

## INSPECTION REPORT

**Bellingham Community Middle School**

Bellingham

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122350

Headteacher: Mrs S Dowson

Reporting inspector: Mr J W Ashton  
4492

Dates of inspection: 18 – 20 June 2002

Inspection number: 244873

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: County

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Redesmouth Road

Bellingham

Hexham

Northumberland

Post code: NE48 2EN

Telephone number: 01434 220 235

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr P Hoggan

Date of previous inspection: June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
4492	Mr J Ashton	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Science; Design and technology.	The school's results and achievements? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
11041	Mr M Moore	<i>Lay inspector</i>		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?
27983	Mrs M Sewell	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Special educational needs.	Literacy; Learning resources; Accommodation.
8756	Mrs P Hanage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	Numeracy; How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
11672	Mr P Harle	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music; Art and design.	Assessment.
4373	Mr P McKenzie	<i>Team inspector</i>	French.	Staffing.
10275	Dr J Cosgrove	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; History; Religious education.	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development.
27803	Mr J Clarke	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology; Physical education.	

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>1</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 <b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>6</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>21</b>
 <b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	 <b>22</b>
 <b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	 <b>26</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school draws its pupils from a very wide rural area around the village of Bellingham, which is 17 miles north of Hexham in the county of Northumberland. There are 205 pupils on roll, aged nine to thirteen. This is just six pupils more than at the time of the last inspection, but 28 more than two years ago, at which time there was a dip in pupil numbers. An average proportion of pupils is eligible for free school meals. The school's intake at age nine covers the full range of attainment, but with more pupils whose attainment is below the national average than pupils who are above average. There are no pupils on roll for whom English is an additional language. Of the 58 pupils on the school's register for special educational needs, 24 are at the higher stages (school action plus) of the special needs Code of Practice. Their needs in the main are moderate learning and emotional difficulties. The school at times finds teacher recruitment difficult because of its rural location. In recent times, mathematics, humanities, modern languages and art have all been affected and there is on-going understaffing in art and humanities.

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

Bellingham Middle is a greatly improved school over the last two years. Pupil numbers are now rising after a period during which they declined. Very significant progress followed the appointment of a new headteacher and new senior team. Between them they have generated, in everyone who works and learns in the school, increased self-esteem, a noticeable team spirit and a determination to achieve excellence in everything they do. The school's new leadership is excellent overall. The quality of teaching and learning is rarely less than good and some of it is excellent. Standards seen during the inspection, in lessons and in children's workbooks are better than the results in the 2001 end of Year 6 national tests would indicate. The school now provides good value for the money it receives.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Pupils of all levels of attainment are now making good progress throughout the school, and better progress than results in the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 6 would indicate.
- The quality of teaching and learning are largely good; often they are very good, even excellent. The teaching challenges all pupils, including higher attaining pupils.
- The new leadership is excellent and has brought about significant improvements over the last two years.
- There is a very good ethos in the school; pupils are very well cared for, but also expected to work hard and achieve well.
- The assessment of pupils' work is well organised, accurate and used well to inform planning. The quality of reports sent to parents about their children's progress is excellent.
- The school has very effective systems for encouraging positive attitudes and good behaviour from its pupils.
- The quality and increasing productivity of the working relationships with partner schools are very good.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Overall performance in the end of Year 6 national tests is not as high as the work seen in lessons, especially in mathematics and science.
- Pupils' standards in spoken French in Years 7 and 8 are not as high as they should be.
- Library provision is still unsatisfactory and is soon to be greatly improved.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made very significant improvements since its last inspection in June 1996, particularly over the last two years. Standards in English have been substantially improved. Teaching now challenges all pupils more consistently. This marks a particular improvement in science, where a lack of challenge for the brightest pupils was a weakness. There has been very good improvement in the assessment and recording of pupils' work, and especially in the method of reporting this improvement to parents. The annual written reports to parents are now of excellent quality and full of useful information. The most significant improvements have been in leadership and management. These have led to an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and hence to improved achievement throughout the school. Pupils' behaviour is much better than it was reported to be at the last inspection.

## STANDARDS

The table below shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	B	C	C	C
Mathematics	B	C	D	E
Science	B	C	E	E

Key	
<i>well above average</i>	A
<i>above average</i>	B
<i>average</i>	C
<i>below average</i>	D
<i>well below average</i>	E

Average levels of attainment on entry to the school are consistently below average. By the end of Year 6, in 2001, average national test scores in English matched the national average but were below average in mathematics and well below average in science.

In lessons and work seen during the inspection across all three subjects, standards overall match national expectations, with higher attaining pupils in all years reaching well above average standards. This is the result of much improved teaching and learning recently and much more effective leadership and management. Overall standards are now as high as they should be, both at the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 8, but this has yet to be reflected in national test results.

Achievement is never less than that expected from the pupils' starting levels in any subject. In both Years 5 and 6, and in Years 7 and 8, it is better than expected in all three of English, mathematics and science. Girls still outperform boys, but the gap is narrowing. All pupils are making good progress, including those with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils. In recent years this has not always been the case.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very positive. Pupils are keen to work hard and to help each other. They stay well on task and show interest in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils display very good behaviour both in and out of the classroom and have a well-developed sense of right and wrong.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships in the school are excellent. Pupils' personal development is very good.
Attendance	Above average. Attendance in the current year at 93.5 per cent is good. Although a large majority of pupils live a great distance from the school, absence is rare.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching and the resulting quality of pupils' learning are both much improved since the last inspection. Overall, they are now very good in Years 5 and 6, and good in Years 7 and 8.

Teaching in English is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good, at times excellent, in Years 7 and 8. In mathematics, teaching is very good overall. Never less than satisfactory, it was good or better in about nine tenths of mathematics lessons seen and very good or excellent in nearly half of them. Teaching in science is never less than good throughout the school and half of it, in Years 5 and 6, is very good. In art and design, religious education and design and technology, teaching is consistently good. Teaching in history and geography is good and much of it is very good. Teaching in music is good up to Year 6, and satisfactory up to Year 8. It is good overall in physical education and satisfactory overall in French and information and communication technology.

The teaching of literacy and of numeracy is much improved in recent years and is now good. The school now meets well the needs of all its pupils, though girls still outperformed boys in the national tests. Particularly improved recently is the teaching of higher attaining pupils.



## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall, there is a good curriculum in all years. It is relevant to the needs of Bellingham pupils, rightly concentrating at first on improving literacy and numeracy, but gradually transferring more time over to other subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Current provision is good. Suitable work is prepared in all curriculum areas which allows children who learn at a slower rate to be included within the main classes. Similarly, pupils who are higher attainers are given work which extends well their experience and understanding.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall, with particular strength in the provision for pupils' social development, and satisfactory provision for their spiritual development, which was noted as a relative weakness in the last inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has good procedures for monitoring pupils' academic performance and personal development. It has very good procedures for promoting high standards of behaviour, and for the assessment and reporting of pupils' work.

The school has made very significant progress since the previous report in maintaining and furthering links with parents. Links are now very good overall.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are excellent, having improved dramatically over the last two years. The result is a school in which pupil and staff morale is high, teaching and learning are very good and standards are rapidly improving.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its legal responsibilities, and accounts very well for the performance of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school now monitors and evaluates its performance exceptionally well. All four of the senior team, and some governors, regularly monitor the work of the school. Their systematic but also positive and helpful approach to determining the school's strengths and weaknesses is one of the main reasons for the present consistency of effective teaching and learning across the school.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its financial resources. It manages its budget well and works hard to achieve 'best value'.

There are sufficient well-qualified teachers to deliver the curriculum, due in some respects to imaginative contingency planning. Staff development is a strength of the school. Learning resources, said to be barely adequate at the time of the last inspection, have significantly improved in most areas. Accommodation is spacious and well used, and overall is well looked after, although the school's heating system is on its last legs and badly needs updating. Despite valiant efforts to enhance its use, the library is far too small and is under stocked. It is soon to be relocated.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Almost all of the parents who responded feel that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard.</li> <li>• The teaching is good.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<p>A few parents who responded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are not happy with the work pupils are given to do at home.</li> <li>• Think that the school does not keep them sufficiently informed about their children's progress.</li> <li>• Feel that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside of lessons.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the parents' positive comments, but not with most of the critical ones. Relevant and interesting homework was set to pupils in all year groups during the inspection. The information provided for parents on their children's progress is of better than average quality, particularly the annual reports sent to parents near the end of each year. There is a reasonably good range of activities offered to pupils. Some activities when offered are not taken up by many pupils due to the distance they have to travel.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils' overall attainment on entry to the school in Year 5 is below national expectations. Many pupils identified as having learning needs are working well below national expectations.
2. At the end of Year 6, the school's performance in the national tests in 2001 matched the national average in English, but was below average in mathematics and well below average in science. Compared to similar schools (those with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals) its overall performance matched the national average in English but was well below average in both mathematics and science. These results represent a decline on previous years, particularly from those in 1999 when results were much higher. However, they more closely match the results of the two years previous to 1999.
3. The work seen in lessons and in exercise books is of a higher standard than the latest test results indicate. Two years ago there were difficulties in the school to do with the administration of the national tests. There were also attendance problems due to the foot and mouth outbreak in the area. Since then there has been a complete change of management team and of many of the teachers in the school. A large majority of the teachers are new to the school since the previous inspection. The overall results are: much better teaching and improved co-ordination across all three subjects; thorough monitoring of this teaching, and much better joint planning, including work being pitched at three distinct levels of challenge in each class.
4. Evidence from the inspection shows that, at present, in English, the attainment of pupils near the end of the present Year 6 is higher than that reflected in the 2001 national tests. Attainment of pupils by the end of Year 8 is also higher than national expectations and demonstrates a rise in standards over the last two years, for those same pupils whose attainment in English two years earlier, in 2000, matched the national expectation.
5. Standards in literacy on entry to the school are below national standards for speaking and listening and writing and well below for reading. Inspection evidence suggests that standards in speaking and listening improve rapidly as a result of carefully planned group work. The best examples of this were seen in English and in geography, where pupils are taught to use language precisely. In these subjects, pupils listen to each other and respond by building on ideas constructively. Higher attaining pupils have learned the skills of negotiation and collaboration to an above average level by the end of Year 8.
6. Standards in reading are well below average on entry in Year 5. However, good examples of reading are found in English, where pupils read to retrieve information, and analyse and evaluate literary texts. Higher attaining pupils are effectively interrogating texts more usually read at GCSE Level. In geography and in religious education, pupils have learned strategies to help them read with understanding and to locate and use information. In religious education reading is promoted by reading aloud in class. In these subjects reading standards are improving.

7. Standards in writing are frequently marred by weak spelling in some areas. Technical words are displayed and used in most subject areas. These are most effective in mathematics, history, religious education, English and geography, where they are changed and updated according to the learning requirements. All pupils have targets set for writing and they refer to these as they work. In some English groups and in history and some science groups, these have helped pupils produce better organised, more extended pieces of writing. Pupils are well supported by structured writing guides over a range of writing activities. This can, however, produce variable effects with different year groups. The writing required of pupils in science in Years 5 and 6 leaves room for pupils to use their own words in such a way that they show their understanding or otherwise of the topic being studied. However, in science lessons in Years 7 and 8 a more restricted way of writing dominates too many practical accounts, and the teacher is less able to diagnose understanding and to point out what pupils need to do to improve. Presentation is excellent in English, with very good use being made of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance presentation in final pieces of work.

8. In lessons and work seen in mathematics during the inspection, standards overall at the end of Years 6 and 8 match national expectations, with higher attaining pupils reaching well above average standards. Present standards are higher than those in the 2001 national tests would indicate. Good teaching in mathematics lessons provides pupils with a secure foundation in basic mathematical skills and plenty of opportunities to practise using them. Pupils use these skills in other subjects, and usually have the necessary techniques. In science, pupils can read an ammeter scale in fractions of an amp and construct accurate scales for the plotting of data in line graphs. In design and technology they measure accurately in millimetres and competently weigh ingredients in grams. In humanities, there is a concerted effort to make sure pupils have opportunities to use their numeracy skills. For example, pupils in geography use their knowledge of scale to locate places and to measure distance accurately. They also develop their numeracy skills as they record distance, climate and weather patterns.

9. Levels of attainment in science mirror those of mathematics. Standards seen are higher than the end of Year 6 national tests would indicate. In other words they are close to the national average overall, with higher attainers significantly higher than this. Improved teaching and learning, better co-ordination across all who teach the subject and greater challenges for higher attaining pupils, boys in particular, are the main reasons for this.

10. Attainment overall at least meets national standards in other subjects. By the end of Year 6, it exceeds national standards overall, in design and technology, ICT, geography, history and physical education. By the end of Year 8, pupils are on track to exceed national expectations in design and technology, geography, history and religious education.

11. Pupils achieve satisfactorily by making the expected progress in Years 5 and 6 in art and design, music, French and religious education. They achieve well by making better than expected progress in every other subject, including English, mathematics and science.

12. Pupils achieve satisfactorily by making the expected further progress in Years 7 and 8 in art and design, ICT, physical education, music, French and religious education. They achieve well by making better than expected progress at this stage in their school career in every other subject, including again English, mathematics and science.

13. Pupils make this mostly good progress for a number of reasons, but excellent leadership and management and much improved teaching and learning are the main reasons. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) are making good progress across all four years. Girls are still achieving better than boys in some areas, mathematics for example, but the gap has narrowed. Higher attaining pupils are now seen to be making significant amounts of improvement. The school insists that the relative proportion of higher attaining pupils has not suddenly increased. There are no more of them than there were in previous years, but they stand out more and are being given more challenging work than they used to be given, and this is seen to be having a noticeable effect upon their levels of attainment.

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

14. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the school and, as a result, their pastoral and academic progress is enhanced. All pupils make a very positive start to their school life and quickly understand the few school rules and adhere to them. Their personal and social skills are very well promoted. Pupils work independently, relate extremely well to adults and work and play well together. They display very good behaviour both in and out of the classroom and have a well-developed sense of right and wrong. The inspection team were impressed by the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils who were keen to show them around the school and indicated how proud they were of it.

15. Pupils are keen to work hard, help each other and behave very well. They stay on task and show interest in their lessons. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson observed during the inspection week, pupils worked very well together and showed excellent attitudes and behaviour. They discussed well together the concept of decimalization and explained clearly to the teacher what they had discovered during the lesson. In a Year 6 English lesson, pupils worked well together to discuss the structure of a story and how to describe the main character. They worked collaboratively and displayed mature and sensible attitudes to their work. In the main, pupils take a very active interest in their lessons and are enthusiastic and keen to show what they can achieve in group work.

16. The overwhelming majority of parents, who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, stated they felt behaviour in the school was good and had improved since the last inspection. The inspection findings confirm these views.

17. In the majority of lessons seen during the inspection week, pupils' behaviour was very good. They interacted well with teachers, responded to them and showed respect for the views of fellow pupils. Pupils mostly remain on task and are keen to contribute to the discussion in lessons. There have been no exclusions of pupils, either temporary or permanent, in the current academic year.

18. Pupils behave in a quiet, mature and sensible manner and display a quiet confidence and politeness when talking to visitors. At lunchtime, pupils behave very well and are keen to entertain the senior citizens group who lunch with them on a weekly basis. Pupils take on responsibilities such as membership of the School Forum, monitor duties within the classroom, lunchtime supervision duties and helping with displays.

19. The School Forum meets regularly under the chairmanship of a Year 8 pupil and all pupils are invited to be members. They are able to debate matters of school interest with confidence and give suggestions to the staff on how they think the school could be

improved. A recent interesting innovation has been the inclusion of a mixture of Year 6 and Year 8 pupils in interview procedures for a new member of staff. As a result of these responsibilities, pupils gain confidence, maturity and their learning is enhanced.

20. Pupils at the school have a very good understanding of the effect of their actions on others and have a very good respect for feelings, values and beliefs. The school has minimal bullying and pupils, keen to earn merit points for good work and behaviour respect the few school rules. Library books are meticulously looked after; pupils switch off computers when not in use, and the school has no graffiti and is litter free. During the inspection week it was noted that pupils treated artefacts, drawings and pictures on display with great care.

21. Attendance in the current year, at 93.5 per cent, is good. Although a large majority of pupils live a great distance from the school, absence is rare and then only for holiday or health reasons. Parents have a perception that good attendance is vital to ensure that pupils achieve good standards and progress.

22. Relationships in the school are excellent. All teaching and non-teaching staff at the school have excellent relationships with pupils, who are polite to them and approach them with confidence. During the inspection week it was noted that pupils were constantly supporting and helping each other. For example, a SEN pupil who entered the lesson late was immediately included in a discussion with her peer group and greeted with affection. Pupils were keen to talk to the inspection team about their work and their views of the school. Pupils are proud of their school, and are keen to tell others and to see the school succeed.

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

23. The quality of teaching and in consequence the quality of pupils' learning are both much improved since the last inspection. They are now very good overall in Years 5 and 6, and good overall in Years 7 and 8.

24. Teaching was found to be at least satisfactory in all but one of the 58 lessons seen. In eight out of every ten lessons it was at least good and in three out of every ten it was very good or excellent. This good, very good and excellent teaching is having a corresponding effect on the quality of learning across the school. Standards seen in class and in pupils' books are clearly higher than recent national test results would indicate.

25. The quality of teaching in English is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good, at times even excellent, in Years 7 and 8. In mathematics, the quality of teaching is very good overall. Never less than satisfactory, it was good or better in about nine tenths and very good and excellent in nearly half of the eleven lessons seen. Teaching in science is never less than good throughout the school, and half of it in Years 5 and 6 is very good. In art and design, religious education and design and technology, teaching is consistently good. Humanities (history and geography) teaching is good and much of it is very good. Teaching in music is good up to Year 6, and satisfactory in Year 8. It is good overall in physical education, and satisfactory overall in French and information and communication technology (ICT).

26. Notable features of the better teaching are its thorough planning and preparation. This includes a clear framework which gives every lesson a distinct beginning, middle and end. Learning objectives are explicitly linked to success criteria, shared with pupils at the start of the lesson and effectively reviewed with them near the end. It also includes very good differentiation of work to make it more suitable for pupils working at different levels of attainment. For example, activities at three different levels of difficulty, core, support and extension were planned and seen to be working particularly well in science lessons.

Classroom management is generally good throughout the school.

27. In humanities, the quality of teaching is notable, not just for its subject competence and classroom control, but also for its good questioning techniques, good relationships and the brisk, purposeful delivery of well-planned lessons. Being qualified in the subject is not always the most important factor. For example, the fact that two of the three teachers of religious education are non-specialists and one is a newly qualified teacher does not adversely affect standards in this subject. This is because they are all well versed in the subject matter and they all have good general teaching abilities and classroom control. Homework is set and marked regularly, particularly in all three of the core subjects, English, mathematics and science. In English, homework is used well for the extension and reinforcement of learning. In mathematics, it is used effectively to help pupils make progress by reinforcing topics covered in class. In science the homework seen was very appropriate to the task in hand. In one case it was particularly relevant, in that it involved pupils having a first try at an investigation to determine which type of paper towel would soak up water the most effectively.

28. The process of monitoring pupils' progress is very good throughout the school, and is excellent in English. The use of assessment is an important factor in the improvement in standards, especially in mathematics. Pupils know their own specific targets in all the core subjects and are keen to work hard and move on to the next higher ones.

29. The teaching and learning seen in art and design were good. Lessons are well organised and build on excellent relationships. A workshop atmosphere is created, with everyone working with a common purpose. Pupils are learning by observation, by trial and error and by doing, refining their work and skills. A strength of all the teaching in physical education lies in the very good relationships teachers have with their pupils, which helps to create a co-operative atmosphere for learning in lessons. The better teaching in music is also characterised by very good relationships, where pupils' strengths and weaknesses are clearly understood.

30. All lessons in English include the opportunity to ICT. In the timetabled ICT lessons, teachers manage pupils well, and relationships are good, so that pupils are not afraid to ask questions or to risk making mistakes. Well-planned visits, good use of ICT, visual aids and artefacts all add to the effectiveness of the teaching in humanities. A particular strength of the teaching in history is the way in which it brings out good responses from pupils who are being trained in thinking skills and source evaluation at their appropriate level. Schemes of work and individual lessons are carefully planned to include a range of activity and extension work for higher attaining pupils.

31. Teachers of physical education are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about physical education and pupils learn correct techniques and improve their performance, for example, in body positioning when throwing the javelin. Design and technology teachers have confidence in their pupils' abilities to handle potentially hazardous equipment safely, and they allow their pupils considerable freedom to create their own solutions to particular design briefs.

32. There are a few shortcomings in some lessons. The quality of marking is variable and this does have an effect on spelling standards in some teaching groups, for example in English and in science. Marking does not always give a clear indication of what is needed in order for pupils to improve. In science, in Years 7 and 8, too restricted a way of writing up accounts of practical work means that teachers are less able to diagnose any misunderstanding and to point out what pupils need to do to improve. Much teaching in the target language is carried out in French lessons, but the pace and challenge of the lessons are often lost when the teacher refers too much to the textbook or speaks too much English.

Teachers of games lessons, whilst enthusiastic, sometimes lack the necessary knowledge to extend and challenge higher attaining pupils.

33. The teaching of literacy is much improved in recent years. Lessons all emulate the national literacy strategy and use the four-part model. Learning objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson and returned to at the end to check the learning that has taken place. This structured approach has helped pupils focus on what they need to do and has improved concentration and motivation.

34. The planned and effective use of national numeracy ideas and methods results in fast-paced and lively lessons. There is very effective joint planning based on material from the National Numeracy strategy, which pairs of teachers in each year group have adapted to provide long, medium and short term plans tailored to meet the needs of the school. The three-part lesson is used effectively to keep pupils' interest and enjoyment, and the main activities are planned to help all pupils make good progress. The school has made good use of 'booster' and 'catch up' classes to improve standards. There has been effective co-operation with partnership schools so staff can learn from each other and share good practice.

35. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is well supported by a part-time special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and part-time learning support assistants. Strong links with external agencies empower the work of SEN staff. Currently the provision is good but in some respects this is due to the goodwill of the team who work many hours beyond their contracts. Suitable work is prepared in all curriculum areas which allows children who learn at a slower rate to be included within the main classes. Similarly, in most subjects, for most of the time, pupils who are higher attainers are given work which extends their experience and understanding. Additional support for literacy needs is provided using one-to-one work with a computer programme. This additional teaching takes just a few minutes each day and provides pupils and staff with a profile of progress. The school's positive philosophy of inclusion is working well and as a result all pupils are making good progress.

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

36. Overall, there is a good curriculum in all years. It is broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of Bellingham pupils. Two years ago the school rigorously audited standards and provision and adjusted the balance of curriculum time in favour of literacy and numeracy, since standards in these areas were thought not to be high enough. As standards have risen, some of this extra time has been re-allocated to other subjects, especially in Years 7 and 8. The school also felt that many pupils lacked skills in speaking and listening and so introduced drama as one way of improving these. The school complies with legal requirements in all subjects.

37. All National Curriculum subjects, together with drama and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) are taught and, in addition, French is introduced into the curriculum in Year 5. Daily literacy and numeracy lessons provide a good foundation for the



development of pupils' basic skills. A discrete information and communication technology (ICT) course provides coverage of all aspects in the National Curriculum programme of study and this is enhanced by the good use of ICT in subjects such as English, history and geography.

38. The curriculum is made more interesting and exciting by many planned school trips visits and by fieldwork. For example in geography and history, pupils make visits to local places, such as Vindolanda, High Borrans outdoor education centre in the Lake district and Durham Cathedral.

39. The school is committed to putting into practice its policy on equal opportunities. Effective planning, including very good provision of appropriate tasks for all groups of pupils, is a key factor in this. Support and booster groups in English and mathematics are also effective in helping pupils to improve.

40. Homework makes an effective contribution to the progress pupils make and the homework club at lunchtime is used regularly by about a tenth of pupils.

41. Curriculum provision for PSHCE is good. The course is well planned and also makes good use of members of the local community. The local police and the school nurse, for example, contribute well to the programme. The governors have decided that there will be a programme of sex education in Key Stage 2 as well as in Years 7 and 8. The school also uses the PSHCE programme in Year 8 to get pupils to think about the broader issues linked to a choice of career routes at the age of 16.

42. The school's links with its partner schools have improved and are now very strong. For example, there are shared policies and materials for teaching aspects of personal and social education. These links support continuity in pupils' learning. Curriculum links in science, mathematics, English and humanities are particularly good and make a significant contribution to continuity in teaching and learning in those subjects. Teachers share good practice in delivering the numeracy and Key Stage 3 strategies and the efficient transfer of information contributes to the assessment of pupils' progress.

43. The curriculum is enhanced by the very good links the school has with the community. For example, adult education courses are provided in school premises; over 60's lunch once a week with pupils; Bellingham football club uses the school sports field to practise. The community manager manages a thriving and growing Adult Education Department. A youth leader manages a very large catchment area, which includes the large youth club Bellingham and six other satellite clubs spread over an area of 1000 square miles.

44. Extra curricular provision is satisfactory, considering the school's rural and geographical location, and is due to improve dramatically as the national grant for all-weather floodlit facilities comes into operation. Provision in English and drama, with cinema and theatre visits, residential courses and regular music/drama productions, is strong at present. It is also strong in history, geography and music, with a programme of visits and good use of the local environment. Participation in the school choir is good, and involves both boys and girls. The increasingly successful school sports co-ordinator scheme began recently and is already starting to improve extra-curricular provision in netball, football and rugby.

45. The school is fully conversant with the national literacy and numeracy strategies in Key Stage 2 and this has helped develop an effective Key Stage 3 strategy in Years 7 and 8. All members of staff have been trained in the cross-curricular literacy and numeracy modules and have been supported by the local education authority's (LEA) consultants. The school's literacy and numeracy co-ordinators effectively monitor the implementation. All departments

have good quality literacy and numeracy policies and action plans. Named governors overview literacy and numeracy. Good use is made of tutorial time to develop speaking and listening and reading. Teachers in all years have taken part in relevant training and the effect of this training is helping to raise standards. Departmental and year group planning is very good, building well on national frameworks and resources and adapting them to the requirements of each group of pupils.

### **Provision for pupils' personal development**

46. The provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall, with a particular strength in provision for their social development. Spiritual provision has improved since the previous inspection noted it as a weakness. It is now satisfactory. The legal requirement to provide an act of collective worship for all pupils is now fulfilled and assemblies provide ample evidence of the excellent and warm relationships and very caring ethos.

47. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory overall and is now good in the area of religious education. This encourages pupils throughout the school to reflect upon non-material aspects of life and to consider what are called 'ultimate questions' of the existence of God and of life and death. There is no specific whole-school policy document but most departments have some written plans and teaching strategies which reflect the school's curriculum policy to foster spiritual development. They achieve their aims with varying degrees of success. Opportunities arise in English and in religious education to reflect upon pupils' own values and those of others, and the study of poetry involves a strong appeal to the imagination. History, geography, mathematics and science provide opportunities to reflect upon human nature, the environment, the universe and other things wider than the nominal content. Opportunities exist in art and design for pupils to explore their own feelings. Time is found in lessons for reflective moments. The school exhibits the spiritual characteristic of a caring community, not just in its everyday life but also in its caring for the memory of deceased members of staff and relatives of children.

48. Provision for the moral development of pupils is good. The school has clear expectations and pupils behave very well inside and outside lessons. This is partly due to an effective implementation of a policy of class competition based upon a 'negotiated' points system. It leads to collective responsibility for good behaviour and for the progress made in lessons. It can include one child supporting another. Opportunities exist throughout the curriculum for pupils to see and discuss the moral issues surrounding past and present actions. History and religious studies present many such examples. English texts invite pupils to empathise with people faced with moral dilemmas and the consequences of choices. Drama provision makes a positive contribution to an understanding of oneself and of society and moral issues. Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) helps to cover moral and social responsibility. The school offers opportunities for pupils to accept some responsibility as in the Pupil Forum. The teachers are good role models. Relationships are excellent. Charitable work encourages moral and social concern to a good level.

49. Provision for the social development of the pupils is very good. Harmonious group work, fostering good relationships and co-operative learning, is a feature of most departments. Physical education provides good opportunities for working together and playing by the rules. Very good links with partner schools help new pupils to transfer more easily and considerable effort is put into helping their social development once they arrive. Various planned trips, exchanges and visits to Newcastle, Gateshead, Alton Towers and other places of cultural interest are designed to foster social development. Some of them,

such as the London trip, have not always been taken up and this is a missed opportunity to widen pupils' experience. Residential trips help to cement and deepen the good relationships. Pupils learn about citizenship and about present day society in religious education, geography, and history and other subjects. They learn about rights and responsibilities and how past and present societies function. Enlightened teaching strategies often give them the opportunity to take some responsibility for their own learning and to help others. Curriculum arrangements are made in conjunction with other partnership schools, demonstrating again the prevalence of the outstanding relationships which characterise the school.

50. Provision for the cultural development of pupils is satisfactory. Religious education offers opportunities to learn about other world religions and other cultures than Christianity. The cross-curricular contributions of English and humanities contribute well to the development of an awareness of the diversity and the interdependence of cultures. French lessons are not currently providing a strong cultural flavour of France in the classroom, but there are skiing trips to Norway. There are examples of pupils in music realising their own individual talents by taking the opportunities to perform. Pupils take part in the Hexham Music Festival and the Morpeth Singing Festival and there are visiting musicians. Visiting artists, clergy and speakers make a useful contribution to cultural development and further enhance the good links with the local community. The school is a harmonious social group but does not contain within itself examples of multiculturalism which would prepare children for life in a wider world. So it tries to expand pupils' cultural and multicultural horizons in other ways. Some of these are to be found in the curriculum, some in displays or visits and some in links with other institutions that can present useful examples. Subjects such as religious education, history and geography by their nature help pupils to understand other countries and other cultures. Opportunities exist in art, drama, literature and topics on food to advance this understanding still further.

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

51. The school has very good provision for the care of its pupils. The comprehensive child protection policy is well understood by all staff at the school. The headteacher, who is the named child protection officer, keeps good records of referrals and concerns both of pupils on the child protection register and of 'looked after' pupils, and liaises well with the appropriate agencies. The child protection officer and the teaching and non-teaching staff have received appropriate training in child protection matters, and the headteacher has arranged to receive the latest up-to-date training from the local authority in the very near future.

52. The local authority last carried out a health and safety audit in 2000, and any items of concern were well recorded, fully documented and rectified. An audit of the school's fire risk assessment procedures was carried out recently and no items of concern were found. The school holds regular fire drills; the fire alarm is tested at appropriate intervals, and correct records are kept.

53. The school has a large number of first aiders, all of whom have received appropriate training and are fully aware of the school's procedures for the administration of first aid and medicine. Accidents are carefully recorded. The school has good procedures for the monitoring of pupils' academic performance and their personal development. Teachers

have a chart for each pupil in their class and merit points, which are awarded for good or deducted for poor behaviour, are meticulously recorded. Pupils negotiate with staff the number of points that they feel they should receive and this leads to a spirit of competition. Pupils are very keen to obtain these merit points and behaviour in the school has improved considerably as a result.

54. The school offers very good educational support and guidance to its pupils. All members of staff are deeply concerned and committed to their pupils' welfare and provide excellent role models for them. Important aspects of this support and guidance are the developing personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme; the close relationship between all staff and pupils, and the careful monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development. These all combine to provide a firm foundation which helps pupils to build good behaviour patterns through motivation, increased self esteem and the awareness of others.

55. The school has satisfactory procedures for the monitoring and promoting of attendance. The school has recently installed an electronic registration system but registers are still marked manually, taking up valuable time. First day absences are followed up both by teaching staff and by office staff, who are successful in contacting parents. The school receives good support from the Education Welfare Service, who visit on a regular basis and liaise well with the school. Because of the great distances that some pupils come to school, a few pupils arrive late, but lessons always start on time and are not disrupted by these late arrivals. The rate of unauthorised absence for the current period is nil.

56. The school has very good procedures to promote high standards of behaviour by its pupils, which are reported to have improved significantly since the previous inspection. All pupils are well known to the headteacher, teaching staff, mid-day supervisors and teaching assistants, who regularly meet to discuss and monitor their behaviour. The school does not tolerate verbal or physical bullying and pupils interviewed during the inspection week confirm that they did not think there was any bullying at the school. Pupils are very well aware that the school has high expectations of their behaviour. The school rules were compiled after discussion with the pupils themselves and are prominently displayed in the school entrance hall. They are fully understood by pupils, who are very keen to observe them, display good behaviour and thereby earn merit points.

57. The system, whereby pupils earn both personal points and merit points for their class by demonstrating good behaviour, works extremely well and each class is keen to receive a 'trophy of the week' and the reward of a school outing at the end of the term. In addition, pupils are nominated personally for good behaviour and the school produces a list of the 'distinguished dozen' pupils nominated by teachers for good work. As a result of the school's pro-active approach, attitudes and behaviour at the school are much improved and pupils are well motivated.

58. The school Mission Statement: 'We aim to be the very best that we can be, every single day, where children feel valued through being encouraged to achieve in all aspects of school life', is well understood by pupils and they strive to obtain good standards in work and behaviour.

59. Regular weekly celebration assemblies are held in the school where pupils are given awards for achievement and good work. These occasions are exceptionally well conducted and are an excellent way of engendering a very positive whole-school ethos. Since the previous report the school has introduced a policy of behaviour management which is very

successful. Pupils' behaviour is closely monitored and tracked by teachers, both in class and at recreation. Pupils know that after two verbal warnings certain privileges, such as playtime and free time, will be withdrawn. As a result of the school's firm policy, there have been no temporary or permanent exclusions during the previous academic year.

60. The assessment of pupils' work is good. There is a very good school policy which links assessment and the monitoring of pupil progress. Clear links are drawn with external tests, and data are analysed to give staff access to national comparisons. The information gained is used to inform school and subject targets. It also feeds the annual report for parents near the end of the year and two short reports during the year. Essential parts of the target setting procedures are pupils' self and mutual assessments. The system for assessing pupils' progress against attainment targets is being totally reviewed, and is fully operational in the core subjects of English and mathematics. All other subjects are being involved in a progressive way, and the regional cluster meetings are being used to ensure comparability.

61. The assessment co-ordinator has a great deal of experience and expertise, and is concerned to ensure that any procedures have a positive effect on pupil learning. The end of lesson evaluations for all classes are clearly linked to learning and progress as well as to attitudes and behaviour.

62. Day-to-day assessment in mathematics is good, and is supported by a very good formal system which evaluates individual progress, supports development, and establishes subsequent targets. Monitoring and tracking of pupil progress are also good in English and science. The individualised computer programme, 'Success Maker', is also very well used in the special needs department, and is allied to close monitoring of all pupils involved. History, geography and religious education have very good policies which resource good practice.

63. The school links academic and personal development closely, and the systems are designed to ensure that pupil behaviour, attitudes, progress and attainment are understood by pupils to be interlinked facets of their overall growth and development. The whole system is manageable, and is of practical use to pupils and staff to support learning. There is no doubt that it is an important factor in raising pupil attainment.

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

64. The school has made very significant progress since the previous report in maintaining and furthering links with parents. They are now very good overall.

65. Bellingham school is the first choice of very many parents and this is demonstrated by the fact that the vast majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire fully support the school. They feel that it is well led and managed; feel comfortable about approaching with questions or problems, and feel that information provided by the school is good. Parents interviewed by the inspection team expressed the view that the leadership provided by the headteacher and staff at the school was exceptionally good. They feel that the school provides a secure environment which supports their children's learning and gives them security. The inspection findings completely concur with these views.

66. A small minority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt they were not fully informed about how their children were getting on and that the school does not work closely with them. Inspection findings do not support parents with these views. The school has produced a brochure of good quality which is very easy to read, and contains a good deal of information about the school's organisation, and its rules, ethos and facilities. Regular newsletters are sent out which give a good deal of information about forthcoming events, pupils' progress and innovations that the school wishes to introduce. The school has, in recent months, sent three questionnaires to parents and has made good use of the information gained to decide how to continue to improve its liaison with parents, evaluate its own procedures and offer parents more information about the school. This is excellent practice.

67. The school holds two parental consultation evenings per year in October and March, where parents are given the opportunity to meet teachers and discuss with them their children's progress. Parents are given a further opportunity after the issue of reports in July to contact the school on an individual basis if they have any concerns about the progress of their children. In addition, an open evening is held in the autumn term for the entire community to celebrate the school's vision of community involvement and to give information regarding future developments.

68. Annual reports provided by the school on individual pupil's progress are excellent. They are extremely well prepared and presented; give full information on a subject-by-subject basis; offer comments on what pupils must do to further succeed, and set targets for future improvement. Parents of children who have statements of special educational needs (SEN) are invited to annual reviews, and are involved in target setting and the decision-making process.

69. The school regularly contacts parents if they have concerns about either pupils' pastoral or academic progress or if they wish to offer congratulations for good behaviour or work. The school has an open-door policy and parents are able to see the headteacher or staff if they wish.

70. The school is very pro-active in involving parents in the life of the school and their children's education. It is a community school and, through the partnership it has with the community education service, courses are provided for the benefit of parents. These include parenting skills, information and communication technology (ICT) skills and a course on 'How to help your child at school'. Each Thursday the Over 60's group is entertained to lunch by the school and there is good interaction between this group and the pupils.

71. A small number of parents come into school to help and, where they do so, their work is much appreciated. They help in providing escort services on school outings, in displaying work and as extra support on residential visits.

72. The Friends of Bellingham Community Middle School is a lively body of about 20 regular members who work hard for the school to raise funds. They are involved in a number of social activities such as barbecues and discos. The funds raised are much appreciated by the school and are used to provide, for example, leaving certificates, curtains in the hall and painting materials.

73. In order to allow parents to plan ahead, the school sends annually a 'brown envelope' to all parents giving the coming homework policy, schedule of events, school calendar, programme of study for the year, copies of homework schedule and the renewal of the home/school agreement and reading list. This system was introduced following information received from a recent parental survey.

74. Induction procedures for children joining the school are very good. Parents are invited into school for a 'taster day' and receive a good deal of information from the school prior to the admittance of their child to enable them to make an informed choice of where they would like their child to go for the next stage of education.

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

75. Leadership and management are excellent, having improved dramatically over the last two years. The new headteacher has turned around a school which, previously, was operating in the doldrums, underachieving and not clear in which direction it was heading. She has been very ably assisted in this by an equally new and effective senior team of deputy headteacher and two key stage co-ordinators. The joint determination of this senior team, working in partnership with a very perceptive governing body and a mostly new group of teaching staff, has created a school in which pupil and staff morale is high, teaching and learning are very good and standards are rapidly improving.

76. The governing body fulfils its legal responsibilities and accounts very well for the performance of the school. Following the last Ofsted inspection, governors invited the local education authority (LEA) to set up a collaborative review of the school. This led eventually to substantial staff changes, including a completely new management team. It also led to substantial changes in the composition of the governing body and in its methods of working. Governors have recently reviewed and streamlined their committee structure and have improved their constitution, both to very good effect.

77. The school now monitors and evaluates its performance exceptionally well. All four of the senior team regularly spend time observing lessons across the school. They also monitor planning, the assessment of pupils' work in exercise books, and the contents of pupils' homework diaries. They give teachers detailed written and oral feedbacks on the strengths and areas for development of work seen. Governors too monitor aspects of the work of the school, visiting recently to look at literacy and numeracy strategies, assessment and performance management. This systematic, but also positive and helpful approach to determining the school's strengths and weaknesses, is undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the present consistency of effective teaching and learning across the school. It also explains the accuracy of the school's diagnosis of what needs to be done, in which order and in what time scale.

78. The current school development plan is notable for its thorough attention to detail, its strategic overview, the perceptiveness of its diagnosis, its rigour, and also for the quality of its vision. It is displayed on one of the corridor walls, where targets achieved are ticked off for all, including parents, to see. This plan is, therefore, an ongoing, working tool, which helps to ensure that the school makes the best use of its resources and links its decisions firmly to educational priorities.

79. The leadership and management of curriculum areas are generally good. Some subjects are one-teacher departments and the persons concerned have only themselves to manage. There are bigger challenges, however, in the co-ordination of key areas which involve a number of different teachers, such as English, mathematics, science, physical education, design and technology and humanities. The quality of the leadership and management in these areas is never less than good, demonstrated by all colleagues pulling in the same direction and giving their pupils a largely consistent provision.

80. The co-ordination of the provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. All aspects of liaison and management are very good. Particular strengths include the excellent documentation which provides comprehensive information for all staff; the regular monitoring of pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) which ensures that pupils make good progress, and the good relationships with parents, partner schools and external agencies. Areas for further development include the need to monitor the specific teaching of reading and spelling across the curriculum and to make even more use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool for learning. Also needing development is the use of structured programmes to support pupils' literacy development.

81. The match of teachers' experience and qualifications to the demands of the curriculum is variable. Although there are specialists in most subject areas, a significant number of teachers teach outside their main specialism for a part of the week. This is an unavoidable situation in a small school but, because of the good quality of staff development and mutual support, all teaching leads to appropriate delivery of the curriculum. The school at times finds recruitment difficult because of its rural location. In recent times, mathematics, humanities, modern languages and art have all been affected and there is on-going understaffing in art and humanities.

82. The level of administrative and clerical support is adequate and provides a good service to the school. The financial administrator provides valuable support in budget monitoring. The site manager makes a significant contribution to maintaining the good quality of the learning environment.

83. The school's Performance Management policy and practice are very good. There is a strong programme of monitoring of teaching and learning, based on observation and work scrutiny. This has made a significant contribution to raising standards. Plans to delegate some of this work to subject co-ordinators are in hand and training is imminent.

84. Staff development is a strength of the school. It is targeted at fulfilling the needs of the school development plan and the objectives set within the performance management cycle. Each teacher has specific timetabled staff-development time. An important aspect of staff development is the strong programme of liaison with other schools, which enables lone subject specialists, for example, to engage in professional dialogue with other similar colleagues. Support for newly qualified teachers and procedures for the induction of new staff are both good. Full legal requirements have been met by the school and the local authority and a wide range of individual support has been made available.

85. Sufficiency of learning resources, said to be barely adequate at the time of the last inspection, has significantly improved in most areas and is now satisfactory. Resource provision in ICT, science, design and technology and music is good. Resources for pupils with SEN are satisfactory but the use of ICT needs further development. Library resources remain insufficient. Despite valiant efforts to enhance its use, the library is far too small and under stocked. The school plans to relocate it to a larger space over the Summer of 2002.

86. Accommodation overall is good. It is well looked after, spacious and well used, although the school's heating system is on its last legs and badly needs updating. The large capital investment into the replacement of obsolete metal-framed windows has led to a noticeable improvement in heat insulation throughout the school and to a much more attractive appearance. Well-displayed children's work is much in evidence and adds further to the pleasing general appearance of the school. Classroom sizes are larger than average and the space is well used by allowing pupils more freedom of movement and a greater range of learning styles in many lessons. Accommodation in the 'under-sea world' of the base room provides a stimulating learning environment for pupils with SEN. The



refurbishment of one of the two design and technology rooms has produced a much more pupil-friendly working area, whilst drawing attention to the cluttered inadequacy of the other room. Provision for physical education continues to need improvement in two respects. The games field drains very badly and the showering facilities are still inadequate. The latter is due for imminent refurbishment.

87. Increasingly effective use is being made of new technology in school planning and administration. Its use is now good. The school makes very good use of its financial resources. Specific grants are used for their designated purpose. It manages its budget well even though a significant sum (£27,000) has already been reallocated elsewhere as the local authority progressively reduces the overall support it gives to smaller schools. The school's financial administrator oversees the school's finances well. A recent local authority audit of the school's accounts has shown no items of serious concern and all minor items have now been addressed by the school. The governing body works well with the headteacher and bursar to achieve best value. The school has budgeted for a carry forward figure on next year's annual budget to be approximately £10,000, which is in line with the requirement for budget control.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

88. In order to improve the quality of education and to raise standards further, governors, headteacher and staff should:

- Take steps to improve overall performance in the national tests, especially in mathematics and science.  
*(Paragraphs: 2, 3, 8, and 9)*
  
- Improve pupils' speaking standards in French in Years 7 and 8, by making more use of spoken French and less use of English in lessons.  
*(Paragraph: 32)*
  
- Improve the library provision, in line with the school's present development plan, by:  
*(Paragraphs: 87 and 88)*
  - \* moving it to a larger space;
  - \* greatly increasing the book stock as soon as funds permit;
  - \* equipping it also with non-book resources, especially information and communication technology (ICT);
  - \* increasing its use by pupils.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	14	28	11	1	0	0
Percentage	7	24	48	19	2	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	205
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	28

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	58

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	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	92.4
National comparative data	93.3

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
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:	<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
	2001	26	22	48

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	20	13	21
	Girls	19	15	19
	Total	39	28	40
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	81 (68)	58 (68)	83 (91)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	17	14	25
	Girls	18	12	20
	Total	35	26	45
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	73 (66)	54 (79)	94 (95)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	<b>No of pupils</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	205
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### Exclusions in the last school year

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

*This table gives the number of exclusions, 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)	10.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.1

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

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	51

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.8
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**Average teaching group size:****Y5 – Y8**

Key Stage 2	24.3
Key Stage 3	25.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	<b>2001 - 2002</b>
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	£
Total income	580,826.00
Total expenditure	580,705.00
Expenditure per pupil	2833.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	42,374.00
Balance carried forward to next year	42,495.00

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1.2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.2
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  
Number of questionnaires returned

205
82

### Percentage of responses in each category

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	38	54	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	44	50	5	0	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	63	1	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	22	56	21	1	0
The teaching is good.	49	49	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	40	48	12	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	39	2	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	37	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	34	51	11	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	55	39	5	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	51	5	2	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	54	11	10	8

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

### **ENGLISH**

Overall the quality of provision for English is **very good**.

#### **Strengths:**

- Meticulous, detailed and effective planning ensures a cohesive experience for all pupils.
- The processes of monitoring pupils' progress and reporting to parents are excellent.
- The quality of teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8.
- There is a shared commitment to raise standards, which is bearing fruit.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively in English.

#### **Areas for Development:**

- The quality of marking is variable and this does have an impact on spelling standards in some teaching groups.

### **Standards and achievement**

91. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are below the national average overall. At the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils who attained Level 4 or above in the 2001 national tests was in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils who attained the higher level, Level 5, was slightly below the average for schools nationally. There is no significant difference in overall attainment between boys and girls aged 11. The trend over the last four years has been rising steadily and reflects the national picture. Standards of attainment are in line with national expectations when compared to similar schools.

92. Attainment of pupils in Year 8 is in line with national expectations and pupils are on course for standards slightly above national average by the end of Year 9. There is no significant difference in attainment between boys and girls aged 13. Achievement is good at both key stages. Lower attaining pupils achieve well in English and are making good progress.

93. Evidence from the inspection shows that attainment of pupils aged 11 is slightly higher than that reflected in the 2001 national tests. Attainment of pupils aged 13 is higher than national expectations and shows a rise in standards over the last two years. There are differences in attainment in reading, speaking and listening and writing. Attainment in reading is a relative weakness for many pupils.

94. Standards in speaking and listening are below average for pupils in Year 5. Expression is limited to simple sentences and frequently ideas remain unextended. By the end of Year 6, skills are more developed and pupils have gained confidence as a result of well structured and collaborative group work. A good example was observed in a lesson on the use of radio where pupils became BBC broadcasters in order to present their research. Pupils extended their vocabulary and powers of expression and learned to speak clearly.

95. Speaking and listening skills were well extended in a Year 8 lesson which facilitated high quality technical discussions. Specialist media terminology was correctly used by pupils of all abilities to show their understanding of directing and producing soap operas.

96. Standards in reading are well below average for the majority of pupils entering the school, but good quality teaching strategies have done much to improve interest and motivation in reading. A good example of this is the use of Power-point presentations to share a text and to develop reading strategies. Standards in reading improve by the end of Year 6 and significantly by the end of Year 8 as a direct result of a focus on reading in lesson planning. Pupils in Year 8 are able to distinguish literary features such as genre, characterisation, theme and plot. Standards in reading by Year 8 are satisfactory overall and good for higher attaining pupils. Higher attaining pupils are reading very effectively texts usually taught at the end of secondary school. These pupils are aware of the social and historical background to the texts. Lower attaining pupils are reading to retrieve information and manage to draw both literal and inferential meanings from the texts. Although the school has a policy of independent reading during tutorial time this has not as yet significantly raised standards. The difficulties in reading are compounded by insufficient good quality fiction and non-fiction texts both within the department and in the library. Pupils of all ages are able to discuss their reading, girls in particular are more ready to compare texts and express personal preferences. Lower attaining pupils are making more progress with reading than higher attaining pupils as a direct result of additional lessons and resources.

97. Standards in writing are below average for pupils in Year 5. Short, unextended pieces of writing demonstrate the pupils' ability to complete small grammatical exercises but the transfer of this learning is limited. Frequently, pieces are marred by very weak spelling – some of which remains uncorrected. However, a good example of writing was observed in a Year 5 lesson where some lower attaining pupils successfully demonstrated awareness of the literary conventions of a school brochure for younger pupils. By the end of Year 6, writing has improved and the range of writing repertoire is extended. The majority of pupils are confident with technical construction and all are able to respond in writing in a variety of ways. Some good examples of creative writing were produced in a poetry lesson. For example, writing about dolphins, a Year 6 pupil wrote:

'Glides submarine like through the water  
Searching, he seeks,  
He darts, he swims  
Clever, conscious, concerned  
He is on a mission'.

98. Standards in writing by the end of Year 8 match national standards and for a significant number of pupils, exceed them. This improvement is due to carefully structured lesson planning, high expectations and challenging tasks. Higher attaining pupils produce sensitive and analytical responses to texts, frequently reflecting standards seen at GCSE level. Lower attaining pupils are very well supported in additional booster classes and are making good progress. Unfortunately, pupils of all ages and abilities respond less well to creative and imaginative pieces and these are much weaker and of a lower standard. Pupils are more confident with factual pieces and seem reluctant to use their imaginations, possibly as a result of narrow reading experiences.

99. Pupils across all four years benefit from the activities central to the content of the literacy hour. The learning objectives are shared at the outset and revisited at the end of the lesson to ensure learning has taken place. This promotes a purposeful learning environment. However greater emphasis still needs to be placed on extending and developing reading.



## **The quality of education**

100. The quality of teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8. Out of 14 lessons seen, teaching was satisfactory in three, good in five, very good in four and excellent in two. Meticulous planning is a feature of all lessons and, as a result, all pupils have a very structured and cohesive experience. All lessons include the opportunity to use information and communication technology (ICT).

101. Where teaching is good, teachers have a secure command of their subject knowledge. A good example of this was in a Year 8 media lesson where the teacher's sound grasp of technicalities enabled pupils to understand how films were actually made. In lessons where teaching is more interactive, the pupils participate and develop a greater understanding. An example of this was in a Year 8 drama lesson where pupils learned how to demonstrate 'language features' to a younger audience. In the lessons where the teaching was excellent, pupils were able to reflect on the learning process as well as on the learning. In these lessons pupils articulately discussed their own learning and how they had achieved it. Marking provides a detailed dialogue for pupils but does not always give a clear indication of what is needed in order for them to improve. The quality of marking is variable and this does have an impact on spelling standards in some teaching groups. The processes of monitoring the pupils' progress and reporting to parents are excellent. All classroom management is good. Homework is set and marked regularly, and is appropriate for the extension and reinforcement of learning.

## **Leadership and management**

102. Leadership and management are very good and provide clear direction. The recently appointed team leader has worked hard to ensure a cohesive experience for all pupils. The English department are enthusiastic and energetic and share a commitment to improve standards. The department's links with the drama and special needs departments empower and extend the work in English.

103. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. As a direct result of boy-focused teaching strategies, the gap between boys' and girls' attainments has narrowed, although girls still read better than boys. Achievement is now good in both key stages. There is a need for a specialist reading scheme which would, for example, guide form teachers in a more structured use of the afternoon reading time near the end of school. Library provision is still unsatisfactory. Despite valiant efforts to enhance its use, it is far too small and under-stocked. It is to be re-sited during the Autumn term.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### **Strengths:**

- Planning and use of assessment are very good and are key factors in the rise in standards.
- A new mathematics co-ordinator is providing very dynamic and effective leadership to a largely new team of mathematics teachers.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics and work hard.

### **Areas for development:**

- For many pupils the speed of response in mental mathematics is not as quick as it should be.
- Some pupils' speaking skills do not accurately represent the depth of their mathematical understanding as well as it is shown in written work. Some lack fluency and give over-brief replies to questions.
- The lack of computers in classrooms means that it is difficult to integrate information and communication technology (ICT) into classroom activities.

## **Standards and achievement**

104. The standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6, and also at the end of Year 8, are in line with national expectations for these age groups. Results in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2001 were below national averages, and were lower than those of the previous year. However, due to the effective work of a new mathematics co-ordinator, and a largely new team of mathematics teachers, standards are rising. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards overall match national expectations, with higher attaining pupils in all years reaching well above average standards.

105. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils can calculate the area of a circle and can use the equivalence between fractions, decimals and percentages to solve problems. They are able to calculate the probability of some events happening. Average attaining pupils can calculate fractions of amounts. They are able to convert one metric unit to another. They can find the area of compound shapes. They can plot points using positive and negative co-ordinates. Lower attaining pupils can understand the use of decimal notation in simple questions; most can recall their multiplication tables with a reasonable degree of accuracy. They can draw bar charts to represent data.

106. By the end of Year 8, higher attaining pupils can use Pythagoras' theorem to calculate unknown sides or angles in right-angled triangles and can calculate the area of a circle. They are able to solve linear inequalities. They are able to use percentages to work out given problems and simplify then solve linear algebraic equations. Average attaining pupils can use fractions or percentages to find parts of a quantity and can solve simple linear equations. Lower attaining pupils are able to interpret bar charts and obtain information from these graphs to answer questions; they can calculate areas of rectangles and recognise simple equivalent fractions.

107. Throughout the school, standards are mainly consistent across all aspects of mathematics, but the speed of response to questions in oral work is slower than it should be. As pupils make good progress through the school, their knowledge of basic mathematical

skills increases. This links to a deepening understanding of topics and how to approach different types of problems. Pupils are able to record their methods of solution in writing, and to describe them orally. However, although accurate, their speed of recall is slow at times, and although keen to answer questions, pupils don't often ask them.

108. Some classes have been specially targeted to give pupils additional support in order to 'catch up' or to provide additional difficult work. The arrangement has proved to be effective in raising standards, and pupils in all years are achieving well. This good progress means that the range of standards of attainment in a given year group is widening, especially at the higher attaining end. For example, some gifted and talented pupils in Year 6 are now working at a standard comparable with some higher attainers in Year 8. Teachers are working very hard with mixed ability classes to successfully provide this level of appropriate work for all pupils. As the attainment range widens this will be harder to do.

109. Although the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 6 showed that girls, higher attainers in particular, were reaching higher standards than boys, no significant differences in standards reached or progress made was seen during the inspection. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make similar progress to others in their classes. The use of learning support assistants is carefully targeted to provide appropriate help, and very effective planning helps teachers to provide suitable tasks and activities for all groups of pupils, whatever their needs.

### **Quality of education**

110. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. It was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen, good or better in about nine tenths of lessons and very good or excellent in nearly a half. Thorough preparation, based on very effective joint planning and secure knowledge of mathematics, provides a clear framework for each lesson. For example in one Year 5 class, the skills needed for the main part of the lesson were practised during the mental 'warm-up' session. Pupils quickly improved their accuracy and recall, and it also helped the teacher to see if any group of pupils needed further work on basic skills before tackling a new topic. This, together with a gradual escalation of difficulty in questions, meant that pupils were able to cope with more difficult work than they thought possible. This excellent teaching helped pupils to enjoy the lesson, work hard and make very rapid progress in their learning. In all lessons, pupils know what it is they are expected to do and appropriate support, or challenge, is built into the tasks for each group of pupils. For example, in a Year 6 class using information and communication technology (ICT) to tabulate and present data from probability experiments, lower attaining pupils worked with a smaller number of events, and some tables were already completed as a model for them. Occasionally the leap in difficulty in a new topic is too big for some pupils, but as soon as teachers realise this they provide additional, often individual, help.

111. Homework is used effectively to help pupils make progress by reinforcing topics covered in class. Regular assessment of both oral and written work helps teachers to see how well pupils are doing and to see what topics need further work. When this is linked to regular and detailed assessment at the end of units of work, it provides a secure basis for individual target setting. Pupils know their own specific mathematics targets and are keen to work hard and move on to the next higher ones. This use of assessment is an important factor in the improvement in standards.

112. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and they clearly enjoy their mathematics lessons. The planned and effective use of ideas and methods from the National Numeracy Strategy results in fast paced and lively lessons. Pupils consequently work hard and enjoy the success achieved by completing achievable but sometimes difficult tasks. Their pride in their work is also shown through well-presented written work.

### **Leadership and management**

113. The mathematics co-ordinator, who has been in post for just over a year, provides very good leadership and management and is well supported by an effective team of teachers. Teachers in all years have taken part in numeracy training and the impact of this is helping to raise standards. Departmental and year-group planning is very good, building well on national frameworks and resources and adapting it to the requirements of each group of pupils. Links with partner schools are very good.

114. The curriculum meets legal requirements and there is some good practice in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). This is dependent on the booked use of the computer suite. There are no computers in classrooms to allow ICT to be an integral part of mathematics lessons. The fairly high proportion of time allocated to mathematics on the timetable is used well, and is another factor in rising standards.

115. Pupils are now achieving standards in mathematics in all years that are in line with national averages, and these standards have improved during the last year. Good progress has been made on resolving the issues raised in the last inspection report, in particular the systematic use of assessment data and the provision of more clearly differentiated work for pupils with differing levels of attainment. The strong leadership and management of the mathematics co-ordinator have been key factors in this overall improvement.

## **SCIENCE**

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

### **Strengths:**

- Teaching and learning are consistently good, sometimes very good.
- Co-ordination is good, everyone works well together and pulls in the same direction.
- The match of work in science lessons to pupils' differing attainment is very good.
- Much imaginative and interesting investigative work is taking place.

### **Areas for development:**

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used to enhance the teaching and learning of science.
- More work is needed on the spelling of key words in a science context.
- The writing up of practical work in Years 7 and 8 is too formal, restricting pupils' ability to bring it alive in their own words, and to demonstrate their understanding.

### **Standards and achievement**

116. Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6, and near the end of Year 8, match national expectations for these age groups. Results in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2001 are well below national averages, and lower than those of the two previous years. Standards are now rising rapidly, however, due to the effective work of a largely new team

of science teachers. In lessons, and in work seen during the inspection, standards overall match national expectations, with higher attaining pupils in all years reaching above average standards. Good progress compared to pupils' earlier levels of attainment is made in every year group seen.

117. By the end of Year 6, lower attaining pupils understand that if a light source moves to the left of a stationary object, the shadow the object projects moves to the right, and vice versa. Average attaining pupils can work out the simple relationship that shadows increase in size as the light source moves closer to an object. They can conduct tests fairly, predict what should happen and relate their results back to what they expected. Higher attaining pupils can work out a detailed relationship between the size of a shadow and the distance between an object and a light source shining on it. This they do by collecting and recording data and plotting it accurately on a line graph.

118. By the end of Year 8, lower attaining pupils understand the basic difference between series and parallel circuits in electricity. They can build a simple electrical circuit from a two-dimensional circuit diagram. Average attaining pupils can also set up more complicated circuits involving more than one cell and bulb, and with some help can measure, using an ammeter, the current at different parts of each circuit. Higher attaining pupils can do all of these and also read the ammeter accurately to fractions of an amp. They can also record the results in a table of their own design and explain the mathematical relationship between the differing amounts of current in series and similar parallel circuits.

119. Throughout the school, pupils are receiving a well-balanced diet of physical and biological science, together with some imaginative investigative work, which is so well differentiated it effectively challenges pupils of all levels of attainment. The use of 'writing frames' (structured sentences which lead the pupils through a logical sequence of thinking and writing) pitched at three different levels of difficulty, enable all pupils to achieve at least a minimum of success, and others to press on to work of greater depth.

120. Numeracy is being developed well in science lessons, through weighing, measuring and calculating exercises, as a necessary part of practical work. Literacy standards are more variable. Writing is receiving more attention than it did previously, though not so the spelling of, for example, key words. The writing required of pupils in Years 5 and 6 is freer and leaves more room for pupils to use their own words in such a way that they show their understanding or otherwise of the topic being studied. In Years 7 and 8 a more restricted way of writing dominates too many practical accounts, and the teacher is less able to diagnose understanding and to point out what pupils need to do to improve. No evidence of the use of ICT to develop the understanding of science was seen, and this remains an area for development.

121. Although the 2001 national tests at the end of Year 6 showed that girls, higher attainers in particular, were reaching higher standards than boys, no significant differences in standards reached or progress made were seen in lessons during the inspection.

### **Quality of education**

122. The quality of teaching and learning was never less than good in any lesson seen. In one half of the lessons seen in Years 5 and 6, it was very good. Teachers have a thorough command of their subject material. Their very effective planning incorporates activities at three different levels of difficulty. Infectious teacher enthusiasm abounds. Clear lesson objectives, linked to easy to understand success criteria, are written on the board and shared well with pupils. In most cases, freedom is given to pupils to modify exactly how they tackle a

particular task. Not too much help is given at first when pupils seem puzzled. At times this pays off, as when particular pupils have flashes of insight and come up with an idea that moves their groups forward. A Year 5 pupil had such a breakthrough when she realised that the best way to work out how much water a paper towel soaked up could most effectively be determined by measuring the amount of water left behind. On other occasions, however, some groups' frustrations 'cry out' for skilled interventions and for key questions which would point them in a more fruitful direction. This intervention did not always come from some teachers. On the other hand, in every lesson, sufficient time was left at the end to review the lesson objectives, and in the better lessons, to organise so that pupils could share key discoveries with the whole class.

123. The quality of learning was never less than good in any lesson seen. Pupils clearly enjoy science, and their attitudes to the subject and their behaviour are never less than satisfactory, and are often very good. They collaborate well in practical sessions, working briskly and effectively in response to the time constraints given to them by the teachers. They have little difficulty in sharing their results with others in the class during the well-organised feedback sessions in the last ten minutes of the better lessons.

### **Leadership and management**

124. The science co-ordinator provides good leadership and management of a team of knowledgeable and effective teachers. Schemes of work are developing well and all teachers of science collaborate efficiently in the planning and delivery of topics. Appropriate attention is paid to the Key Stage 3 National Curriculum Strategy; as in 2002 it focuses particularly on the review of teaching and learning in science. Resources for teaching are in reasonably good supply and are well organised, despite the complete lack of any technical support. Textbooks are in short supply, however, and these are looking dated. Accommodation, in the form of a laboratory of good size and flexible layout, is good.

125. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, except in the results in the end of Year 6 national tests. Work seen during the inspection is of a higher standard than these results imply. Behaviour is better than it was reported to be last time and all pupils, including higher attaining pupils, are now challenged much more effectively than they were held to be last time.

### **ART AND DESIGN**

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

#### **Strengths:**

- Very good use by the school of a local artist to resolve the current staffing situation in the short term.

#### **Areas for development:**

- The lack of a specialist art teacher.
- The consequent lack of an appropriate time allocation for art, with adverse consequences for the coverage of the National Curriculum.
- The lack of a broad and balanced curriculum for all pupils.

## **Standards and achievement**

126. Standards of work seen on display, and in the one lesson seen, match the national expectation, with some pupils showing flair and vibrancy in their work. The range of work is limited, concentrating appropriately on styles and methods where effective results can be achieved quickly. Some drawings were seen showing undeveloped skills, and paintings showed little variety or range of technique, although some intense application of colour and tone was seen. This reflects the shortage of lesson time for art and design across each year as a whole. The work of famous artists is used well, as a stimulus for pupils to develop their abilities to compare ideas, approaches and methods and to help them to say what they think and feel about this. Drawing skills are less well developed than is usual for pupils by the end of Year 8, and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance their learning in art and design is inadequate.

127. Achievement is satisfactory in that pupils make progress in applying their limited skills to make effective artworks - to a very limited degree in Years 5 and 6 and more effectively in Years 7 and 8 in spite of the lack of timetable continuity and limited time allocation overall.

## **Quality of education**

128. For timetabling reasons during the inspection period it was only possible to observe one art and design lesson, and this at the very end of the inspection period.

129. The quality of the teaching and learning seen was good. It was well organised and built on excellent relationships. A workshop atmosphere was created, with everyone working with a common purpose. Pupils were learning painting skills and applying them to pattern and texture work showing good control of their work. They were learning by observation, trial and error and by doing and refining their work and skills. Pupil response was very good, and self-motivation strong. There was a sense of delight, where concentration and fun were linked.

## **Leadership and management**

130. The issues in art at the last inspection remain, being clearly linked to staffing recruitment difficulties. The school has had problems in recruiting an art specialist. As a temporary solution, a local artist who is also an experienced teacher was recruited on a part-time basis to ensure that all pupils receive experience of art. This is provided on a 'carousel' basis with all pupils having five-week modules in turn. Although it is impossible to cover fully the requirements of the National Curriculum in the limited time available, the work seen shows enjoyment, vitality and involvement. The work on display and seen being worked on is of a good standard, and this is a valuable experience for the pupils. It has proved to be a very good temporary resolution of a crisis.

131. The school is currently seeking to resolve the staffing issue, including the possibility of a job share with another school. The headteacher is confident that a solution will be found, but is also seeking to maintain and develop links with local artists because they have been found to be so valuable.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### **Strengths:**

- The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good.
- The teachers are well qualified and have complementary qualifications; between them they cover well all aspects of design and technology.
- Provision for resistant materials is good; the workshop was recently refurbished to a good standard.
- Planning, schemes of work and assessment are all good.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- Accommodation for the teaching of food technology and textiles is barely satisfactory; the room needs refurbishing to bring it up to the standard of the other design and technology room.

## **Standards and achievement**

132. In lessons seen, and from an examination of pupils' folders and examples of their finished design projects, standards by the end of Year 6 are above national expectations for pupils of this age. This is largely due to the specialist teaching pupils receive in their design and technology lessons (unusual in Years 5 and 6). Standards near the end of Year 8 are on track to be above the above national expectation by the end of Year 9, reflecting the good start pupils receive in their first two years in the school. Achievement compared to pupils' starting point on entry to the school is good throughout the school.

133. Pupils in Year 5 are well versed in health and safety and good practice in the workshops. They design and make a ball-bearing game and wind chimes to a creditable standard in most cases. By the end of Year 6, they can design and make a healthy pizza, and also use their above average knowledge and understanding of structures to build a wooden bridge to support a heavy mass.

134. By the end of Year 8, all pupils have made a celebration cake; researched younger children's choices of what makes a 'cuddly' book, and designed one to fit the results of their survey. They have made between them a whole variety of simple mechanical toys which change rotary motion into reciprocating motion. They can also design and make a 'desk tidy' by heating, bending and twisting plastic into imaginative shapes, whilst preserving the usefulness of the finished object. Even lower attaining pupils can do all of this and achieve creditable results. Average attaining pupils, and especially higher attaining pupils, can show in their design planning that they are aware of some of the constraints of the materials used. All the pupils are trusted to use, and show that they are fully capable of using, sewing machines and full sized cookers, plus a wide range of workshop tools, such as pillar drills, sanders and hot wires, with the minimum of, ever vigilant, direct teacher supervision. Higher attaining pupils can use these items of equipment and tools with an above level of precision for their age. Boys are equally at home with sewing machines, and girls with pillar drills and sanders. Sex discrimination was totally absent in the lessons seen. All pupils, even lower attaining pupils with some support, are able to evaluate their products with comments which make sense. Higher attaining pupils are able to answer well the more demanding questions, such as what they would do to improve things if they had the chance to tackle a particular design brief again.



## Quality of education

135. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Both teachers are well qualified and experienced in teaching the subject. Their expertise and experience are complementary; between them they cover well all aspects of design and technology. Their knowledge and understanding of the design process is secure. Their relationships with pupils are good. Their class control is effective, and is essential in areas where potentially hazardous machines are constantly being used. In a Year 7 textiles class, cushions were being tacked and sewn up on the electric sewing machines, by one third of the pupils, whilst others were usefully involved in researching a variety of man-made and natural fibres. Pupils who were a little ham-fisted in their tacking were dealt with effectively and diplomatically. Others who slackened off their efforts were quickly brought back on task. A Year 8 resistant materials group were all at different stages of development in their production of a plastic 'desk tidy', but all were kept thoroughly absorbed and completely focussed by a mixture of well-organised group work and individual support. In both lessons, just the right amount of intervention took place, but not so as to take the responsibility away from the pupils for their own particular individual solution to the design problem.

## Leadership and management

136. Design and technology is well co-ordinated across the different aspects of the subject and across all four year-groups. Improvement since the last inspection is good. For example, planning, schemes of work and assessment are all of good quality. Very good use is made of a structured planning sheet developed by the local education authority (LEA). The provision of educational resources is better than it was. Worries about the safety of pupils in the workshop are no longer there since some of the heavier machines were removed and the room was refurbished and re-organised to make movement and supervision of pupils at the remaining machines easier. The food and textiles room suffers in comparison with the refurbished workshop, for it remains cramped and in need of more refurbishment. It is on the school's list of future upgrading projects, as soon as funds allow.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths:

- Standards are above national expectations at the end of Years 6 and 8.
- Teaching is always good and often very good.
- Pupils develop good thinking skills.
- They develop a good knowledge of the locality and compare it with far away places.
- Very good leadership and management underpin the high standards.
- Very good assessment mechanisms help to promote good progress.

### Areas for development:

- Opportunities for extending gifted and talented pupils are not identified clearly enough in schemes of work, although there was evidence of such pupils being challenged in their classwork.

## **Standards and achievement**

137. Geography is taught within the curriculum arrangements for the humanities. By the end of Year 6, the attainment of the majority of pupils is above national expectations. This represents good achievement and progress in the light of their lower attainment on entry to the school. Towards the end of Year 8, the attainment of the majority of pupils is also above the national expectation and this represents further good achievement and progress over Years 7 and 8.

138. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are polite and co-operative to teachers and visitors. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress with the help of modified materials and teaching strategies and, on occasion, with effective help from learning support assistants within the classroom. The attainment of individual pupils and their rates of progress are well known to teachers, who have very effective means of assessing, recording and improving them. Targets are set for individuals to make progress. One of the few things that could be improved in the geography provision within humanities is to include in the schemes of work more specific ways of extending the gifted and talented children. The attainment of boys has been raised since the previous inspection noted that the attainment of girls was better. All pupils benefit from the emphasis that the school puts on improving literacy. This shows itself in the increased opportunities to acquire and use a technical vocabulary relevant to each topic.

139. The work seen in lessons and in pupils' books shows that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are able to demonstrate a good knowledge of the school's locality and the ability to compare places in the United Kingdom with other far away places, perhaps in Mexico, India or Kenya. This skill of comparing and contrasting is a strength of the department. Pupils use geographical terms correctly and have a good understanding of scale in map making. They use their knowledge of scale to locate places and to measure distance accurately. They understand from their work on the locality how it contrasts with other places and they have a developing understanding of weather changes, patterns and conditions in different parts of the world. Pupils can describe clearly how physical processes can change the features of places and affect the lives of inhabitants. They learn to use their mathematical skills to record distance, climate and weather patterns, and use computers to research an area being studied.

140. In Years 7 and 8, pupils show increased skills in the use of maps to work out direction, and they use grid references and map symbols with accuracy. Pupils have a clear understanding of basic facts about temperature and rainfall distribution in Britain and a basic knowledge of volcanic processes. They have a satisfactory understanding of the basic concept of population density, of the basic forms of settlement patterns and of a simple classification of economic activity. By the end of Year 8 they have increasing opportunities to develop greater knowledge and understanding of the locality, with an ability to argue a case for and against contentious planning and land-use issues. Training in thinking skills is a growing strength of the humanities department. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils is helped by such knowledge and such thinking skills and by the understanding of the moral dimension to many environmental situations. A positive contribution is made to an introduction to citizenship.

## **Quality of education**

141. During inspection week, three lessons were observed. The quality of teaching was at least good in all three, in one it was very good. Other evidence was found in pupils' exercise books, on classroom walls and by asking the pupils themselves. Some teachers of

geography were also seen teaching other subjects. They all have good subject competence, good control, good questioning techniques, good relationships and a brisk, purposeful delivery of well-planned lessons. Where the same topic was taught by different teachers the good planning ensured consistency of treatment with some variations of style. The best teaching was found in a lesson in Year 5 which was about life in Tocuaro in Mexico and also involved interpreting maps, block graphs and line graphs of weather patterns, and understanding the impact of weather patterns on every day life. A strength of the teaching was the very skilful and patient way by which it allowed the children in groups to discuss, make judgements, try out their ideas and record them for the benefit of the whole class. There was a carefully planned, and skilfully executed strategy of getting pupils to collaborate and even to lead in their own learning, before the teacher took it up for the benefit of all. Well-planned visits, good use of information and communication technology (ICT), visual aids and artefacts all add to the effectiveness of the teaching.

142. The pupils are interested in their studies. They are conscientious and well behaved. In lessons there is a good deal of collaborative activity in which they are partly responsible for their own learning and in which they help each other. Relationships with the teacher, with visitors and with each other, are very good.

### **Leadership and management**

143. Geography teaching takes place within the humanities department, which is very well led, with the headteacher playing a major part in its functioning. As with other subjects in humanities, geography has very good action plans and development plans. These are conceived at whole-school level, and carried down to departmental level and to individual lessons. One example of this is the emphasis placed in the geography lessons on raising the standards of literacy. The planning embraces not just this school but also an effective partnership of feeder and other schools so that a very good, sensible, consistent pattern of provision is made.

144. The geography teaching at the time of the previous inspection was found to be frequently good and standards were good overall, but writing skills were weak and resources were barely adequate. These aspects have been significantly improved over the past two years. Very good policies of assessment, monitoring, moderation and evaluation help to ensure the continued high quality of pupils' planned educational experiences.

## HISTORY

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

### **Strengths:**

- Standards are above national expectations and well above expectation by Year 8.
- Teaching is always good and often very good.
- Very good leadership and management underpin good teaching and improving standards.
- Source evaluation and the development of thinking skills are strengths.
- Very good assessment mechanisms help to promote good pupil progress.

### **Areas for development:**

- Opportunities for extending gifted and talented pupils are not identified clearly enough in schemes of work, although there was evidence of such pupils being challenged in their classwork.

## **Standards and achievement**

145. History is taught within the curricular arrangements for the humanities. By the end of Year 6, the attainment of the majority of pupils is above national expectations and this represents good achievement and progress in the light of their attainment on entry to the school. Towards the end of Year 8 the attainment of the majority of pupils is also above the national expectation and this represents good achievement and progress in Years 7 and 8.

146. Modified materials and adapted teaching strategies enable pupils with special educational needs (SEN) to attain appropriate standards and to make good progress with the aid of support assistants. The attainment of individual pupils and their rates of progress are well known to teachers who have very effective means of assessing, recording and improving it. Targets are set for individuals to make progress. One of the few things that could be improved in the history provision is to give more thought to more specific ways of extending the gifted and talented children. The attainment of boys has been raised since the previous inspection noted that the attainment of girls was better. All pupils benefit from the emphasis that the school puts on improving literacy. This shows itself in the increased opportunities to acquire and use a technical vocabulary relevant to each topic. This vocabulary covers more than just definitions but is also important for the formation of concepts such as *Reformation, Monarchy or Medieval* which are studied in their original contexts.

147. The work seen in lessons and pupils' books shows that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are able to demonstrate a good chronological knowledge and good knowledge and understanding of the Aztecs and the Ancient Greeks, as well as of the development of the locality of the school. They can describe changes such as the Explorations in the Tudor Age, giving reasons for the voyages, the motives of the explorers and disadvantages of the discoveries. A very good lesson in Year 6 was a very good introduction into how to ask the right questions of primary sources, something that was a weakness at the time of the last inspection. By the end of Year 8 they have increasing opportunities to develop greater knowledge and understanding of a range of historical topics, from the Roman Empire to modern Britain. Their work on interpreting historical evidence in the form of a contemporary portrait of Queen Elizabeth I is of a high order and bears out the conclusion that source evaluation and thinking skills are a strength of the department. The spiritual, moral, social

and cultural development of all pupils is helped by such knowledge and such thinking skills; also by the understanding of the moral dimension to many historical situations, as well as by the awareness of many cultural aspects of invasions and settlements. A positive contribution is made to an introduction to citizenship.

### **Quality of education**

148. During inspection week, only one lesson could be observed but the quality of teaching during it was very good. Much evidence of good teaching was also found in pupils' exercise books, on classroom walls and by asking the pupils themselves. The teachers of history were also seen teaching other subjects. They all have good subject competence, good control, good questioning techniques, good relationships and a brisk purposeful delivery of well-planned lessons. A strength of the teaching is the way in which it brings out good responses from pupils, who are being trained in thinking skills and source evaluation at their appropriate level. The very good lesson with Year 6 on Tudor explorations was characterised by very good planning, very clear aims, very good classroom presence with an element of 'acting', a variety of activities that made for interest and an effortless progression from one planned experience to another. The quality of learning was enhanced by the co-operative pupils engaging in profitable discussion, sharing ideas and helping each other. It was a genuine 'History' lesson as opposed to an ordinary lesson about a topic in the past. Well-planned visits, good use of information and communication technology (ICT), visual aids and artefacts all add to the effectiveness of the teaching.

149. The pupils are very well behaved. They are fully involved in their own learning, willingly perform the tasks set and work harmoniously in groups. They respond very well to the good teaching, good relationships and good learning ethos of the humanities department.

### **Leadership and management**

150. History and geography benefit from the same very good leadership of the humanities department, with the headteacher playing a major part in the effectiveness of the history teaching. It can be clearly seen that the very good action plans and development plans, conceived at whole-school level, are carried down to departmental level and to individual lessons for the benefit of the pupils. One example of this is the emphasis placed in history lessons on raising pupils' standards of literacy. The planning embraces not just this school but also an effective partnership of schools in the area so that a very good, sensible, consistent pattern of provision is made.

151. The history teaching at the time of the previous inspection was found to be generally sound but girls outperformed boys, writing standards were weak and resources were barely adequate. All these aspects have been significantly improved over the past two years. Very good policies of assessment, monitoring, moderation and evaluation help to ensure the continued high quality of the planned educational experiences.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

### **Strengths:**

- Standards are above national expectations by the end of Year 6.
- The use of ICT to support learning in some other subjects is good.
- Resources are good and are well used.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to developing the use of ICT in their subject.
- Lessons make a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development.

### **Areas for improvement:**

- There are limited opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills in some lessons.
- Timetabling arrangements constrain pupils' learning opportunities.

### **Standards and achievement**

152. In lessons and work seen, standards by the end of Year 6 are above national expectations. Given pupils' levels of attainment on entry, this represents good achievement. The great majority of pupils is familiar with the major software packages and can use them proficiently to convey information and to handle data. Higher attaining pupils can use digital cameras to incorporate text and images. For example, in Year 5, pupils have created 'Wanted' posters of their fellow pupils and their teachers. All pupils can create simple databases and spreadsheets. Higher attaining pupils can gather information, create a database and produce graphs, for example, a bar chart of the favourite foods of class members. Independent learning skills are underdeveloped and pupils rely too much on their teachers to tell them what to do and when to do it. Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) make good progress in Years 5 and 6, benefiting from access to an independent learning system.

153. In lessons and work seen, standards by the end of Year 8 match national expectations. Given these pupils' attainment at the end of their Year 6, this represents satisfactory achievement for all of them, including pupils with SEN. Pupils are only just beginning to benefit from better resources and more specialised teaching, neither of which was consistently available in their earlier years. The great majority of pupils can create and combine different kinds of information, for example, using text and clipart to produce letters and brochures. They can use Power-point to make well-constructed presentations, matching the type of information and the style of presentation to attract the attention and meet the needs of the intended audience. They can research the Internet and download information. They know about web site construction, and pupils can create web pages with hypertext hotlinks. All pupils can use packages such as Access and Excel to create databases and spreadsheets. Few pupils can select for themselves which text software package to use and their independent learning skills are below average. Pupils' understanding and use of e-mail are underdeveloped. Throughout all four years, pupils have a very limited understanding of the use of ICT to solve problems by building models, constructing procedures and then measuring or controlling the results.

## **Quality of education**

154. Teaching and learning in ICT lessons are satisfactory overall. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed and some teaching was good. In all lessons, teachers manage pupils well and relationships are good, so that pupils are not afraid to ask questions and risk making mistakes. Most lessons are taught by specialist teachers who have a good grasp of the subject and are able to explain concepts clearly in a way that pupils understand. A weakness in some lessons seen is a failure to group and teach pupils according to their prior attainment. Pupils are taught in mixed-ability classes, and are treated sometimes as if they were roughly of the same ability. Consequently, higher-attaining pupils get frustrated waiting for others to catch up and lower-attaining pupils do not get the support they require. Teachers generally expect pupils to work hard and pupils respond well. They come to lessons willing to learn; are respectful, obedient and responsible and work well together when sharing a computer. They behave well. These very positive attitudes are not being exploited enough in lessons. Pupils are given few opportunities to work independently with access to self-help resources, and rely too much on their teachers for help. Work is assessed at the end of each unit of work, but pupils are not always informed of the National Curriculum Levels they are working at.

## **Leadership and management**

155. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The headteacher and deputy head are keen to develop the subject and are focused on the need to raise standards. They have done much to motivate and support teachers in their use of ICT. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and willing to embrace new ideas. Although the use of ICT in most subjects is good, there is no cross-curricular plan showing which subject is doing what and when, to ensure that pupils experience the full range of ICT opportunities and to avoid repetition. Resources and accommodation are good and pupils have some access to computers outside of lesson times. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development. The timetabling of lessons in double periods - which for some classes last as long as two hours - and which are delivered in five-week blocks, constrain pupils' learning. Towards the end of double lessons, pupils are weary and find it difficult to sustain concentration. In the long gaps between blocks of lessons, pupils forget what they have been taught.

156. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, particularly in the number and quality of computers available for pupils to use. The use of ICT to support learning in some other subjects is good. There have been improvements in recording and reporting pupils' progress and there is now less non-specialist teaching.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

### **Strengths:**

- Pupils' understanding of spoken and written French is good.
- The standards of writing in Years 7 and 8, demonstrated by a small number of higher-attaining pupils, are good.

### **Areas for Improvement:**

- Boys' attainment in general is too low.
- Pupils' speaking standards are not as high as they should be in Years 7 and 8, because they do not use spoken French sufficiently.
- Pupils mark too much of their own work. There is consequently too little guidance on how they might improve.

## **Standards and achievement**

157. Standards, by the end of Year 6, match national expectations and pupils' achievement during Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory overall. Pupils' attainment is better in speaking and listening than in reading and writing, although they are able to understand simple written French. Even at this early stage, the standards of girls are higher overall than those of boys. A Year 6 class showed good use of spoken French in a role-play activity ordering drinks in a café.

158. By the end of Year 8, standards are still in line with national expectations in lessons and work seen. Achievement is satisfactory overall during Years 7 and 8. Pupils continue to show good understanding of written and spoken French but speaking skills are under-developed because of the amount of English in the teaching and the over-use of text books. Pupils have not learnt to respond instinctively to questions and situations. They make too much use of reading from the text book, which affects their accent and fluency. The standards of writing achieved by a small number of higher-attaining pupils are good. The majority of other pupils' writing consists of too much copying and is not sufficiently challenging. The overall attainment of boys continues to fall significantly below that of girls.

## **Quality of education**

159. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Schemes of work and individual lessons are carefully planned to include a range of activity, and extension work for higher attaining pupils. Much teaching is carried out in French but the pace and challenge of the lessons are often lost when the teacher refers too much to the text book or speaks too much English. The teaching style ensures that pupils develop good understanding of written and spoken French. Pupils are given opportunities to practise speaking French in groups. However, especially in Years 7 and 8, they read aloud from their books or speak too much English, because they are not well-enough prepared for the exercise.

160. Learning is satisfactory. In all four years, there is evidence of satisfactory progress. The school's decision to offer French in Years 5 and 6, where it is not a requirement of the National Curriculum, provides a foundation for the work in later years. However, the



greatest potential of this work, the securing of good speaking standards, is not successfully carried forward to Years 7 and 8. The progress made by higher-attaining pupils, criticised at the last inspection, is now a strength. The progress of lower-attainers, many of whom are boys, continues to be an area of concern.

161. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. Behaviour is consistently good: pupils have clear understandings of what is expected of them, are polite and develop good relationships. Attitudes to learning French are also good, with the exception of a minority of boys in all years, whose lack of concentration and commitment results in unsatisfactory learning and attainment.

162. Formal assessment procedures are good. Regular recording provides the teacher with information to inform lesson planning and, potentially, curriculum review. It contributes to the extension work provided to higher attaining pupils. The quality of marking is unsatisfactory. Pupils mark too much of their own work, much of which is confirmed only with a tick or a comment. There is insufficient guidance for pupils on how to improve. National Curriculum Levels are only given occasionally on the work of higher-attainers.

### **Leadership and management**

163. The French teacher works alone in the subject. He has developed good documentation and shows the potential to move further forward. He needs strong support from senior management in the school and the opportunity to observe good practice and extend his experience, particularly in teaching methods specific to modern foreign languages.

164. Learning resources have improved since the last inspection. There are now enough books for each pupil in Years 7 and 8 to have an individual copy. There is less need for regular use of textbooks in Years 5 and 6.

165. The French atmosphere, praised at the last inspection, has been lost. The visits to France and the links with a French school are not currently taking place. There is too little use of authentic materials in the teaching and pupils have no opportunity to read real French books and magazines. The lack of opportunity to place the learning of the language in the context of French culture contributes to the lack of enthusiasm of some pupils. The school hopes to restore some of the activities in the near future.

166. Since the last inspection, standards in modern languages in the school have varied widely. There was a period without a permanent language teacher and the present teacher has had to re-build much of the infrastructure. There are visible improvements in learning resources, including the imminent installation of a dedicated information and communication technology (ICT) area.

## MUSIC

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

### **Strengths:**

- A high proportion of pupils receive instrumental tuition.
- There has been a significant improvement in time allocation and resources.
- Excellent use is made of available specialist skills.

### **Areas for development:**

- Appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) provision is lacking at all levels.
- There is a lack of the opportunity for instrumentalists to perform in groups.

## **Standards and achievement**

167. Attainment target levels in music are recorded on an individual basis. Comparative figures are not provided, since the department is involved with other schools in a project to ensure comparability of standards. Attainment and experience on entry are low, and the weakness in musical skill development inhibits progress and achievement at all levels. However, pupils in Year 5 receiving percussion lessons are already making very good progress and achieving well. The potential for excellence was shown in a recording of a composition by a group of Year 8 pupils, which was of a very high standard – well above the national average. One of the group was a pupil with special educational needs (SEN), and he was working at an equally high standard. Pupils with SEN attain at least as well as their peers.

168. Attainment by the end of Year 6 matches national expectations. Towards the end of Year 8 it is below expectation, but some work heard is well above this level. Singing is good, and two part singing to a good standard was heard in assembly. Tone and tuning are good, and performances have a strong sense of style. Part singing is developing well, but few pupils can yet sing an independent part with sensitivity. In lessons and other work heard, progress was good, and some pupils were attaining well.

## **Quality of education**

169. Teaching and learning are good up to Year 6, and satisfactory with Year 8. The better teaching is characterised by very good relationships, where pupils' strengths and weaknesses are clearly understood. There is a calm class management style, and a good learning atmosphere is created. Pupils have not yet learnt the skills of ensemble music making, and this often gets in the way of progress. Planning is generally good, with very clear targets set and shared. In some lessons, however, too long is spent on just one activity. Pupils were seen learning by example, by building on previous work, by doing and refining their skills, by repetition and practice, and by listening and analysis. The percussion teacher really inspired his pupils through his obvious expertise.

170. Pupil response is excellent in Years 5 and 6, and satisfactory in Year 8. The very positive attitude of pupils to music is shown by the exceptionally high proportion of pupils opting for instrumental tuition, and by attendance at extra-curricular music making. Opportunities for instrumentalists to make music together do not yet exist. Pupils are open and positive, and concentration is deep. Ensemble and self-management skills in practical

music making are undeveloped.

### **Leadership and management**

171. Management in music is good, and there is a clear view of development needs. The overall vision for musical development in the school is excellent. There has been a significant financial input to resource growth, which continues. The six new computers which have just arrived and await the installation of software will resource exciting developments in ICT in music. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and under continual development to ensure its relevance to this school and its pupils.

172. All the issues in music at the last inspection have been resolved. Specialist teaching ensures equality of access for all, and an appropriate time allocation is in place. Resources – including those for ICT – have been significantly improved, and when the software is installed in the new computers, provision will be good.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

#### **Strengths:**

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 6.
- The teaching in physical education lessons is good.
- Pupils' attitudes are very good in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8.
- Leadership and management are good.

#### **Areas for improvement:**

- Pupils are not stretched enough in games lessons.
- The fields lack suitable drainage and are often waterlogged even in summer months.
- Boys show a lack of interest in extra-curricular sport.

### **Standards and achievement**

173. In lessons seen, standards in Years 5 and 6 are above national expectations for pupils of this age. This is largely due to the specialist teaching pupils receive in their physical education lessons. Pupils have acquired good skills and effective technique in a number of areas. In athletics, for example, pupils know the importance of leading with the same leg in hurdles. They know how to stand at the start and can run and jump with impressive speed and rhythm. Their all-round movement is generally well co-ordinated and balanced. Their planning and evaluation skills, however, are weak. Given their lower attainment on entry, pupils' achievement, including that of pupils with special educational needs (SEN), is good.

174. In lessons seen, standards in Years 7 and 8 match national expectations for pupils of this age. Pupils know how and why they prepare for an activity and have a good knowledge of fitness and health. For example, they understand the benefits of physical activity to a healthy lifestyle and the importance of warming up muscles before exercise. Standards in some aspects of athletics are above average. For instance pupils have developed such good technique that they throw with accuracy and above-average distance. For all pupils, the ability to select and apply skills and tactics is under-developed. Pupils' skills of observation, analysis and evaluation of their own and other' performance are below average. Given their attainment at the beginning of Year 7, pupils' achievement, in Years 7 and 8,

including that of SEN pupils, is satisfactory.

### **Quality of education**

175. The quality of teaching and of the learning it promotes is good on the whole. Each week pupils are taught one lesson of physical education and one of games. Teachers of physical education are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about physical education and pupils learn correct techniques and improve their performance, for example, in body positioning when throwing the javelin. Teachers of games lessons, whilst enthusiastic, lack the necessary knowledge to extend and challenge higher attaining pupils. A strength of all the teaching lies in the very good relationships teachers have with their pupils, which helps to create a co-operative atmosphere for learning in lessons. Pupils' attitudes are very good in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. The vast majority of pupils enjoy the subject and want to learn. Teaching would be better, and pupils' learning would be accelerated, if pupils were encouraged to take responsibility for analysing and planning improvements to their work. They are not usually involved in making decisions about their own learning and are not sufficiently encouraged to become independent learners. For example, the warm up sessions at the beginning of lessons are nearly always teacher-led and teacher-directed. Within lessons pupils rarely work in groups of similar attainment where they can challenge and test themselves and each other rigorously and competitively. Participation rates are very good and non-participants are always involved as helpers or observers.

### **Leadership and management**

176. The leadership and management of the department are good. The co-ordinator has identified appropriate areas for development, for example, the raising of standards in Years 7 and 8, and is keen to raise further the sporting profile of the school. Non-specialist colleagues are well supported and the leadership team formally monitors their lessons. Extra-curricular opportunities in Years 7 and 8 are not as extensive as are found in most secondary schools. However, where activities have been organised for boys, for example in football, take up has been poor. An after-school girls' netball club is popular and successful and regularly attracts almost one in four of the girls in the school. Talented pupils, both boys and girls, are given encouragement and support. They make good progress and often go on to achieve much success in local and regional competitions. Indoor accommodation is good but the fields are often unusable due to poor drainage. This inhibits pupils' learning opportunities in, for example, athletics. A major area for development is the encouragement of teaching styles which will ensure that students become independent learners.

177. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Standards in Years 5 and 6 have improved as a result of more specialist teaching; pupils' attitudes in Years 7 and 8 are better than previously, and assessment procedures have improved and are now satisfactory. Showering facilities, however, are still inadequate.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Standards are good in Years 7 and 8.
- The standard of teaching is consistently good.
- Learning about the impact of beliefs on everyday lives is a strength of the teaching.
- Using the locality and links with pupils' own lives is also a strength of the teaching.
- Good efforts are made to improve pupils' literacy skills.

### Areas for development

- Curriculum delivery in Years 5 and 6, being in rotating five-week blocks, is not as helpful to continuity and progression of learning as it might be.
- More specific identification of the units where information and communication technology (ICT) could be used is needed in the schemes of work.

## Standards and achievement

178. The school meets the legal requirement in the provision of religious education for all its pupils. The standards achieved have been judged against the requirements of the local Agreed Syllabus and national guidance. By the end of Year 6, the attainment of the majority of pupils matches agreed expectations and this represents satisfactory achievement and progress in the light of their attainment on entry. Towards the end of Year 8, the attainment of the majority of pupils is above agreed expectations and this represents good achievement and progress compared to their prior attainment.

179. The teaching strategies and the worksheets at different levels enable pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and those children designated as gifted and talented to attain appropriate standards and to make good progress without the aid of in-class support teachers. The difference between the attainment of girls and boys which was noted at the time of the last inspection is no longer evident. All pupils benefit from the emphasis that the school puts on improving literacy. This shows itself in the increased opportunities to acquire and to use a technical vocabulary of religious terms, and in the help the teachers give on how to write persuasively.

180. The work seen in lessons and pupils' books shows that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are able to demonstrate a satisfactory knowledge of the beliefs, values and practices of Christianity and other world religions. Thus Year 7 pupils were able to use a visit to the Anglican Church and to the Methodist, United Reform Church, to gain a deeper knowledge of different interpretations of the Eucharist. By the end of Year 8 they have increasing opportunities to develop a good understanding of the feasts, festivals, signs, symbols and beliefs distinctive of particular denominations. It is a strength of the department that pupils are able to appreciate the impact of beliefs on the lives of believers. This is evident in the lessons in Year 8 relating to the significance of special foods. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils is helped by such knowledge and understanding. It is also helped by the sensitive discussion, inside and outside of lessons, of such 'ultimate' questions as the existence of God and the meaning of life and death. The attainments of individual pupils and their rates of progress are well known to teachers because they have effective means of assessing, recording and improving them. The curriculum arrangement for lessons in Years 5 and 6, based on five week, rotating blocks and a relatively short time allocation is not as helpful as it might be for more effective achievement, continuity and progression.

## **Quality of education**

181. During inspection week, three lessons were observed and the quality of teaching and learning was good in all three. The fact that two of the three teachers are non-specialists in the subject and one is a newly qualified teacher does not adversely affect standards because they are all well versed in the subject matter and they all have good general teaching abilities and classroom control. It is a common feature of the department that teachers and pupils alike are very clear about the aims and objectives to be achieved in the lessons. Teachers plan well; they proceed by appropriate steps and make provision for different types of learners. Where the same topic is taught by two different teachers in the same year group, as in Year 8 on the topic of food, it is obvious that good prior planning and team work make for consistency of treatment but still allow for individual teaching styles to be used. It is a strength of the teaching that the locality is used well as a resource and brought into the lessons to enhance the learning, as in the Year 7 lesson on the significance of the Eucharist to different denominations. Teachers have a gentle, sensitive approach to topics and to pupils, which sits well with the aims and objective of religious education. The teaching incorporates very well the school's emphasis on raising standards of literacy and, to a lesser extent, numeracy. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used for some research and word processing, but there is still a need to identify more specific opportunities in the schemes of work where it could be most effectively employed.

182. Pupils respond well to the good learning ethos and the good teaching they receive. They willingly co-operate in their own learning and they show a commendable respect for the views of others as expressed in class or as studied in terms of religious groupings.

## **Leadership and management**

183. The department is well led as it was at the time of the previous inspection. Action plans, development plans and schemes of work are all being evaluated and re-written. The procedures for assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the department have been strengthened. All those weaknesses identified by the previous inspection have been remedied. In particular, those relating to assessment, resources and the relative weakness of the spiritual dimension of the religious education programme have been much improved.