' achievements. The quality of teaching has improved significantly, with a higher proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching. Teachers' expectations have improved, but further improvement is still needed in Year 7. Teaching is now more closely monitored and lessons have a sharper focus. Schemes of work have improved; these now provide greater support for teachers' planning and aid progression in pupils' learning. Assessment procedures have improved, although a few weaknesses remain, and recording of pupils' National Curriculum attainment and progress is now more detailed. Subject managers and year leaders have greater, planned opportunities to monitor practice and to ensure policies are being applied. The school is well placed to improve further.

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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	E	E	B
Mathematics	E	E	E	C
Science	E	E	E	C

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

In the 2001 national tests, overall standards in English, mathematics and science were well below average. However, when compared with similar schools, results were above average in English and average in mathematics and science. These results represent a steady improvement, and indicate that the school has kept pace with the national improving trend. The rate of improvement has been greatest in science.

Inspection evidence shows that overall standards for eleven year olds are broadly satisfactory, but standards are unsatisfactory for pupils aged twelve. The school achieved its demanding targets for 2001 in English and science, but results in mathematics were below the target set. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by the age of eleven are improving at a good rate due to the school's emphasis on, and adaptation of, national strategies. Standards in other subjects are at the level expected by the ages of eleven and twelve, with the exception of information and communication technology (ICT), in which standards are below expectations. Progress is good for pupils with special educational needs and those pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. Given the pupils' well-below-average attainment on admission, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils respond very well to teaching and work with enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good overall, and very good from Year 5 onwards. The pupils work and play together effectively. They are polite. They have a good understanding of right and wrong, and the consequences of their actions on themselves and others. When decisions have been taken to exclude pupils, these have been taken in the best interests of individuals and the school as a whole.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships are very good. The School Council is exemplary.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory overall, although the school takes all practicable steps to ensure regular attendance.

The School Council exemplifies the high quality of personal relationships, pupils' commitment to the school and their ability to take responsibility. It is a very good example of the school's aims in practice.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 4 to 6	Year 7
Quality of teaching	Good	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 teaching is good with significant examples of very good teaching in all year groups. There are particular strengths in the teaching in Year 6. Literacy teaching is good, and in numeracy teaching is satisfactory. Teachers give an appropriate emphasis to the development of pupils' reading, writing and number skills. Teachers usually give clear explanations and manage pupils' behaviour well. In the best lessons, teachers know precisely what individual pupils can do, and what they need to do to improve. Teaching is weaker in a small number of lessons where the content of work is not sufficiently well matched to the needs of all pupils. Pupils usually have a good awareness of how well they are learning. The pace of learning is mainly good in Years 4 to 6. Occasionally, the pace of learning is too slow and there is insufficient challenge for more able pupils.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. Very good range of extra-curricular activities. Sound planning for subjects. Withdrawal from lessons for tuition in other subjects undermines pupils' equality of opportunity. Where pupils are withdrawn from assembly, this contravenes statutory requirements.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Individual education plans are well focused and used to plan work. The learning support staff make a very good contribution to pupils' progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Staff working with these pupils have very good skills. Pupils make good gains in their learning and their use of English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. There is a strong and consistent approach to promoting very good social and moral behaviour. Spiritual development is sound, although opportunities are not consistently taken to promote a sense of awe and wonder. Cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is a caring school where the interests of pupils lie at the heart of the school's work. Although procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are not yet wholly consistent, their personal development is very well promoted.

The school benefits from the support of parents. Arrangements for acts of worship do not fully meet statutory requirements.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher inspires confidence in staff, parents and governors and provides excellent leadership. Staff with responsibility for subjects provide effective leadership.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. The governors are very supportive and have a clear understanding of their role in shaping the direction of the school
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher and governors carefully analyse the teachers' and pupils' performance and set challenging targets. The school uses data well to pinpoint areas for improvement in performance in national tests.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school considers best value when purchasing supplies and services. The school's finances are secure and controls are effective.

There is a good number of teaching and support staff. The accommodation in classrooms is cramped,

especially for the oldest pupils. Access to year areas for disabled pupils is not ideal. Resources for information and communication technology are unsatisfactory. The school library contains too few books and is currently under-used.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects children to work hard • Children like school • Staff are open, friendly and hardworking • Children make good progress • The quality of the leadership and management of the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework set for pupils • The range of extra-curricular activities • Information about children's progress. • More opportunities to work closely with the school

The inspection team fully endorses the parents' positive views. Inspection judgements do not support the areas for improvement identified by some parents. The school sets homework for pupils on a regular basis. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, both at lunchtime and after school. The school's reports are informative, and the school's open door policy provides effective opportunities for parents to gain further information as necessary.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Assessments of pupils admitted to the school in Year 4, based on their performance in national tests at the age of seven, indicate that they attain standards that are well below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- 2 In the 2001 national tests at the age of eleven, overall standards in English, mathematics and science were well below average. However, when compared with similar schools, results were above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. Given the pupils' well-below-average attainment on admission, pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.
- 3 In the 2001 national tests and teacher assessments for English, the overall performance of all pupils aged eleven in English at Southwood Middle School was well below the national average when compared with all schools. Results were below the national average at Level 4 and above, the level expected for pupils of this age, and also below average at the higher Level 5. When compared with results from similar schools, standards were above average overall, being above average at Level 4 and above and also at Level 5.
- 4 In the tests for mathematics, overall results were well below the national average in comparison with all schools. They were well below the national average at Level 4 and above, and below, but closer to, average at Level 5. When compared with results in similar schools, results for Southwood were average overall, being below average at Level 4 and above, and in line with the average at the higher Level 5.
- 5 In comparison with all schools, overall results in science were well below the national average. They were below the national average at both Level 4 and above and at Level 5. When compared with similar schools, Southwood's overall results were average, being in line with the average at both Level 4 and above, and also at Level 5.
- 6 Over the last four years, the school's overall results in national tests for eleven year olds have increased each year. This represents a steady improvement. These results indicate that since the previous inspection the school has kept pace with the nationally improving trend. The greatest improvement in results over this period has been in science. Although there have been some fluctuations in the results of boys and girls, there has been no significant difference between the results of either group.
- 7 Evidence from the inspection indicates that by the age of eleven, pupils' standards in relation to national expectations are average in English and science, but below average in mathematics. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills by the age of eleven are improving at an appropriate rate due to the school's emphasis on, and adaptation of, national strategies.
- 8 Pupils have successfully consolidated previously taught skills, and advanced their knowledge and understanding in English. Standards throughout the school in speaking and listening are good. In reading and writing standards are satisfactory, except in Year 7, where standards in these aspects are unsatisfactory.
- 9 In mathematics, overall standards are unsatisfactory. A majority of pupils achieve at levels appropriate for their age, but a significant minority of average and more able pupils do not achieve the standards of which they are capable, particularly in work involving shape and space. Pupils usually use the correct mathematical language to describe what they are doing. They show increasing accuracy when making mental calculations. The school has correctly identified the need to raise standards in

mathematics to the same level as that achieved in English, and some headway has been made this year.

- 10 Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding in science are generally improving at a steady rate in Years 4 and 5, and improvement in Year 6 is often rapid, but the pace of learning slows in Year 7.
- 11 There has been some improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 by the age of 11 in all three core subjects since the previous inspection. The school is aware that more still needs to be done to increase the number of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in national tests for English, mathematics and science. Standards are satisfactory in art and design, design and technology, history, geography, music and physical education. This position is similar to that identified at the time of the previous inspection.
- 12 By the age of twelve, the rate of progress in English and science has not been maintained consistently enough, and standards are unsatisfactory in English, mathematics and science. Pupils' achievements in mathematics are too often limited because the work is not suitably matched to their needs. Standards are satisfactory in art and design, design and technology, French, history, geography and music, a similar position to that identified at the time of the previous inspection. Standards in physical education, which were unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, have improved and are now satisfactory.
- 13 In information and communication technology, standards achieved by the ages of eleven and twelve are unsatisfactory. The school recognises this, and is taking positive action to improve provision and standards in this subject. Pupils throughout the school achieve standards in religious education that are in line with those set out in the locally agreed syllabus for the subject.
- 14 Pupils have ample opportunities to practise and develop their speaking and listening skills across the curriculum. They use their reading skills appropriately in classwork, but have too few opportunities to develop further the research aspect of their reading skills in the school's library. Writing skills are promoted successfully through other subjects. Appropriate opportunities are provided for pupils to extend their mathematical skills through extended tasks and challenging problem solving which contribute to work in other subjects, such as design and technology and science. Information and communication technology is not used effectively in support of work in other subjects, although the development of pupils' skills is now accelerating.
- 15 Pupils with special educational needs, whilst performing generally well below the national average, make good progress in relation to their prior learning in English, mathematics and science, with sensitive and well-focused support from teachers. Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress and a significant minority achieve in line with the national average in all subjects. The progress made by gifted and talented pupils is currently unsatisfactory. The school's newly-developed programme of support for these pupils has yet to have a significant impact upon the standards they achieve in English, mathematics and science, although they achieve well in music.
- 16 The school has appropriately identified a core group of pupils, those who have spent all of their schooling between Year 4 and Year 7 in this school, as a reference group. Their achievements and standards attained in tests are carefully monitored; these indicate that they make good progress from Key Stage 1, and attain results much closer to the national average by the age of eleven than those of the respective year group as a whole. The school is also developing comparative statistics for the pupils who join or leave the school other than at the normal transfer times, and uses these well to target support for individuals and groups.
- 17 The school achieved its demanding targets for 2001 in English and science, but

results in mathematics were below the target set. Assessment information is used well to analyse general trends in performance and to help set targets. The school has set suitably demanding targets for pupils at the age of eleven in English and mathematics for 2002.

- 18 These targets, and the draft targets set for subsequent year groups, take appropriate account of those pupils with special educational needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 19 Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. Lessons are mostly calm, with everyone hard at work. Pupils show concentration and perseverance and respond enthusiastically to good teaching. Pupils listen attentively in lessons and concentrate on their work.
- 20 Behaviour in the school is good overall; most pupils behave well most of the time. It takes some time for the school to instil its high expectations in all pupils but from Year 5 onwards the standard of behaviour is very high. A very clear set of behavioural and other expectations are embodied in 'Golden Rules'; these are prominent in school life and are frequently referred to by teachers and pupils. Some lessons in Year 4 are disrupted by a minority of pupils who are not fully engaged by the teaching, and have not yet accepted the expectations of the school. A clear and graded set of responses to unacceptable behaviour is in place and the ultimate sanction of exclusion is used appropriately. The incidence of exclusions in the previous school year was relatively high. However, when decisions have been taken to exclude pupils, these have clearly been taken in the best interests of individuals and the school as a whole. Pupils learn quickly what is unacceptable and develop a good understanding of what is right and wrong.
- 21 Pupils maintain very good relationships with other pupils, teachers, other adults in the school and with visitors. There is no tension between groups of pupils from different social or cultural backgrounds. They co-operate well when working in pairs or larger groups.
- 22 Whether they are performing in assembly or sharing their ideas and experiences with their classmates, pupils are justifiably confident of an attentive and respectful audience. They are keen to participate in discussion and are not afraid to test their ideas. Elected representatives of each class convey pupils' ideas to the School Council where they are discussed in a mature and effective way. The results of discussion are reported back to the class by their representatives. This excellent introduction to democracy enhances pupils' personal and social development and enables individuals to have a positive impact on the school community.
- 23 Most pupils arrive on time for school and quickly enter into the school spirit. Attendance is unsatisfactory. In spite of the school's efforts, some pupils are withdrawn from their education in order to take holidays. As a result, the overall attendance rate for the past two years has been well below the national average for primary schools; this has had a detrimental effect on the standards achieved by a significant minority of pupils. The rate of unauthorised absence, however, is broadly in line with the national average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 24 Overall the quality of teaching throughout the school is satisfactory. During the inspection, 96 per cent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better, and 23 per cent were very good or excellent. There are significant examples of good and very good teaching in all year groups. The school has particular teaching strengths in Years 5 and 6 where teaching is often good or very good and, occasionally, excellent. In a large majority of lessons pupils are making at least satisfactory, and often good progress in their learning as a direct result of good teaching. Three lessons (4 per

cent) were judged to be unsatisfactory. In these lessons, pupils' progress was limited, either because the work was not challenging enough or the expectations of teachers were too low.

- 25 Teachers are generally confident in the way they approach their work in most subjects. The school has made appropriate decisions about the use of specialist expertise within the timetable. This has a positive effect on pupils' experience of the curriculum. In music, pupils benefit from the mixed work of specialists and classroom teachers. In modern foreign language (French), where the specialist is able to conduct lessons in the target language, pupils make good progress in their learning. In physical education, where the school uses the interest and skills of specific teachers in rugby, football and swimming tuition, the quality of teaching is improved. Specialist work also takes place in information and communication technology. This has benefits in lessons where the ICT suite is used to good effect with larger groups of pupils.
- 26 Teachers in all year groups have sufficient knowledge and the confidence to teach most subjects at an appropriate level. There are a few instances where teacher knowledge is weaker, and the consequent loss of confidence has a detrimental effect on pupils' learning and progress. This was the case in some science and music lessons. The detailed schemes of work that are in place for most subjects have been developed by specialists within the school or are the result of appropriate adaptation of National Curriculum guidance documents.
- 27 The teaching of basic literacy skills is almost always satisfactory and often good, particularly in Years 5 and 6, and the teaching of numeracy is sound overall. Teachers have implemented the strategies recommended by the national frameworks and, for example, in mathematics lessons, there is strong evidence of their willingness to heed advice from local specialist consultants. All teachers place a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' reading, writing and number skills. In both English and mathematics lessons, teachers show that they have a secure understanding of the literacy and numeracy skills that their pupils need to develop. In many lessons, teachers use the specialist language of the subjects well. The best lessons in English, mathematics and science are characterised by this use of language and the way in which teachers encourage, expect and demand that pupils should gain experience of the correct technical vocabulary. In a good mathematics lesson with Year 7 pupils, the teacher was careful to use correct terminology in the work which required pupils to use geometric information to find co-ordinate points. The pupils were involved in setting a challenge for Year 6 to complete and the need for precise use of language in the instructions was understood.
- 28 Planning for lessons in subjects and year groups is undertaken using long- term curricular outlines, schemes of more detailed work and short- term plans for some subjects. Guidance notes and advice for teachers are provided by the subject managers and year team leaders. The approaches to planning vary across the school. There are inconsistencies and differences in planning processes that have some negative effects on teaching and learning. In particular, the detail provided to guide the learning of pupils of different abilities lacks consistency; as a result, some teachers' expectations of more able pupils are lower than they should be, particularly in Year 7.
- 29 All teachers have agreed and adopted a useful and consistently applied technique for setting out clearly what is to be learned in each lesson. This is applied to all subjects and forms the basis of every lesson. Teachers are diligent in using WALT (we are learning to), the intention for learning, and WILF (what I'm looking for), the outcome of learning. This is successful in focusing teachers and pupils on the learning that is to take place and how the teachers will assess gains in knowledge, skills and understanding. All teachers are engaged in this process, and where teachers are clear about the lesson and subject expectations, it is having a very positive impact on pupils' learning and their attitudes to their work. Pupils understand the strategy and

are often eager to talk about WALT and WILF. In the most successful lessons teachers use the technique as a way of clarifying their expectations of what and how pupils will learn and how the work of the lesson fits into the overall development of the topic. They allocate time effectively to the sharing of learning objectives, and use the final part of the lesson as a means of checking on progress and understanding. This way of working, at its most effective in Years 5 and 6, is adding significantly to the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.

- 30 Teachers use a good range of styles and methods in their work. In the best lessons teachers have planned the detail of the work very well. During the inspection, there were very good examples of carefully “scripted” lessons in English, mathematics and geography, that included not only the learning objectives and content, but also key questions and extended tasks that would challenge the pupils. School policies devoted to effective teaching and learning contain very good guidance to teachers and make a good contribution to their work.
- 31 The school uses grouping arrangements in English and mathematics based on current and prior attainment. This is largely effective, but has little staffing flexibility and still requires each teacher to plan for the needs of a wide range of ability in each group. Because there are inconsistencies in the way in which each year group plans the work there are a few lessons where the work provided is not well matched to pupils' needs. Occasionally, the detail of the lesson has been planned by one teacher for delivery by another. This leads to some unnecessary repetition because the lesson is not based on an assessment of levels of pupils' achievement, a slower pace of learning and development of the work and a lack of ownership of the content.
- 32 Good use is made of group activities, direct teaching and demonstration. During the inspection, there were good examples of this in most subjects and year groups. In a Year 5 English lesson, the teacher showed pupils how to make use of a bookmark, and how to write notes so that they could use these later on to draw up a set of instructions. This enabled the pupils to make good gains in their learning, and to be familiar with a process which they could develop for themselves. Teachers are sufficiently confident, in many cases, to be learners themselves. They are almost always good role models for their pupils in lessons. Teachers use whole class, small group and individual work with pupils effectively. Many lessons contain examples of teachers working in a coaching and support role with pupils. In a science lesson with Year 6, the teacher provided effective individual support to remotivate a less able pupil, who was then able to play a full part in a lesson where pupils were devising fair tests. This was achieved at the same time as promoting very good thinking skills amongst all the other pupils who were busily engaged in making predictions and recordings about the effects of freezing to combat germs. The teacher thus maintained the brisk pace of learning in the lesson. The content of lessons is often, but not always, designed to provide opportunities for independent learning through research, problem solving or the use of information and communication technology.
- 33 A very positive feature of the teaching is the consistent way in which all teachers and supporting adults have adopted positive approaches to the management of pupils' behaviour. There are high expectations of mature behaviour in classrooms that are supported by clear and consistently applied systems for rewards and sanctions. Teachers and learning support staff are almost always good, and often very good, at recognising when pupils will need support in classrooms. This was the case in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, where the teacher was quick to recognise which pupils needed extra support during the main activity, namely to represent data in a pictogram and bar chart format. Support was provided by the teacher whilst maintaining a clear view of the progress of the rest of the class. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong, usually based on mutual respect, and carefully nurtured as a means of maximising the opportunities for pupils to learn. In a few lessons where pupils exhibit challenging behaviour, it is dealt with sensitively and according to the well-established codes of conduct and school-wide “Golden Rules”.

- 34 Time is used effectively: all lessons start promptly and movement of pupils from group to group is smooth and efficient. Little time is wasted in lessons and most teachers set time expectations on tasks. There is a strong work ethic throughout the school that is understood by the pupils and encouraged by teachers and learning support staff. Resources to support learning are usually well prepared and of good quality. Teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) in the school's suite is mostly good, and leads to good and sometimes very good gains in pupils' learning. However, teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT in support of other subjects, mainly because of limited access to computers and the relevant software elsewhere in the building.
- 35 There are regular and structured assessment and record keeping procedures that all teachers are involved in. These tend to be focused on the levels attained by pupils. Marking of pupils' work is regular but does not always conform to the school's declared policy and is often not developmental in nature. From the marking, it is not always clear how pupils can improve their work or what the next steps in learning for each pupil should be. There are some examples of good quality, marked work in most subjects and year groups, but good practice is linked to individual teachers rather than a consistent, whole-school intention. Some work has begun in setting targets for pupils' writing but this has yet to be evaluated fully. Group targets in mathematics are being developed and, though in its early stages, the school envisages that this approach will be extended further.
- 36 Homework is set in all year groups and the use of a school Contact Book encourages pupils and their parents and carers to be actively involved. Pupils respond well to the demands of the work set for them outside school and teachers make good reference to homework tasks in lessons. The amount of work set is appropriate to the age and stage of development of the pupils.
- 37 Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is almost always of good quality. Teachers and learning support staff prepare work that is relevant to pupils' needs. The way in which the supporting adults work with small groups and individual pupils makes a very positive contribution to their progress in learning, and to the meeting of targets set in individual education plans. Support for pupils for whom English is an additional language is also good: they are taught well and make good gains in their learning. Pupils identified with particular skills and talents are provided with some opportunities for enrichment and extension. For example, in mathematics, a group of higher-attaining pupils receive additional teaching using problem solving and mathematical challenge materials. This work is useful, though currently limited to mathematics and the provision of out-of-school clubs and activities.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS

- 38 When the school was last inspected, the following important strengths were noted in relation to curricular and other opportunities:
- pupils' personal and social development was well promoted; and
 - extra-curricular clubs were good, and pupils had good opportunities to take part in competitive sports.
- 39 The curriculum remains satisfactory overall, and is improving. There are some important strengths. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. Provision for pupils' moral and social development is now very good.
- 40 Weaknesses in the last inspection were:
- inconsistency in interpreting planning for the different classes;
 - there were very few schemes of work to give detailed guidance for the planning of series of lessons, this prevented better progress in learning in some subjects;

- and
 - setting for English and mathematics lessons was not supported by teachers having appropriately high expectations based on thorough assessment of pupils' existing achievements.
- 41 There remain a few inconsistencies in teachers' interpretation of planning and expectations are not high enough as a result. Assessment has improved; it is now used to better effect in guiding curricular decisions in most year groups. There have been good improvements in the planning of schemes of work for most year groups. The curriculum provided for most pupils now makes a sound contribution to their progress. Improvements are still needed in some aspects of the curriculum in Year 7.
- 42 The curriculum provides all the statutory subjects and includes personal, social and health education. Curricular time for the statutory core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum, and for personal, social and health education in Key Stage 2, has been enhanced by concentrating on teaching only these subjects, and in Year 7 by limiting modern foreign languages to French. There are some areas in which curricular time could be enhanced. First, teaching time for the curriculum at Key Stage 2 is slightly below the recommended minimum of 23.5 hours; second, within the time allocated, science, a core subject, receives too little time in some classes, particularly in Year 7, and this restricts the potential progress that pupils can make. One further curricular issue is that only Year 5 pupils go swimming. This means that by the end of the key stage only around half of the pupils have achieved the national expectation that they should swim 25m unaided.
- 43 There is satisfactory continuity and progression in planning. The implementation in Key Stage 2 of the National Literacy Strategy has been good overall; for the National Numeracy Strategy this has been satisfactory. Some further work is needed to ensure these are consistently applied in some classes. The Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy has not yet impacted sufficiently in Year 7, and progression between Year 6 and 7 is not good enough. The work provided for pupils does not build well on the existing experiences and achievements of pupils leaving Year 6. This is particularly noted in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- 44 The adoption of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's schemes of work for science and for most of the other foundation subjects is providing satisfactory learning opportunities across Key Stage 2, although developments are still at an early stage. In order to support the achievement of higher standards, these now need to be adopted more consistently in teachers' planning and refined more closely to match the pupils' learning needs. In physical education, however, the planning to build on earlier work for each year group across the school, and the detailed planning for the broad lesson content in each half term, is a model of good practice. Suggestions from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority documents are taken account of, and enhanced further by the school's addition of ideas for lessons which will better meet the needs of the pupils and use the strengths of the teachers. The use of semi-specialist teaching also helps to guarantee some good learning opportunities, particularly in physical education, information and communication technology and French.
- 45 Provision for pupils with special educational needs remains good, as is the provision for pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. The good identification of learning difficulties, and the strategies to help overcome these, in behaviour, in mathematics, in reading, writing and spelling as well as in acquiring confidence in speaking English are all good, and make a significant contribution to the standards achieved by these pupils. The contributions made by the special educational needs co-ordinator, and by teaching assistants in the school, in addition to the help provided for pupils for whom English is an additional language by the visiting specialist from Milton Keynes Ethnic Minority Achievement Support Service team, all help to ensure a curriculum which supports the learning of these pupils. This results in good progress

for these pupils.

- 46 There are some occasions when some pupils' access to learning opportunities is not as good as it should be and results in them not having the same opportunities as their classmates. The inspection team noted a number of occasions when pupils were withdrawn from one lesson to have extra tuition in a different subject. Pupils report that this can happen regularly, when they miss the teaching of that subject's lesson week after week. During the week of the inspection, pupils were withdrawn for extra lessons in, for example, spelling, handwriting or music from the class lessons in mathematics, science, information and communication technology, art and physical education. Even more seriously, pupils are also withdrawn from religious education and assemblies. This contravenes statutory requirements. Pupils may only be withdrawn from these if the pupils' parents formally request this for religious reasons.
- 47 There is a very good range of extra-curricular clubs which gives pupils opportunities to extend their learning in a range of sporting and other activities. All of these extra-curricular activities are greatly valued by pupils, and membership of clubs is very high. During the week of the inspection, a teacher who has been offering a sailing club in the early part of the term offered to set up a club for rugby for the next few months. By Thursday, the interest level was so high that the teacher was facing a problem of how to provide for the high numbers who had shown an interest. Similarly, in an assembly where the good achievement of the school's cross country team in a Milton Keynes schools' competition was celebrated, a large number of pupils across the age ranges stood up. First the team, then those who had gone to support, and finally, the other members of the club, were invited to stand and be applauded.
- 48 The school makes good use of the resources and support for the school which is available in the community, for example the Central Milton Keynes Shopping Centre, local branches of national and international companies, the local church, and a range of environmental venues. In addition, the school houses an after-school club run by a local Christian group, "Fusion". The school also supports the parents in a "Clutch Club" where a sizeable group of parents are developing their information and communication technology skills and in doing this, are creating a resource to help learning in local history and in building web pages for the school.
- 49 The school also makes very good use of visits to enrich the curriculum, including residential trips in each year group, and a variety of day visits to artistic, historic and environmental venues, and other places of interest, both locally and further afield. These include a trip to Normandy for older pupils every other year. These opportunities are a continuing strength and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and social development. The school welcomes a range of visitors from Christian groups such as Fusion and Signpost, the local vicar, poets, a Tudor music specialist, Milton Keynes World Development Education centre, and dance groups. Counsellors who help care for pupils, and a drama teacher who helps build pupils' self esteem, further enhance the school's provision of learning opportunities.
- 50 The school has satisfactory and improving links with Stantonbury school, and good links with the on-site King Edward nursery and with one of its two feeder schools. There are good links also with De Montfort University's teacher training department.
- 51 Personal, social and health education is satisfactorily covered. There are timetabled lessons in Year 7; in the other classes, circle time considers many of these issues. Elements of health education arise through science, and many other aspects of personal and social development feature in religious education. Important ideas from this area of study are also promoted in the way most teachers manage learning every day. Although this aspect of the curriculum is not yet a consistently planned feature throughout the school, there are some strengths. The school's emphasis on teamwork and building respect for all, has a major impact on helping pupils to behave well and be considerate. A great deal of sensitive work is put in across the curriculum in Year 4 which helps to settle children well so that effective learning can happen for

all. This work is continued effectively through almost all classes, and provides a secure basis, both to allow suitable expectations of behaviour and achievement, and to "future-proof" children for the challenges that will face them in resisting pressures to take part in unhealthy or unsafe activities. Furthermore, this key feature of the school's work is reinforced by the work of the School Council to where pupils' representatives from each class bring issues which are then taken to the senior management of the school to be resolved. This develops a strong feeling of citizenship. There are sound policies for drugs education and the management of any drug-related incidents, and for sex education.

- 52 Statutory requirements for providing a daily act of collective worship are not consistently met each day. Sometimes circle time takes the place of an act of worship, and some assemblies also fail to be acts of worship. The opportunity to promote pupils' spiritual development through these assemblies is not used well.
- 53 The curriculum is used well to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils' moral and social development are promoted very well every day in classes across the school. Pupils throughout the school are aware of right and wrong. In almost all classes careful planning, and the teacher's commitment to the principles and aims which the school holds dear, helps to provide a safe and calm environment where pupils can work well together. This promotes their personal, social and emotional development. Opportunities to consider moral issues are taken in many subjects. For example, very thoughtful responses are encouraged in some role-play about the issues concerning the exploitation or conservation of the rain forests. Through the School Council, pupils have expressed a wish to develop an area with rich potential to become a nature area that will encourage birds and other wildlife. Pupils also raise money to support a variety of charities, for example the Toybox charity which supports street children in Guatemala. Pupils have also contributed to the running of a Fair Trade Breakfast event in Milton Keynes. In all classes, pupils are encouraged to collaborate well in tasks, and they rise to this challenge. It is notable how well pupils use the few computers in the suite. They share very sensitively, taking turns, even though they are all keen to have their "go". Teachers provide good role models and encourage an ethos of mutual consideration and respect.
- 54 Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory overall. One good example occurred in a religious education lesson in Year 5 when pupils took a photograph with the digital camera of the tableau just enacted (Solomon chooses David to be King), capturing the moment and showing it on the computer screen. The teacher then used this to raise important questions about the character's feelings. Pupils were able to empathise with this because of the effective use of drama. In a music lesson in Year 4, there was a strong spiritual element when pupils gave good responses to music played ("Albatross" by Fleetwood Mac), indicating feelings about the gift of the albatross to soar for long periods that they had detected being transmitted through the music. However, there could be more of these kinds of opportunities planned into the curriculum. Few assemblies promote spiritual development as well as they could.
- 55 Provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Opportunities in music, art religious education and in literature are used appropriately to extend pupils' appreciation of their own and wider world cultures. In music for example, resources include African and Indian drumming music on tape for specific year group programmes. The school is also planning to develop teachers' skills in a range of dance styles from other countries, and some teachers are about to attend training on Indian dance which will be fed back into the curriculum. The major world faith festivals are celebrated.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 56 A fundamental feature and a real strength of this school is the care it takes of its

pupils. Teachers know everyone in their class well and pay close attention to their general progress. Their monitoring of pupils' personal development is mostly informal but quite consistent, and it is effective. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, and eliminating oppressive behaviour, are very effective. The improvement in personal development that results from a period of continuous attendance at this school is clearly demonstrated by older pupils. The very good relationships that are cultivated between teachers and pupils encourage pupils to understand and follow the 'Golden Rules'. These rules promote mutual respect, friendly communication, and acceptance of the agreed disciplinary structure. As a result, pupils are taught to have consideration for one another, to work together well, and to be confident in their relationships. It is the quality of relationships between staff and pupils that allow learning in the cramped classrooms to be effective. Good use is made of a range of ways to support pupils, including circle time, a school counsellor and raising pupils' self-esteem in drama activities. The School Council is particularly effective in fostering pupils' social and moral development.

- 57 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and academic progress are sound overall, but are still at a relatively early stage of development. Knowledge of trends in the performance of the whole school is better developed than knowledge of individual pupils. Information about individual pupils' attainment and progress is not yet always used to the best advantage in determining the work they are given. This particularly applies to the more able pupils. However, pupils with special educational needs or with English as an additional language receive good support; they are given appropriate work and make good progress. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs are detailed. They are updated termly and teachers are aware of the objectives.
- 58 The school's arrangements for monitoring and ensuring pupils' welfare, and their health and safety, are good. Satisfactory arrangements for child protection are in place. There is currently no child protection incident requiring formal action, but all staff are aware of their responsibilities in this area. There are comprehensive and effective procedures for easing the transition of pupils from Year 7 to Stantonbury School, their main secondary destination. Physical security is satisfactory: there is a formal procedure for admitting visitors, and all staff are vigilant. Fire drills take place regularly and the outcomes are reported to the governing body for action. The school monitors attendance carefully to identify individuals whose attendance causes concern. All practical steps to encourage full attendance are taken. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good. Attendance is monitored using a computer system. In order to reduce the amount of unauthorised absence, repeated absence is discussed with parents and, where appropriate, referred to the Education Welfare Officer for support. The attendance registers are accurately completed and comply with the appropriate conventions and statutory requirements.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 59 In both the written survey and the consultation evening parents expressed positive views about many aspect of the school. They are happy that the school expects their children to work hard and are pleased with the progress their children make. Their belief that their children like school is supported by the school's survey of pupils' views. Parents appreciate the hard working staff and recognise the strong leadership that enables the school to function well. Inspection judgements do not support the negative views of some parents in respect of homework, extra-curricular activities, information about pupils' progress and opportunities for parents to work closely with the school. The school sets homework for pupils on a regular basis. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, both at lunchtime and after school. The school's reports are informative; the school's open door policy provides effective opportunities for parents to gain further information as necessary, and to work closely with the school.
- 60 As well as three formal opportunities to come in and discuss their child's progress

during the year, parents receive annual written reports of their children's progress. Further information about the whole school is presented in the Southwood Standard newsletter. The school operates an open-door policy, so approaches can be made at any time. This approachability, supplemented by initiatives such as the successful Numeracy morning, is appreciated by parents. The reports give quite detailed accounts of pupils' progress in all areas, most comprehensively in English, mathematics and science, but apart from English, few sections identify personal targets or areas for improvement. The newly-developed report format offers the opportunity for such comment. Contact books are used effectively to record reading, homework and some personal targets for pupils, but they are not used consistently enough to be fully effective as a channel for home-school communication.

- 61 The school makes good efforts to involve parents in their children's education. Parents regularly hear their children read and are appropriately involved if their children are identified as having special educational needs. Social and fundraising events, organised through the Friends of Southwood, are well supported and popular; the funds have provided useful supplements to school resources such as physical education equipment and a digital camera. Parents have been responsible for the Clutch project and help with a range of extra-curricular activities, but few help in the school on a regular basis.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 62 The leadership and management of the school are good and have a beneficial impact on pupils' learning. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and has a very clear educational vision for the school, which he shares effectively with staff, governors, parents and pupils. He has a very clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development at the school. He has worked hard and successfully to tackle the issues which were raised by the previous inspection, as well as ensuring clear direction for the school through a period of significant change in staffing.
- 63 The aims of the school and the mission statement place great emphasis on the promotion of good relationships, the development of high self-esteem within a well-ordered and secure environment. The school has been very successful in applying these aims. A central theme is that of striving for high achievement within a culture of learning and continual improvement. This is at the heart of the school, and is very much in evidence in the daily life of the school, where all staff are committed to raising standards. The aims of the school and key messages to pupils reminding them of these aims are displayed prominently around the school. Pupils know and respect these aims, which are also strongly supported by parents.
- 64 The governors are very supportive of the school and have a clear understanding of its work. They are well organised and play an important role in strategic development and, increasingly, in monitoring the school's performance through analysing test results and through informal visits to help and support in classes and monitor teaching and learning. Governors have a good understanding of the principles of best value and tenders for major purchases of supplies and services. They are prudent and forward-thinking before committing the school to large expenditure, such as the recent purchase of new furniture. A scheme to upgrade the existing computer suite is currently being studied carefully to ensure the best possible value for money is obtained. Another effective spending decision has been to maintain the number of support staff working in classrooms; this has had a beneficial effect on standards. The governing body meets almost all of its statutory duties effectively, although the arrangements for the provision of a daily act of worship are currently inconsistent and, therefore, unsatisfactory.
- 65 Governors are involved well in strategic planning. The school's development plan identifies priorities clearly and includes good levels of detail of costs, key responsibilities, monitoring arrangements, timescales and measures of success. It also usefully identifies good links with the local education authority's own education

development plan. It is complemented by an equally well-conceived financial plan and a plan for staff development. It is a very useful tool which is helping to bring about sustained improvement and the raising of standards. Priorities are based on an astute analysis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and set a very clear agenda for the next few years. Progress in meeting the targets is reviewed regularly by staff, and governors monitor carefully through sub-committees and meetings of the whole governing body. The plan is displayed in the staffroom so that all staff and governors may check specific priorities and see for themselves the good progress made in meeting targets. This both exemplifies and supports the shared commitment by staff and governors to school improvement.

- 66 Since the previous inspection in February 1998, the school has made good progress. Standards in English, mathematics and science have improved in relation to schools in similar contexts, and the school now sets demanding targets for the pupils' achievements. The quality of teaching has improved significantly, with a higher proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching. Teachers' expectations have improved, but further improvement is still needed in Year 7. Teaching is now more closely monitored and lessons have a sharper focus. Schemes of work have improved; these now provide greater support for teachers' planning and aid progression in pupils' learning. Assessment procedures have improved, and recording of pupils' National Curriculum attainment and progress is now more detailed. Subject managers and year leaders have greater planned opportunities to monitor practice and to ensure policies are being applied. The school is well placed to improve further.
- 67 The monitoring of teaching and curriculum development is good. The previous inspection highlighted the need for the school to make significant improvements in this aspect of its work, and much has been done to achieve this. Arrangements for monitoring operate at several different levels, and are co-ordinated successfully by the headteacher and senior staff. There is a rolling programme of observation by subject managers, year leaders and the headteacher. The headteacher's monitoring is systematic and thorough and, as a result, his knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses is good. The results of monitoring are being used with increasing effectiveness to bring about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, and thus upon the raising of standards.
- 68 The headteacher and members of the senior management team undertake analysis of the standards that pupils achieve. The results of this are shared with staff and governors, and targets for whole-school improvement are set. The target-setting process is based on a thorough assessment of the achievements of each pupil. Good account is taken of the processes and curricular adaptations needed to support teachers in their planning and delivery of programmes of learning which will bring about raised standards. As a result, the school achieved its targets for 2001 in English and science, although not in mathematics where, it was acknowledged, the target agreed with the local education authority had been over-ambitious for the pupils concerned.
- 69 The school's policy, provision and procedures for pupils with special educational needs meets the recommendations of the Code of Practice. The school's special needs co-ordinator manages the support programmes for pupils on the special needs register well, and plays an active part in helping to ensure that pupils make good progress. The school's good work in supporting pupils contributes towards a significant minority being taken off the register when their special need has been met. There is a member of the governing body with responsibility for special needs provision. Assessments are undertaken, reviews are conducted and parents informed as required. There are appropriate links with external agencies. The school fulfils its statutory obligations effectively. Pupils with special educational needs are carefully and successfully integrated into school life.
- 70 Financial control is robust; there are good systems to control and manage

expenditure. The carry-forward figure estimated for the current year is within acceptable limits, and has been clearly identified for specific expenditure. Financial decisions receive serious attention and funds are used wisely. Specific grants are used appropriately. The administrative staff provide very good support and their effective organisational skills and pleasant, efficient approach contribute to the smooth running of the school. Subject managers are allocated budgets, and amounts vary between subjects according to the priority in the development plan. Subject managers carefully account for the funds and use them well.

- 71 The staff work effectively as a team; all are valued and contribute much to the quality of education provided at the school. There are sufficient, well qualified teachers who have suitable training and they make a good contribution to the raising of standards. The school's support staff are fully involved in lessons, in working with pupils for whom English is an additional language and those with special educational needs. They have benefited much from training and make a very good contribution to the pupils' progress. The school's staff development programme is well organised and linked to priorities in the school improvement plan. Training in English and mathematics has been effective, but training for information and communication technology has recently been re-cast in consultation with the provider to ensure that it more closely matches the school's needs. The induction arrangements for new staff are effective. Arrangements for newly qualified teachers are in place, and new staff receive appropriate support and guidance. Arrangements for the training of new teachers are generally secure. The arrangements for performance management are effective; performance management interviews are conducted well and targets for improvement are set for staff. The staff handbook and guidance for supply staff provide good levels of information.
- 72 The school's accommodation has some weaknesses which affect teaching and learning. The classrooms are small, particularly for the older pupils, and this presents difficulties for whole-class teaching and practical activities within the curriculum. This position was noted at the time of the previous inspection. It is to the staff's credit that disruption to learning in literacy and numeracy lessons because of a lack of space is minimised. Pupils show consideration for others, and adjust well to the cramped conditions. Access for disabled pupils is not ideal, requiring a detour outside the buildings if a wheelchair is used in order to avoid the various sets of steps in the building. The steps also present a potential hazard for partially-sighted pupils. The school grounds are well developed and cared for, and the buildings are well maintained and very clean. The playground is sited at a lower level than the playing fields; as a result, it becomes very muddy in wet weather. All staff are vigilant, and every effort is taken to ensure pupils' safety at such times.
- 73 There are also some weaknesses in the provision of resources for learning. The school library, recently moved from its shared location with the computer suite, has a very small stock of books for the current size of school, although this is partly the result of old and out-of-date material being appropriately removed. This newly-designated library area has the potential to be a valuable site, but it is currently under-used. The staff are aware of this and there are plans to address the matter. Whilst there are significant strengths in the resources for design and technology, physical education, religious education and music, the school's level of provision of computers for information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. This limits the access which pupils have to computers. There are too few books to support further improvements in pupils' reading skills in French. The school makes good use of external resources, such as the local theatre and arts centre, and maintains annual residential experiences for pupils in all years. Visitors from the local community, musicians and theatre groups are also used effectively to enhance the curriculum.
- 74 At the time of the previous inspection, weaknesses were identified in the management roles of team leaders and subject managers, particularly in respect of monitoring practice and ensuring the application of school policies. These issues have been addressed successfully. Team leaders and subject managers work together well to

improve both standards and levels of provision, and monitoring practices throughout the school as a whole have improved substantially.

- 75 Taking into account:
- the pupils' well-below-average attainment on entry to the school and the above-average costs of educating the pupils;
 - the steady improvement in standards over the past four years;
 - the good improvement made since the previous inspection, and particularly the good improvement in the curriculum and the quality of teaching; and
 - the good provision for, and progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language;

the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 76 To improve the educational standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

1) Improve standards in mathematics by the ages of 11 and 12 by:

- making the procedures and processes for year team planning more consistent, coherent and rigorous;
- providing a better match of mathematical learning experiences for individuals and groups of pupils;
- reviewing arrangements for grouping, and regularly evaluate how effectively the needs of pupils are being met; and
- further developing approaches to target setting for individual pupils; providing professional development opportunities for teachers to ensure that all of the teaching in mathematics is of the same high quality.

(Refer to paragraphs 9, 28, 31, 35, 41, 44, 88, 90, 93, 94, 97, 100, 101, 102.)

(The raising of standards in mathematics already has a high priority in the school's development plan.)

2) Improve standards in information and communication technology (ICT) by the ages of 11 and 12 by:

- providing professional development opportunities for teachers to increase their subject knowledge and confidence in teaching the subject;
- auditing pupils' existing knowledge and skills, and modifying planning to take account of these;
- using nationally available and other funding to equip the school with an up-to-date computer suite with Internet connections sufficient to allow access for a class and to meet the requirements of the curriculum; and
- providing opportunities for ICT to support learning in other subjects outside the ICT suite.

(Refer to paragraphs 14, 28, 34, 35, 73, 84, 100, 137, 146, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 156, 161, 173.)

3) Raise standards in English and science and improve teachers' expectations of achievement by the age of 12 by:

- ensuring greater collaboration with Key Stage 2 teachers in planning work;
- building closely on pupils' prior attainment;
- raising teachers' expectations of what can be achieved by pupils in Year 7;
- increasing the time spent on science in the curriculum;

- providing coaching from within and outside the school to build teachers' confidence in setting appropriate challenges; and
- consolidating the valuable initiative already begun in school on the development of teaching and learning.

(Refer to paragraphs 8, 10, 12, 28, 31, 35, 41, 43, 44, 77, 82, 83, 84, 87, 105, 107, 109, 111, 112, 114, 116.)

4) Ensure all pupils, particularly the more able, are sufficiently challenged by:

- using existing assessment data more precisely to pinpoint the next steps in learning for all pupils, and especially the more able; and
- further developing structured programmes to meet their needs.

(Refer to paragraphs 15, 28, 41, 57, 101, 102, 153, 157, 190.)

5) Improve timetable arrangements for the withdrawal of pupils for extra tuition by:

- withdrawing pupils from the subject in which they need tuition and support; and
- ensuring pupils are not withdrawn from acts of worship and religious education unless this is formally requested by parents in accordance with their religious beliefs.

(Refer to paragraphs 46, 52, 64, 191.)

6) Ensure the provision of a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

(Refer to paragraphs 52, 64.)

Other issues which the school should consider:

- Improve the book stock in the school library and ensure the newly-designated area is used effectively to support pupils' learning.
(Refer to paragraphs 73, 81, 86.)
- Improve access to year areas for disabled pupils, particularly those with visual impairment.
(Refer to paragraph 72.)
- Continue to develop strategies which promote better attendance at the school.
(Refer to paragraph 23.)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	79
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	21

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	5	13	34	24	3	0	0
Percentage	6	17	43	30	4	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Nursery	Y4 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		286
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		102

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Nursery	Y4 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		90

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	28
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	28

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2
National comparative data	6.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	42	32	74

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	26	22	36
	Girls	23	14	25
	Total	49	36	61
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	66 (58)	48 (58)	83 (76)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	27	32
	Girls	19	21	22
	Total	43	49	54
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	58 (55)	65 (61)	73 (64)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	11
Indian	3
Pakistani	3
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	2
White	257
Any other minority ethnic group	

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	9	2
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y4 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.3 : 1
Average class size	22

Education support staff: Y4 – Y7

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	145

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
	£
Total income	564,681
Total expenditure	546,741
Expenditure per pupil	1,879
Balance brought forward from previous year	-3,254

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	290
Number of questionnaires returned	103

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	43	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	46	8	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	50	9	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	48	17	6	4
The teaching is good.	46	38	8	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	47	36	15	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	59	34	4	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	42	3	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	40	43	12	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	42	48	3	1	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	41	7	1	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	35	14	3	9

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

ENGLISH

77 In the 2001 national tests for eleven year olds, overall standards in English were well below average. However, when compared with similar schools, results were above average. These results represent a steady improvement, and indicate that the school has kept pace with the nationally improving trend. The school achieved its 2001 demanding target for pupils attaining Level 4 and above in English. Teacher assessments are in line with the test results, which indicates a significant improvement in teachers' judgements since the last inspection. Pupils' literacy skills by the age of eleven are improving at an appropriate rate due to the school's effective implementation and adaptation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS). Given the pupils' well-below-average attainment on entry to the school at the age of eight, and the improvements made as a result of successful implementation of the NLS and good teaching, their achievement is broadly satisfactory in English. By the age of twelve, standards of attainment in English are below average. The Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy is in the very early stages of implementation. Evidence gathered during the inspection from lesson observations, samples of work and through discussions with pupils, indicates that standards achieved throughout the school in speaking and listening are good. In reading and writing, standards are satisfactory except for the oldest pupils for whom they are unsatisfactory. There are no significant variations in the standards achieved by boys and girls. Progress is good for pupils with special educational needs and for those with English as an additional language.

78 The school has successfully implemented the NLS. Each year group is divided into three sets, according to prior attainment, for the teaching of literacy with the intention of providing a better match of work to pupils' needs. This structure is sometimes at the expense of matching work to the individual needs of pupils within these groups. The school needs to carefully monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these groupings to ensure appropriate learning for all. All pupils spend at least an hour a day on the development of literacy skills. When pupils enter the school they lack confidence in speaking and their listening skills are poor. Reading skills are poorly developed and very few pupils are able to write fluently. These limitations are immediately addressed. Through effective teaching pupils soon become confident in speaking and listening and contribute well to discussions in large and small groups, as well as individually with adults. The School Council is an excellent example of pupils' ability to speak on behalf of others, and represent their views. Pupils performed very well in this formal situation, speaking through the chair and listening carefully to all contributions. Pupils were able to engage in a mature discussion of issues arising, and to take possibilities back to their class for further consideration, as well as reporting issues raised in other classes. During assemblies, pupils listen very carefully and attentively even when, from time to time, they are unable to hear some of the contributions. The after-school drama club also makes a significant contribution to pupils' performance skills, enabling them to learn how to project their voices. Plenary sessions are common across all classes and subjects, enabling pupils to focus on their learning and build on their speaking and listening skills. Their vocabulary and use of words is developing through the language associated with the literacy hour and the focus on the use of correct terminology in subjects across the curriculum. Pupils have ample opportunities to practise and develop their speaking and listening skills across the curriculum. The emphasis upon spoken language helps those pupils with English as an additional language to make good progress in their acquisition of English.

79 Pupils are able to read and write with increasing confidence, fluency and

understanding. They read together successfully during whole-class sessions, in a group with the teacher and independently. They have a good grasp of letter sounds and this helps them to tackle words that are unfamiliar to them. Younger pupils make good use of pictures to help with their understanding, and many are able to self-correct as a result of reading on and making sense of the text. Higher-attaining pupils read fluently and with expression and discuss text knowledgeably. Older pupils are able to read and understand complex texts and discuss ideas, themes, events and characters. When talking about what they have read, pupils show that they are able to pick out inferences and make deductions. This was evident when some of the oldest pupils were considering the loneliness of a character as inferred by a poet. They are keen to talk about what they have read and show an interest in books of all types. They are able to state preferences and know why they like particular books and authors. Pupils are familiar with terms such as fiction, non-fiction, author and illustrator. They know how to find information within books using contents and index pages as well as making good use of skimming and scanning skills.

- 80 Pupils are developing a good understanding of the sound and spelling system which they use to read and spell with increasing accuracy. Standards of presentation are generally good throughout the school except for the oldest pupils. Although handwriting is generally neat and legible, and pupils learn to join letters during handwriting practice sessions, these skills are not consistently applied in other written work. Writing covers the full range of fiction and non-fiction texts, and pupils are able to write for different purposes. Year 4 pupils were making good progress in learning how to change informational writing into instructional writing, making effective use of imperative verbs. In the lower-attaining group, pupils successfully made little books, linked to their work on the ancient Egyptians, providing instructions on how to mummify a body, the gory details particularly capturing their interest! In Year 5, pupils were learning how to make notes for instructional writing. One set of pupils was doing this successfully, working collaboratively in pairs, as they made a string telephone for which they were writing the instructions. This "hands-on" experience, whilst engaging their interest, enabled the pupils to add precision to their instructions, making them much clearer and easier to follow. In one of the Year 5 classes, pupils were recounting the events of the previous day when they had been looking at Tudor musical instruments. They were able to write an opening paragraph to effectively set the scene prior to writing a chronological sequence of events. Year 6 pupils were learning how to write a screenplay script. This was especially challenging but successfully achieved, particularly by the higher-attaining pupils who clearly understood the features of this complex genre of writing. A significant feature of the majority of lessons is how effectively pupils co-operate and work together in collaboration reflecting the school motto "**T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore".
- 81 Pupils' writing skills are promoted effectively through work in other subjects, notably history and geography, but also in religious education. This contributes significantly to the raising of standards in literacy. Pupils' reading skills are frequently challenged through a wide range of classwork. Although pupils make effective use of books in the classroom, too little use is made of the school library, and not all pupils are familiar with the classification system used or how to locate a book appropriately.
- 82 Teaching is good overall. In 97 per cent of English lessons seen across the school, teaching is at least satisfactory. In two thirds of lessons it is good or better and in a quarter of lessons it is very good or better. Teaching in Year 7 is satisfactory. The majority of lessons throughout the school are well planned. Learning objectives are clearly identified and shared with the pupils. The use of WALT (we are learning to) and WILF (what I'm looking for) ensures that pupils understand what they are learning and know how to achieve the learning outcome. Where teaching is particularly good, activities contribute well to pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, the practical activity of making string telephones was not only motivating but also enabled the pupils to sequence and produce a clearer set of instructions. Teachers have high expectations and set challenging tasks such as in Year 6, where pupils made significant gains in learning when successfully writing

film scripts. Good use is made of introductory, whole- class sessions to recap on previous lessons and reinforce and consolidate learning. Revisiting the learning objective at the end of the lesson enables pupils to recognise gains in learning and celebrate success. Relationships are particularly good. Teachers know the pupils and manage them well. Pupils are encouraged to work together and do so effectively. Provision of a secure learning environment, in which all contributions are valued, enables pupils to grow in confidence. Praise and positive feedback, together with the belief that everyone can improve, enhances self-esteem. A good example of this was seen during a Year 5 lesson when the teacher skilfully maintained the interest of the lower-attaining pupils, the majority of whom have special educational needs, during the literacy hour. When teaching is unsatisfactory, it is characterised by unclear learning objectives and low expectations. Given the setting arrangements for the teaching of English, it is important that all teachers have a clear understanding of WALT (we are learning to) and WILF (what I'm looking for), and that it is applied consistently in all lessons.

- 83 Although teachers know the pupils well and monitor their progress effectively overall, assessment information is not always used consistently to match the learning to pupils' individual needs within the setting arrangements. Feedback to pupils during lessons is both positive and constructive. In many lessons, pupils are involved in self-assessment, and work effectively in pairs, providing each other with helpful feedback about what has been done well and engaging in discussion about how their work might be improved. Marking is particularly effective in some classes where pupils are provided with constructive feedback about how well they have achieved the learning objective, with targets for improvement as appropriate. However, although there is a marking policy, it is not applied consistently across the school as a whole.
- 84 Pupils with special educational needs have detailed individual education action plans which are followed carefully. They make good progress towards the targets set for them and are very well supported both by teachers and learning support assistants. More-able pupils sometimes do not make sufficient progress in Year 7, but their progress in Years 4 to 6 is generally satisfactory. The use of information and communication technology in support of English is generally sound, although good use is made of computers for word processing to facilitate and edit writing. Many examples of this were displayed in classrooms. A particularly good example of this is the autobiographies written by Year 6 pupils. Desktop publishing facilities are not used regularly, although there are examples of this approach being developed in Year 6.
- 85 The English curriculum is taught mainly through the literacy hour, with good provision made for the teaching and learning of speaking and listening skills. The school has benefited from the support of the Local Education Authority (LEA) and, as a result, teachers have gained confidence in managing the literacy hour. The management of English is good. The subject manager has recently updated the English policy, and schemes of work have been written in line with the requirements of the NLS. Most classes allocate an hour a day to the teaching of literacy. Standards of attainment are closely monitored through observation of the literacy hour being taught in classes across the school and analysis of teacher assessment and test outcomes. The monitoring has resulted in carefully identified, school targets for development which are documented in the subject manager's action plan. Recently, the focus has been on using NLS booster units for Years 5 and 6, on improving extended writing and having a focus for an assessed piece of writing each term to facilitate the monitoring of progress. There is a detailed implementation and monitoring timetable in place. Classes throughout the school have targets relevant to the age group. Individual pupils' needs are met through the setting of individual, personal targets. Each child has a fold-out sheet at the front of their English book which can be referred to whilst working. This is particularly successful when teachers focus pupils' attention on their targets at the beginning of lessons and carefully monitor their progress towards achieving them. This good practice needs to be applied consistently across the school as a whole.

- 86 Resources for learning are adequate. Pupils have access to a range of literature, which makes a positive contribution to the standards attained in reading. The school library has recently been relocated to enable the development of a computer suite. It is centrally positioned and provides an appropriate working environment. Although the two learning support assistants who manage the library do so effectively, there is not a designated teacher with overall responsibility for oversight of the library. The library has been audited recently with the support of a LEA librarian. Out-of-date books and those in poor condition have been discarded. Gaps were identified and, subsequently, funding was allocated for the purchase of books. There are still gaps and more funding is needed. At the time of the last inspection the library was identified as being an under-used resource; it continues to be so. Discussions with pupils indicate that they make little use of the library. Some do not know how the books are organised or how to locate books efficiently. Fiction books are allocated to year groups and are stored in classrooms. Books are rotated across all three classes in each year group during the year, enabling pupils to access a wider range. Topic books are borrowed from the LEA loans service.
- 87 Since the time of the previous inspection, following the introduction of the NLS, standards in English have improved. A subject manager for English has been appointed who provides good leadership and support across the school. The impact of this support, which has been identified in the action plan as a target for the coming year, has yet to be seen with the older pupils in Year 7. A better range of teaching and learning styles has been developed. There have been distinct improvements in pupils' speaking and listening skills. Writing has improved. It covers a wide variety of purposes and is appropriately organised, such as into paragraphs. Presentation is good with the exception of the oldest pupils in Year 7. Handwriting has improved although there continue to be inconsistencies across the school as a whole. Pupils with special educational needs made satisfactory progress; this is now good. In the majority of classes, learning objectives are clear and understood by the pupils. As a result, pupils are learning the skills of self-evaluation and are engaging in effective self-assessment and peer-assessment. Procedures for assessment have improved, although there are inconsistencies across the school, and marking is not always as effective as it might be. Assessment information is not always used to meet the differing learning needs of pupils within the sets.

MATHEMATICS

- 88 In the 2001 national tests for pupils aged eleven, overall standards in mathematics were well below average. The percentage of pupils gaining Level 4 or above was well below the national average. Pupils' attainment at the higher Level 5, was below, but closer, to the national average. When compared to schools with similar characteristics, standards in mathematics are average. With the exception of the year 2000, the school has shown a small but steady year-on-year improvement in standards in mathematics since 1997. The school has studied differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Inspection evidence suggests that this is not now a significant issue. The school continues to set challenging targets for pupils' attainment in mathematics. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in mathematics are below average by the age of eleven, although good teaching is making a substantial impact on improving standards in the subject. By the age of twelve, standards overall are still below the level expected, although there is evidence that the most able pupils are capable of higher attainment in lessons.
- 89 The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy is making a positive contribution to improving standards throughout the school. The strategy has now been consolidated in the teaching of classes for eight to eleven year olds. The Key Stage 3 Numeracy Framework has also been introduced but is at an early stage of implementation in Year 7. Throughout the school, planning for lessons is aligned to the recommendations of the strategy framework.

- 90 Pupils are grouped broadly according to their attainment in mathematics. This approach has benefits in terms of the match of work to the range of attainment in each group. There are some inconsistencies in the way in which teachers plan for their year and attainment groups. This leads to some unnecessary repetition of work from the national framework and, on occasions, a poor match of work to the needs of the pupils.
- 91 The pupils identified as the most able in each year group are usually achieving as well as they should, with the exception of those in Year 7. The youngest pupils are confident and accurate when handling number sequences. In oral and mental work, they show that they can use a good range of mathematical methods to arrive at the correct answers to simple problems. In a Year 4 class, they can represent data using pictograms and bar charts, and are able to explain how they have used tallying as a way of counting quickly. In Year 5, pupils recognise co-ordinates and can read and plot positions on a chart using quadrants. In Year 6, they are confident in describing the properties of quadrilaterals using the correct, specialist vocabulary. Most are able to classify shapes using side angle properties and, in a challenging lesson, they were introduced to the concept of mapping properties using a binary tree. A large majority of pupils are able to define appropriate questions in order to map the shapes according to a variety of attributes, for example right angles, adjacent sides, bisects and parallel sides. The use of geometric information, in a Year 7 lesson, to prepare a test question for Year 6 pupils, showed a good level of understanding of the way in which mathematical knowledge can be used to set up and solve problems.
- 92 Some work has taken place to identify pupils with the potential to achieve at even higher levels. There is some provision for extended tasks and challenging problem solving in lessons, such as in a Year 6 lesson when pupils were classifying quadrilaterals, working with an increasingly more varied range of angle properties which challenged their thinking. A small group of talented pupils receives additional teaching to extend their knowledge and application of mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language usually make good progress.
- 93 In most lessons a large majority of pupils are achieving at levels appropriate for their age in mathematics. They understand the need to work with numbers accurately and have a grasp of the ideas about using different strategies to reach conclusions. The work on shape and space is leading to a greater knowledge of the use of data to represent information. In some lessons, pupils are able to recognise the way in which mathematical skills can be used in other subjects. This is not a strong feature of the mathematical curriculum, but there is increasing evidence of links made by pupils in Years 5 and 6, from their work on co-ordinates in mathematics, to geography.
- 94 There is a significant minority of pupils who do not attain at the level expected for their age. In some lessons, pupils are not secure in their knowledge of number and mathematical concepts. For example, some Year 7 pupils are unsure about using a protractor; they find accurate measurement of angles difficult. The achievement of these pupils is, on occasion, limited because the work is not suitably matched to their needs. Year 4 pupils who have arrived at the school well below average in attainment are beginning to make gains in their knowledge of number. They show increasing accuracy when making calculations in oral and mental work. The least-able pupils in mathematics are making slow but satisfactory progress in their first term at the school.
- 95 A large majority of pupils are making satisfactory progress in their learning. There are examples of swift and good quality learning in classes throughout the school. Many pupils show interest and enthusiasm for their work in lessons. They respond well to the oral and mental section of the daily mathematics lesson. In a Year 4 class, pupils were confident in counting in multiples of five, and some were keen to show that they

understood how negative numbers are calculated. In Year 5 and 6 classes, pupils were particularly attentive, listening carefully to instructions, becoming thoroughly involved in solving problems and enthusiastically sharing their methods with the teacher and each other.

- 96 In many lessons, pupils use the correct specialist language of mathematics to describe what they are doing and how they are working. In Year 4 and 5 classes, they use visual images to help them with their work in using co-ordinates – “tadpoles swim, frogs jump”, enabling them to find positions using first and second quadrants. “This is fun, I like this work” was a common response made by pupils in the lesson.
- 97 Older pupils demonstrate increased understanding and are able to work collaboratively in classes. Where opportunities are provided, they show that they are beginning to evaluate their own learning and progress. This approach is not consistent in the school and, while there are examples of group target setting in mathematics, there is only limited evidence of pupils being aware of their own individual goals.
- 98 Homework is used effectively to reinforce knowledge and understanding. References are made to homework tasks and there is strong evidence in mathematics that this is having a positive effect on pupils' progress.
- 99 Teaching is broadly satisfactory throughout the school. There are examples of good and very good teaching in all year groups. Teachers are secure in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. They have embraced the national frameworks for the teaching of basic number skills and have begun to plan lessons using the guidance provided. In most lessons the expectations are clear, usually supported by the WALT (we are learning to) and WILF (what I'm looking for) approach that is consistently applied across the school. This helps teachers to focus on the objectives for learning in each lesson and is effective in helping pupils to understand what is required of them.
- 100 All teachers use an appropriate range of teaching methods in mathematics lessons. The management of pupils is almost always good, often very good, and only in a small minority of lessons is it unsatisfactory. In the best lessons teachers use questions very effectively to check knowledge and to challenge pupils further. In very good mathematics lessons in Year 6, teachers prepared questions very carefully as a way of extending learning and understanding. The pace and development of themes in lessons is often very good. Time is used well and resources are generally well prepared. The contribution of learning support assistants is very good, particularly in groups where pupils have difficulties or need sensitive reinforcement. Teachers usually make good use of additional, adult support in the classroom. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in some data-handling tasks, for example in Year 6, where pupils generate graphs from spreadsheets, but the potential of ICT to support mathematics more broadly is under-developed. The school recognises this as an area for development.
- 101 Although the pupils are grouped according to their ability in mathematics, with clear differences between the most and least able, there is often a wide range of attainment in the groups. In some lessons, teachers do not provide sufficiently for this range. Learning experiences are not well matched to the needs of particular groups. Approaches to planning vary in different year groups. Year teams meet together regularly, but in some teams one teacher plans the work for the whole year group and there is too little responsibility given to individual teachers to match the work carefully to the needs of pupils in their own group.
- 102 The quality of marking in mathematics books is variable. Work is generally marked regularly. There is very little evidence of a sustained, consistent approach to marking that helps pupils to build on their learning in a developmental way. The use of assessment to plan future learning is limited. During the inspection some teachers

did, however, make adjustments to their lessons in the light of information gained about the levels of knowledge and understanding gained in previous lessons. This improved the quality of teaching and learning for those pupils.

- 103 The subject is well led by the subject manager. She has a clear vision for improvement in standards in mathematics and has begun to implement a regular programme of monitoring of teachers' planning. The school has benefited from intensive support through the LEA specialist consultant for numeracy. Mathematics has a high priority as part of the school's development plan and there is a good focus on raising standards throughout the school. Observations of teaching and learning in the classroom are planned as part of the subject manager's monitoring role. These are in their early stages but have the capacity to make a positive impact on all aspects of teaching and assessment in mathematics.
- 104 The school has made good progress since the time of the previous inspection. The previous report judged that standards were well below average, but the school has improved its approaches to the teaching and learning in mathematics as a direct result of the introduction of the national strategy. Gains have been made in overall attainment, particularly when judged against similar schools.

SCIENCE

- 105 Pupils' performance in national tests at age 11 is improving. Although standards are well below average when compared with national results, these standards are average when compared with schools in similar contexts. Standards are showing a steady upward trend, supported by improvements in teaching, particularly in Years 4 to 6, where standards in the work seen are broadly average, and there has been a significant improvement in pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Standards in Year 7 are below those expected nationally, and are lower than they should be given these pupils' test results last year. Work is not well matched to their existing attainment and insufficient time is given to science in this year group.
- 106 The test results for 2001 showed that the school comes fairly close to the national average in its attainment at Level 4, but is much less successful at the higher Level 5. It is this fact which means the school compares less well nationally. To some degree, this picture is reinforced in lessons.
- 107 In lessons during the inspection and in the work sample, there is clear evidence that pupils make steady progress in most classes, having started the school at standards considerably below national averages. While pupils of lower ability and average ability are well challenged and make good progress, sometimes pupils with potentially higher achievement are not always challenged enough. There have been differences in the test results over the last few years between the attainment of boys and girls, but no clear trend that either is underachieving. There is no evidence to suggest this is an issue in the school at the moment. Pupils for whom English is an additional language, those with special needs and the core group of pupils who spend all their schooling between Year 4 and Year 7 in this school make good progress from Key Stage 1.
- 108 In Year 6, however, particularly in two of the classes, all pupils make very rapid progress. It is significant that in the pupils' books in the two months since the term started, some of the Year 6 books contain much more work, and work that is of much higher quality, than that in any other year group, including Year 7.
- 109 Standards in Year 7, when pupils leave the school, are below national expectations. This judgement is based on evidence from lessons and from the work of pupils in this year group. In particular, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 is not sufficiently high enough. The reasons for this are mostly to do with weaknesses in the planning for this year group, and the fact that it does not take adequate account of the existing

achievements of pupils. In this year group, the important emphasis on Attainment Target 1 (scientific enquiry), is not maintained throughout, and a teaching style is used which, while mostly satisfactory in helping pupils to gain knowledge, is less effective in helping them develop their scientific skills. These limitations are made worse by too little time being given to science in this year group, and by inconsistencies in the way in which the curriculum is covered in each class in the year.

- 110 Pupils enjoy the practical activities in science and are well-motivated to learn in almost all classes. Some pupils bring behavioural difficulties with them into the school; in Year 4 these can sometimes break the flow of the lesson. For example, in a lesson when the teacher was trying to encourage thoughtful responses to questions about how to make a test fair, one child was continuously misbehaving, and the teacher had to keep stopping the lesson to deal with this. In nine out of every ten lessons throughout the school, however, behaviour is at least satisfactory, and in Years 6 and 7, behaviour is often good. In Year 6, two out of the three lessons observed showed very good behaviour, high motivation, very good collaboration and very thoughtful contributions from pupils in working out ideas together. This is a major factor in the very successful learning that takes place in these classes.
- 111 Judgements on teaching take account of the lessons observed and the pupils' work. Teaching is satisfactory overall. No teaching in lessons was judged to be unsatisfactory; much is good or better. In satisfactory lessons, strengths are in the sound management of the pupils, and some good use of questions. Comparatively weaker elements are in the teacher not thoroughly understanding the ideas of science in the learning, or in not being fully prepared for the problems that might arise. Thus, in a lesson in Year 5 on investigating how to insulate sound, the teacher was not sure about how to attach a battery-holder to a buzzer. In a lesson in Year 7 the pupils were not clearly guided to the lesson's key objectives in designing a recording sheet and refining their accuracy in measurement, and some messages about balanced and unbalanced forces were not as clear as they might be.
- 112 One common teaching weakness in many classes is in the expectations of and marking of pupils' written work. There is an exception to this in Year 6 where one teacher provides an excellent role model for the quality of marking and expectations of presentation. The work sample also bore out the trend observed in some lessons across the school to set all the work to the "average ability". This limits the better progress of some, particularly the higher-ability pupils.
- 113 There is some very good and excellent science teaching. All of this is found in Year 6. What makes this teaching of the highest quality is complex. The key feature is that teachers have a genuine interest in the learning of all the pupils facing them: they value their ideas, are keen to explore their thinking and to refine and shape it better into deeper understanding. They plan very carefully. In one class the quality of planning is a model of the best practice. They know very well the differing capabilities of pupils and pitch challenges well so that all make gains. Pupils are well aware of these teachers' powerful commitment to their learning and know that their ideas are valued. They fully appreciate the respect they are shown. They respond by returning this respect and commitment. As a result, learning is rapid, and these lessons are happy experiences for all concerned.
- 114 The curriculum has improved significantly since the previous inspection. In particular, the emphasis given to Scientific Enquiry is now good. Schemes of work for Key Stage 2 take good account of the suggestions provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, and provide a sound basis for teachers' planning. In most classes there is good consistency in using the year-based plans. There are some exceptions. In Year 4, one teacher relies too heavily on some low quality work sheets. In Year 7 there is not enough consistency. Two of the three teachers teach similar work, one does not. Some work that is set shows a weaker appreciation of what it is appropriate to expect from Year 7 pupils. Sometimes, work is pitched too high, for

example some work on chemical formulae for photosynthesis or respiration, while at other times pupils' existing knowledge on forces is repeated at a level suitable for the first school. There is very little evidence to indicate that information and communication technology is used effectively to support learning in science.

- 115 The leadership of the subject is good. The subject manager has a very clear idea of the priorities for the subject, sets a very good example in his own teaching, and has engaged in suitable monitoring activities. Assessment practices are improving, although some refinement is needed in the way these are used to target work for differing abilities and to ensure the year group plans take account of the incoming pupils' existing achievements. While the subject has a low status in displays around the school, the quality of the experience in lessons is at least satisfactory for all pupils, and sometimes is very good indeed.
- 116 In the previous inspection, the subject had a number of weaknesses. In most respects there has been improvement. Most significantly, the emphasis now given to Attainment Target 1 is now good in Years 4 to 6; this is building secure foundations for future, higher achievement. There is a scheme of work in Key Stage 2, and a common approach to teaching science which is guaranteeing that most pupils are working at appropriate levels of challenge. There is still a need to promote more achievement at Level 5 by Year 6 and to continue these high expectations into Year 7. Information and communication technology is still under-used to develop learning in science. In some classes, work is still not as challenging as it could be for the pupils with higher abilities. Teaching is now satisfactory throughout, and good or better in one third of lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

- 117 Attainment in art and design is in line with national expectations by the age of eleven and twelve. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the development of their skills, knowledge and understanding. They have experience of a suitably wide range of drawing materials, media and methods and are able to record from experience and imagination. They work effectively with both 2D and 3D materials. Good use is made of sketchbooks, in some classes. During the inspection, Year 4 pupils were effectively using their sketchbooks to record stylised drawings of animals from Ancient Egyptian times to assist them in developing ideas for their own stylised drawings. In Year 5, pupils were using collage to compose family portraits and develop an understanding of the purpose and meaning of such portraits when looking at paintings from different periods of time. Pupils were able to speculate about the various artists' intentions and recall details from images seen previously. Year 6 pupils were discussing the work of William Morris and how he evokes different feelings through the use of colour. They applied this knowledge to their own work when printing repeating patterns using polystyrene tiles. Some pupils produced some very pleasing effects. They were able to discuss the outcomes of their work, recognise what had been successful and where improvements could be made. Year 7 pupils were working in pairs, taking turns to be the model whilst their partner drew their portrait. They were able to recall the key aspects of a portrait drawing, such as proportion and how to represent features of the face. They discussed mood and feelings, and how these can be detected by the ways in which the artist has drawn the eyes, eyebrows and mouth. The pupils enjoyed pulling different faces to represent different moods and feelings.
- 118 A key feature of all of the lessons seen was how effectively pupils worked together collaboratively. Pupils' attitudes are positive and they are enthusiastic in art lessons. They show respect for each other's efforts, recognising strengths as well as offering advice for improvement. Pupils with special educational needs, the most able and those for whom English is an additional language make satisfactory progress in the subject.

- 119 Teaching in art is good. The best teaching is characterised by careful planning and the sharing of learning intentions with pupils, using the mnemonics WALT and WILF, so that pupils are clear about what they are learning. The organisation of time and resources is good. The carefully monitored pace of the lesson in Year 6 enabled the pupils to complete their work within a very tight time scale. The demonstration of techniques and skills by teachers is also effective, enabling pupils to be clear about how to tackle specific tasks. Assessment is relatively under-developed, but there are clear plans to improve in this area. There is some use of information and communication technology, including the use of photographs, but there is scope for further development. Relationships are very good and pupils are well managed. As a result their behaviour is very good.
- 120 The recently-appointed subject manager has updated the subject policy. Qualifications and Curriculum Authority units of work are to be developed into the format common to the rest of the school. Teachers within year groups plan work together, with the support of the subject leader. To further ensure progression in learning, the subject manager plans to develop a school portfolio of work. This will reflect the range covered, and include examples of pupils' work and photographs, especially of completed 3D tasks. Not only is it intended to exemplify standards at Southwood Middle School, but also to depict progression in skills. The monitoring of standards has recently been established, with the subject manager observing the teaching of art and design lessons in each class across the school. Recording formats have been introduced in line with the recording of learning outcomes in other subjects. This enables the tracking of key skills, knowledge and understanding for individual pupils.
- 121 There is a good range of resources for art and design work. Pupils also benefit from visits to an art centre within walking distance of the school. They are able to work with trained artists in woodcarving and clay, and make use of the kiln. School visits are arranged to the Art Gallery in Milton Keynes and artists in residence enhance the provision of art from time to time. The school frequently displays pupils' work in the Milton Keynes shopping centre as well as in the Art Gallery and Business Exchange. Although little artwork is on display in classrooms, there is some good quality, 3D work, such as ceramic tiles and pupils' paintings and drawings, which are framed, around the school: a clear indication of the value placed on pupils' work. Displays covering various aspects of the curriculum, as well as being informative, are attractive and greatly enhance the school environment.
- 122 All issues raised at the time of the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. In response to the previous inspection report, schemes of work have been developed or adopted for each year group to ensure systematic coverage of the subject and to assure progression in learning over time. Gaps have been addressed and plans now include painting techniques, textiles and the use of work by a wide range of artists from the past and present.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 123 On the basis of information from lessons, discussions with teachers and pupils, examples of retained artefacts, displays of pupils' work and photographs, standards at ages eleven and twelve are judged to be in line with what is expected nationally. This is a similar position to the one identified in the previous inspection findings.
- 124 By the age of eleven, pupils make at least satisfactory and sometimes good gains in their learning. They are developing generally sufficient levels of skill to enable them to design realistically and to make increasingly complex products with enthusiasm and pride. More able pupils at both key stages make appropriate progress. Pupils with special needs and those for whom English is an additional language undertake the same demanding tasks as other pupils but with good support. As a result, their

progress is often good.

- 125 In their learning, pupils are successfully encouraged to make good links with other subjects, notably science, English and art. In Years 4 and 5, pupils develop their basic skills, making links for example with science. In Year 4, they make pouches which will hold money, showing good levels of skill in stitching together fabric and testing it for strength. They determine which stitch type will be the most effective, usually agreeing on a backstitch. They develop and follow a design brief, for example to ensure that the pouch will be able to contain notes. They generate a good variety of different ideas for fastening the pouch, such as zips, buttons, poppers and drawstrings. They have a clear idea which fastener will be the most effective. By Year 5, pupils develop more detailed, annotated drawings for making musical instruments. There are good links with literacy in their writing of instructions, which are built on logical steps in the designing process. More able pupils are successfully challenged to produce their own writing frames for this task. The more able show good awareness of the characteristics of different instruments, with good levels of detail, for example in their drawings of the tuning keys on a drum. Appropriate attention is given to the choice of materials and joining techniques to be used.
- 126 In Year 6, pupils create more detailed design briefs which demonstrate a secure understanding of the role of evaluation at different stages of the design process. Pupils investigate how a buggy moves through a study of wheels, gearing and axles. Very good links are made with the study of forces in science, for example by drawing on pupils' understanding of how circuits are made to provide power to an electric motor for the vehicle. Pupils are also beginning to use their design skills to create pages for desktop publishing, linking effectively with their developing skills in information and communication technology.
- 127 By Year 7, pupils again draw on their scientific knowledge and understanding to generate eating plans for an adult or a child. Their skills of evaluation are further extended through work building and testing towers made of paper to determine the characteristics of a strong structure. They apply their knowledge of the design process to the systematic production of vegetable soup, adhering carefully to safety and hygiene rules whilst preparing the raw ingredients.
- 128 Pupils work enthusiastically and concentrate well. Their behaviour is often very good, and they collaborate well over specific tasks. They handle tools and materials carefully. Relationships between teachers, support assistants and pupils are very positive, and pupils regularly help each other during practical tasks.
- 129 Teaching is generally good at both key stages, and strengths were observed in the teaching in Years 5 and 6. Here, teachers had high expectations and were confident with the subject matter. In an excellent lesson in Year 6, the teacher consistently encouraged pupils, through very good questioning skills, to undertake evaluation of how cogwheels could help make a wheel turn faster or slower. Very good links were made with mathematics through extension work on gear ratios, and with forces in science, when pupils discussed how a cogwheel transmitted a force through the teeth to an adjacent wheel. The teacher made very perceptive assessments of the pace of learning, which was rapid for many pupils. As a result, tasks were modified and new challenges set to further extend the more able pupils' knowledge and understanding during the lesson. Apart from the link with publishing, too little use is made of information and communication technology in support of the subject.
- 130 Learning support assistants were well briefed in the lessons seen, where their intervention was both sensitive and very well focused. Good attention is paid to the presentation of pupils' written work and displays of finished products. Teachers usually provide written feedback which helps pupils to improve their designs of finished products, although this is achieved more consistently in Years 4 to 6.
- 131 Most planning usually shows clear detail of learning intentions. Appropriate emphasis

is placed on the development of practical skills such as accuracy in measuring, marking, joining and folding or cutting. Throughout the key stages, there is an increasing amount of written evaluation which shows a sound grasp of the principles. This represents an improvement over the position highlighted at the time of the previous inspection, when expectations of pupils' recording and evaluation were not high enough.

- 132 The subject manager provides good support and guidance for teachers. Opportunities for more formal monitoring of teaching and learning are planned as part of the school's improvement plan and the action plan for the subject. The subject manager evaluates work samples and record sheets, and interviews pupils. All the required aspects of the subject are covered. There is a scheme of work nearing completion which encompasses the national guidelines which are currently being used and evaluated by staff. Resources are generally good. Good attention is paid to health and safety issues in practical activities and in the storage of tools and materials. Adult helpers, including governors, provide good support for food technology and other activities.
- 133 Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved, and teachers are more confident about teaching the subject. Assessment has improved, and this is informing planning more consistently. Evaluation by pupils now plays a more consistent part in design and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

- 134 In the small number of lessons seen during the inspection, from the evidence of pupils' own work and discussions with them about their geography study topics, pupils are making satisfactory progress. By the end of Years 6 and 7, standards in geography are satisfactory. Pupils are developing an understanding of their environment, are making suitable comparisons with life in contrasting areas of the world and have the skills, by Year 7, to examine statistical data. Older pupils show the ability to use information from reliable sources to look for changes and trends in population growth, birth and death rates and the effects of climatic, social and economic characteristics on a global scale. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language often make good progress and show enthusiasm for the subject.
- 135 Pupils are enthusiastic participants in lessons. They show interest in and understanding of their work, as for example in a Year 6 lesson where they were encouraged to role-play the views of different inhabitants of the rainforest in Brazil. The quality of the debate was exceptional. Pupils were able to use their knowledge to put forward arguments about the relative merits of the forestry industry and the effect of forest clearance on the climate and the people of the area. Some of the arguments were very convincing and persuasive. Pupils have a lively interest in the world around them. They have a strong concept of the "Global Village" as well as being able to develop their own ideas about the improvement of the local environment.
- 136 Younger pupils in Year 4 have undertaken a school site and accommodation survey. They are now in a position to use a school plan, devising their own key to show areas of the environment that would benefit from change. There was a strong link between this initiative and the work of the School Council in receiving ideas from the class, that could form a proposal for action by school governors, staff, parents and pupils.
- 137 The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. Teachers use a good range of styles and techniques in their lessons. The quality of learning is often good; pupils respond positively to demanding questions and, where the pace and development of the topic is brisk, they make very good progress. Lessons are planned according to the scheme of work. In the best lesson observed during the inspection, the teacher had

“scripted” her lesson in considerable detail so that she could be assured that nothing was missed. The teacher apologised for referring to her lesson plan but in fact this was an excellent approach. The teacher was modelling the role of learner alongside her pupils and this had a very positive effect on both teaching and learning. Some limited use is made of information and communication technology resources, and there are plans to improve this through increased access to computers within the school as resources permit.

- 138 Work in geography is guided by a policy that is now due for review and suitably detailed schemes of work. These are comprehensive and relevant. The subject manager has ensured that the subject is kept under regular review through staff evaluations and subject action plans. The structure of the National Curriculum 2000 framework has been adopted for Years 4 to 6. A locally agreed scheme is now in place for Year 7 pupils. New topics have been introduced to reflect a greater emphasis on sustainability and the local environment.
- 139 The school has developed an approach to fieldwork in geography that is very good. Pupils are given opportunities to visit the Isle of Wight, France and more local sites of geographical interest. The use of a Geography Week proved to be a great success and will be repeated.
- 140 The work in geography has improved since the previous inspection. The new schemes of work provide good quality guidance to all teachers and there is a stronger emphasis on the development of geographical skills than was the case previously.

HISTORY

- 141 Only a small number of lessons were observed during the inspection. Together with the evidence from pupil's written work, discussions with older pupils and the evidence from teachers' planning, pupils throughout the school are making satisfactory progress, and standards are satisfactory by the end of Years 6 and 7. Pupils in Year 4 are able to discuss their study of Ancient Egypt. They recall factual information and have made satisfactory gains in their understanding of some of the religious and social practices of the period. In Year 5, through the study of the Tudor period, pupils are gaining greater insights into the use of secondary source material as a means of finding out more about the life and times of Henry VIII and his wives. The Medieval Realms topic in Year 7 promoted discussion about the character and motivation of William I. Older pupils are beginning to develop the use of research skills. In looking at the depictions of the Battle of Hastings from the Bayeux Tapestry, discussing how the writers of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle viewed events and using other information from later historians, they are beginning to interpret the events of history from different viewpoints. More able pupils make satisfactory progress overall; pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress.
- 142 Teaching is satisfactory. The tasks and activities in lessons are generally appropriate to the topics. Teachers plan their work in Years 4 to 7 from a good quality and sufficiently detailed scheme of work. The scheme has recently been re-written and, though not yet fully in place in lessons, will provide a good basis for developing the skills of enquiry, interpretation and use of evidence.
- 143 Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge and are using a good range of strategies for their work. They have developed a relevant and appropriate set of resources for the lessons, though there is some over-reliance on the use of work sheets with the younger pupils. Textbooks, videos, visits and visitors are used to good effect. In lessons, teachers plan well for the tasks and activities but do not consistently give enough attention to the specific historical objectives of the lesson, nor are they using questions to sufficiently challenge pupils' thinking about the themes and ideas they are exposed to.

- 144 Pupils are attentive in lessons. They show interest and enthusiasm for the subject, are keen to share their knowledge and are confident enough to ask their own questions and to seek clarification if unsure. The climate for learning in lessons is positive. Pupils show good listening skills, they follow instructions and readily express their opinions based on reading and discussion.
- 145 The subject is effectively led by the subject manager. He has prepared a challenging action plan for subject development. There is a good focus on ensuring progression and an incremental development of skills, knowledge and learning. The subject policy is of very good quality and has aspirations for the teaching and learning in history that are appropriately concerned with developing pupils as historians, using key questions to develop skills and an enquiry-based approach that is well in line with the National Curriculum 2000 demands.
- 146 Teaching is supplemented by a good, structured programme of visits, including the British Museum, Sulgrave Manor, Bradwell Abbey and Holdenby House. During the inspection, a visiting music specialist focused on Tudor music with Year 5 pupils. This had positive outcomes for the pupils in relation to their work in history, music and English. Information and communication technology is currently under-used in support of history. However, the work of a local parent group (the Clutch group) that has focused on compiling computerised data on the history of the local area should make a positive contribution to the subject in the future. Possible developments in the use of local census data as the starting point for historical enquiry about the nearby Linford Wood area are planned.
- 147 History has improved greatly since the previous inspection. Much of the unsatisfactory practice identified in Years 6 and 7 has been eliminated. The scheme of work is good, some formal monitoring of lessons has taken place and the subject policy has been revised in line with the need to maintain the discipline of the subject and to recognise the development of discrete skills in history.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 148 In the previous inspection, the standards achieved in this subject were below national expectations at ages 11 and 12. It was noted that pupils entered the school at age 8 with standards well below those expected for their age. National expectations have risen substantially since then, but the school has not kept up. Pupils new to Year 4 have lower skills and knowledge than are expected nationally, but they also make insufficient progress through the school and standards remain both below the national expectations and below those that pupils should be achieving at ages 11 and 12.
- 149 The reasons for this are as follows:
- The school has too few, fully compatible, up-to-date computers that are both networked and connected to the Internet.
 - Many of the working computers the school has are located in the suite. This means that the computers are not used well outside of the timetabled lessons to support learning in other subjects.
 - Pupils have made uneven progress through the school, better in some years than others, and they have not caught up yet with the knowledge and skills they need to achieve higher standards.
The nationally funded (New Opportunities Fund) training to help teachers raise their levels of confidence and expertise in information and communication technology (ICT) has not yet been provided for teachers in this school, due to difficulties with finding an appropriate provider.
 - Some unsatisfactory leadership decisions have been made in the past about the use of funding for the subject and the way in which pupils should be helped to improve their skills.

- Only recently has a scheme of work for the subject been developed for all years, and it is still in the early stages of implementation.
- 150 By the age of 11 and 12, pupils are confident in starting up the computers, saving and retrieving data, and selecting the applications they wish to work with. They are developing skills with text tools, and early work is starting on multimedia presentations. Pupils show some facility with spreadsheets, and Year 7 pupils can recall using some simulations about Ancient Egypt. A few can remember programming a small robot, but not storing a series of commands through the computer. Again, a few Year 7 pupils can recall using sensors, but this was not a consistently strong memory across the sample of pupils. There are still areas where pupils' knowledge and skills are not so strong, for example in using e-mail and the Internet. Pupils' experience in using many ICT applications has been limited and there is ground to be made up, but their learning in these areas is now accelerating.
- 151 Systems now in place to timetable the suite and to make use of semi-specialist teaching are improving pupils' access and experience. This is an effective strategy, but it is undermined by the unreliability of some computers and by the fact that the programmes are not the same on the two main different makes of computer. The fact that pupils have too little access to the computer as a tool to enhance learning in or near their classroom further undermines their progress. This is reflected in the very limited evidence of pupils' work using ICT. Apart from word processing examples, there is little evidence of work using the computer, either in paper or electronic form. Pupils' computer-generated work is rarely displayed.
- 152 A few teachers show confidence to use the resources creatively, but this is not a common feature. In a very effective lesson in religious education, a teacher made use of a digital camera to enhance work when pupils were acting the story of Solomon and David. Images from the digital camera were also used very well in a gymnastics lesson for pupils to evaluate and build on their work in the previous lesson. Another confident teacher used computer-based resources as a basis for a literacy lesson on writing instructions.
- 153 Pupils bring enthusiasm to their learning in ICT. They collaborate well with each other when given challenging tasks to undertake, such as evaluating how good different CD-ROMs are in a Year 6 lesson. While the teacher concentrated on work with the lower attainers, the other pupils collaborated very sensibly on completing the task, showing very good levels of concentration. The pupils' thinking skills were fully engaged in this evaluative task, and they rose to the challenge. Pupils with special educational needs make sound progress, and those for whom English is an additional language often make good progress. There are too few opportunities for the most able pupils to have access to computers in order to further develop their skills, and their progress in the subject is unsatisfactory.
- 154 It was not possible to observe any teaching in Year 7, as no lessons were happening during the period of the inspection. Elsewhere, teaching is mostly good and is very good in some lessons in Years 5 and 6. In Years 4 to 6, the school uses more confident teachers as semi-specialists to take the timetabled lessons in the suite, and this works well. Teachers in these lessons show confidence and make good use of time in the ICT suite. Lessons are often challenging and there is a lively collaboration to achieve the objectives set. The very best teaching was seen in Years 5 and 6. Here, the combination of a very good relationship between the teacher and the group of pupils, backed up by teachers' high levels of confidence in the subject and high expectations of behaviour and independence for higher attainers, led to very good gains in learning.
- 155 These strengths in teaching are supported by the recently adopted scheme of work for ICT, which has been based sensibly on recommendations from the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. There is a need to refine these plans further to take account of the pupils' existing capabilities because, for some pupils, the expectations

are above their existing achievements. The school needs to refine its assessment of ICT to carry out an audit of pupils' skills and then refine the scheme of work to match these.

- 156 The subject leadership has had weaknesses in the past, and these have contributed to the lower standards pupils are currently achieving. The new subject manager, who has just taken responsibility for the subject, is showing sound leadership in setting a very good example of teaching, and in having a clear view about where the next priorities lie for developing the subject. The higher quality of skills teaching in the suite, the better curriculum planning and the clear direction for the subject from the subject manager are all positive indicators that standards should be set to improve. This will, however, depend on raising all teachers' confidence in the subject, and in guaranteeing sufficient high quality computers for pupils to use, both in the suite and outside of it.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 157 Pupils are introduced to French as a first modern foreign language at the beginning of Year 7. This represents a significant change from the position identified at the previous inspection, when French was taught from Year 4 and German added in Year 7. By the age of twelve, standards in French are at least in line with expectations for pupils of this age, and sometimes above this. This represents an improvement over the position identified at the time of the previous inspection. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls at this stage of their language learning. Pupils with special educational needs make good and, occasionally, very good progress; they receive very good assistance and encouragement from teachers and support staff. Pupils for whom English is an additional language often make very good progress, and contribute significantly to lessons. Higher attaining pupils make sound progress; a lack of reading resources hampers their further development.
- 158 Most pupils develop increasingly good listening skills from the start of the year and these support their emerging speaking skills. They make steady gains in assembling and actively using key phrases and new vocabulary in classwork, particularly in role-play situations, games and through songs. Their pronunciation is usually sound and occasionally good. Pupils' written language skills are sound; evidence from current and previous years shows that they copy accurately and are beginning to show good levels of skill in their own early writing in the subject.
- 159 Almost all pupils are keen to take part in speaking, listening and role-play activities and show confidence in using newly-learned phrases and songs. Pupils enjoy the active lessons and the wide variety of tasks provided, and most of them are developing positive attitudes in their first year of learning a modern foreign language.
- 160 Classes are taught through a combination of specialist teaching and lessons taken by class teachers. Specialist teaching is also extended to cover ability groups, broadly based on pupils' abilities in English. This is generally appropriate for the needs of the pupils, and enables the subject manager to gain a good overview of pupils' progress across the whole of the year group.
- 161 Teaching is usually at least sound and is often good. A very high proportion of teaching by the specialist teacher is conducted in the target language. This successfully encourages pupils to listen carefully and make effective links between the spoken language and the tasks or situations that are the focus of the teaching. It also provides them with frequently repeated models upon which they can construct their own attempts at speaking. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, with high levels of challenge for pupils of all abilities. Relationships are very good and questioning is sensitively adapted to each pupil or group. As a result, pupils usually maintain high levels of concentration throughout the lesson. The good pace of learning is also supported by a broad range of teaching methods, including group role play, short reading and written tasks, paired work, and the successful inclusion of

audio-visual approaches. Information and communication technology is not sufficiently used in support of the subject.

- 162 Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives. New words and phrases are systematically introduced. For example, in a role-play session, small groups of pupils rapidly constructed a simple dialogue in which they greeted one another, and asked each other questions about their age. This challenged all pupils to draw on and consolidate their speaking and listening skills, and resulted in some good exchanges.
- 163 There are some links with the local secondary school, to which the majority of pupils transfer at the age of twelve, although these could be strengthened further in the interests of continuity. The school arranges a residential visit to France on an annual basis. This is a focus of the work during the year.
- 164 The subject manager provides good leadership. Teaching is usually monitored informally by the subject manager, but this is also informed by scrutiny of pupils' written work. There is a scheme of work which supports teachers' planning. There are some weaknesses in the development of pupils' reading skills, due to shortcomings in the provision of reading materials. The provision would benefit from a wider, more challenging range of books, games, visual aids and other reading resources.
- 165 Many improvements have been made since the previous inspection. French is now only taught in Year 7, allowing staff and pupils to focus on one modern foreign language and releasing extra, curricular time elsewhere in the school. The quality of teaching has improved, mainly through an increase in use of the target language in lessons and increased consistency through the moderating work of the subject manager. Assessment has improved, although this does not readily lead to more flexible grouping arrangements for pupils because of timetable constraints. There has been some improvement in overall standards of attainment and pupils' progress, particularly in speaking skills, and pupils' attitudes to learning a foreign language are now often good.

MUSIC

- 166 By the ages of 11 and 12, standards in music are satisfactory. Lessons were observed during the inspection at both key stages. Further evidence was collected through discussions with the subject co-ordinator and pupils, observations during tuition sessions, through assemblies, and an analysis of policy and planning.
- 167 By the age of eleven, pupils can concentrate on rhythmic rounds, and sing and play two-part pieces. They enjoy the challenge of creating a group sequence. Most of the younger pupils have good listening skills, but some find concentrating on a rhythm difficult, and need support. They are introduced successfully to standard musical notation. By the age of twelve, a significant minority of the pupils, often but not exclusively those who are learning musical instruments, have a firm appreciation of basic standard notation. Gifted and talented pupils are given good opportunities in the subject, and make good progress. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language, are developing this understanding, and are increasingly able to use it to good effect. Those who are unable to distinguish a rhythm or pulse are not discouraged, but are helped to join in with whole-class or group activities.
- 168 Pupils' levels of musical knowledge and skill in the performance of music are enhanced through choir sessions and by the visits of a variety of musicians, such as a Tudor music specialist and a band demonstrating the development of rock music. Pupils also benefit from visits to see and hear musical productions which include opera and musicals. Those pupils who attend woodwind, brass and strings tuition at

the school bring an enthusiasm for music back to their classes. This enthusiasm, in turn, is built upon by teachers during class music lessons. Whilst instrumental tuition is of great benefit to pupils in terms of music, the current timetable arrangements result in some clashes with work in other subjects. This tends to lead to pupils missing key parts of lessons or acts of worship.

- 169 Pupils usually enjoy their music lessons, attending and responding well to both their teachers and to each other. Many have an appropriate sense of rhythm, and are beginning to control the dynamics of singing, particularly tempo. This is extended effectively as pupils move through the school. They listen well to music performed by other pupils and adults and to recorded music. Pupils co-operate well, and are eager to improve the accuracy of their counting, clapping and interpretation through simple composition. They show interest and respect for each other's work and enjoy performing, either for the class or, when the opportunity arises, for parents.
- 170 Music is taught through a combination of specialist teaching and class teachers who teach music to their own class. Teaching is never less than satisfactory and is often good. The teaching of singing and instrumental music is good. Singing is usually tuneful, and most children participate well. Teachers usually have high expectations of pupils' listening and performance and of their behaviour, and the pupils respond accordingly. In the lessons seen, teachers' subject knowledge was mostly good, although not all staff teach music with confidence. In a Year 4 lesson where the teacher's knowledge was sound, good teaching ensured that the knowledge and skills of pupils were utilised during the lesson to interpret the mood conveyed by a piece of music ("Albatross": Fleetwood Mac). The pupils' enthusiasm for music ensured that the momentum of listening and appraising was maintained at a high level. The pupils' thoughtful reflection on the mood created, and the lonely flight of the albatross, resulted in a very positive contribution to their spiritual development.
- 171 There is a suitable policy for music, and national schemes of work are being followed. These schemes are being evaluated. Music performed in assembly, and recordings and performance in class lessons make good contributions to pupils' spiritual development. The opportunities presented by assemblies for pupils to listen to a wide range of recorded music are not consistently taken. The work of class teachers is extended through the contributions of visiting staff who teach woodwind, brass and guitar, and support the considerable efforts of the subject manager. Tuition in instrument playing is open to any pupil who expresses an interest. A significant proportion of pupils also demonstrate good levels of competence playing recorders and percussion instruments.
- 172 There is a clear action plan for the subject. The subject manager is a skilled music teacher who provides good, enthusiastic support to her colleagues. There are clear examples which illustrate how she has successfully helped improve teachers' knowledge of the subject and their confidence to teach it. Assessment has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory.
- 173 Resources for music, including a range of tuned and untuned instruments, are very good in both quality and quantity, and this allows class lessons to be appropriately resourced. Further instruments are being purchased as finances permit to enhance further the provision. The school continues to make very good use of the local education authority's instrument resources and visiting instrumental teachers. Too little use is currently made of information and communication technology in support of the subject. However, the range of recorded music available covers an appropriately wide spectrum, including a small collection of music from other cultures. The school is adding to its collection of recorded music on compact disk, and new players have recently been provided to support teachers in the development of pupils' listening skills.

- 174 The clear strengths in instrumental work, highlighted in the previous inspection report, have been maintained. Visiting music teachers continue to make an important contribution to standards, and a significant number of pupils - nearly one in five - take instrument lessons at school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 175 The school achieves standards close to those expected nationally in physical education lessons in school. It has major strengths in the range and uptake of the sporting clubs it offers to the pupils.
- 176 Pupils achieve standards in both key stages which are broadly those expected of pupils at age 11 and 12. During this inspection, only limited evidence was available for the whole range of the subject, since almost all the lessons were focusing on games skills, where pupils learn to send, receive and travel with a ball. One lesson only was observed where pupils were developing gymnastic skills. This lesson in Year 6, showed standards well above those expected. No lessons in dance were observed. It was not possible to observe the swimming lesson received by pupils in Year 5, but there is evidence that standards in swimming achieved by pupils in the school are below those expected. At the end of their swimming sessions, all of which happen in Year 5, around half the pupils are still not able to swim 25 metres confidently. In this respect the school has made insufficient improvement since the previous inspection.
- 177 As pupils move through the school their progress is good overall. Where teaching is less confident, in Year 5, this progress is satisfactory, elsewhere it is good. Pupils make rapid gains in netball skills and in gymnastics in Year 6. This is due both to their superb commitment to improving their performance, which is linked to accurate evaluations they make of where they need to improve, and very well structured teaching which takes account of the pupils' existing capabilities and moves them on. More able pupils make satisfactory gains in their skills. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language often make good progress.
- 178 The quality of teaching is good. No teaching was unsatisfactory. Some teaching is very good indeed, and the overall quality of learning is mainly good. The strengths in teaching are connected with the high subject knowledge of the teacher which links with very high expectations of the pupils. This teaching makes excellent use of assessment, for example in a Year 6 gymnastics class, the digital camera is used to take shots of the positions with a sequence of movements planned and carried out by groups of pupils. The pupils evaluate how these look and collaborate on decisions as to how to improve. The time in these lessons flies by, and pupils end them with brains and bodies fully exercised. Where teaching is just satisfactory there is one minor weakness. In these lessons, teachers engage pupils in evaluative commentary at too many points in the lesson. This breaks up the flow, and reduces the high levels of physical activity which the subject requires.
- 179 Pupils show good interest and enthusiasm for physical education lessons in most years. In Years 5 to 7, attitudes and behaviour are consistently good and sometimes excellent. In Year 4, behaviour can be unsatisfactory and makes considerable demands on the teacher. For example, in one lesson observed in this year group, a good many pupils were continuously chattery, and needed to be reminded to pay attention and listen carefully to the teacher. The teacher's calm persistence and refusal to lose patience means that, gradually, pupils are able to improve their skills. This patient but consistent reinforcement of the school's expectations of behaviour is completely in line with the school's attempts to build pupils' self-control and self-esteem.
- 180 The school has significant strengths in the extra-curricular sporting activities it offers

pupils. The enthusiastic contribution made by a good proportion of staff, with the aid of some parents, to provide extra-curricular clubs for traditional team games like football, netball, and rugby, and to also offer table tennis, ice hockey, sailing and cross country, is matched by the enthusiastic uptake by the pupils. This also reflects the teachers' high commitment to the wellbeing of the pupils beyond lesson time.

- 181 The subject is very well led. The subject manager has had the responsibility for one year, and has already had a significant impact. Her leadership has been effective in structuring a well-thought-out scheme of work, and her own enthusiasm helps to maintain the keen support from the staff. Her monitoring is efficient and well-targeted. Her plans for the subject's improvement are good. The subject has the capacity to improve further.
- 182 In the previous inspection, standards were judged to be appropriate for 11 year olds, but lower than they should have been at age 12. While teaching in Years 4 to 6 was judged to be satisfactory and often good, teaching in Year 7 was poor, and the progress these pupils made was unsatisfactory. A new scheme of work is about to be implemented. There have been good improvements since the previous inspection. Teaching is now good in the majority of lessons, and is consistently good in Year 7. The latest scheme of work produced by a new co-ordinator is a model of good practice and helps guarantee effective teaching. Monitoring of the subject, which had been judged as a weakness in the previous inspection, is now of a good quality. The subject is now led very well and the school has improved many aspects of the subject. There remains a need to promote better achievement in swimming.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 183 Standards of attainment are broadly in line with the expectations of the Buckinghamshire Agreed Syllabus for pupils by the ages of both eleven and twelve. Pupils make sound progress and, by the age of eleven, have a good understanding of the symbolic importance of a range of religious writings and other forms of communication. They are able to explain why special books are so important to specific faiths and that they contain codes of behaviour and rules for living. They are able to identify the personal qualities attributed to special people, including religious leaders. Pupils with special educational needs, the most able and those for whom English is an additional language usually make sound progress.
- 184 When considering the life of Moses and the Ten Commandments, Year 4 pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how rules can provide a way of life and should be obeyed from the heart. They are able to relate them to the school's "Golden Rules" and recognise specific similarities. They make comparisons between the abstract formulation of the commandments with their own experience such as having respect for each other's property. When discussing respect for parents they suggest this should be extended to the teacher.
- 185 Year 5 pupils show empathy when putting themselves in the place of others, such as when enacting the story of Samuel anointing David as King of Israel. They successfully discuss feelings and emotions such as those of rejection and surprise, and further develop their understanding of the qualities of leadership.
- 186 Pupils in Year 6 have an awareness of differing forms of communication through which religious meaning may be conveyed, such as through art. When considering the painting "The Light of the World" by Holman Hunt, they are able to recognise through discussion how various features of the painting symbolise Christian beliefs.
- 187 By the age of twelve, pupils have a sound understanding of the significance of pilgrimage to individuals and their faith community. For instance, they understand the

significance of the Ganges River as a place of pilgrimage to the Hindu faith community. Although pupils' knowledge and understanding is secure, the recording of their work is relatively weak. The written tasks sets are not sufficiently challenging and pupils' reading skills, such as when skimming a text to find key ideas, are insufficiently developed.

- 188 Pupils' attitudes to their learning are good. Most are attentive and eager to answer questions. They are keen to work together, listen to each other and respect other points of view. Pupils respond particularly well to the opportunity to act out the story of David being chosen as the King of Israel and successfully explain how each character in the story felt.
- 189 Teaching is at least satisfactory and in half of the lessons seen it is good or better. Where it is particularly good, lessons are well planned, with clear learning intentions that are understood by the pupils. Pupils are managed well and behaviour is good. Teachers' questioning skills are good, encouraging discussion and reflection. Suitable opportunities are provided for pupils to express their own views and consider feelings, which they do with confidence. Good use is made of drama to achieve this and very good use is made of information and communication technology. Pupils captured the tableau that had just been enacted using a digital camera, loading the photograph onto the computer for all to see. This approach successfully reinforced pupils' understanding of the characters' feelings and, with focused questioning by the teacher, helped to clarify thinking. Where teaching is less successful, teachers' expectations are not sufficiently high and tasks are not challenging enough.
- 190 Religious education (RE) is well led by the subject manager who has good subject knowledge and relevant, up-to-date training. She provides good support and helps with planning. The policy for RE has recently been updated, and schemes of work are regularly reviewed and coverage of the subject broadened. There is a systematic programme of monitoring of teaching and standards. The subject manager's annual review indicates that targets for improvement have been met. Targets for the coming year include improving teaching in Year 7 by raising expectations and increasing challenge. Record sheets have recently been introduced for the systematic recording of pupils' attainment against key areas of learning. Resources, particularly artefacts, are good. RE makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. There is a comprehensive programme of visits planned throughout the year to support the teaching programme as well as visitors to the school.
- 191 Standards have improved since the previous inspection with the appointment of an enthusiastic subject manager. Supporting documentation had been updated or developed and the monitoring of standards and teaching introduced. There is now systematic recording of attainment. However, in respect of withdrawing pupils from RE lessons for extra tuition in other subjects, the school does not meet statutory requirements.