

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **FERNDOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Ferndown

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113878

Headteacher: Mr D G Reeves

Reporting inspector: Susan Chamberlain  
07661

Dates of inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> January 2002

Inspection number: 243887

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 deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Peter Grant Way  
Ferndown  
Dorset

Postcode: BH22 9UP

Telephone number: 01202 876556

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr G R Edgar

Date of previous inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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07661	Susan Chamberlain	Registered inspector	Key Stage 3 strategy	How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? Equality of opportunities
09724	Brigid Quest-Ritson	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
03753	Hamish Wilkie	Team inspector	Mathematics	
18453	Colin Lower	Team inspector	Science	
12276	Terry Payne	Team inspector	Music	
10385	Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology	
04829	Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
08216	Geoff Binks	Team inspector	English	Special educational needs
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography History	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
17868	E Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design Religious education	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Ferndown is a mixed middle school, with a larger than average roll of 638 pupils, 338 boys and 300 girls. The school shares its campus with a first and an upper school. Some eight to ten per cent of pupils leave at end of Year 6 to attend selective schools in Bournemouth. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals amount to 8.3 per cent of the school population and this is below the national average. There are no pupils speaking English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is above the national average at 27.6 per cent. Two per cent of these pupils have statements, which is below the national average. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities and those who are, appear to be well integrated. The school is affiliated to Investors In People. The school employs additional staffing to support inclusion. Pupils enter the school with attainment levels in line with national averages.

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

This is an exceptional school. It has excellent leadership and very good teaching. Students have very good attitudes and behaviour. When combined with high standards of attainment and balanced against an average income per pupil and a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, this indicates a school that provides very good value for money.

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

- Leadership and management are excellent
- Teaching and learning are very good overall
- Pupils' attitudes to their learning are very good
- The contribution to pupils' learning by parents is excellent
- The moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good

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

- There are no major issues

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

#### **Minor issues**

- Not all subjects contribute to the assessment of standards in information and communication technology at the end of Year 8.
- At present, the timetabling of the school day does not allow all subjects to be taught on a weekly basis.

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

The report from the previous inspection in 1997 indicated that the school was doing well at that time. The school has addressed the issues raised and has made very good progress. High standards have been maintained with teaching grades considerably improved. The management of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved, as have resources in this area. Technical support is greater in design and technology, music and ICT where class sizes have been reduced. National Grid for Learning funding and New Opportunities Funding have been used very effectively. National Literacy Strategies for improving literacy have been implemented both at Key Stage 2 (Years 5 and 6) and at Key Stage 3 (Years 7 and 8). Since 1997 there have been more pupils with speech and language problems. The school is very aware of these and is taking positive steps to bring about improvement. The school is

well on the way to meeting its targets. Cost effectiveness is very good. The school continually seeks ways to improve upon this.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in Year 6 tests.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
Key Stage 2 tests				
English	B	C	C	D
Mathematics	C	B	C	C
Science	A	A	A	A
All Subjects	B	B	B	C

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

Pupils enter school with levels of attainment broadly in line with the national average. In 2001, standards in the statutory tests were average in English and mathematics and well above average in science, by age 11. When compared with similar schools, results are close to the national average. Published results indicate a below-average score. They do not take into account the lower attainment profile of Year 6 in 2001, a group that had lower scores on entry to the school, had more boys than normal (boys do less well than girls nationally) and, unexpectedly, came into a less favourable band for similar schools. Boys gained similar results to girls in mathematics, but girls' performance in English and science were better than those of boys. Results are in line with those of Dorset averages in mathematics and English, and above in science. At the end of Year 6, the school loses eight to ten per cent of its high attainers to local grammar schools. At the end of Year 8, pupils are well on course to reach at least above average levels by the time they take statutory tests, at the end of Year 9 at upper school.

In lessons and workbooks, standards are above average. Pupils' achievements are very good, given the short time pupils have to make progress by age 11 and 13 in middle schools. The school sets challenging targets, which, generally, are exceeded because of very good teachers, who work exceptionally hard, and the very positive attitudes of pupils. Standards are high enough.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes are very good. Pupils are very well motivated and interested in their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. There is virtually no bullying. Levels of exclusion are low.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils respond well to provision for their personal development. They are mature, thoughtful and considerate.
Attendance	Attendance is above average.

Good standards noted at the previous inspection have been maintained.





## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 – 6	Years 7 – 8
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teaching and learning are very good, overall. They are marginally better in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 7 and 8. A high proportion of lessons (just under half) are very good and some (nearly one in ten) are excellent. Most lessons (at least nine in ten) are good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Work in pupils' books indicates high standards of learning resulting from the very good teaching.

Teachers have high expectations, which they combine with very good classroom management. They use a wide range of strategies, including group and paired work, and use resources such as videos and computers well. In design and technology, for example, the range of methods used is exceptional and promotes very good learning. Pupils' creative efforts are encouraged in many subjects, particularly in art where they learn key skills in painting and pottery that enable them to use their creativity effectively.

Teaching is very good in mathematics and science, and good in English. Numeracy is very well taught by specialists and non-specialists alike. All have adopted the National Numeracy Strategy with enthusiasm. The strong focus on literacy in Years 5 to 7 is supported by good teaching of writing and other basic skills. Opportunities for teachers to use ICT across the curriculum have increased.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality of the curriculum is good across all years, providing well for the needs of all pupils. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is provided. The community gives very good support to the school.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school provides a good level of support for pupils with differing special educational needs, including physical disability.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is very good. It is well supported in the sharing and caring ethos of the school as seen in assemblies and in the majority of subjects, particularly in religious education, art and music.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school looks after pupils very well. Teachers give them very good personal and academic support and guidance. Assessment is a growing strength of the school.

The school has very effective links with parents through personal contact, backed by good information.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. This is because of the shared, very clear direction and total commitment to all aspects of the pupils' development.

How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very well. The governors have an excellent understanding of the needs of the school and are very involved in its running.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. All aspects of school are monitored and reviewed. External advice is sought where necessary.
The strategic use of resources	Financial control is very good. The school is prudent with its funds and uses them very efficiently, ensuring it seeks the most economic and good value solutions. The school association ensures that school projects are given a great deal of external support.

Accommodation is good though the school is quite full; it is particularly good in art, and design and technology. There is a good match of staff to the needs of the curriculum. Performance management is well in place. The quality and range of resources are good.

### **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The amount of work to do at home.</li> <li>• Information about how their children are getting on.</li> <li>• The school working more closely with parents.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positives but do not agree with the negative opinions. Homework diaries indicate good levels of homework. The school tries hard to work closely with parents and is very good at collecting information about pupils' progress. It shares this information with parents on a regular basis.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The school expects high standards of attainment from all its pupils. It works very hard to ensure that pupils reach their potential; results indicate that it is successful in this goal.
2. Pupils enter the school with attainment levels that are broadly average. This represents the full range of ability, including some very high attainers and around a third with special educational needs. Overall, the school does well for its clientèle.
3. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average in statutory tests overall. They are at the national average in English and mathematics, and well above average in science. Boys gain similar results to girls in mathematics but girls' results are better in English and science. Published results for the cohort of pupils taking these tests in 2001 gave a misleading picture of the school's performance when compared with similar schools. Whilst published figures indicate a dip in results in mathematics and English, these figures create a misleading picture. The Year 6 involved had lower scores on entry to the school, was boy-dominated in numbers (boys perform less well than girls nationally) and also dropped into a different band for similar schools – all factors adversely influencing the overall grade. Inspectors believe that when compared with similar schools, Ferndown's performance is close to the average. When comparing statutory test results with the results for Dorset, the school's results are in line with average county scores in mathematics and English, and above average in science. The trend in the school's National Curriculum points for the three subjects mathematics, English and science was broadly in line with the national trend. Standards have risen slightly and have certainly been maintained.
4. At the end of Year 6, approximately eight to ten per cent of pupils transfer to grammar schools. This has an adverse affect on overall attainment in Years 7 and 8. The school does well to minimise this and maintains high standards throughout these years. At the point of transition, at the end of Year 8, pupils are well on course to reach standards at least above average. In many subjects, for example modern foreign languages, they reach well above average levels by the end of Year 9 at the upper school to which they transfer.
5. Pupils achieve very well by the end of Year 6 and similarly by the end of Year 8. Most pupils are close to reaching their potential.
6. In the work seen, standards are above average overall. They are very high in science where results have risen over the last three years, with pupils achieving very well. Standards are well above average when compared with all and with similar schools. The problems encountered by low entry grades in mathematics and English have been surmounted in science. Imaginative teaching, above the normal, has contributed to this very good achievement. High attaining pupils showed very good understanding when they were able to perceive the relationships between the distance of an object from a light source and the height of a shadow, from accurately plotted line graphs. Year 8 pupils could explain the process of refraction. Lower attainers struggled with some aspects of these concepts but were able to plot line graphs in Year 6, and explain what different coloured lights did to the appearance of an object in Year 8.

7. Standards are also high in art and music, in Years 5 and 6, and in design and technology in Years 7 and 8. In art, talented pupils experimented and used drawing skills imaginatively and creatively. All pupils learn what can and cannot be done with clay. In music, many pupils join school choirs and about a third receive instrumental tuition. Pupils compose and understand graphic scores. By Year 8, pupils can devise raps or compose film scores but the instrumental skills of those who do not have individual tuition are not as well developed as those who do.
8. Standards in English are close to average by age of 11 and 13. Purposeful teaching helps pupils achieve well in relation to their starting point on entry. A decline in literacy scores on entry has challenged the school. Generally, this challenge has been met. High attaining pupils are doing well.
9. The school has made good progress with the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy for Key Stage 3. The co-ordinator has had preliminary training. The external literacy consultant led the first awareness training session for the whole school after a series of observations of lessons across a range of curricular subjects. The focus of the first day of training, for Years 6, 7 and 8 teachers, was on improving writing skills, an area identified as needing improvement.
10. The central thrust of the school's efforts for improving literacy in Years 7 and 8 has been to target those pupils who failed to reach Level 4 of the National Curriculum by the end of Year 6. These pupils are now placed together in small groups with very effective teachers within the teaching sets. Observations of the groups show that all pupils attending regularly are making good progress from their starting point in September.
11. Standards in mathematics are near the national average at both the Level 5+ and Level 6+ benchmarks, although a slight dip occurred in 2001. This was expected given the attainment profile of those tested. In lessons and workbooks, standards are above average in Years 6 and 8. Achievements are well above average.
12. Standards of numeracy in the school are generally good in all but the lowest attaining groups. Standards have risen since the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, which has improved the teaching of both specialists and non-specialists. The new materials have added a fresh dimension to numeracy, which pupils appreciate and respond to well, and their attainment levels have consequently risen. The school has been using the National Numeracy Strategy successfully for some time and has now incorporated it into Years 7 and 8 as part of the Key Stage 3 strategy. At present, numeracy is used very effectively in modern foreign languages to analyse and present survey data, in science to calculate averages and draw bar charts, and in design and technology to weigh and measure accurately.
13. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress overall because of the good provision made for them. Achievement is very good in science, art, design and technology and religious education, and satisfactory in humanities.
14. Most pupils on the register of special educational needs achieve well in lessons. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is very much related to individual needs and to particular disabilities. Within a school such as this, in which all pupils are valued and monitored carefully, those with identified learning difficulties are helped to make good progress. In lessons observed during the inspection, learning was particularly good in art and religious education, where pupils were identified well and

were given individual attention by skilful teachers. They also achieved well in geography and history where work of different levels was prepared and where support was sometimes available. Achievement was similarly good in French, design and technology and ICT, although the achievement of the youngest pupils is limited by the small amount of time allocated to design and technology. In English, mathematics and science lessons, pupils generally make good progress in relation to their starting points although some need additional support to improve low literacy and numeracy skills. The school now teaches English and mathematics in Years 6, 7 and 8 in sets based on pupils' measured prior attainment. Teaching and learning for many of the pupils with special educational needs take place in the lowest attaining group in each year. This has the advantage of providing well-focused support teaching and individual help for the development of basic skills, usually in small groups. A disadvantage, however, particularly noticeable in English, is that pupils have fewer opportunities to work alongside and to learn from higher attaining pupils. A library research lesson for a lower attaining group was less effective than it might have been as all the pupils had very low reading skills and were almost totally reliant on the teacher and support assistants. Pupils are on the way to reaching set targets.

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

15. Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good and standards of behaviour are high. Relations within the school are also very good and pupils respond very well to the provision that the school makes for their personal development. All this helps learning. Attendance is better than the national average.
16. Pupils have very good attitudes towards the school. They are very well motivated and interested in the work they do there. In lessons seen during the inspection, pupils were very keen to answer questions and to contribute their own ideas. In a personal and social education lesson for Year 5, pupils learning about the importance of a balanced diet, discussed contents labels on food packets. The teacher asked who might need to read these labels carefully to avoid some ingredients (for reasons of illness or allergy) and pointed out how others, active in sport, might want to select energy-giving foods. A lively discussion resulted with pupils eager to join in. Similar attitudes occur in all year groups. Keenness, interest and initiative featured strongly in a Year 8 religious education lesson when pupils interviewed each other for a job as caretaker for the Earth. Pupils work hard at their studies.
17. Standards of behaviour are consistently very good in lessons. The very few pupils who might be inclined to lower standards respond to firm management. Standards of behaviour are also very good as pupils move around the school. At lesson changeovers pupils are sensible and considerate in crowded areas. Behaviour during lunch in the dining-hall is civilised. Pupils are friendly, polite and ready to converse. Older pupils help younger ones settle into the school. Pupils interviewed do not think that bullying is a problem and consider that any cases that do occur are dealt with very quickly. The level of fixed term exclusions – there are no permanent ones – is low.
18. Pupils respond very well to the provision for their personal development. They are mature, thoughtful and aware of the effect their actions can have on others. The school council illustrates this maturity well. It is a well-run, articulate group, which takes its responsibilities seriously, and also undertakes much charitable work. The chairman and secretary sit on the governors' community committee. Pupils enjoy the many extra-curricular activities and feel that they gain from such visits as the residential one to Leeson House. Relations in the school are also very good. Pupils

work well together. Year 5 pupils loved working with friends and using 'real' coins in a mathematics lesson. In another mathematics lesson Year 6 pupils did some very good paired work. Year 7 pupils, making a mechanical toy in a design and technology lesson, supported each other in aspects of the practical work. Year 8 pupils, who had been practising persuasive writing in an English lesson, were enthusiastic about reading out their own work, but also listened carefully and respectfully to each other's sentences. Relations between pupils and teachers are very good. Pupils interviewed said they were glad to have come to the school because they felt valued as individuals and that they were safe. Such good relations help learning.

19. Attendance in the school is good and is monitored well. The rate of attendance for the academic year 2000/2001 was 94.1 per cent – above the national average of 93.3 per cent. Authorised absence was 5.7 per cent compared with a national figure of 6.3 per cent. Unauthorised absence was 0.2 per cent, which is considered broadly in line with the national average of 0.4 per cent. Figures for the current academic year are similar.
20. Pupils' attitudes were very good at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils continue to have a very positive approach to their studies.
21. The attitudes of pupils with special needs are very positive. In lessons seen pupils work hard and persevere well in all subjects. This reflects the care with which lessons are organised and taught by teachers. Behaviour is good in all year groups and this is helped by the judicious attachment of support assistants to particular pupils and their skill in helping them to succeed.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

22. Teaching and learning are good, overall, and have improved since the previous inspection. A high proportion of lessons are very good (nearly half) and a number (nearly a tenth) are excellent. Most lessons are good or better. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Work in pupils' books indicates high standards of learning resulting from the very good teaching.
23. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good. Even non-specialists are sufficiently prepared to be able to talk around the topic they are conveying and consequently extend pupils' learning beyond the ordinary. They assess work well and in a way that pupils can learn. Pupils are very aware of how they are doing as a result of the school's good tracking procedures.
24. Across the school, teachers support well the promotion of literacy by explaining key words and displaying these on the walls. Most teachers reinforce vocabulary by highlighting it on their white boards. The teachers of modern foreign languages make a particularly strong contribution to the development of literacy by emphasising the importance of accurate written work, good presentation skills and the correction of mistakes. English teaching is good. Lessons now begin with a 'starter' activity, which teaches, or revises, punctuation, vocabulary or grammatical skills appropriate to the stage of the National Literacy Strategy. Inspectors observed good, succinct 'starters' on homophones, connectives, antonyms and use of the apostrophe, all taught effectively as a prelude to the main learning activity.
25. Teaching is very good in mathematics. Numeracy is taught very well both by specialists and by non-specialists. All have adopted the National Numeracy Strategy with enthusiasm. They use exciting new materials successfully including the

Springboard work for lower attainers. Teachers increasingly use ICT across the curriculum.

26. Teachers successfully promote a spirit of independent thought. In a mathematics lesson on data handling, for example, the teacher challenged pupils by asking “Why would you?” or “How could you?”, gradually moving them to a slightly more difficult problem. As a result, pupils’ learning is secure and recall is accurate because pupils are routinely required to explain their thought patterns. In some lessons a large proportion of time is given to collaborative group discussion, which enables pupils to become the teachers to good effect. In an English lesson, a teacher adopted this approach and pupils did well; they argued language ideas and wrote down an agreed version of a story.
27. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour. When lesson pace is brisk, control is effortless and the quality of pupils’ responses is very high. Lessons are well structured, always having an introduction, a middle and a drawing together of learning towards the end. Work is usually interesting and well ordered and pupils show a good level of understanding about what they are doing. Classroom management is very good. There are excellent examples in science when teachers balance time cleverly to give high, middle and low attainers opportunities to extend or practise their skills. In science, for example, the teacher, with the help of a support assistant, ensures all pupils have work suited to their needs as well as appropriate support and reinforcement. Pupils respond by enjoying the challenge of taking responsibility for their own learning, whilst also enjoying the task.
28. Teachers use a wide range of strategies including group and paired work and use resources such as videos and computers well. In design and technology, for example, the range of methods used is exceptional and promotes very good learning. Pupils’ creative expression is developed through interesting lessons and stimulating teaching. In history, for example, pupils discussed types of decoration in Ancient Greece. Pupils really enjoyed the discussion and subsequent drawing of pots. It is similar in art, where they learn key skills in painting and pottery, which enable them to use their creativity effectively. They produced well-designed papier-mâché frames using pasta shells to achieve three-dimensional effects in decoration.
29. Good practice is evident in science when investigative skills are explicitly taught and are regarded by science teachers as the foundation of learning. It also occurs in history when pupils are encouraged to observe and analyse, and in French, when a class in which nine out of ten pupils have special educational needs, the taught language is spoken throughout. Contrary to this, time is wasted when pupils spend time colouring in and doing unnecessary calculations in geography.
30. The teaching of gifted and talented pupils varies across departments. Although almost all lessons plan for extension tasks, their use is uneven. In design and technology, pupils are taught in a special extension set. In ICT, extra support staff ensure that gifted pupils are suitably challenged to ensure their progress.
31. Homework is taken very seriously. Pupils keep accurate records of homework and targets they are to pursue in their homework diaries.
32. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well in all areas of the school. There is particularly good support for pupils with statements of special needs, both by the attached assistants and by subject teachers who have a clear understanding of the nature of the particular needs. The only weakness noted in this area was that most



teachers have not yet written targets for pupils on the register. A few teachers also are not familiar with the individual education plans of all the pupils they teach. Particularly skilled and effective teaching is provided for the Year 7 pupils identified as having low levels of skills in speaking, reading and writing at the end of Year 6. A rigorous programme of 'catch up' activities is provided in the pattern recommended within the framework of the National Literacy Strategy.

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

33. The school offers a good range of learning opportunities overall through a one-week timetable of 25 periods of 55 and 60 minutes. In addition the curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of activities and clubs at lunchtimes and before and after school. Statutory requirements are met in all subjects, although the quality of ICT provision across the curriculum is inconsistent. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is met by a combination of assemblies and tutor group 'thought for the day' activities; however, the quality of the spiritual input in the tutor groups is variable but better than at the time of the previous inspection.
34. Pupils study all the subjects of the National Curriculum plus one lesson per week of personal, social and health education which includes sex education. A weekly lesson of French in Year 6 widens the curriculum and prepares pupils well for compulsory language learning in Years 7 and 8. History and geography are combined as humanities, though curricular and time requirements for both subjects are fully met. The position of art and design in a 'practical' carousel leads to long periods of the year when pupils have no opportunity to develop these particular aesthetic and creative skills. Facilities for physical education are very good and swimming takes place at a nearby leisure centre.
35. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There is only one disapplication from the National Curriculum for pupils with special educational needs. They have access to the full curriculum. There is little withdrawal from lessons except for some individual testing and sometimes for booster reading lessons.
36. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good. A co-ordinator has been appointed who liaises with the Ferndown Pyramid and the local education authority. A register of these pupils has been compiled and most subjects are already providing special work to help them to fulfil their potential. A series of special events, such as sports coaching, visiting artists and a local education authority mathematics summer school, provides extra enrichment. Provision across subjects is currently uneven but in-service training sessions are being provided.
37. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching literacy skills is good. Additional teaching time has been allocated to all classes in Year 6 to ensure that by the end of Year 6 can give the maximum impact to improving literacy and attainment in English. Six hours per week is now allocated for English, and seven teaching groups have been created from the five tutor groups. These groupings are based on pupils' prior attainment in reading and writing. Unlike schools nationally, the school does not organise a formal daily literacy hour for pupils in Years 5 and 6. Since 1999 it has used elements of the framework, including the teaching of skills and grammar, without some of the shared reading and individual reading strategies.
38. The teaching of numeracy skills is effective. The school has been using the National Numeracy Strategy successfully for some time and has now incorporated it into

Years 7 and 8 as part of the Key Stage 3 strategy. Sensibly, the school has carried out an audit of the use of numeracy across the curriculum and has planned appropriate staff development to improve delivery. Active plans are in place in science and design and technology to develop cross-curricular investigations. At present, numeracy is used very effectively in modern foreign languages to analyse and present survey data, in science to calculate averages and draw bar charts and in design and technology to weigh and measure accurately.

39. Pupils are provided with their entitlement to equality of opportunity and access. The school is conscientious in its attempts to ensure no pupil is disadvantaged as a result of background, ability, gender or race.
40. A good range of extra-curricular activities is provided and this is well supported by parents. More than 40 per cent of pupils take part in sporting activities such as football, rugby, netball, volleyball, cross-country running and athletics and many take up opportunities for residential outdoor education. Music provision is a strength, with a choir, orchestra, jazz band, percussion group, guitar group and several recorder groups. Around 40 pupils travel to France each year as part of a student exchange programme. A technology club enables pupils to extend their interest in individual projects in a relaxed and informal way. Pupils are welcomed to literacy and numeracy breakfast clubs and to a homework club by special invitation and according to need. A mathematics summer school proved successful in 2001 and pupils joined an art summer school run by the Ferndown Schools Pyramid.
41. The provision for pupils' personal and social education is good. Considered overall, the programme is carefully planned. Topics selected for study are appropriate for the various year groups. The programme includes visitors from outside the school, for example the police and local magistrates, who make an effective contribution. Most lessons take place on Friday afternoons, so it was not possible to see lessons for all year groups during the inspection. The school makes very good provision for pupils' health education. It features strongly in the personal and social education programme as well as forming part of physical education.
42. The community makes an excellent contribution to pupils' learning through a variety of channels. The most notable of these has been the provision of a new art block through parents' fund-raising activities. The playing fields are a community resource. Pupils distributed hampers to pensioners at harvest festival time and this was reciprocated by the pensioners, who raised money for the school. 'Neighbourhood Engineers' support the design and technology curriculum. The police and magistrates play a part in the personal, social and health education curriculum and local ministers of religion take assemblies. Governors and parents help with residential trips and a parent volunteer was seen supporting pupils with special needs in class. The governors have a special community committee, which includes pupil members of the school council.
43. Satisfactory relationships with partner institutions centre mainly on the Ferndown Schools Pyramid. This provides for liaison with feeder first schools and with the Ferndown Upper School. Liaison is the responsibility of the two curriculum co-ordinators. Regular subject meetings focus on curricular continuity, while pastoral liaison ensures smooth transfer of pupils between schools.
44. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. These aspects are at the heart of the ethos of the school.

45. Provision for spiritual development is good. It is excellent in assemblies where pupils listen to touching music such as Ladysmith Black Mambazo's 'Amazing Grace'. This is very well linked to the theme of working together and to a philosophical understanding of what might constitute heaven or hell with regard to helping each other. There are very vivid demonstrations of harmony in the music listened to and exuberance in the pupils' own singing of 'Walking Together'. The school now meets the legal requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Provision for music is excellent: pupils are given a spiritual uplift by the quality of experiences provided and by their own participation. The orchestra is well attended. Teachers and parents give support. Pupils' playing shows good, very good and excellent levels of attainment. It provides an uplifting experience when the spiritual, moral, social and cultural elements are interwoven. In religious education, pupils study some of the spiritual elements of the major world religions, and of Christianity in particular. There is a very well attended 'Ark' Christian group that meets weekly when pupils have opportunities to consider what their commitment to their Christian faith means to them. They do this through song and study. Dance provides opportunities for pupils to achieve creatively and express feelings through movement. In art, pupils are able to see the spiritual significance in the art of different cultures, particularly in their studies of masks from a range of cultures. In design and technology, pupils gain an aesthetic awareness through high quality work and experience some awe and wonder at the power of the computer. Pupils consider the beauty of patterns in mathematics. There are some missed opportunities to consider the glory and awe-inspiring elements in many of the subject areas and assemblies.
46. Provision for moral and social development is very good. They are inter-linked in accordance with the ethos of the school. Pupils are given a clear understanding of right and wrong in all subject areas. They display a very good sense of this by their very good behaviour, showing respect for each other throughout the school. The school has the feeling of a close community and pupils support each other. Teachers are very good role models treating everyone with great courtesy and respect. Pupils develop a moral conscience and give generously to a range of charities. The school hosts the 'University of the Third Age' and this adds to the sense of community. There are regular visits by magistrates, the police and members of a youth club, who all educate pupils in moral and social issues, including the misuse of drugs. There is a well-structured personal and social education programme that adds significantly to pupils' moral and social development. Tutor time in the mornings also contributes effectively to pupils' personal development; there is a strong emphasis on moral and social issues. Pupils exercise responsibility when they work co-operatively in groups in all subjects.
47. All pupils have good opportunities for residential visits in Year 5. In Year 7, pupils have the opportunity to visit a country park where there are outdoor pursuits such as canoeing and sailing. In Year 8, pupils visit France as part of a successful exchange programme, staying for a week.
48. Provision for cultural development is very good. There is a strong regard for poetry and literature and pupils study some well-regarded works including the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf, Shakespeare and Shaw. There are visiting performers in drama and music. Pupils visit concerts locally and in London including the Schools' Prom in the Albert Hall. In music they study the cultural traditions of this country and an appropriate range of world music. They study Indian dance movements, and in design and technology they have lots of discussion and research on food and clothes of different cultures. In religious education pupils gain good insights into the cultures of others by looking at the major world faiths. In geography pupils study China, Gambia and

France but do not consider the cultures in enough depth. Pupils study art from a wide range of cultures. All these provisions enable pupils to be aware of the wider society in which they will continue their studies and represent a considerable increase since the previous inspection.

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

49. The school looks after the pupils in its care very well.
50. There are very good procedures to ensure the welfare of all pupils in the school. Members of staff make sure they know the individual children in their classes and tutor groups, and use their knowledge very effectively in how they care for them. Informal knowledge is backed by extremely thorough records. Pupils interviewed considered that they have much support from their teachers and tutors. There are very good procedures to ensure pupils' safety, both within the school and on visits outside.
51. Child protection procedures in the school are good. The headteacher is the designated teacher. There is clear guidance for all members of staff, including those on lunchtime duties. The procedures to promote and monitor attendance are good. The school encourages parents to telephone when their children will not be in school and contacts them when pupils are absent, in some cases on the first day of absence. The education welfare officer works closely with the school when there are problems of persistence lateness or low attendance.
52. Procedures to promote good behaviour and discipline are very good. The school has high standards and makes this clear. It rewards pupils for hard work and effort. The consequences of bad behaviour are made equally clear. Discipline is enforced consistently by members of staff. The school acts swiftly to manage potential problems with behaviour. Last autumn, school routines were altered to counter perceived difficulties with a particular group of pupils. Parents consider any instances of bullying are dealt with promptly and sensibly. The very high standards of behaviour seen in the school during the inspection show how effective its procedures are.
53. Assessment is a growing strength of the school.
54. Since the previous inspection, assessment procedures have been refined to include annual and statutory test data and additional cognitive ability test data covering all year groups. This has enabled the school to measure progress and achievement of all pupils on a regular basis and hence to set appropriately realistic but challenging targets for them. The half-term database of pupils' efforts backs up the attainment system and provides early warning of changes in achievement. Pupils value the commendations arising from the system. The school systems sensibly allow for the analysis of pupils' achievement within subjects. Overall, the assessment procedures in the school are very good. In the majority of subject areas assessment is used effectively to guide curricular planning. However, there is a need to ensure that all areas maintain a uniform approach to assessment and its use. The school has made good progress in this area since the previous inspection.
55. There are very good procedures to record and monitor pupils' personal development. The school has devised its own programme, part of the continuous assessment (a term recognised and used by parents), which enables it to track academic and personal progress very effectively. If a pupil, or group of pupils, does not do as well as expected, or if there are problems in a particular area, the programme indicates

this clearly. The school makes sensitive use of the information available to it. It provides very effective academic and personal support and guidance for its pupils.

56. The quality of care given to pupils has improved since the previous inspection. This is largely due to the continual development of procedures to monitor personal and academic progress and the way the school uses information to help pupils.
57. The school monitors well the progress of all pupils on the register of special educational needs in the same way that it does all pupils. In some subjects teachers have contributed to the setting of learning targets for pupils on Stage 3 of the register and above by adding subject-specific learning targets to the general targets agreed between the special needs co-ordinator and the pupil. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are monitored more closely. Each is tracked carefully and given targets appropriate to need. For these pupils there is a more precise identification of learning needs, more detailed learning targets to be pursued, and a more thorough evaluation of progress. At the moment, the school's support assistants do not have a sufficiently strong role in recording the progress of their pupils.

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

58. The school has a very strong partnership with parents.
59. Parents hold the school in very high regard. Many more than is usual returned the pre-inspection questionnaire. Parents believe their children like the school. They consider that the school expects their children to work hard in school and to do their best. Parents think that the teaching is good and that the school is led and managed well. The inspection team agrees with the highly positive views which parents have of the school. Some parents who returned the questionnaire and attended the parents' meeting do not think that their children get the right amount of work to do at home. The team considers that, on the whole, homework set for pupils is appropriate, but that there can be inconsistencies in the way it is done. Some parents do not think that they are well informed about how their children are getting on. Inspectors consider that, overall, information about progress is good, though annual reports could be more consistent between subjects. Some parents do not think that the school works closely enough with them. The inspection team does not share this view.
60. The school has very effective links with parents. It continues to work hard to strengthen and develop them. Very good induction procedures are in place to help pupils when they move up from the first school and then on to the upper school. This is achieved largely by the good personal contacts, which tutors and heads of year establish with parents, reinforced by the good information provided for parents. Tutors and heads of year make themselves readily available should parents wish to contact them. They also make a point of telling parents when their children have done well. Diaries are a frequently used channel for communication between home and school. The school provides very good information about itself: initial information in the pyramid and school prospectuses, a detailed summary of the year in the governors' annual report to parents and current information in booklets and newsletters. Parents are told about the progress their children make five times a year through the process of continuous assessment, where grades are entered in homework diaries. This is a very good method of informing parents how their children are doing. Annual reports, by contrast, vary between subjects in what they tell

parents about progress. On balance, the quality of the information that parents receive is good.

61. The contribution that parents make to the life of the school is quite exceptional. The Ferndown Middle School Association is led by an energetic committee and is very well supported by the whole parent body. Parents organise and attend a wide range of events to raise money to provide better resources and facilities for pupils at the school. Their most outstanding achievement was to raise, in a single year, £15,000 towards the new art block. Pupils are benefiting enormously from these efforts. They now work in pleasant and spacious surroundings with the space to explore diverse media. Many other resources which contribute to learning, for example, computers and software, have also been provided by parents. Parents also help in the school and attend concerts and other events to support their children.
62. The school had a very strong partnership with parents at the time of the previous inspection. It has continued to develop this.
63. Good parental contact is maintained for those pupils on the register of special needs. Parents attend parents' evenings and attend the annual review meetings for those with statements.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

64. Leadership and management are excellent. The headteacher, a very committed and conscientious leader, has a very clear direction that is underpinned by an ethos of equality of opportunity, and ensures that the education of the whole person is promoted well. This vision is shared by key staff, who are not only supportive but also active in the pursuit of excellence. All seek to enable pupils to reach their potential. They have created a haven where pupils can grow and learn without fear and are gently encouraged as they take on the challenges of citizenship and academic prowess. Middle managers have much to contribute. They expect high standards across subjects and through year groups. They are conscientious and work too hard as does the senior management team – a judgement supported by Investors In People (IIP) assessors. All staff, including support assistants, administrative assistants, the financial administrator, catering and caretaking staff, contribute very well to the effectiveness of the school.
65. The school has adopted the Ferndown Pyramid Policy, which recognises that all members of the school's community are unique and of equal value. The policy addresses well issues relating to gender, ethnicity, religion, social background and special educational needs of staff and pupils. It expects positive attitudes, unhampered by stereotyping.
66. Governors form a strong group and are led by a chair of governors who is very well appraised of the school as are all governors, all of whom know its strengths and weaknesses well. As an educationalist himself, the chair has much to offer the school. The governing body is extremely effective in its role and acts as both supportive and involved critical friends.
67. The school development plan is clearly documented and addresses school priorities well. It identifies academic targets, which are realistic but usually exceeded because of the enormous efforts put in by staff.

68. Financial control is very secure. The school is very prudent in its management of funds and as a result achieves far more than might reasonably be expected. For example, by careful management, planning and tremendous help from the School Association, the new art block has evolved. Day-to-day expenditures are rigorously monitored as are more costly projects. Good value is sought by using contractors who offer discount and through bidding and tendering processes. Any specific grants are used appropriately. Governors keep a watchful eye out and are critical when necessary. Strategic planning is good. The school development plan identifies realistic costs of new initiatives.
69. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching are excellent. Co-ordinators are given three days per term to carry out this task in line with clear guidelines. This has resulted in clear targets and action plans for staff and has played a key role in raising standards. A very effective system of performance management is well established. All staff have received their second review and have new objectives in place. Ferndown has been recognised as an Investor in People in part due to its commitment to staff training and development. The staff are sufficient in number and are well qualified and well matched to the needs of the curriculum. The induction programmes arranged for new staff are very good. An individual audit of professional developmental needs is carried out for every new member of staff, each of which is supported by a mentor. The school has a history of successful induction of newly qualified teachers and student teacher training.
70. The co-ordinator for special educational needs provides good oversight of a well-organised and valuable school support service. The space available for dedicated teaching is very limited but it is used effectively. As a small classroom, it is often used for teaching English with up to 16 pupils in group activities using the facilities. The four computer stations inside the room are used to good effect for improving language and numeracy skills. The governor with responsibility for oversight of special educational needs is a frequent and a well-informed visitor to the school.
71. The school has an open site in pleasantly landscaped surroundings. The adequacy of accommodation is, on balance, good, though pupil numbers mean the school is quite full and corridors become crowded at lesson changeovers. Attractive and interesting displays of pupils' work decorate the school. There is no litter or graffiti. The buildings are clean. They are also very well maintained, largely through the hard work of the caretakers. There is good teaching space for all subjects, and in some areas accommodation is very good. In particular, art and design and technology areas have recently been extended to provide very spacious rooms for pupils to work in.
72. All pupils benefit from the accessibility of the school library as an important resource for reading material. A good book stock of both fiction and non-fiction is available to pupils at breaks and after school. The latter availability is a result of the school's action following the previous inspection. The only relative weakness noted when the library was being used was the lack of non-fiction and reference books for the youngest readers and those with low reading levels. A good activity in a lesson with low attaining pupils in Year 6 was hindered by the lack of natural history books with text accessible to those with low reading skills. The number of computers is just below average. The school makes very good use of the resources it has.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

73. There are no major issues.

### **Minor issues**

1. Not all subjects contribute to the assessment of ICT, of standards at the end of Year 8.
2. At present, the time-tabling of the school day does not allow all subjects to be taught on a weekly basis.



## Key Stage 3 strategy

74. The school implemented the Key Stage 3 strategies for literacy and numeracy in September 2001 and as a result brought about changes in the school's long-term planning. Now topics are revisited throughout the year in order that pupils can review previous learning and extend their skills and knowledge. Medium-term planning is now completed on a commonly agreed format in the form of planning grids. Teachers ensure objectives for each lesson are identified, and key vocabulary is considered prior to lessons and consequently this becomes a feature of learning.
75. The acting literacy co-ordinator, although fully committed to improving the performance of lower attaining pupils, is overstretched. The school's decision to create two small parallel English sets, combined with successful and very effective teaching and the help of a very competent learning support assistant, has proved effective. All subject co-ordinators are more aware of the need to work on literacy skills. All teachers are also more aware of literacy needs. For example, English lessons now begin with a language starter.
76. The numeracy co-ordinator has led the implementation of the numeracy strategy very enthusiastically and very effectively. Teachers are very keen to adopt the strategy and to analyse its progress. All are pleased with Springboard materials and enjoyed the summer school where pupils at Level 3 or below were helped. The National Numeracy Strategy has been in place for several years in Years 5 and 6 and was being used in Years 7 and 8 before the official introduction of the Key Stage 3 strategy. The introduction of a three-part lesson has facilitated the use of new materials and new ideas which pupils enjoy. Short-term gains are clearly visible in lessons, but it is too early to assess how well newly-gained skills have been retained.
77. Individually, pupils in Year 7 have made good progress, when compared with attainment in their statutory tests in Year 6. There is no way of measuring accurately the effect of this improved provision on pupils' attainment at the end of Year 8, as there are no benchmarks for all pupils available yet. However, the school believes that pupils have made great leaps forward.
78. Strategies used to enable pupils to 'catch up' are successful. Extra lessons are available and the summer school makes a good contribution. Day-to-day awareness has been a key to pupils' improvement. There is good support for pupils with National Curriculum levels below Level 3. All individuals are given extra time in Year 7. Teaching on 'catch-up' programmes is good, both for literacy and numeracy. Pupils enjoy such sessions and respond very positively. They like the individual attention they receive and are well motivated.
79. Overall, the school has effectively implemented the strategy both in literacy and numeracy. The external co-ordinator has been valuable in offering guidance to the acting co-ordinator for literacy. She has brought in fresh ideas. The headteacher is concerned, however, about the need to improve literacy further, a concern prompted by the performance of Year 6 pupils in test scores in national tests. There is a great willingness to try new strategies in Year 7. In numeracy, teachers are delighted with new materials and particularly the effectiveness of the summer school. The need to promote basic literacy is contained within the problems involved in improving numeracy skills.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	126
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	12	58	48	8	0	0	0
Percentage	10	46	38	6	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	638
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	53

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	176

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.7
National comparative data	6.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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	84	76	160

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	56	65	80
	Girls	62	58	73
	Total	118	123	153
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (83)	77 (77)	96 (95)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	59	68	71
	Girls	69	61	67
	Total	128	129	138
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (80)	81 (80)	86 (91)
	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	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	631
Any other minority ethnic group	3

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	3	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	29.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21.7

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

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

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	87.2
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8**

Key Stage 2	26.0
Key Stage 3	22.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001
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	£
Total income	1,295,398
Total expenditure	1,287,847
Expenditure per pupil	2,025
Balance brought forward from previous year	51,768
Balance carried forward to next year	59,319

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.0

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	638
Number of questionnaires returned	386

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	44	49	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	51	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	55	8	2	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	54	15	4	2
The teaching is good.	44	49	2	1	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	47	13	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	37	6	2	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	34	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	35	49	11	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	62	31	1	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	43	5	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	40	6	3	3

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

### **ENGLISH**

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

#### **Strengths**

- Teachers plan and deliver lessons well helping pupils to make good progress.
- Arrangements for monitoring and assessing pupils' attainment and progress are particularly good in Years 5 and 6.
- The school's arrangements to improve literacy standards of lower attaining pupils identified after the National Curriculum tests taken at the age of 11 are working well.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- The school should ensure that all pupils in Years 5 and 6 are heard to read aloud regularly as intended within the framework of the hour of literacy.
- The school should ensure that there is a more standard approach to teaching and learning in Years 7 and 8, for example, in the amount and variety of writing expected from each group each week and each term.
- The revision of schemes of work should be completed in line with the revised National Curriculum, the National Literacy Framework for Key Stage 3, and in close conjunction with the teachers of Year 9 in partner upper schools.

80. Attainment in English is close to the national average both at the age of 11 and at the age of transfer at 13. Effective and purposeful teaching at all stages helps pupils to achieve well in relation to their starting points on entry. The attainment of girls is higher than that of boys, as it is nationally. Pupils on the register of special educational needs are supported well and in most cases make good progress.
81. In the National Curriculum tests taken at the age of 11, attainment overall has been close to the national average in the last two years. Girls' performance in the last three years has exceeded the national average whereas boys' performance has been in line with the national average in the same period. The school's performance in the tests in 2000 was in line with performance in similar schools but was well below this in 2001. This can be attributed to three main factors. A larger number than usual of pupils with low literacy skills entered the school in that year, the year group contained a higher proportion of boys than girls, and it also contained an unusually high number of pupils (over 30%) with special educational needs, related mainly to lack of language and literacy skills. The latter factor led to a relatively high proportion of pupils not being entered for the written tests in 2001 which produced a subsequent dip in overall attainment. In the same tests, however, the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 and above improved markedly compared with the previous year. Attainment in English tests was slightly below what was achieved in mathematics and well below the standards achieved in science. The standards of work seen in Years 7 and 8 indicate that these pupils are attaining standards fully in line with the national average.
82. Pupils' work in Years 5 and 6 shows attainment levels fully in line with national standards. In the higher attaining sets in Year 6, standards of reading and writing are well above the national average and, conversely, they are well below this standard in the two smaller groups created exclusively with lower attaining pupils. The adopted policy of creating seven teaching groups for English within Year 6 helps to provide a more favourable teacher to pupil ratio for the average and below average attaining

pupils. This, together with the high standards of teaching seen in Years 5 and 6, helps pupils to achieve well in relation to their starting points on entry to the school. In one of the mixed groups, for example, with the encouragement of skilful teaching, all pupils successfully completed literacy work on the use of 'connectives' in writing, and read examples of their work to the class. All read and listened to others reading arguments for and against the continued existence of zoos. They then identified and listed the relevant arguments and began to draft their own essays on the subject using the evidence collected to support their own opinions. The teaching in all the seven groups observed in Year 6 and also in lessons visited in Year 5 was helpful in building pupils' confidence in speaking, reading and writing. The group work undertaken with pupils with special educational needs is well structured to ensure regular practice in individual reading to an adult, in developing an extended vocabulary and in improving spelling and word recognition by using computer programs.

83. The attainment of pupils by the end of Year 8 also meets the national expectation. Again, there is a wide range of individual attainment, with many pupils in the higher attaining sets of both Year 7 and Year 8 producing perceptive answers when analysing poems and when writing in response to books read. Pupils heard examining in detail a poem by Wilfred Owen were thoughtful, constructive and articulate in their interpretation of the poem, once they had grasped the poet's meaning. Samples of pupils' writing in response to reading 'Pygmalion' in Year 8 and to 'Beowulf' in Year 7 show that many pupils possess a well-developed ability to interpret characters well and to use their imaginations effectively when continuing a story. The writing of girls is better overall than that of boys as it is by the end of Year 6. As a result, girls outnumber boys in the higher attaining sets. In lower attaining groups pupils, who are similarly taught well, achieve well in relation to their starting points but at levels below the national average. Within Years 7 and 8, pupils work within the same units of prepared work but there is some considerable difference in approach between teachers, which has an impact upon learning and the practice of skills. The main difference is that some pupils do not produce sufficient written work for their age and for the stage of the English course within each term. Although the quality of the redrafted work may be of a high standard and in some cases is very well presented, there is a wide difference between groups producing two or three pieces of writing for assessment and other groups which complete 12 or more pieces in a term. This is an area requiring improvement and greater standardisation.
84. Teaching is good throughout the school. It encompasses many different styles, from the successful whole-class teaching of children of differing abilities in Year 5, to the differentiated groups of pupils in Years 6, 7 and 8. No lessons observed were unsatisfactory; just under a half were judged to be very good or excellent. Particularly strong features were the detailed lesson planning, helpful diagnostic marking of pupils' writing and the skill of teachers in involving all pupils actively in lessons. Some outstanding lessons used time very productively to develop ideas and activities. A lesson, in which a Year 8 group was at an early stage of studying 'Macbeth', included an effective language activity drawing upon the play and characters, followed by a rehearsal of five groups acting out the acts of the play using drama techniques to summarise the plot. This led to the reading in groups of a short key scene in the original Elizabethan language, with the task of producing this as a short play scene within 15 minutes. This was accomplished with great enthusiasm, skill and self-discipline by the groups, with sufficient time available for three of the five groups to act the newly interpreted scene before the whole-class audience. It shows how well pupils respond to the high demands made upon them by well-prepared teachers. Other strong features within teaching include the regular use of ICT to enhance learning at all levels and to encourage high standards of presentation. There is



evidence, also, of good pre-planning with support assistants and the librarian to ensure that pupils receive the greatest benefit from supported lessons and research lessons in the library.

85. At the present, the assistant headteacher is acting as co-ordinator of English and as literacy co-ordinator for the whole school. She has been effective and successful in this role in maintaining an overview of teaching, learning and the monitoring of pupils' progress in reading and writing across the school. Departmental policy and operating documents are clear and up to date; good progress has been made with developing the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 and 8. Some improvement is still needed, however, to ensure that the teaching strengths of more than 20 teachers of English are harnessed in the most productive way to ensure the highest attainment levels for all pupils. Firstly, there will need to be an appraisal of whether teachers in Years 5 and 6 are meeting fully the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy in respect of hearing children reading regularly. Secondly, it will be necessary to find ways of ensuring that teachers in Years 7 and 8 follow a balanced programme of speaking (including drama), reading and writing within the schemes of work to enable pupils to regularly practise writing skills within a given time scale. At present, some units of work take a very long time to complete. A third area is to develop greater confidence in grading pupils' completed work to National Curriculum levels within Years 7 and 8 so that pupils can see what levels have been reached. A good start has been made to this with the introduction of folders of assessed work. The levels currently given to Year 7 pupils and the targets set for them to achieve by the end of the year need to be adjusted in line with the writing assessments and the previous tests. A further need is to plan the English curriculum for Years 7 and 8 more closely with upper school partners so that all teachers are clear about the contribution they are making to learning across Years 7 to 9. Teachers would benefit from having opportunities to observe some of the very successful methods of classroom organisation in Years 5 and 6 and the very skilful teaching of drama and English to both high and low attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8.
86. It is over four years since the previous inspection. There has been movement in attainment towards the national average at Key Stage 2 rather than above it but this is linked directly to school intake characteristics which are monitored more closely now. Teaching has clearly improved since 1997 and good progress has been made to develop the use of ICT throughout the curriculum. Pupils' behaviour and their enthusiasm in lessons remain very positive and they make good progress.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

**Strengths**

- Dynamic leadership.
- Mainly very good teaching with high expectations.
- Highly motivated pupils and very good relationships.

**Area for improvement**

- Some split teaching groups.

87. In the 2001 national tests for pupils aged 11, overall standards in mathematics were near the national average at both Level 4 and above and Level 5. When compared to schools with similar characteristics, standards are average. The 2001 figure represents a slight drop on the previous years especially at the higher level. This drop can be attributed to the lower average attainment of that intake. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Attainment in mathematics is lower than that in science but is higher than that in English.
88. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are now above national expectations at Year 6 and at Year 8. The good, and often very good, teaching and the very motivating management of the subject have undoubtedly helped raise standards. The introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy into Years 7 and 8 has also been a boost for all teachers but especially non-specialists. The materials, including the Springboard work for lower level attainers at Year 6, come as part of the recently introduced Key Stage 3 strategy. They provide an excellent basis for planning suitable stimulating courses for all pupils. The school has very thorough systems for assessing pupil attainment in every year, and analyses of this data confirms that the school adds good value to their pupils in mathematics. Pupils are generally very hard working and are motivated learners. They achieve very well.
89. By the age of 11, higher attaining pupils can multiply three-figure numbers with confidence, average attaining pupils can add and subtract decimal quantities accurately, and lower attainers can carry out mental additions of simple money sums. By the age of 13, higher attaining pupils can successfully multiply out algebraic brackets and factorise simple trinomial expressions, average pupils can convert fractions to decimals and to percentages accurately, and lower attaining pupils have a good grasp of basic probability. Standards of numeracy are generally good in all but the lower attaining pupils. The school addresses this problem well by using the National Numeracy Strategy three-part lesson to emphasise mental skills routinely in every lesson and to incorporate weekly assessment of these skills. The Key Stage 3 strategy, which extends the National Numeracy Strategy into Years 7 and 8 and also includes Springboard material, also emphasises further development of basic numeracy. Numeracy is also developed well in science, design and technology and French. Pupils' oral work is generally good and is improving as a result of the mental National Numeracy Strategy work in every lesson. Pupils are usually very pleased to explain their understanding of aspects of mathematics to their friends using appropriate mathematical language. Teachers are sensibly emphasising key words in lessons as poor reading and comprehension skills still have a major effect on performance in mathematics tests. ICT is used regularly and effectively in mathematics lessons. Particularly good use was seen in a Year 8 lesson, using a spreadsheet to simulate number machines. Pupils were very stimulated by using ICT in their successful determination of linear and non-linear expressions. Pupils use calculators appropriately and accurately and teachers rightly encourage the development of mental estimating skills.

90. Pupils' learning in lessons is at least good and often very good. They enjoy learning new techniques and applying them successfully. Thus a lower attaining Year 6 class learned how to change multiplication facts into division facts for numbers 5 and 10 and then successfully applied their understanding to other numbers. They enjoy working in pairs and being challenged. A lower attaining, Year 5 class loved estimating lengths, having got the idea of what 10cm looked like. They concentrate well when the teaching is dynamic, thus one group of 11 year olds, who had special needs in terms of ability to concentrate, were kept going by the teacher varying activities and keeping each pupil involved in the lesson. Very occasionally, when the pace of a lesson drops, pupils' interest falls. Pupils with special educational needs make good and occasionally very good progress in lessons. The small groups in the lower sets of the subject are a major factor in helping these pupils attain appropriately. Gifted pupils are challenged in most lessons with extension materials. All pupils are looked after as individuals in mathematics classes. The classes that are run outside school hours confirm the dedication of staff to their charges.
91. All teaching is at least good and a significant majority is very good. Teachers are uniformly enthusiastic and keen to develop pupils' understanding and knowledge. They enjoy the three-part lessons and usually keep a very good pace up throughout the hour-long lessons. Particularly good practice was seen in several lessons where there was a staggered arrival of pupils from different areas of the school. Teachers had the mental starter work ready on the board and pupils were conditioned to get on with that work immediately on arrival in class. Particularly effective learning was seen in a lesson where the teacher's clear explanation of speed, distance and time relationships, based on excellent subject knowledge, enabled pupils to apply their understanding to complex problems in this area. Teaching is generally dynamic and exciting and pupils learn well under these conditions. The effective leadership of the co-ordinator has had a major part to play in creating the positive learning environment. All teachers have taken to the National Numeracy Strategy and its materials. They all enjoy using them and this is transmitted to their pupils in most lessons. Pupils love participating verbally and coming to the board to show off their grasp of new ideas. They enjoy assessing their own work and competing with friends. They enjoy the weekly mental tests and the rewards for improving performance. Pupils are invariably well behaved and motivated. They have very good relationships with staff and fellow pupils. They respond well to the very high expectations of teachers.
92. The subject is very well co-ordinated by a caring professional who leads by example. He has carried his dedicated teaching team with him and the subject has improved significantly since the previous inspection in terms of teaching and learning.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Pupils' achievement is very good.
- Pupils' attainment is very high.
- Leadership is excellent
- Target setting for individual pupils in practical science is excellent.
- Pupils' practical investigative skills are developed very well.

### Areas for improvement

- The development of the departmental marking policy.
- The development of individual target setting for the more theoretical aspects of science.

93. In the national tests for 2001 the results for Year 6 were well above the national average and were well above average in comparison with similar schools. Overall, girls did slightly better than boys and pupils did better in science than in mathematics or English. Performance in the tests has improved over the last three years in line with the national trend. Pupils enter the school with average standards in science and the standards achieved by the end of Year 6 show that they make very good progress. By the end of Year 8 pupils' standards are well above national expectations and very good progress has been maintained.
94. During the inspection, the standard of work observed in lessons and books for all pupils in Year 6 was well above that normally seen. High attaining pupils were able to see the relationship between the distance of an object from a light source and the height of its shadow, from accurately plotted line graphs. Lower attaining pupils were also able to plot line graphs from experimental data when given a framework and support to guide them. In Year 8 the standard of work observed in lessons and books was well above average compared to that expected nationally. High attaining pupils were able to describe the process of refraction using analogies to explain why it happens, and lower attaining pupils were able to describe how different coloured objects appear to change colours in different coloured light.
95. The teaching is very good. All the teaching seen was good or better and some was excellent. A key feature of this high standard was the use of relevant, stimulating practical tasks that enabled pupils to learn very effectively. Very good teaching was seen when lessons were well planned, and delivered in a way that allowed pupils to gain skills, knowledge and understanding through carrying out their own investigations. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson to determine the speed of a moving object, pupils used skate boards, trundle wheels and electronic timers in the playground to calculate speed. As a result, all pupils could calculate the speed of a moving object and were able to understand the need to repeat measurements. Excellent teaching was seen. Pupils were inspired by the enthusiasm and high expectations of the teacher. For example, in a Year 5 lesson pupils developed line graph plotting skills; pupils were highly motivated and engaged from the start of the lesson by the teacher's enthusiastic approach involving the pupils in role-play to demonstrate graphical trends for the scientific description for some everyday physical events. The pupils were keen to live up to the high expectations of the teacher as they were guided through the processes of line graph plotting. As a result, the pupils made excellent progress and developed graph-plotting skills far beyond those which would normally be expected for their age group. High attaining pupils were given excellent support by the class teacher and were able to construct multiple line graphs on the same axes. A support teacher also gave those pupils with special educational needs excellent support. This enabled them to acquire line graph plotting skills very effectively. High attaining pupils and those pupils with special educational needs were supported very well in all the lessons seen and as a result made very good progress. Literacy is developed very well at every opportunity with key words being displayed on the board for all topics taught. Large, colourful key statement flow charts are displayed in every room in which science is taught, providing an excellent reminder for pupils of the processes involved in investigative science. Numeracy skills are developed very well and teachers ensure that pupils have acquired the numerical skills required for a particular task beforehand. Pupils use ICT effectively in science

for word processing, spreadsheets and data logging. Teachers assess pupils' work very well. Exercise books are very well marked with very good comments although the style of marking varies across the subject area. An excellent system of assessing and monitoring pupils' practical skill development is in use. As a result, pupils know what National Curriculum attainment target level they are working at and what they need to do to advance to the next level. They evaluate their own progress and take responsibility for their own learning. This process has not yet been extended to include all science attainment targets. However, the monitoring of pupils' progress in all areas is very good. As a result of very good teaching, pupils remain on task throughout the lessons, enjoy what they are doing, take a pride in their work and behave very well.

96. The department is led by a science co-ordinator who demonstrates the highest levels of leadership. He sets an example of excellence in his teaching and management. This, together with the efforts of a committed team of high calibre teachers and superb technical and learning support, has resulted in very high standards of teaching and learning. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, which involve discussion with pupils, are carried out thoroughly and points for action are followed up effectively. The laboratories and classrooms provide clean, well-organised, motivating environments for the pupils but some of the classrooms are rather cramped when large groups of pupils are carrying out practical activities. Resources for the department are good, although some equipment is in need of updating.
97. Science has made significant improvements since the previous inspection. The department has excellent leadership and the teaching is now very good overall. This has resulted in all pupils being well behaved, carrying out instructions well, and knowing how to improve their performance, and attainment in all years is now well above average.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Standards are very high at the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 8.
- Teaching is very good; this is contributing to the very high standards.
- Assessment is very good: it is ongoing in all lessons and pupils learn what they have to do to improve at all stages.

### Areas for improvement

- Extend the time given to art in Years 7 and 8 so that more advanced methods of printing can be studied.
- Extend the use of ICT so that pupils use it in the development of their own work.

98. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 8 are well above the levels expected for pupils of the same age nationally. This represents very good achievement given that the majority of pupils enter the school with levels of attainment that are broadly average. They enter the school with a basic knowledge of drawing and colour. By the end of Year 8, pupils are well placed to achieve well above average standards at the end of the Year 9.
99. By the end of Year 6 all pupils have very successful drawings of street scenes using one point perspective. They also have very successful studies in two-point

perspective and the gifted and talented can experiment and use the skills learned imaginatively and creatively. Their studies in landscape are well developed in collage and pupils are able to experiment with the use of a range of materials. They also learn the effect of tone by making studies of a range of shades in one colour or in a limited range of colours. Pupils in Year 6 also explore the use of three-dimensional effects in the decoration of picture frames. They learn some features of traditional, modern and contemporary framing designs and techniques. They experiment successfully, particularly in their use of a range of commercially produced pasta shapes. No Year 5 lessons were seen, but pupils' work in ceramic masks that are on display is all of a high standard. These are based on studies of masks from a large number of African cultures. Pupils learn techniques for creating free-standing masks and the techniques of applying features in high relief. They learn the properties of clay and know what can and cannot be done in clay and so are able to avoid aspects that would not survive firing at high temperatures.

100. In Year 8, pupils learn to explore portraiture from carefully observed self-portraits through to abstract work. They learn to experiment in a range of materials and use mono printing techniques as part of their studies. Time is often limited when they reach the printing stage and this limits the range of printing techniques that can be explored. Pupils continue studies in tone and have impressive work in single colours. They experiment well with the effects of geometric shapes. In Year 7, pupils research well for their pottery project on vases. They use the Internet to study the shapes of vases from a wide range of cultures through the ages. They get formal teaching by demonstration and learn the correct techniques associated with pottery and all complete impressive slab pots.
101. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, make equally very good progress. All pupils get individual attention in class and this ensures that they know how to build on their own skills and ideas. Projects are well structured so that the pupils build on their skills systematically from lesson to lesson. All are encouraged to experiment and to be creative and are given guidance on where to search for ideas. The formal, specialist teaching ensures that pupils learn the skills and techniques that bring success.
102. The very good achievement by pupils in this subject can be attributed to the very good, imaginative and creative teaching in all years. Almost all lessons are taken by a specialist teacher who has very good knowledge and understanding of the subject, including pottery. The teachers present the pupils with imaginative ideas. They show pupils how these ideas can be developed in a range of ways. They also show them how to do research on the work of major artists across a range of cultures so that the pupils can get inspiration for their own work. The teacher gives excellent demonstrations on the correct techniques for the construction and decoration of pottery and in drawing and painting and collage. These ensure that pupils gain confidence by their own success. Assessment is carried out in all lessons. All pupils get individual attention from the teacher. They are encouraged to evaluate their own work and often the work of others. They learn how to improve on their work at stages throughout all lessons and this leads to the very high standards.
103. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy by encouraging them to learn the correct vocabulary and by making notes from research on the Internet.
104. Pupils have very good attitudes to this subject and enjoy lessons. They show respect for the teacher and the subject. They listen attentively to the teacher and work

seriously and with great composure. Behaviour was excellent in almost half of the lessons seen.

105. Management of the subject is very good. Schemes of work are structured well and in very good detail. Assessment is thorough and good records are kept on all pupils' work. There is very good accommodation and a wide range of resources and these help to raise standards because pupils have enough space and equipment to experiment on a large scale when appropriate. The art room is adjacent to the design and technology suite of rooms and pupils have access to computers for individual research. There are extensive displays of high quality work in the classroom and throughout the school. These inspire pupils and make an impact on the learning environment of the school. There is very good support for the non-specialist teacher.
106. All the very good features mentioned in the previous inspection report are well maintained. Sketchbook presentation has improved. One shortcoming is that art is taught intensively in blocks of time of five to nine weeks duration and therefore pupils have long periods of time throughout the year when art is not studied. This affects the continuity of their learning to some extent. The time devoted to art is below average in Years 7 and 8. However, these shortcomings are offset by the very good provision available by having small numbers of pupils in lessons. Few groups have more than 20 pupils.
107. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development by studying these elements in the work of artists from a wide range of cultures. Pupils are also given a sense of beauty, balance and aesthetics in the subject.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good and leads to a high quality of learning and well above average attainment by the end of Year 8.
- Well-crafted products show a high level of creative flair and imagination, and good practical skills are taught and practised.
- Excellent co-ordination and management of the subject ensure pupils have access to a broad range of design and technology activities, which fully reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- Very good relationships between pupils and staff enable all pupils to learn effectively and achieve well above expectations over time.

### Areas for improvement

- Extend curricular time for design and technology in Years 5 and 6, to ensure increased opportunities for continuity and progression in pupils' experiences in the subject.
- Increase technical assistance time to support the learning in a greater number of lessons.

108. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average overall. A minority of higher attaining pupils achieve well above the national expectation. Achievement is good; pupils entered school with average attainment and variable, and sometimes limited experience, of designing and making, particularly in using sophisticated technology equipment. Standards in Years 5 and 6 are lower than they might otherwise be

because of the below average time allocated to design and technology, which affects continuity and progression across material areas. The curriculum is a 'carousel' arrangement to cover all material specialisms and includes art, which results in one unit of work in textiles in Year 5 and no further experience in these materials until they are in Year 7. Standards at the end of Year 8 are well above national expectations. Pupils enter Year 7 with above average attainment. Overall, achievement from when pupils enter the school in Year 5 to the end of Year 8 is very good. The work of pupils in the higher attaining extension group is significantly above the average. Pupils benefit from the specialist teaching they receive and from the school's very good specialist resources and good accommodation for the subject.

109. Standards in work seen in Year 6 are above the national average expectation in all material areas. Pupils develop good skills in designing and making products. These are evident, for example, in the enamelled brooch, key ring or fridge magnet project made in resistant materials, and in their decorative bread project in food technology. The focus here was on the affect of microbes on food, both as a decaying agent and as a food enhancer. They systematically gain a good level of knowledge and increase their understanding of the products they design. Hand and machine tools are used well and safely when making products. All pupils weigh ingredients precisely and have a good understanding of ratios when combining liquid with flour to achieve the correct consistency in dough making. The range of vocabulary used to explain their work is above average and increases as they progress through the school, a direct result of teachers' insistence on pupils using the correct terminology when describing their work. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well for their capabilities. Boys and girls achieve equally well in the subject.
110. In work seen in Years 7 and 8, standards are well above the average expected of pupils at this stage nationally. A minority of higher attaining pupils achieve significantly above the expectation. Pupils show a very good understanding of the design principles and processes when designing and making a moisture tester, a mechanical toy, a CD rack, a range of food products and a novelty soft toy which incorporates a facility to produce an interesting sound in textiles. Pupils analyse given products well, write specifications to guide the development of their designs and produce a range of initial ideas before modelling their work prior to designing a final product. Higher attaining pupils show good graphic skills and all pupils use computer-aided design software to produce an orthographic view for their packaging for a moisture tester in Year 7. The graphicacy skills of average and lower attaining pupils are satisfactory, although some sketches lack accuracy and do not always fully reflect the object they mean to depict. Pupils in Years 7 and 8, including those with special educational needs, reach a good level of practical skill and make a variety of very good quality products. In food technology, pupils apply a range of skills in product testing and higher attaining pupils have a very good understanding of chemical and nutritional values. All pupils are taught effectively how to use a computer to calculate nutritional values. Spreadsheets are used well to analyse and present findings in a graphical form as, for example, in the comparison of the weight of key rings people carry around with them. The use of ICT is therefore very good in design and technology work. A very significant feature is that pupils are given every opportunity to use sophisticated software to control another machine as, for example, in a gated level crossing project in Year 8. They also use electronic circuit software to trace electronic circuits as, for example, in the moisture tester. Also in Year 8 textiles, they use a computerised sewing machine to produce a logo design on their soft toy product.



111. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good in all years. In all lessons it is never less than satisfactory, normally very good and quite often outstanding. Teachers provide a very good structure to lessons with clear objectives to guide and support pupils in their work. Teachers plan their lessons well and have high expectations of their pupils. Higher attaining pupils are very well challenged in the 'extension group' where the expectations of outcomes are very high. Strategies are adopted to ensure lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are supported on a one-to-one basis, resulting in good achievement for these pupils. Teachers use a good range of techniques to develop pupils' literacy skills and particularly the technical vocabulary associated with the material specialism. Lists of technical words are displayed in all workshops and are particularly useful to lower attaining pupils who find them very helpful in their writing. This is having a very positive effect on the development of the pupils' literacy skills. Pupils are also expected to write in a variety of styles such as making notes, giving instructions on how to make their products, and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their product outcomes. ICT is used very effectively to raise the overall quality of presentation. Guidelines support pupils as they prepare specifications; step-by-step instructions are given on how to make products, and in how to evaluate effectively their work. In all lessons, the teaching successfully generates a very positive attitude to learning. Pupils are expected to work supportively and to collaborate well with one another when sharing tools and equipment. Teachers expect and achieve very good behaviour from pupils. Behaviour is often excellent because the tasks set by teachers are well matched to interest and intellect; as a result, pupils enjoy what they do. Teachers deploy technical assistance well in support of pupils' learning, and pupils are greatly assisted by the hard work and efforts of the technician. However, technical assistance time is low for a school of this size.
112. The co-ordination and management of the subject is excellent. The co-ordinator has focused on raising standards and has introduced schemes of work, which cover a broad range of well-integrated activities in both resistant and pliable materials. The subject benefits from an excellent team approach. A very good system is in place to monitor and record the attainment of pupils, and targets are set to help them improve further.
113. Very good progress has been made since the previous inspection and standards have been raised considerably. Similarly, the accommodation and resources for the subject have been vastly improved and now provide a very comfortable, stimulating and effective learning environment. Schemes of work are of very good quality and fully reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum in all material areas. Control technology is covered effectively in textiles, electronics and resistant materials. There are good arrangements in Years 7 and 8 through extension groups to challenge the highest attaining pupils and those who are gifted and talented.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- Assessment procedures.
- Progress of pupils.

### **Areas for improvement**

- Development planning.
- Planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

114. Geography is taught in discrete lessons as part of a humanities course. Because of the arrangements of the cycle of lessons, only two geography lessons were available for observation during the inspection, both in Year 8. Judgements are, therefore, informed by rigorous scrutiny of workbooks and considerable discussions with teachers and pupils.
115. By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are in line with national expectations. Pupils' work shows that they have a basic grasp of the concepts of maps and plans, and the relationship between people and places. When pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8, standards are above expectations, indicating that pupils can reach high standards by the end of Year 9. Pupils have a growing understanding of place and location and the relationship between humans and the environment, which was shown in a lesson about agriculture in the Paris Basin.
116. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6, and good in Years 7 and 8. In the work available for scrutiny, pupils in Years 5 and 6 have developed their map work and observation skills and begun to learn about research and enquiry. Pupils with special needs make steady progress, gradually improving their literacy skills. In Years 7 and 8 these pupils have all made good progress and in most cases there is little difference between their work and that of the rest of the class. By the end of Year 8, most pupils' geographical skills and understanding are well advanced.
117. Attitudes and behaviour are good. In one lesson, pupils found it hard to sustain concentration during an unstimulating lesson. In the other lesson, pupils clearly enjoyed their work, and behaviour and effort were at their best. Relationships with teachers are good, leading to a positive atmosphere for learning.
118. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It was very good in one lesson and satisfactory in the other. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. The planning of the weaker lesson, taken for an absent colleague, did not consider the implications of the tasks being set. Consequently, pupils spent the main part of the lesson on time-wasting calculating and colouring work about the population of the regions of France, instead of discussing and analysing the reasons for the population distribution. As a result, pupils learned little. In the better lesson, the teacher imaginatively used a pile of saucers to illustrate the different soil strata of the Paris Basin. This immediately engaged the interest of the pupils. The teacher then led them through a range of briskly-paced supporting tasks to consolidate their learning about the agriculture of the region.
119. Teaching of pupils with special needs and provision for the gifted and talented were good in the better lesson but no provision was made for them in the other. No ethnic minority pupils were seen in these classes. Literacy and numeracy were incorporated satisfactorily into lessons, though not specially emphasised. No evidence was seen of the use of ICT but it is planned for in the curriculum.
120. Management is good overall. Appropriate schemes of work are in place, though at present they do not plan for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Assessment procedures are very good, with detailed records kept of the progress of all pupils. Teaching methods are constantly under review in the light of pupils' learning. Resources are adequate, with appropriate priorities for future spending. At present no departmental development plan guides future improvements. Teaching is monitored.

121. The position of geography in the humanities course does lead to a lack of continuity in parts of the year, particularly during the spring term, but this is well managed by the co-ordinator and does not affect standards.
122. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good with improvement in the use of ICT in teaching and better stocks of textbooks and subject books in the library. The department has good capacity to improve further.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **good**.

### Strengths

- Assessment procedures.
- Progress of pupils in Years 7 and 8.
- Use of homework.

### Areas for improvement

- Development planning.
- Planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

123. History is taught in discrete lessons as part of a humanities course.
124. By the end of Year 6, standards of attainment are in line with national expectations. By that time, pupils have a basic grasp of the principles of time lines. They are developing effective skills of observation and analysis, which they apply to evidence such as photographs recording changes to places over time, or the remains of artefacts from past civilisations. Enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject have already been kindled in many of them by the knowledge and imagination of their teachers. When pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8 standards are above average, comparing well with those expected of pupils at the end of Year 9 in other schools. Pupils have a growing understanding of cause and effect, for example the causes of the French Revolution. They have learned to use the Internet to find and use historical source material, such as the Bayeux Tapestry. In 2001, targets for National Curriculum levels were not met, but these were over-ambitious; targets for 2002 are more realistic.
125. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6, and good in Years 7 and 8. In Years 5 and 6, they develop their concept of time and begin to learn research and enquiry skills. Pupils with special needs make satisfactory progress because of the good support they receive but in some cases weak literacy holds back their learning. In Years 7 and 8, these pupils have all made good progress, and in most cases there is little difference between their work and that of the rest of the class. By the end of Year 8, most pupils' historical skills and understanding and their knowledge of past events are well advanced; for example, they can piece together the narrative leading to Harold's defeat at the Battle of Hastings.
126. Attitudes and behaviour are good overall, though there was some poor behaviour by a group of boys in one lesson, and occasionally pupils found it hard to sustain concentration for the whole of the hour-long lessons. The majority of pupils clearly enjoyed their lessons. One Year 5 pupil studying Greek pottery said, "This is really interesting." Relationships with teachers are good, leading to a productive atmosphere.

127. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen, but two were very good. Not every lesson was clearly planned; sometimes teachers did not think through carefully enough what they were trying to achieve. There was not always a sufficient variety of activities to sustain pupils' interest through the long lessons and thus the level of learning sometimes flagged. The best lessons combined teachers' very good knowledge with unflagging enthusiasm and pace. For example, in a Year 5 lesson where pupils were using climate graphs and photographs from the Internet to identify features of modern Greece, which might have relevance for life in ancient Greece, the teacher's enthusiasm was communicated to pupils who made worthwhile learning gains as a result. Teachers' expectations of behaviour and progress were almost always high, which also led to good progress. Homework was used particularly well to extend the lesson topics.
128. Teaching of pupils with special needs is good. They are provided for by classroom assistants who work in close liaison with teachers, by extra help from teachers and by specially tailored work in many lessons. For example, in a Year 7 lesson about events leading up to the Battle of Hastings, special worksheets were tactfully distributed to targeted pupils so that they could learn without discouragement. Extension work was provided for gifted pupils in many lessons but this was not always used. Ethnic minority pupils are well integrated. Literacy and numeracy are incorporated satisfactorily into lessons, though not specially emphasised. ICT is taught well when pupils have special lessons with the ICT facilities, though in the lesson investigating the Bayeux Tapestry, the ICT processes took precedence over the teaching about historical source material.
129. Management is good overall. Appropriate schemes of work are in place, though at present they do not plan for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Assessment procedures are very good with detailed records kept of the progress of all pupils. Teaching methods are constantly under review in the light of pupils' learning.
130. Resources are adequate, with appropriate priorities for future spending. At present no departmental development plan guides future improvements. A programme to monitor teaching is in place.
131. Since the previous inspection improvement has been good. ICT is now well used in teaching. Stocks of textbooks and library books are adequate for teaching requirements. The department has good capacity for further improvement.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Strengths**

- Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is very good and leads to a high quality of learning with above average attainment and good achievement over time.
- Very good relationships between staff and pupils, enabling very effective use to be made of the available lesson time.
- Very good technical support which ensures all equipment functions properly and assures pupils' learning in the subject is well supported. In addition the technician works alongside the teachers in lessons, providing very good support and guidance for pupils at an individual level

### Areas for improvement

- Build on the good practice already established across many subjects by increasing ICT resources so that all subjects have easier access to them and can contribute more effectively to the overall judgments on levels of attainment at the end of Year 8.
- The school has insufficient technical support time for a school of this size.

132. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above expectations and represent good achievement since pupils enter the school with average attainment in the subject. By the end of Year 8, standards are above the average expected and achievement is good.
133. In the work seen in Years 5 and 6, standards are above average. Pupils benefit from specialist ICT lessons in which they are introduced to a broad range of ICT skills. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, pupils show good skills in using sophisticated presentation software to tell a story. They included animations and sound effects very effectively to enhance their presentation. In English, pupils produce work showing a good range of language skills in a variety of contexts, such as presenting factual information, and writing poetry, articles and letters. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils used a spreadsheet to set up formulae to calculate costs associated with organising a children's party. In an art lesson, pupils showed good skills in using sophisticated software to draw images using three-dimensional perspective and to create collages. Pupils are able to explain clearly the work they do and use technical vocabulary well to describe the processes involved. The assessment of pupils' ICT skills in discrete lessons is appropriately linked to the National Curriculum levels of attainment. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well for their capabilities, especially as a result of the good individual attention they receive from their teachers, support staff and the technician. Boys and girls achieve equally well in the subject.
134. In Years 7 and 8, pupils increase their skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject but not as well as they might because they are restricted by fewer opportunities than they had in Years 5 and 6 to practise and develop skills in all subjects across the curriculum. The two computer rooms are heavily used for specialist ICT lessons in Years 5 and 6 and are booked by subject teachers where there is spare capacity. In some subjects, for example art and design and technology, where they have a small suite of computers in the area, pupils gain a good experience of using computers. In textiles, pupils use a computerised sewing machine to apply a decorative design, such as a logo, to their work. Higher attaining pupils show very good skills when, for example, scanning their logo shapes and programming the sewing machine to reproduce it. In a Year 8 resistant materials lesson, pupils programmed the computer to control the opening and closing of a 'level crossing gate' they built and to operate flashing warning lights in their model. Similarly, in science, pupils use a small cluster of specialist 'LogIt' equipment to capture and measure data. In mathematics in all years at the school, pupils competently and confidently use spreadsheets for a range of mathematical calculations. In a Year 7 art lesson, pupils use the Internet to research vase shapes and import various images into their work folder. In a humanities lesson, pupils used the Internet well to research their topic on the Bayeux Tapestry. In most subjects, teachers try to provide as much opportunity as they can within the limits of resources for pupils to research information using the Internet.
135. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, and better in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 7 and 8. Teachers plan and prepare lessons well and are well focused on meeting lesson objectives. They set clear targets that help pupils to focus on the

tasks; in all lessons support staff are well deployed to provide high levels of individual guidance and support for pupils. Teachers consistently encourage pupils to use correct technical vocabulary and expect pupils to use technical language properly when explaining what they do. Literacy skills are also developed through reading from a range of on-screen texts and the Internet when researching work. Teachers encourage pupils to use spreadsheets in all years and enable them to develop good numerical skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge and effectively assess how well pupils understand what they have to do. In all lessons the teaching is very successful in generating a very positive attitude to learning which results in pupils tackling their work with high levels of enthusiasm and enjoyment. They work mostly in pairs and collaborate well with one another on their tasks. Behaviour is consistently very good because the tasks set by teachers are well matched to interest and intellect; as a result, pupils enjoy what they do.

136. Planning is very effective for pupils in Years 5 and 6. However, the limitations of resources mean that pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not always have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills further in all subjects. Schemes of work have recently been updated but the planned work cannot be implemented thoroughly until sufficient computer resources are available. There has been a considerable investment in upgrading the computer facilities and providing broadband Internet access and more is planned, but current provision remains a little below the national provision. For example, in specialist ICT lessons, most pupils have to share computers and despite teachers' best efforts, this slows their progress. Overall, planning fully reflects the National Curriculum requirements in all subjects across the curriculum. However, assessment is not yet linked to curricular planning which means that not all subjects contribute effectively to overall judgement on standards at the end of Year 8. The technician provides an invaluable contribution to pupils' learning by ensuring all equipment is well maintained and functioning properly. In addition, the technician works well alongside the teachers in lessons, providing very good support for pupils at an individual level thereby increasing the level of teaching assistance considerably. However, technical support time is low for a school of this size.
137. The overall management of the subject is good. Progress since the previous inspection is also good. The subject now fully reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum. Standards have been raised considerably and the quality and level of resources considerably enhanced. The recently acquired broadband access to the Internet enables pupils to carry out research quickly and effectively in the shortest possible time, enhancing their learning considerably.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES – FRENCH**

Overall, the quality of provision in French is **excellent**.

### **Strengths**

- Leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- Very good teaching and pupils' very good attitudes enable pupils to achieve high standards.
- The department supports the teaching of literacy very effectively.
- The department makes a very good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of its pupils.
- The very good curricular provision in Years 7 and 8.

### Area for improvement

- To ensure that no opportunities are missed to develop even further the oral skills of pupils.

138. Pupils begin the study of French with one lesson per week in Year 6, which is earlier than in most schools nationally. They attain standards which are appropriate to the allocation of time and they achieve well. In an interview with the inspectors, pupils said that they enjoy French because it is a living language. In one lesson observed, the teaching was good and the pupils learnt well. They revised the numbers from 1-31 and went on to learn how to ask each other their date of birth and how to give an answer. Pupils copied sentences correctly from the board. In their Advent calendar in their exercise books, pupils had written the dates in words correctly for all the days from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> December; some of the work had been illustrated well. Pupils also write the phonetic spelling of words to help them with their pronunciation.
139. Teachers' assessments of the standards of attainment for the end of Year 8, in July 2001, show that eight out ten pupils had attained Level 4, the national expectation, but of these pupils, 31 per cent have attained Level 5. This compares extremely favourably with the national average of 45 per cent at Level 5 one year later, at the end of Year 9, and it represents very good achievement.
140. Work seen, overall standards of attainment in French are above average in Years 7 and 8 and pupils achieve very well. Pupils have a very sound knowledge of the relevant vocabulary for each topic that they study, for example, leisure activities and where these occur in Year 8, or school subjects in Year 7. They understand the foreign language used by the teachers in all the lessons. They are able to retrieve information successfully from cassette. Speaking skills are generally good. Higher attaining pupils in a Year 8 class asked each other questions for a survey and answered them, some from memory. Average attaining pupils in a Year 7 class asked each other questions about likes and dislikes. They spoke in complete sentences and from memory. Pronunciation is consistently at least satisfactory, and usually good. Written work is used well to support oral skills and to consolidate vocabulary and constructions. Year 7 pupils can write about their likes and dislikes; Year 8 pupils are developing the use of relevant additional phrases about leisure activities, especially phrases which indicate when, where and with whom these activities take place. Pupils write with a high degree of accuracy. The work is very well presented and, at times, well illustrated; handwriting is very good. Pupils respond very well to the high standards that are expected of them. Pupils complete corrections to their written work at the back of their book in order to improve accuracy.
141. Pupils with special needs make similar progress to the other pupils in their class; when there is support in the classroom it is good. Pupils are well integrated into their classes. In an excellent lesson with a class of lower attaining pupils in Year 8, the majority of whom are on the special needs register, French was the language of the classroom for teacher and pupils alike. Flash cards were used most effectively to revise and consolidate leisure activities, of which pupils showed an extensive knowledge. Speaking from memory, they named, with good pronunciation, 13 different activities and said whether they carried them out or not. Pupils received points as an incentive for speaking, and these were recorded by the support assistant. They are confident speakers and ask for help in the foreign language. Their response to the teacher's methods was excellent. Concentration and interest were well maintained throughout the lesson. These pupils have made very good progress over time.

142. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent and their attitudes to the subject are very good. These two features are instrumental in enabling pupils to learn well and to reach high standards. Pupils work well independently, in pairs and in groups, and they respond well as a class to chorus work in repeating sentences. In one Year 7 class more boys than girls volunteered to present their role-play to the class, and they responded better to the teacher's questions.
143. The quality of teaching ranges from good to excellent; overall it is very good. All three teachers are linguists and have a very good knowledge of their subject. They use the foreign language to good advantage in all lessons; in some lessons very little English is heard. A boy in a Year 7 class was quick to translate when the teacher said to the class *incroyable*. Pupils are encouraged to use the foreign language to the teacher when they need help. Numeracy is taught well, particularly dates, which feature in every lesson. Particular attention is paid to literacy, and the department makes a very good contribution. All lessons start with revision, usually in the form of key words or sentences; in a Year 7 class, for example, higher attaining pupils had to write four sentences from memory. Key verbs, in all the persons, are revised and consolidated. As they learn different constructions, pupils compile their own grammar book which they use for reference. Teachers plan their lessons very well, with different activities and skills. This helps pupils to maintain their interest and concentration. There are clear learning objectives. Expectations of pupils are very high. Pupils are productive in class and work at a good pace. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, in a race against the clock higher attaining pupils produced accurately 15 short sentences in one minute in only their second lesson on the perfect tense. This feature added pace to a very good lesson. Teachers' methods are very good: they use pair and group work well, together with resources. There are instances in some lessons, however, when pupils could be challenged even more, particularly orally. Opportunities are missed to hear more pairs presenting to the class their conversation or role-play after they have worked together, or by failure to ask individual pupils to repeat words and phrases after chorus work or when there are sentences to be read out. Time limits are set for activities. The management of pupils and relationships within the classroom are very good. Homework is set regularly, and written work is marked very well, with helpful comments and, at certain times, the level of the National Curriculum for a particular piece of work.
144. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. Monitoring and evaluation have been most effective. All three teachers are linguists, and the co-ordinator receives excellent support from her team. The curriculum is enhanced by the introduction of French in Year 6. This provides a good springboard for pupils to achieve high standards in Years 7 and 8, where the grouping of pupils into smaller classes is another valuable asset. The time allocated to French in Year 8 is also very realistic. Pupils learn about various aspects of French life and they can participate in an annual visit to France. Displays in classrooms are stimulating and informative. The effective use of assessment enables the department to track pupils' progress and to move pupils between classes if the need should arise. The final assessments at the end of Year 8 are, however, not broken down into boys and girls. Progress since the previous inspection has been very good.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **excellent**.

### Strengths

- Standards are well above average



- Teaching and learning are very good; much teaching is excellent.
- The attitudes and the behaviour of most pupils are very good; relationships are excellent.
- The range of opportunities in instrumental tuition is very good.
- The standards reached in extra-curricular work are often excellent
- Leadership and management in music are excellent.
- Staff are committed, enthusiastic and very hardworking; parents are supportive.
- Since the previous inspection report there has been very good improvement.

**Areas for improvement:**

- Accommodation lacks sufficient practice areas and storage.
- The music department lacks a computer and its own audio-visual equipment.
- Instrumental and music reading skills of pupils.

145. Pupils enter the school with variable musical experience but most enter with average attainment in music and teachers' assessments confirm this. By Year 6, when pupils are 11, standards are well above average and pupils' achievement is very good, assisted by two periods of music in Year 5. Most pupils are working at about Level 4 or 5 but some talented pupils attain higher levels. Pupils sing regularly, confidently and enthusiastically; they develop good technique with appropriate breathing, expression, diction and posture, as seen in the African song 'Siyahamba'. Many pupils join choirs in school, which strengthens work in the classroom. Over 30 per cent of the pupils in the school receive tuition from visiting teachers; many pupils make good use of them in lessons and show very good skill levels. The majority play very accurately and sensitively, for example, when developing accompaniments to songs using percussion. Pupils compose effective pieces; they show good understanding of graphic scores. Pupils listen very respectfully to each other when performing and to recording. They show very good but general musical knowledge of artists, composers, forms and well-known pieces of music, and particularly of instruments and how sound is produced.
146. By Year 8, when pupils are 13, standards are above average and pupils' achievement is very good. Most pupils are working at Level 4, 5 or 6 but a few talented pupils attain higher levels. The minority of pupils who leave to attend other secondary schools at the age of 11 include some of the most talented pupils musically. Pupils continue to sing regularly, with good levels of volume, as seen in lively performances of 'Love is all Around'. They sing phrases back completely in tune, and sing with a sense of enjoyment. Pupils who receive tuition continue to make use of their instruments in lessons but the instrumental skills of the majority and their understanding of notation and compositional devices are not as developed as they should be. However, pupils compose confidently and imaginatively, for example when devising raps or creating film scores, inspired by video clips. Pupils listen well and use good levels of musical vocabulary in discussion when appraising. They show very good general musical knowledge.
147. Teaching is consistently never less than good and most teaching is very good; teaching was excellent in several lessons seen in classroom work. The same pattern was seen in instrumental tuition and extra-curricular work. Teachers show secure subject knowledge so that they teach confidently. Good accompanying skills support pupils' achievement. Instructions are clear and teaching is energetic; the pupils always understand the objectives. Schemes and the content of lessons are well thought out to involve all pupils in making music through performing, composing and listening, so that they enjoy lessons. Expectations are very high and as a result pupils are challenged and inspired. Pupils with special needs are well integrated and make progress similar to that of the other pupils. Lessons are very well organised and

management of pupils is excellent so that lessons are orderly, time is well used, and pupils acquire skills, develop ideas and increase their understanding. As a result, relationships are excellent and almost all pupils are very good humoured and make a good effort to work well. The most musical of pupils are suitably challenged, for example when directing performances. Lessons start briskly and maintain a lively pace so that pupils remain focused, supported by the use of visual aids such as an overhead projector, video and a good range of instruments so that there is not an over-reliance on keyboards. The assessment of pupils is very supportive and encouraging and shows them clearly how they can improve; marking of written work is very thorough. A project for homework is set in Year 8; this is a lost opportunity to extend pupils' learning in the earlier years. Pupils enjoy music; they use equipment sensibly. They are attentive and work productively and are very supportive of each other, for example when working in groups. Pupils are keen to answer questions and the most enthusiastic involve themselves in opportunities offered by the department and in musical opportunities outside school.

148. Leadership and management of music are excellent and well supported by the school. Music is very well organised and the staff and visiting teachers form a strong team of enthusiastic and hardworking colleagues, committed to raising standards. There is excellent monitoring and evaluation of the subject's performance. Schemes of work, assessment schemes and the strategies to develop the subject further are appropriate and constantly under review. Staffing is good and music is well supported by a practical assistant. The department has very good resources but the music room lacks a computer and its own audio-visual resources. The room is spacious but there is a shortage of practice and storage areas because of the high level of musical activity in the school. There are valuable links with other schools through the music pyramid, which the curriculum leader for music chairs. Since the previous inspection, standards, teaching, staffing, resourcing, the range of opportunities and the management of music have all edged further forward; this is very good improvement.
149. An outstandingly high number of pupils, 73 boys and 112 girls, about 30 per cent of the pupils, receive instrumental lessons from seven visiting teachers. Standards are well above average. The achievement of pupils is very good in relation to their ages and the time they have received tuition. However, practice is too variable and pupils do not have practice books, so that their work, effort and progress are not so easily monitored and supported by parents. Teaching is mainly very good and excellent teaching was seen in wind and percussion. The range of extra-curricular activities in music is excellent and supports the instrumental teaching. It includes two choirs, several recorder groups, guitar ensemble, percussion ensemble, Jazz FM and a large orchestra. Standards and the quality of teaching are very good and often excellent as seen during the inspection and heard in recordings, including the CD the school made to celebrate the Millennium. Instrumental staff and other teachers at the school give the fullest support to these groups. The school promotes regular concerts at Christmas and in the summer, involving large numbers of pupils, and visits to concerts locally and in London. Workshops in school, given by musicians, further broaden the wealth of opportunities of these pupils. Music groups perform in assemblies; the regular use of music in assemblies is a strength. Groups perform frequently at local first schools, in supermarkets, old people's homes, at festivals, local arts and charity events. Music makes a very valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. These activities reflect the dedication of staff, keen support of parents (some of whom play regularly in the orchestra) and the enthusiasm of the many talented musicians whose performances

and successes are well deserved and bring great credit to the department. Clearly, music is a major strength of the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Standards in dance are well above the national average.
- Extra-curricular provision is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- To raise standards in gymnastics.
- To prioritise in-service training to raise awareness of excellence in physical education.

150. Standards of attainment are above average at the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 8. Pupils' achievements in relation to their previous learning are good overall. Good, sometimes very good, teaching and pupils' positive attitudes, enthusiasm and behaviour combine to ensure good quality of learning. Pupils improve their standard of work as they progress through the school.
151. The work seen during the inspection reflects a wide range of ability from class to class, with standards being above average overall. Pupils in Year 5 are improving their movement skills in gymnastics and dance; they show good linking routines with good starts and finishes. The various groups work at their own level and higher and lower attainers both achieve an above average standard in relation to prior attainment. The talented pupils are able to extend their expertise in the extra-curricular activities offered. There is no difference in attainment between boys and girls. In Year 6 the attainment in dance is well above average but in gymnastics there is a lack of control in sequence work, which lowers the standard. At the end of Year 8, attainment in dance is well above average, but barely average in gymnastics in which many of the pupils have not yet acquired the basic skills. Many pupils show their knowledge and understanding of health-related activities and they evaluate their own and other's work. Orienteering tasks are presented in other lessons and the pupils show above average problem-solving techniques.
152. The quality of teaching is good overall. During the inspection, there were very good lessons in dance, good lessons in health-related fitness and orienteering, and mainly satisfactory lessons in gymnastics. All lessons are well planned, efficiently managed and organised. Dance lessons are active and rigorous and question pupils' creative talents. The impact on pupils' learning in dance is shown by the expressive sequences stimulated by music, words, clothing and fabric. Pupils are taught to evaluate their work and they articulate thoughts confidently. In gymnastics, although the teaching was at least satisfactory, there was a lack of control in basic skills and linking movements. Pupils' performance in gymnastics may have been affected by the unavoidable absence of the head of department. When pupils are required to think carefully about their actions and are challenged constantly by the teachers' thoughtful questioning, very good progress is made. Resources are used well throughout the department to stimulate learning and are made available to all pupils during the lesson. Teaching methods encourage pupils to take responsibility for their own learning in warm-up sessions and when coaching or evaluating each other's work. Feedback is given in most lessons and pupils know exactly from the day-to-day

assessment what is expected from them. Teaching has a positive impact on learning throughout the school.

153. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good overall, often very good and, in the work seen, never unsatisfactory. They are enthusiastic, change quickly for lessons and are keen to answer questions. Behaviour is good and, apart from a minority of pupils in a Year 6 gymnastic session, concentration is sustained. Relationships are good and the pupils co-operate effectively with one another. The collaborative working in dance, in orienteering and, to a lesser extent, in gymnastics is helping pupils to progress in the practice of their skills. Many pupils took responsibility for their own learning by working and planning in pairs and small groups.
154. The curriculum more than meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced. Schemes of work are excellent and have been developed in line with Curriculum 2000. Literacy, numeracy and ICT links are being established by using key words, graphs and computers in appropriate lessons. Assessment procedures are very good and continue to be modified in order to eliminate unnecessary tasks. Leadership and management are very good and the department functions well, even with a teacher absent. There are approximately eight teachers who contribute to the very good extra-curricular sporting activities and almost 50 per cent of pupils take part. Priority time needs to be given to sharing good practice with each other. The accommodation is excellent with two large indoor spaces and expansive outdoor facilities.
155. The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Pupils are achieving high standards in dance because of very good teaching, swimming programmes now meet statutory requirements, schemes of work are excellent, and extra-curricular sport is very good. Areas for improvement include raising standards in gymnastics and arranging some in-service time to share good practice.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Standards are high.
- There is very good teaching and this is contributing to the high standards.
- Assessment is very good; pupils are given certificates at pass, credit and distinction levels.

### Areas for improvement

- Extend the use of ICT so that pupils can research in more depth.
- Help pupils to express their ideas in written work in a more structured way.

156. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' standards of attainment at the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 8 are above the levels expected for pupils of the same age nationally. In all years the standards are high because the subject is taught in very good depth. In their spoken answers, pupils display a very good knowledge of the topics covered. However, their written answers are in less depth and are hindered by an inability to express their opinions clearly and at length. Pupils are well placed to achieve high standards by the end of Year 9.
157. In Year 6, pupils have a good general knowledge of the nature of the books of the Old and the New Testaments. In studying the story of Jonah, they learn the essential

message about the power of prayer and the concepts of repentance and salvation. They also explore the nature of compassion. They respond very well to the teacher's approach of creating 'a stream of consciousness' by linking their thoughts to those of Jonah inside the whale. They learn to appreciate the differences by hearing the full scripture reading at the end of the lesson. This helps their knowledge and understanding of the concept of faith. In Year 5, pupils examine some of the cultural similarities and differences in celebrations by studying the Chinese New Year. They learn the nature and significance of symbolic aspects such as the use of gesture and colour. They learn how traditions come about by examining different versions of the same story. This gives them an understanding of Eastern and Western celebrations. It also gives them a knowledge of symbolism that pervades much of the literature that they will study later.

158. In Year 8, pupils compare the teachings of the six major world religions on mankind's duty to care for the environment. They study extracts from these teachings and place them in order of priority with regard to appointing a "Minister for the Environment". They are capable of making a close analysis of the writings and choosing logically and conscientiously. Their spoken answers justify their opinions in very good depth when assisted by the teacher. In this way pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject and they learn the skills of analysis and criticism. In Year 7, pupils studying the baptism of Jesus can compare this with modern day baptisms in different Christian denominations. Again, they learn the significance of the use of symbolism and they consider the nature of commitment in ways that extend beyond this subject.
159. Achievement is good in all years. Pupils learn to reflect on the topics being discussed and to evaluate the evidence. They begin to learn the skills of analysis and criticism that are useful in all learning.
160. There is no significant difference in the achievement of pupils of different attainment. Pupils with special educational needs get very good support, especially in their basic written work, and make very good progress. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
161. Teaching is very good. There are eight teachers teaching religious education, many with their own form tutor groups. All these teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and a commitment to teaching the subject in the spirit as well as the letter of the law. They set out clearly what is to be learned and make links with previous learning that help pupils to build systematically on their knowledge. They have very good skills for involving all pupils in the lesson and are able to make the subject interesting and relevant to pupils' own lives. They make links with the spiritual, moral and social needs of people to be loved, cared for and supported by one another. Teachers employ a very good range of teaching styles to engage pupils' interest and to help them to think for themselves. Pupils learn how to justify their opinions and this contributes to their general learning in other subjects. All teachers have very good class management skills and create a stimulating learning environment that supports pupils' learning.
162. Although there is good support for literacy in most lessons there is a need for a more structured approach to help pupils to gain better expression in their use of language.
163. Pupils have very good attitudes to this subject. In the majority of lessons behaviour is exemplary. They show respect for the subject and for their teachers. They are alert and answer readily and are willing to speculate, even when unsure of the answer.

164. The subject is led and managed very well. Documentation is of a very good standard and this gives good support to all the teachers. There are good resources that enable teachers to provide a good range of experiences for pupils. The co-ordinator has identified a need for more resources on Buddhism.
165. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Standards have improved. Teaching has improved and this contributes to the rise in standards.
166. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as all these aspects are studied in some depth as part of the 'Dreams' focus in the agreed syllabus. These aspects contribute to pupils' general knowledge and well-being and help to create a lively, caring and enlightened school community.