

INSPECTION REPORT

BIRKENSHAW MIDDLE SCHOOL

Cleckheaton

LEA area: Kirklees

Unique reference number: 107768

Headteacher: Mr G. M. Harker

Reporting inspector: Mr D. Klemm
2049

Dates of inspection: 14th – 16th October 2002

Inspection number: 249132

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Bradford Road
Gomersal
Cleckheaton
West Yorkshire

Postcode: BD19 4BE

Telephone number: 01274 335208

Fax number: 01274 335212

Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs. C. Cook

Date of previous inspection: 16th June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2049	D. Klemm	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion	Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9649	J.M.Smith	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
30702	P. A. Bowyer	Team inspector	Mathematics	
4689	M. Christian	Team inspector	Art and design	
12356	R. G. Dickason	Team inspector	Science Citizenship	
4355	F. Earle	Team inspector	History Religious education	
12470	B. Greasley	Team inspector	Geography	
11969	J. Hardy	Team inspector	Design and technology	
11044	J. N. Hedge	Team inspector	English Provision for pupils with English as an additional language Provision for pupils with special educational needs	
27665	A. Lees	Team inspector	Music	
20192	T. J. Mcdermott	Team inspector	Physical education	
31096	J. J. Thornhill	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
4829	I. Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

Inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

'Grasshoppers'
1 Anglesey Close
Chasetown
Burntwood
Staffordshire
WS7 8XA

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Birkenshaw Middle School is a mixed comprehensive for pupils aged 9 to 13. There are 359 pupils on roll. It is about the same size as the average middle school with slightly more boys than girls. It is part of a pyramid of schools sending most of its pupils to one high school in the Kirklees Metropolitan District. The majority of pupils are from Birkenshaw and surrounding areas although a significant and increasing number are from the neighbouring area of Bradford. At the end of Year 6 approximately ten per cent of pupils leave every year to attend a neighbouring grammar school. On entry to the school, pupils have a wide range of attainment levels but overall standards are about average. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. There are around five per cent of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and one pupil with English as an additional language who is at an early stage in acquiring English. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs, including statements, is below the national average although the number with statements of special educational needs, mainly with learning difficulties, is above the national average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school with more strengths than weaknesses. It provides satisfactory value for money. Teaching is good and pupils achieve well to attain above average standards. They have very positive attitudes to work and behave very well. Attendance is very good. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school runs well on a daily basis although the governing body and headteacher have not produced sufficiently detailed plans for improving standards further.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good and pupils learn well
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school
- Pupils behave very well, enjoy their lessons and work hard
- Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are excellent.
- The school cares for and supports pupils well
- Pupils develop good social skills and a clear understanding of right and wrong
- The school has good links with feeder first schools and very good links with the receiving upper school

What could be improved

- More detailed plans to develop provision for high attaining pupils and improve satisfactory teaching
- Marking of pupils' work
- Use of assessment information in Years 7 and 8 to monitor pupils' progress
- More detailed advice in reports to parents about what they can do to promote learning
- Improved use of information and communication technology (ICT) to assist learning in all lessons

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has shown satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in June 1997. Standards have improved and children make good progress. Teaching is now good. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The school still needs to tackle issues from the last report including the use of ICT across the curriculum, more specific advice to pupils and parents about how to improve learning and a more detailed and specific programme to improve further teaching and attainment in particular for high attaining pupils.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	B	A	C	D
mathematics	C	C	C	D
science	B	B	B	D

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

On entry standards are around the national average although this does vary from year to year. At the end of Year 8 when pupils leave the school they are reaching standards above the national average. This represents good achievement.

Standards in the national tests for 11 year olds in 2001 were above average in science and average in English and mathematics. These results were below average when compared to schools with a similar number of free school meals although this was the first time the school had been compared with schools with the lowest number of free meals. The trend of results reflects the national improvement. The school's appropriate targets for 2001 were exceeded in English but not reached in mathematics.

Standards in Year 6 are around the national average. These pupils entered the school with standards below average and have made good progress. Standards in Years 5 and 6 are above average in science, music and art and design. In Years 7 and 8 they are above average in mathematics, science, English, music, art and design, citizenship and physical education. Standards are below average in ICT throughout the school although pupils are beginning to make good progress following the recent appointment of a coordinator. The progress pupils make overall is good throughout the school. Girls do better than boys in line with the national picture. Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress. High attaining pupils achieve satisfactorily but more could be done to advance their learning. Pupils from different backgrounds make equal progress. Standards in literacy and numeracy are average in Years 5 and 6 and above average in Years 7 and 8.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are enthusiastic and eager to learn. They enjoy lessons and make the most of out of school activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is very good both in and out of lessons. They show a high level of self-discipline. Only one pupil has been excluded in the last ten years.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and teachers are excellent. Pupils support each other well and respect teachers and school property. When given chances to take responsibility they respond well and the school should extend these opportunities.
Attendance	Very good. Attendance is well above the national average

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 - 6	Years 7 - 8
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good in all year groups. The amount of very good and excellent teaching has improved since the last inspection and no teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science and is very good in mathematics in Years 5 and 6. Teaching is satisfactory in religious education and design and technology and is good in all other subjects. It is very good in music and physical education.

Literacy skills are taught well in English with good quality additional support for pupils who need extra help. Across the curriculum there is good practice in developing reading but not enough opportunities for speaking and listening or extended writing. Numeracy is taught well in mathematics and there is good support in science, geography and art and design. Its use in other lessons needs further development. ICT skills are now starting to be taught effectively in timetabled lessons but their use is underdeveloped in other subjects.

Strengths in teaching include good classroom management, well-planned lessons and teachers' knowledge of their subjects. Homework is used well in Years 7 and 8. More detailed advice to pupils about what they need to do to improve would help to improve standards further. Pupils learn well. They work hard and are anxious to do well. In the best lessons they respond well to the brisk pace of learning. Pupils with special educational needs are generally taught well although in some lessons learning would be improved if they were given modified tasks. The one pupil with English as an additional is being taught well. High attaining pupils are taught satisfactorily but more could be done to encourage them to work independently on more challenging work.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is good. It meets statutory requirements and is broad and balanced.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and they make good progress
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Pupils are encouraged to develop strong moral principles. The school should seek to extend pupils' cultural development by planning more opportunities for them to appreciate the diversity of modern life.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are looked after and guided well. Provision for health and safety is satisfactory and there are effective systems for child protection. Systems for assessing pupils' progress are satisfactory although more could be done to give them help to improve.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	Parents view the school positively and many take an active part in their children's learning. The school needs to improve its communications with parents including the school prospectus and reports

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and his deputy manage the school well on a day-to-day basis. There is a caring ethos in the school. School plans to improve standards are not detailed enough. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have improved but are still under developed. Some of the issues from the last inspection have not yet been fully addressed. Year leaders and subject coordinators work effectively but have limited time to disseminate good practice.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors perform their duties satisfactorily. Some spend generous amounts of time in school and are involved in planning. They fulfil legal requirements but need to be more active in shaping the future direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	In Years 5 and 6 assessment information is used well to monitor pupils' progress and set them targets. This is not as well developed in Years 7 and 8. There is some monitoring of teaching but no clear priority for improving satisfactory teaching and learning.
The strategic use of resources	Financial resources are managed effectively although there is a need to cost all parts of the school development plan. The amount and quality of learning resources are generally satisfactory although there are insufficient books in history, geography and science. Accommodation is good although some specialist rooms are somewhat cramped for practical work. Teachers are suitably qualified to teach the curriculum and are well supported by effective classroom assistants. The school applies well the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children like school and are making good progress• Teaching is good• The school is helping their children to become mature and responsible• The school is approachable• Behaviour is good• Homework is set appropriately	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The range and number of extra curricular activities• Better quality information about their children's progress• Provision for pupils with special educational needs and high attainers

The inspection team endorses the positive views expressed. It agrees that the quality of reports could be improved and existing provision for high attaining pupils could be developed. The team found that provision for special educational needs was good and that, for a small school, the range and number of extra curricular activities was satisfactory. 168 questionnaires were returned to the Registered Inspector and 17 parents attended the consultation meeting.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. On entering the school pupils' attainment is around the national average although there are variations from year to year. There are some very high attaining pupils and also pupils with learning difficulties. At 13 when they leave school standards are above the national average. This represents good achievement.

2. In the 2001 national tests Y6 pupils reached above average standards in science and average standards in English and mathematics when compared with schools nationally. Results were below average in all these subjects when compared to schools with a similar number of free school meals although this was the first time the school's results had been compared with schools with the lowest number of free meals. Since the last inspection there have been variations in results from year to year and in 1997 and 2000 the school received DfES awards for improved results. The improvement in results since the last inspection has been in line with that nationally. In 2001 the school exceeded its target for English but failed to meet its target in mathematics. In 2002 the mathematics target was reached but English results were well below the target set.

3. Standards of work seen during the inspection in Year 6 are comparable with recent results in national tests. In English and mathematics they are average and this represents good achievement when compared with these pupils' below average attainment on entry. Standards in science are above average also representing good achievement. Pupils in Year 5, after five weeks in the school, are achieving well. In other subjects standards in Years 5 and 6 are above average in music and art and design and are average in other subjects with the exception of ICT where standards are below. The new coordinator started in the summer term 2002 but has had insufficient time to make an impact on standards although pupils are starting to make good progress. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in religious education, design and technology, geography and history and very well in physical education. They make very good progress in art and design and music. Improvement in achievement has been good since the last inspection especially in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.

4. In Years 7 and 8 standards in lessons are above average in English, mathematics and science. Since the introduction of the national strategies in English and mathematics there has been some improvement in the numbers of pupils achieving the higher levels in English but no evidence of any significant change in mathematics. Standards in other subjects are above average in music, art and design, physical education and citizenship. They are below average in ICT and average in French, design and technology, history, geography and religious education. In Years 7 and 8 pupils achieve well in French, ICT, mathematics, science, English, music and citizenship. They achieve very well in physical education. In all other subjects achievement is at least satisfactory. This represents good improvement since the last inspection.

5. In English lessons most pupils develop good reading skills as they move through the school although there are a few who still need support in Year 8. Speaking and listening skills are stronger than writing. In Year 6 mathematics lessons pupils understand how to use fractions and in Year 8 high attainers can do calculations involving fractions and decimals. Middle attaining pupils understand ratio and lower attaining pupils work hard although they still have problems with numeracy. In science all pupils achieve well and make good progress. They develop a good understanding of scientific principles in Years 5 and 6 and in Year 8 demonstrate a good knowledge of topics such as gravity. In art and design, drawing

and painting skills are above average across the school. Standards in design and technology are average in all years with a small number of pupils reaching higher levels. In geography, standards are average in all year groups. Pupils' knowledge is generally stronger than their analytical skills. Standards in history are average and pupils have a good understanding of the periods they are studying. High attainers in Year 8 can use their knowledge to support their interpretation of historical events. In French standards are average with speaking and listening skills stronger than writing. Standards in music are above average with pupils developing good skills in composition and performance. ICT standards are below average but have started to improve recently. Pupils have had insufficient opportunities to use confidently spreadsheets and databases. Pupils achieve well in physical education and reach above average standards with particular strengths in gymnastics. In religious education standards are average and most pupils have a good knowledge of the faiths they are studying although their skills in analysis and evaluation are under developed. After six weeks of teaching standards in citizenship are above average.

6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in all years given their starting points because teaching and additional support are carefully targeted and planned to cater for their needs. In lessons pupils with special needs make the same progress as others. Progress with reading and spelling are good. There is little difference between the standards of boys and girls although there are many more boys than girls on the register. The proportion of pupils with special needs is below average and has fallen this year. They make very good progress in music because teachers plan appropriate individual work. Progress in French is unsatisfactory because they do not have the same curriculum time as other pupils.

7. Boys' attainment compared with that of girls is in line with the national difference in most subjects. Girls' attainment is, however, significantly stronger in design and technology and geography because girls pay more attention to detail and take greater care over their work. In some groups in English and geography boys' writing is weaker than girls. The one pupil with English as an additional language is making very good progress and achieving well. Pupils from ethnic minority groups are reaching similar standards and achieving as well as other pupils.

8. The school has no system for identifying or providing enrichment activities for gifted and talented pupils. In most lessons they make satisfactory progress and in English and physical education good progress. They use sophisticated vocabulary in sustained quality writing in some English lessons and apply their skills effectively to demonstrate good practice in physical education. In art and design they make very good progress using time effectively for independent study and working hard out of lessons to further their studies. Pupils make very good progress in music because there are good opportunities for individual work supplemented by instrumental lessons. In other lessons they would benefit from more challenging work and opportunities to work independently.

9. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards would be further improved by: giving pupils more specific advice on how to improve their work and developing the use of ICT across the curriculum as a learning tool.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. Pupils' very good attitudes, behaviour, attendance and personal development are great strengths of the school and have a very positive impact on standards. This aspect of the life of the school has improved since the last inspection.

11. In lessons pupils respond with interest and enjoyment to the good teaching they receive. Pupils are well motivated; they want to succeed and take pleasure in their achievements. They concentrate very well as, for example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson

at the end of the afternoon when pupils tackled the challenging work they were given on decimals with total concentration and as a result made very good progress. In an art and design lesson, the attitudes and behaviour of Year 8 pupils were exemplary. Pupils worked diligently on their surrealism projects, showed interest in the topic and in each other's work, were alert and involved throughout the lesson and cleared up cheerfully at the end. Pupils work together very well in groups and pairs as, for example, when practising speaking French to each other. In discussions with inspectors pupils spoke very positively about all aspects of their school life, praising the helpful and friendly staff and confident that the school is helping them to do well.

12. Pupils behave very well both in lessons and around the school. Throughout the inspection pupils were exceptionally courteous, considerate and friendly in their behaviour towards their visitors. Pupils show a high level of self-discipline in the way they respond to school routines. Behaviour at lunchtime is civilised and in the playground pupils play energetically and harmoniously. Pupils show a high level of respect for school property and no graffiti or litter was observed. They show their trustworthiness in the careful way they treat the computers which they are permitted to use during the lunch break. No evidence of bullying or other harassment was seen and pupils said that they were confident that any incidents would be dealt with effectively. One pupil was twice excluded for a fixed term last year but this is the first exclusion the school has had for many years. It occurred following repeated incidents of disruption and despite the school's best efforts to support the pupil.

13. There are excellent relationships amongst all members of the school community including pupils from different ethnic groups. This is a great strength of the school and has a significant and positive impact on pupils' personal development which is very good. Pupils are very supportive of each other, for example in physical education and ICT lessons. They work well cooperatively and show respect for the views of others. In many lessons they organise themselves well and show good independent learning skills. In a geography lesson, Year 5 pupils busily and sensibly assembled the resources they needed for their brochures about Birkenshaw, including maps and aerial photographs downloaded from the Internet. Pupils exercise the responsibilities they are given as class monitors very well and library monitors help to run the library efficiently. Year 8 pupils help to supervise younger pupils during wet breaks. In conversation, a group of Year 8 pupils said that they would like to be given more opportunities to exercise responsibility. The provision of such opportunities would develop further pupils' very good personal development.

14. Attendance is very good. The attendance rate for the last year was well above the national average. Pupils' punctuality is good. Registration is performed efficiently and the day gets off to a prompt and orderly start.

15. Pupils with special needs are fully integrated into the work of the school. Their relationships with peers and with teachers are good and as a consequence they have a good measure of self-esteem. Attitudes to work are positive and pupils are keen to succeed. Their behaviour is very good. They participate well in small group work and in discussion. They work well together, are well motivated and take their work seriously.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. Teaching is good in all year groups. The amount of very good teaching and excellent teaching has increased since the last inspection. In four lessons teaching was outstanding and no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Teaching was good or better in just over three quarters of lessons seen.

17. Teaching is very good in music and physical education across the school. In Years 5 and 6 teaching is very good in mathematics and in Years 7 and 8 it is good. Throughout the school teaching is good in English, science, art and design, geography, history and ICT. In Years 7 and 8 French and citizenship are taught well. Teaching is satisfactory in religious education and design and technology. At the previous inspection teaching was not as good in Years 5 and 6 as in Years 7 and 8. This has changed as a result of the work of the subject coordinators with non- specialist teachers and the year coordinators who have focused their energies on raising attainment by checking thoroughly the progress of pupils. Joint planning and the efforts made to implement the numeracy and literacy strategies have contributed to these improvements.

18. Work is well planned and the pace of learning is brisk. This is especially noticeable in English and mathematics where pupils respond well to the challenges in lessons and enjoy the work. The national strategies for literacy and mathematics have contributed to these improvements. Learning aims for lessons are now increasingly shared with pupils. In a very good Year 8 music lesson, all pupils were given work matched to their attainment. They worked hard, improved their skills and enjoyed learning. In physical education excellent planning provided opportunities for pupils to evaluate their performance against the lesson's objectives. In science there are high expectations that pupils will do well and, in the best lessons, pupils are taught very effectively through a range of learning activities difficult concepts such as gravity.

19. Teachers' good subject knowledge and classroom management skills are particular strengths in geography, history, French and ICT. In a Year 6 geography lesson about St. Lucia the teacher encouraged pupils to share their ideas. Pupils in a Year 8 history lesson used a range of resources to explore different views of Henry VIII and developed well their skills in interpretation and evaluation. In ICT the teacher's excellent subject skills is used to give pupils the confidence to develop their skills and, in French, the teacher's confident use of activities successfully maintains pupils' concentration and interest.

20. Relationships in lessons are very good. Teachers know their pupils well. Work is marked regularly and conscientiously although specific advice to pupils on how they could improve needs further development. Homework is set regularly and extends usefully class work especially in Years 7 and 8.

21. Literacy skills are taught well in English and the national strategy is being implemented effectively. Pupils who are having difficulties receive good quality extra help in Year 6 through a small booster group and, in Years 7 and 8, are taught in smaller groups with classroom assistant support. They are making good progress. Across the curriculum reading and basic skills in writing are taught effectively although the school should increase opportunities for extended writing and speaking and listening. There has been a recent focus on implementing the national numeracy strategy and teaching is good in mathematics with some effective support in science, geography and art and design. Opportunities in other lessons to develop mathematical skills are under developed. ICT skills are now being taught well in the timetabled lessons but their use across the curriculum is insufficient.

22. The quality of teaching and learning for all pupils with special educational needs is good and pupils make good progress. In all years, work is generally planned with a good range of tasks to sustain interest. In most lessons special needs pupils are given tasks which are well- adapted to their needs. In Years 5 and 6 teaching is particularly well focused on pupils' difficulties with basic literacy. However, tasks are not always modified or marked to meet the targets expressed on pupils' individual education plans. Relationships are very strong so that pupils feel confident when taking part in classroom activities. Lessons have good, sometimes very good, pace and pupils make good progress. Special needs pupils are very well integrated in lessons. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils'

progress because their interventions are well planned, informed and discreet. Pupils learn particularly well when they are given additional attention and support..

23. Although high attaining pupils are making satisfactory progress overall and do well in music, physical education and English, more could be done to improve their attainment. There are setting arrangements in Years 7 and 8 but relatively few opportunities for independent study or enrichment activities which would present more challenging learning activities. The one pupil with English as an additional progress is making very good progress.

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

24. The curriculum is broad and balanced. All National Curriculum subjects and religious education are taught throughout the school. The introduction of French in Year 7 extends pupils' knowledge and skills with lower attaining pupils receive extra literacy support in some of these lessons. The coverage of history and geography has improved since the last inspection following improvements in the school timetable. ICT is taught as a separate subject from Y5. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. In Years 5 and 6 pupils are taught in mixed attaining groups and in Years 7 and 8 are grouped according to attainment in mathematics, science, English, French, history and geography. These arrangements work well. Sufficient time has been created to implement the national literacy and numeracy strategies. Since September, citizenship has been added to the curriculum in Years 7 and 8.

25. Extra curricular activities are provided for pupils in drama, art and design, ICT, music and physical education. There are school teams in football, cricket and rounders. Specialist rooms in art and design and ICT are used outside formal lessons. Music makes a major and good contribution with additional instrumental lessons for pupils, whose parents pay a subsidised rate for the tuition. There is a school choir, samba band and orchestra. Pupils are given the chance to take part in various school trips. Visitors to the school enhance the normal curriculum, an example during the inspection was a visit by the local education authority orchestra which was enthusiastically received by Year 7 pupils. Considering the size of the school, provision is satisfactory but should be extended when resources are available.

26. The school pays good attention to equality of opportunity. All subjects and extra curricular activities are available to every pupil and the school deals firmly when it has to with bullying or racism. The school works hard to avoid any discrimination with regard to gender. The school has now achieved full access to the building for wheelchair users following recent modifications to the building. The school has organised a weekly out of school signing class which has been enthusiastically supported by pupils. Policy documents are being implemented.

27. Pupils with special educational needs receive good attention and follow the same curriculum as other pupils. In Years 5 and 6 they are usually taught by their class teachers and in Years 7 and 8 are taught in small groups for English, mathematics and science. Teaching assistants and teachers provide very good in-class support for pupils through small group work. A teaching assistant runs a computer learning programme every morning for small numbers of special needs pupils to improve their reading and spelling. After four weeks these pupils move on to an intensive spelling programme run by the special needs coordinator. Pupils are drawn mainly from Year 5 but the programme is available to pupils in other years if they would benefit from additional support. Year 5 pupils who have spelling problems attend a spelling group for a period each week. This is good quality support and is improving pupils' standards of writing.

28. At present the school has only one pupil at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. The ethnic minority support service of the local education authority has provided suggestions for the support of this pupil who is making very good progress.

29. High attaining pupils are not identified and there is no separate provision for them or monitoring of their progress. In Years 7 and 8 some lessons are taught in attainment groups which helps to facilitate the planning of challenging work although this is underdeveloped across the school.

30. Personal social and health education now includes the new citizenship course and is taught by one teacher in Years 7 and 8. In Years 5 and 6 personal social and health education is integrated with the teaching of other subjects. The teacher managing the programme was appointed to the post recently and has produced a new teaching programme for Years 7 and 8. This includes paired discussion activities, reading from books such as *Lord of the Flies* and discussion of television programmes. A good variety of teaching methods is being used to explore a range of issues relating to health, moral and social issues. Teaching materials, for example on the ground rules for discussion, are well organised and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for decisions about the rules. Sex education is provided in Years 6 and 8 as part of the science course and lessons deal with drugs and alcohol. An audit of the teaching of personal social and health education in Years 5 and 6 is being carried out. Provision is good and has improved since the last inspection. The audit of provision in Years 5 and 6 should be completed as soon as possible. The quality of provision is good and contributes well to pupils' moral, social and cultural development.

31. There are good links with the community. A local firm uses the school's sports facilities and, in exchange, provides the school with furniture. This has made the entrance area attractive and provided very useful display facilities in the corridors. The school is used extensively for further education evening courses and provides work experience for secondary school students. Funds are raised for a number of charities including the NSPCC and children's homes. The community policeman visits regularly and contributes to the drugs education programme.

32. The school has good constructive links with its partner schools. Liaison with its linked first schools has improved since the last inspection. Regular meetings are held and agreements are reached on what should be taught which ensures that there is no unnecessary duplication of work. First schools pass on assessment information in mathematics and English which helps in planning lessons in Year 5. Pastoral liaison is good and is used to help determine class groupings and to ease pupils' transition to the school. Liaison with the upper school is now very good. There are regular subject meetings with other middle schools and the upper school. These enable the review of curriculum agreements and transfer arrangements. Transfer documents, which include assessment information on National Curriculum levels reached in all subjects, help to ensure a smooth transition into Year 9.

33. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is good. The school meets legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship and this makes an important contribution to developing pupils' awareness of spiritual issues. They are encouraged to reflect on moral issues, to pray and to sing. There are also opportunities for pupils to contribute to the act of worship, for example, in playing the piano or reading a prayer. Assemblies and acts of worship mark important events in the Christian year and other notable dates such as Remembrance Day. A thoughtful policy document sets out the school's aims for collective worship. This recognises the importance of the Christian tradition and is sensitive to the varied beliefs and aspirations of all members of the school community, allowing everyone to participate. Many such events are opportunities to celebrate achievements and

accomplishments. Opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual development are taken in English, where pupils listened with rapt attention to *The Ballad of Hillsborough*. In religious education pupils are often given opportunities to relate what they learn to their own experiences. In art and design, encouragement is given to pupils to reflect on the importance of aesthetic experiences, for example in their work on stained glass; in science and geography pupils are prompted to reflect on the mystery and beauty of the natural world. Opportunities in other subjects to enrich this aspect of learning, however, are few and the wider relevance of what is taught to beliefs and values is not always effectively drawn out.

34. The provision for pupils' moral development is good. There is a strong sense of moral purpose in the school and pupils are taught to distinguish right from wrong and to act according to their principles. In citizenship, personal and social education and religious education lessons these issues are specifically discussed. Emphasis is placed on the importance of behaving in morally responsible ways in relation to other people and in wider social settings. Pupils recognise the importance of respecting each other's values and are sensitive to the feelings of others. Teachers insist on a consistent standard of moral behaviour and many activities in lessons contribute to this, for example, in physical education pupils are taught the importance of fair play. Ethical issues are specifically raised in some lessons. In geography pupils consider the morality of the exploitation of natural resources and in science they are encouraged to consider ethical questions surrounding alcohol and drug use, human fertility and ecology. The clear moral guidance given to pupils and the expectation of high standards of behaviour is evident in their respect for school property and equipment and the responsible use of resources. Pupils are also learning how to show practical moral concern through support for a range of local and national charities, some of which are directly related to members of the school community.

35. Provision for pupils' social development is good. They are beginning to understand the importance of sensible and socially responsible behaviour and how to contribute to the wider society in which they live. They are encouraged to think about such aspects of social life as crime prevention, drug abuse and personal safety. The school makes good use of local expertise to enhance this aspect of provision. Pupils show increasing social confidence as they move through the school. Older pupils are impressively mature when speaking to adults and in expressing their own views and opinions. Pupils co-operate well with each other in lessons. In many subjects they are learning to work collaboratively and in art and design, music and physical education are discovering the pleasure and benefit which comes from co-operative work. There are some opportunities for pupils to take on responsibilities and they make a valuable contribution to the school community, for example, as library monitors. In general there are too few opportunities for them to exercise responsibility and initiative and the school is not fully realising their potential.

36. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Several subject areas make significant contributions to the development of their cultural and aesthetic appreciation. In art and design they are encouraged to a work in a wide range of artistic styles and are introduced to the work of modern artists as well as the art of other cultures such as that of the Aztecs and the art of Africa. Displays of pupils own work reinforces the value placed on creative work. Pupils are taught to value their own cultural heritage in history and religious education and are given opportunities to explore literature from different periods in English. In music pupils can sing, play and compose and listen to a wide range of musical styles, including Caribbean and African music. Some opportunities are presented to help pupils appreciate cultural diversity through the study of French culture in modern foreign languages and the study of Brazil and St. Lucia in geography. However, with the exception of religious education, which gives pupils opportunities to explore a range of religious traditions, the school does little to extend pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity of modern life. This aspect of provision has not improved since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The school continues to provide good care for its pupils. This good care is based on the excellent relationships between staff and pupils. The thoughtful and good pastoral arrangements between this school and its linked first schools and receiving high school ease pupils' transition when they enter and leave the school. Some Year 5 pupils told inspectors that they felt settled in by their second day. The staged progress from class based teaching in Year 5 to subject based teaching in Years 7 and 8 helps pupils to adjust gradually to a different style of teaching.

38. The school's caring ethos is shown in the attention paid to meeting pupils' individual needs and the headteacher plays a prominent role in ensuring this. The school is committed to helping pupils who have behavioural and other problems. In addition to a good range of support strategies, which include the counselling skills of the headteacher and other staff, the school calls upon the services of an education social worker when it considers it appropriate. The parents of a hearing impaired pupil are very pleased with the arrangements made by the school for their child; these include an after school signing club for pupils. The school has successfully obtained funding to make the school fully accessible to wheelchair users and the work for this is almost complete.

39. There are effective child protection procedures in place. The headteacher, as named person for child protection, keeps his training up to date and staff have received appropriate training. Overall the school's health and safety procedures are satisfactory. Regular checks are made of the premises both by the local council and by the school's health and safety representative. However, the school's health and safety policy is incomplete and needs to be made more specific to the school; the headteacher recognises that it needs to be reviewed. In lessons, teachers show a good awareness of health and safety issues. Formal assessments of possible hazards have been carried out in curriculum areas such as science, design and technology and art and design but it would be advisable to ensure that these are also carried out for physical education. Pupils are well supervised during break times; there are good procedures for dealing with accidents and these are properly recorded.

40. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. Registration is completed very efficiently and unexplained absences are properly followed up. An education social worker makes regular visits to the school and is available to help if attendance problems occur.

41. There are very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. The consistent application of the behaviour policy by all staff, the strong mutual respect which exists amongst teachers and pupils and the high expectations of good behaviour help to create a very good learning environment. There are good procedures for dealing with bullying and the rare incidents which occur are properly recorded. Pupils are reminded regularly in assemblies of the importance of care and consideration for each other. Both parents and pupils said that they were confident that any incidents would be dealt with firmly.

42. The school has satisfactory procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress. Progress is regularly and accurately recorded in all subjects. Since the last inspection there has been considerable progress in the use of assessment information in English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6. On entry to the school and at the beginning of Year 6 assessments are completed which enable teachers to set individual pupils' targets and to track progress to see whether these are achieved. These targets are shared with parents at the autumn parents' evening. In Years 5 and 6 the assessment coordinator is beginning to develop well the analysis of assessment data and assessments are used to identify and provide extra support for some groups, for example the booster classes run in Year 6.

43. In Years 7 and 8 assessment information is used to monitor pupils' progress mainly within departments. Departmental coordinators from the upper school and all the local middle schools meet regularly to standardise assessments in order to ensure a smooth academic transition into Year 9. However, there is no system to use all the assessment information the school possesses in order to obtain an overview of the progress of individual pupils, to identify strengths and weaknesses and to set targets for improvement. Assessment information is used to determine groupings but not to analyse and evaluate progress and to guide lesson planning. Pupils' work is marked regularly but lacks specific detail about what they need to do to make progress.

44. Procedures to monitor and support pupils' personal development are good. Teachers know pupils well, encourage them to do their best and are sensitive to the needs of individuals. There is a good reward system of house points and merit certificates which helps to motivate pupils to work hard and behave well. The school provides good guidance both through assemblies and the good personal, social and health education programme. For example in one personal, social and health education lesson Year 8 pupils showed that they had learnt a considerable amount about the nature of different drugs and their dangers from the visit of a police officer the previous week. Pupils' social skills and their sense of independence are developed well by residential experiences in Years 5 and 6. There are some good opportunities for older pupils to exercise responsibility within the school as monitors and by helping to run the library, but compared with many other schools opportunities to exercise responsibility and initiative are limited.

45. Care for pupils with special needs has improved since the last inspection. Teachers are well informed about their pupils. All pupils on the register of special educational needs have an individual education plan which is prepared by the class teacher for younger pupils and by the special educational needs coordinator for pupils in Years 7 and 8. Targets specified on an individual education plan are discussed with the pupil and a copy is sent to parents. The monitoring of pupils' progress against their targets is improving particularly in Years 5 and 6 where class teachers check pupils' progress towards their targets. This needs to be developed in Years 7 and 8.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

46. Parents view the school positively. Almost 50 per cent of parents returned the pre-inspection questionnaire and their response shows good support for most aspects of the school's work. Parents agree that their children like school, are expected to work hard and that the school is helping them to become mature and responsible. Parents are positive about the good teaching and the good progress their children are making and agree that they find the school approachable. The one area of significant disagreement is on the school's provision of a good range of activities outside lessons and some concern about the amount of information sent to parents about their children's progress. Other concerns expressed at the parents' meeting included the amount of provision for pupils with special educational needs, and for high attaining pupils. The inspection endorses parents' positive views about the school. Inspectors consider that, in view of the relatively small size of the school, the range of activities offered outside lessons is satisfactory and provision for pupils with special educational need is good. It agrees that more could be done to help high attaining pupils and to provide better reports about pupils' attainment and learning.

47. There are both strengths and weaknesses in the school's partnership with parents. The school works effectively in partnership with parents to resolve problems concerning individual pupils. The homework diary is useful both as a means of monitoring homework and as a flexible and easy means of communication with parents; several good examples were seen of the diary being used in this way. However, some comments made at the parents' meeting and on the questionnaires indicate that there are a few weaknesses in

communication between the school and parents. The school does not at present consult parents on matters which concern them, such as homework, and some parents feel that the school does not keep them well informed.

48. The quality of written information provided for parents is unsatisfactory. The governors' annual report to parents is quite informative but the school prospectus and the brief handout for new parents are unsatisfactory. The prospectus is poorly set out and has insufficient information on the curriculum and pastoral matters. It does not do justice to the school by providing a rounded picture of its work and the education it seeks to provide. Newsletters are sent out several times a year but some of the items in them could be usefully included in an annual handbook which parents could use for reference.

49. Annual written reports on pupils' progress are of variable quality. For each subject a teacher's assessment of the National Curriculum level is given which provides parents with an indication of their child's attainment against the national average. The format of reports allows very little space for teachers' comments. A few examples were seen where pupils' strengths and weaknesses in subjects were outlined succinctly with specific and useful targets for improvement. However, in the majority of reports comments are too vague; they tend to focus on pupils' attitudes and do not suggest ways that pupils can improve their work.

50. Parents' involvement in the school has not been fully developed. The good support which most parents provide for their children's homework makes a very positive impact on their learning. Year 5 pupils had clearly worked hard on their geography homework drafting brochures about Birkenshaw, and access to resources such as the Internet and digital cameras had obviously helped them. The use of good quality homework diaries promotes well the home school partnership. It could be strengthened further if the school kept parents better informed about how they can support their children's work. The provision of better information on the curriculum either through a handbook or information sheets, or possibly through curriculum evenings or workshops would enable parents to become more knowledgeable partners in their children's education. The Parent Teacher Association, run by a small number of parents, supported the school well last year by holding social events such as after-school films with tea. Parents also help the school through their support for sponsorship events and by helping with school events, trips and transport for extra-curricular activities. Parents constitute a useful resource and there is scope for the school to further increase their involvement in its work.

51. There has been some improvement in the level of communication with the parents of special needs pupils. The school operates an open door policy for parents. They receive copies of individual education plans and are invited to discuss progress on a regular basis. Some parents make good use of pupils' planners to communicate with teachers. There are, however, too few opportunities for parents to be involved in setting and working towards pupils' targets. Parents of pupils with statements of special needs are invited to the annual review but the school does not provide them with sufficient information about appeals and complaints procedures.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and his deputy provide effective management of the school on a day- to- day basis. Relationships within school are very good and the headteacher sets the tone for what is a caring and well-ordered school. He is well supported by his deputy. The school's aims have been discussed and agreed with governors. Since the last inspection the headteacher has started to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and has been well supported by the local education authority. This has led to some improvements but needs to be extended to involve more fully

subject coordinators and year heads. The deputy head has written a more effective timetable which has enabled teachers to focus on key areas such as literacy and numeracy.

53. The school development plan identifies clearly what the school needs to do to improve but lacks sufficient detail on the specific actions needed to effect improvement and not all actions are costed. Although some staff development including that on numeracy has been effective in raising standards the link between school developments and individual staff development is unclear. There is no priority in these plans to improve further satisfactory teaching and learning through careful monitoring and dissemination of good practice. Training does not focus on how teachers could give more specific advice to pupils and their parents about how they can improve learning.

54. Subjects are all managed effectively and some very well. Coordinators work hard at supporting non-specialist teachers although they have limited time to share and extend good teaching practice. Schemes of work are in place and provide good guidance for teachers and the quality of teacher produced learning resources is good. Year 5 and 6 coordinators have a good overview of pupils' progress although this is not the case in Years 7 and 8. Subject coordinators have managed well the introduction of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy although considerable work is needed to make progress with the use of ICT across all subjects.

55. Governors perform their duties satisfactorily. They know the school well and are aware of its strengths and weaknesses. Some spend generous amounts of time in the school and provide good support to the headteacher. They are kept well informed of developments but need to more involved in shaping the future direction of the school and evaluating the progress the school is making. The school's policy on racial equality is a sensible and clear document. It has been recently approved and adopted. All statutory requirements are met.

56. The school is administered well and satisfactory use is made of ICT. The school secretary provides very good support to the headteacher. Daily routines operate smoothly. The deficit budget at the last inspection is now a small surplus. The last auditor's report was good with only minor recommendations made which have now been implemented. Strategic use of resources is satisfactory and grants are used effectively. The school needs to review its risk assessment procedures particularly in physical education. The school consults and compares to gain best value in its spending. Spending is controlled well. The school does not sufficiently involve parents in discussions about priorities for future developments.

57. There has been some good progress in the arrangements made for special needs pupils. The school's commitment to ensuring they are involved in every aspect of school life works well in respect of special needs pupils. There has been satisfactory progress towards adopting the new code of practice. Governors and staff are aware of the new procedures and an updated policy is in place although this does not fully cover the new systems. There is no formal development planning for special needs nor is it included in the school's planning. The school supplements the funds it receives from the local education authority to support special needs pupils in order to pay for four teaching assistants. There has been considerable modification to the school building to improve access for wheelchair users.

58. There are sufficient experienced teachers to match the needs of the curriculum. In Years 5 and 6 pupils are taught mainly in mixed attaining groups by the class teacher. In Years 7 and 8, some subjects are grouped according to pupils' attainment with an increasing number taught by subject specialists. These arrangements are working well. Learning support assistants are effective in the classroom.

59. The quality of the school environment is good with excellent spacious playing fields and playground areas. Classrooms are generally of a good size, well decorated and attractive. There are problems in some practical areas where large groups struggle to fit into the rooms. History and geography have good quality specialist rooms available. Wall displays are good, especially in mathematics, modern languages, art and design, history and geography. The school is well maintained by the caretaker and his staff and is conducive to effective learning.

60. Learning resources are generally satisfactory although there are insufficient books in history, geography and science. Some of the equipment used in science needs replacing. ICT provision in many classrooms needs to be improved. Resources for mathematics and modern languages are good as is the quantity of keyboards and percussion instruments available for music making.

61. The large and attractive library is reasonably well equipped with both fiction and non-fiction books. It is well managed with access to pupils at breaks and at lunchtime. Older pupils act as librarians and exercise their responsibilities efficiently. The library is used as a classroom all day and this limits opportunities for pupils to do independent research during lessons.

62. Since the last inspection there have been satisfactory improvements in the management of school although progress in developing ICT across the curriculum and planning short and medium actions to improve attainment further still need to be tackled.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. In order to improve standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- (1) produce more detailed termly plans to improve learning. These should focus on:
 - developing provision for high attainers
 - providing more opportunities for staff who teach satisfactory lessons to improve further their teaching skills(Paragraphs: 8, 17, 23, 46, 52, 53, 62, 108, 167)
 - (2) improve the quality of marking and feedback to pupils through:
 - regular discussion by staff of pupils' work
 - systematic monitoring of books and homework diaries by the headteacher and senior team
 - giving more specific advice to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work(Paragraphs: 43, 53, 69, 80, 92, 120, 127, 138, 145, 164)
 - (3) monitor the progress of pupils in Years 7 and 8 by keeping an overall record of each pupil's attainment and progress in all subjects in order to identify under attainment and learning problems
(Paragraphs: 43, 45, 71)
 - (4) give more advice to parents in reports about what they can do to improve their children's learning
(Paragraphs: 46, 49-51, 84, 92)
 - (5) increase the use of ICT across the curriculum by developing staff skills through subject based training and, as finance allows, the number of computers available in lessons
(Paragraphs: 60, 62, 85, 92, 93, 101, 105, 109, 110, 128, 140, 151)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	78
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	36

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	24	32	18	0	0	0
Percentage	5	31	41	23	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	359
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	31

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	35

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.1
National comparative data	6.7

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	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	47	47	94

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	36	35	41
	Girls	42	38	44
	Total	78	73	85
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	83 (93)	78 (77)	90 (92)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	33	35	40
	Girls	42	37	42
	Total	75	72	82
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	80 (78)	77 (81)	87 (81)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
346	2	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
5	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0

The 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)	17.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.5

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	95

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81.3
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	25.9
Key Stage 3	24.6

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	832 650
Total expenditure	824 820
Expenditure per pupil	2 447
Balance brought forward from previous year	59 334
Balance carried forward to next year	58 174

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.25
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7.25
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Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	359
Number of questionnaires returned	168

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	51	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	40	46	4	1	10
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	55	4	0	10
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	56	7	2	5
The teaching is good.	39	49	2	1	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	49	11	2	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	41	2	4	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	63	35	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	31	47	9	5	8
The school is well led and managed.	35	48	2	3	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	50	2	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	21	34	20	7	19

Other issues raised by parents

Some concerns were expressed about provision for pupils with special educational needs and high attaining pupils.

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

ENGLISH

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

Strengths

- Pupils' achievement.
- The quality of teaching.
- The attitude of pupils.
- Opportunities for speaking and listening in Years 7 and 8.

Areas for improvement

- Information gained from marking pupils' work is not used enough in Years 7 and 8 to plan lessons.
- The quality of marking and target setting is inconsistent.

64. When pupils enter the school in Year 5 standards of attainment are broadly average although there is some variation from year to year. In the current Year 6 standards on entry were just below average. In 2001 standards in the Year 6 national test were average. In comparison with similar schools the 2001 results were below average. Results in English were fairly well in line with other subjects although fewer pupils reached the higher levels than in mathematics and science. Girls do better than boys in English and better in English than in mathematics and science. Results dipped in 2002 but this year group entered the school in Year 5 with lower levels of attainment than pupils a year earlier. In both years there was significant added value between Year 5 and the test in Year 6. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 8 standards are above average. The school tests pupils in Year 8 with a test similar to the national test a year later. Pupils do well in this test and reach standards, which show they are a year ahead of the standards expected nationally in Year 9. Pupils' achievement in English is good in all years.

65. Overall standards at the end of Year 6 are average although pupils make good progress and there is improvement in standards between entry in Year 5 and the end of Year 6. Pupils listen well, are keen to answer questions and to engage in discussion. They are confident speakers. In Year 5 pupils were considering how instructions are written. They were able to explain why the use of bullet points, boxes and diagrams were helpful in instructions for making a windmill. In Year 8 lower attainers were playing card games to reinforce their knowledge of the use of apostrophe. They cooperated well and were able to speculate about the position of cards and with some prompting explain why pairs of cards matched or not. They were able to put a point of view and adapt and clarify their ideas. High attainers in Year 8 use quite sophisticated vocabulary. They are able to discuss rhyme, rhythm and meaning in order to make decisions on the missing words in a ballad and are able to explain the reasons for their decisions.

66. Most pupils read well for their age and many enjoy reading for pleasure. Pupils are organised into small ability groups so that they read at a level, which is right for them. In a Year 5 reading lesson pupils were well engrossed in their novel and able to share their ideas well. In Y6 pupils were able to read parts from a scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Although some pupils did not read very expressively, all had a reasonable understanding of the characters and action. They were able to extract key points to plan a summary of the scene. Pupils generally make good progress with reading although girls make better progress in the analysis of character and plot. By the time they reach Year 8 a few low attaining pupils still have difficulties with reading and need much support. Others read quite

well and were able to sustain the rhythm of the ballad they were reading. Their understanding of the narrative was clear. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 read aloud fluently, showing enjoyment of the ballad and with good levels of understanding.

67. Pupils' oral and reading skills are generally better than their writing skills. In Year 5 pupils were studying how instructions are written before writing their own. In one class pupils tested out how clear their instructions were for tying a tie. In Years 5 and 6 pupils cover a good range of writing tasks including, for example, book reviews and research on the life of Shakespeare. High attaining pupils present their work very well and write accurately and at some length. Some middle and lower attaining pupils write much more briefly. Their spelling and punctuation are not very accurate and presentation is immature. As pupils move through Years 7 and 8 they make good progress and express themselves more confidently. Middle attaining pupils write quite fluently. In general boys' presentation, their use of vocabulary and extended writing are weaker than girls'. There is a good emphasis on improving levels of literacy. There are small numbers of pupils in all years whose writing reaches a very high standard. These pupils write at length, their work is well expressed, ideas are well ordered and the standard of spelling grammar and punctuation is high.

68. Pupils' response to lessons is very good. Plenty of hands go up to answer questions. Pupils are attentive, concentrate very well and work hard. They collaborate well in pairs or groups. Their behaviour is very good. Most take pride in the presentation of their work.

69. Teaching is good in all years. In Years 7 and 8 the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been introduced and this has effectively promoted good learning. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. A significant proportion of teaching is very good. Teachers maintain attention in all lessons on the major elements of the subject. They concentrate effectively on improving spelling, punctuation and extending vocabulary and understanding. Lessons start promptly, pupils are very well managed, know what to do and expect and little time is lost. Pupils understand from the outset what the lesson will cover and how it fits with previous lessons. Starter activities engage attention well. Teaching is carefully planned so that the main tasks are varied and well balanced. Pupils are kept busy. The best lessons move quickly and the teacher's enthusiasm rubs off on the pupils. Teachers make very skilful use of questioning. They pose challenging questions and draw all pupils into discussion. They make good use of the whiteboard to record learning points. Teachers often structure working groups and activities well so that pupils are given tasks at the right level for them. These arrangements together with groups formed according to attainment enable all pupils including those with special needs and high attainers to make good progress. There are very good opportunities for speaking and listening activities particularly in Years 7 and 8. Instructions are clear and they know how long they have to complete tasks. In some lessons, particularly in Years 7 and 8, the teacher does not always summarise the lesson for the class because there is not enough time left. On other occasions though, this is done well so pupils end the lesson with a clear understanding of what has been covered. Pupils' work is regularly marked but there is some variation in the quality of marking and target setting. Some marking is very brief and provides too little information for pupils to help them understand how to improve their work. Many pupils do not understand their individual targets for improvement in English. Relationships in the classroom are very good and pupils benefit from being well known. Teaching assistants provide very good support for special needs pupils and for small group work.

70. The school makes a good effort to help pupils whose literacy skills are below average. In Years 5 and 6 all pupils have a daily literacy hour and a guided reading lesson once in the week where pupils read in small groups. In Year 6 pupils just below the expected level attend a twice weekly *booster group* which aims to improve their skills. In Years 7 and 8 where pupils are taught in classes organised according to attainment, pupils who have

difficulty with basic skills are taught in small sets and have an additional period of English in the week in the place of French. Teaching assistants provide valuable additional support.

71. Leadership of the subject in all years is very strong. The English coordinator has responsibility for the subject in Years 7 and 8 and works very closely with the leaders of Years 5 and 6 to advise on and check the curriculum as well as to teach. There is no organised opportunity for teachers to observe each other's work in order to share good practice. Good progress has been made in developing the use of assessment and data collection particularly in Years 5 and 6 and there has been considerable progress in Years 7 and 8 although as yet teachers do not make sufficient use of assessment to plan lessons. There are regular assessments in all years and checking to ensure that teachers are assessing accurately. Some, but not all pupils, are aware of their targets in terms of National Curriculum levels.

72. Considerable effort has gone into planning of the English curriculum since the last inspection. In Years 5 and 6 the curriculum has been adapted to give pupils experience of different types of writing. Last year the English coordinator revised the Year 7 and 8 curriculum in order to introduce the National Strategy for Key Stage 3. All teachers now teach the new materials in Years 7 and 8 and although further work is needed the strategy is running well. Concern about the performance of boys has led to new units of work especially written to capture the interest of boys.

73. As a result of pressure on accommodation the library is used as a teaching room. This limits to some extent its use by other classes. It has reasonable stock of books, an *easy read* section and a new section for teenage readers. Pupils act as librarians. The number of books for English lesson has increased but it is still the case that there are too few to allow books to be taken home.

74. Although there has been no significant change in standards of attainment since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the work of the department. In 2001 the proportion reaching level 5 in Year 6 was higher than in 1997. Teaching has improved especially in Years 5 and 6. Nearly all teaching is now at least good. There has been some progress towards using National Curriculum levels and descriptions to enhance marking.

Key skills: literacy

75. Since the last inspection the amount of support for literacy has improved. Although more attention is given to developing literacy skills in some subjects than others all teachers now have a good understanding of the contribution they can make to improve standards. Pupils are good listeners. They listen well to each other and to their teachers. They express opinions in ICT and respond well to questions in mathematics. Both English and French lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to develop confidence as speakers through pair or group work. In other areas, however, opportunities for speaking and listening are not extensive. There is little use of discussion in history and design and technology and pupils' responses are mainly in answer to teacher's questions. There are few opportunities for discussion or presentation in science.

76. Reading aloud is a feature of most history lessons. Most pupils read with understanding and knowledge of some specialist vocabulary. Pupils have good general knowledge of words and their meanings. They use the Internet to access relevant information for topics and read well for information in geography. There are regular opportunities for reading in English lessons. Pupils can read a book of their choice at registration time.

77. There are very good displays of pupils' writing in classrooms. Across the school pupils are given a broad range of writing tasks. Key words are used well in mathematics and in geography where pupils were asked to write a brochure asking visitors to come to Birkenshaw. There are key words and word lists to support units of work in ICT and pupils are encouraged to use spellcheckers. Pupils copy key words into their books in French and good attention is paid to the use of verbs and pronouns but there is little evidence of drafting or completing corrections. In English and in history there is some emphasis on developing extended writing. There are not enough opportunities in science for pupils with poor writing skills to improve.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils lead to pupils' good attitudes to the subject.
- Teaching is good. It is very good in Years 5 and 6.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient use of computers in mathematics.
- There is a lack of extra curricular provision for high attainers.

78. Pupils enter the school in Year 5 with average standards in mathematics although there are variations from year to year. By the time they take National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 their results are also broadly average when compared to national standards. Trends in the National Curriculum tests over the past few years mirror the national pattern very closely with results consistently around the national average. By the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 8 the results of optional national tests indicate that attainment is above average. Standards in the current Year 6 were just below average on entry and are now around the national average. The scrutiny of work of the current Year 8 indicates that standards are above average. Overall, pupils achieve well throughout the school. There is little significant difference between the performance of boys and girls.

79. Most Year 5 pupils understand place value in the context of decimals and many Year 6 pupils can understand the relationship between simple pie charts and fractions of quantities. In Year 7, higher attaining pupils can understand the uses of imperial and metric units and know the equivalence of decimals, fractions and percentages. Middle attaining pupils can understand place value and can make accurate calculations with decimals. Lower attaining pupils have problems with number work such as times tables but practise their weak skills thoroughly. In Year 8 pupils in the top group can perform confidently calculations with decimals, fractions and negative numbers. Middle attaining pupils can understand ratio and how to use decimal places and significant figures to round off their answers. Lower attaining pupils still have problems with numeracy such as work on fractions but their exercise books show good effort.

80. Teaching is good in Years 7 and 8 and very good in Years 5 and 6. During the inspection all lessons seen were at least satisfactory and many were very good. This is an improvement on the last inspection where teaching was judged as satisfactory. Teachers have sufficient knowledge of the subject to teach confidently to the required levels. Lessons are very well planned and show good use of teaching materials including overhead projector displays and prepared equipment. Lessons, in general, follow the three-part format of the National Numeracy Strategy, with effective numeracy “starters”, a main section and a whole class session at the end. The use of time is good, most lessons progress at a brisk pace and pupils both consolidate their prior knowledge and make good gains in their understanding. All three Year 5 classes made good progress in using a number line to count both upwards and downwards in steps of 0.05. Although the numeracy starters are well thought out, the whole class sessions are often less effective and are sometimes rushed. This is especially noticeable in Years 7 and 8. Homework is set regularly and is appropriate. The marking of classwork and homework is done fully but comments on how to improve are rare, although when used are pertinent. There are good attempts to reinforce literacy with the practice of using subject keywords although this is not consistent in all classes.

81. Almost all lessons have effective question and answer sessions, which draw pupils into the lesson and enable them to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. The level of challenge for pupils is high, especially in Years 5 and 6, but is appropriate considering prior attainment. Classes in Years 5 and 6 have pupils at different levels of attainment but teachers design the lessons well to ensure all pupils take a full part in lessons. Teachers know their pupils’ strengths and weaknesses well and this helps to create very strong teacher-pupil relationships. This, in turn, leads to pupils’ very positive attitudes in mathematics lessons with pupils working hard and showing interest in the subject. Pupils work well singly, in pairs or in small groups. They treat property such as books and calculators with respect and there is no evidence of graffiti, either on exercise books or on desks. Most lessons are strongly teacher led and there are too few opportunities for independent work except when pupils are involved with investigations.

82. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Regular classroom support is supplied for small lower attaining groups in Years 7 and 8 but there is less support in Years 5 and 6. Some lower attaining pupils are taught in small groups by support teachers to help pupils reinforce their learning. Here, the good teacher-pupil relationships enable low attaining pupils to gain confidence in numeracy tasks such as fraction-decimal equivalence and the generous amount of attention provided for pupils leads to their good progress. In all cases where learning support assistants are deployed in class they are effective. In Years 5 and 6 the heads of year are timetabled to support in other teachers’ lessons. This provides the opportunity for informal observations of teaching and leads to discussion about teaching strategies, thus allowing for effective dissemination of best practice.

83. The management and leadership of the subject is good and teaching is well organised. The teachers form a strong and experienced team. The subject co-ordinator teaches only in Years 7 and 8 so the organisation of teaching mathematics in Years 5 and 6 is in the hands of the respective year heads. Here, effective discussion amongst staff means that the planning and teaching of numeracy is very good with consistent, well-organised lessons. The subject co-ordinator offers appropriate advice on the direction of these discussions in terms, for example, of textbook provision. In Years 7 and 8 the teaching is shared between two teachers and dissemination of good practice is achieved by largely informal discussion. The formal monitoring of staff is performed by both the subject co-ordinator and the head teacher with the recent aim of focussing on the teaching of numeracy. This has helped raise awareness of the National Numeracy Strategy as it applies both within mathematics lessons and in other areas. Together with whole school staff development on the teaching of numeracy and with the effective use of outside agencies this

has raised the profile of the National Numeracy Strategy in the school and has led to very good teaching in the classroom, especially in Years 5 and 6.

84. There is regular assessment of pupils' work and the recording of pupils' progress is very good. Pupils are kept informed of their progress by individual record cards, filled in by the pupils themselves. These record cards make National Curriculum levels explicit and clear. Targets set for pupils are largely informal and involve little more than encouraging pupils to aim to improve by one level. Reports to parents follow school practice but the information, especially on targets for pupils' improvement, is very slender.

85. The use of ICT in mathematics is still a weakness as it was at the last inspection. This is an issue that needs urgent attention as there is little or no formal work done in mathematics using computers. There is currently no extra curricular provision in mathematics, such as a maths club. This disadvantages gifted and talented pupils who are not always fully challenged in lessons. The accommodation for the subject is good with good size classrooms and stimulating wall displays. The rooms are clean, generally airy and are free from litter and graffiti. Keywords of the subject appear on most classroom walls and help to reinforce learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Key skills: numeracy

86. Following recent in-service training, there is a great deal of awareness of the importance of the National Numeracy Strategy and the development of numeracy across the curriculum. A recently written cross-curricular numeracy policy is designed to enhance this awareness in other subject areas although it has yet to have an impact in most lessons. Nevertheless there is good practice in numeracy in areas other than mathematics. For example, in science pupils' skills in graph interpretation are good. They can calculate density accurately. In art and design pupils show understanding of symmetry and use coordinates to scale up and down and they understand the idea of proportion. Some Year 8 pupils understand the ideas of perspective in drawing.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Some high quality teaching that helps pupils to understand difficult ideas.
- Good assessment information is sent to the high school on pupils' standards.
- The support provided for science teachers by the science coordinator.
- Communication and collaboration with local middle schools and the high school.

Areas for improvement

- Ensuring that relationships with pupils are good in all lessons.
- More monitoring of teaching to ensure consistently good learning.
- Use of ICT to extend the range of teaching and learning methods.
- More opportunities for writing in order to support pupils with poor writing skills.
- Regular marking of pupils' books and folders.

87. In the 2001 Year 6 tests pupils' performance in science was above average. Similar results were gained in 1999 and in 2000. Since 1998 results have improved slowly, following the same pattern of improvement as the national results, and boys and girls do equally well. The results for the tests in 2002 were similar to those of 2001 but as yet no comparison with national averages is possible.

88. Standards of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books are above average in all years. In a Year 5 lesson pupils had a good understanding of the structure of the lungs and how they are used for breathing. By Year 6 pupils know what a plant needs to grow and understand how they would show that a plant needs light. In Year 7, their knowledge of the reactions that happen when metals are burned is good. Higher attaining pupils' work about the solar system and their practical work on separating salt from sand are above average as are pupils' numeracy skills when they draw graphs about the cooling of animals bodies or interpret graphs about variation in living things. In Year 7 pupils' investigative skills are good; they know why measurements should be repeated and do this work carefully, explaining why some of their measurements may be inaccurate. Work about acids and alkalis done by the lower attaining pupils is below average. In a Year 8 lesson about gravity and weight the standard reached by the pupils was well above average and the higher attainers showed a very high degree of understanding of scientific principles and methods. All pupils including boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress in lessons.

89. Teaching throughout the school is good. It is never less than satisfactory and is sometimes very good or excellent. Consequently, pupils' learning is also good. Instructions are clear so that in a lesson in which pupils investigated how a ball bounces, they understood what to do and made good progress in their understanding of methods of investigation. Teachers use question and answer sessions very well to check pupils' progress and challenge them to extend their understanding. Relationships are often good, for example in a Year 5 lesson about breathing pupils were congratulated on their efforts and as a result were very willing to answer questions. In the same lesson interesting detective work kept pupils' attention and ensured good progress and behaviour. A pupil for whom English is a new language received very effective support from the teacher and a learning support assistant. Teachers have good classroom control and pupils behave well. They listen carefully and in one lesson used effectively a teacher demonstration of burning metals to develop their understanding of the topic. Their observations are guided skilfully so their learning is good. In a well-organised Year 7 lesson pupils made good progress when they investigated burning candles in jars of different sizes. The best lessons are very demanding. For example, in a lesson about gravity the teacher's expectations of the pupils was very high and the well chosen activities reinforced learning with pupils making excellent progress in their understanding of some very difficult ideas.

90. At other times teachers missed opportunities for pupils to work independently. In one lesson instructions were too prescriptive and pupils did not have an opportunity to decide what to measure or how often to measure it. The teacher leads some lessons for too long and pupils are not able to discuss their work, research and evaluate scientific ideas or present their ideas to the class. On one occasion, the teacher's use of unsympathetic language resulted in a missed opportunity to raise pupils' morale by recognising their achievements. Planning is usually good although there is some unnecessary repetition of teaching activities which can lead to a poor use of time and pupils do not learn as much as they should. In some lessons, writing skills are not developed and lower achieving pupils make less progress than they should and their homework is too difficult. For example, in a lesson about oxidation pupils did not write in their own words about what they saw and were not prepared for the written homework that was given to them. In other lessons, pupils' writing and speaking skills were good and pupils with special educational needs made good progress. In general pupils do not have enough opportunities to write about science.

91. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They work cooperatively with their teachers and take very good care of the materials that they use, working hard with enjoyment. The most able are critical in their approach and are commendably willing to use reasoning to explain scientific problems. Pupils are interested in learning and want to make progress in their lessons.

92. Management of the department is good. The science coordinator provides very good support to colleagues who teach science. Tests are used well to provide accurate information about pupils' attainment which is passed on to the local high school. Assessments on entry in Year 5 are done well. However, pupils' books and folders are not marked with grades and pupils and their parents do not receive information about day-to-day progress. Although homework is set at the end of many lessons it is not marked with grades and pupils are not always aware of how well they are doing. Following tests in Years 7 and 8 pupils are given good advice about how to improve, but reports to parents do not provide enough information about pupils' progress or their difficulties. Preparation for tests is very good and pupils clearly benefit from this. The teaching programme which is agreed at regular meetings with other middle schools and the high school provides guidance about teaching methods and through topics including conservation, abortion and health education provides a good contribution to pupils' moral development. There is a good range of teaching methods, including investigations, but teaching is not monitored effectively and as a result there is too much difference between the best teaching and the satisfactory teaching. The organisation of teaching groups means that some classes have to share the laboratory and there is not enough science equipment to support the teaching of classes taught at the same time. There are not enough books for classroom use; none are available for some year groups and there is not enough ICT equipment, including data-loggers.

93. Improvement since the last inspection is good, standards have improved in tests and in the classroom and the progress made by most pupils is good. National Curriculum levels are now reported to parents but there has been no improvement in the use of ICT.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good, securing good quality learning.
- Pupils have very good attitudes to art and design; they get on very well together, their behaviour is very good and they work hard in lessons.
- Pupils make very good progress over the four years in school and resulting standards are above average throughout.
- Leadership is good, securing good improvement since the last inspection.
- Art and design makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- There are limited resources for ICT, which restrict the amount and type of work attempted.
- There are too few reference books both in the department and in the library, which limits pupils' research work.

94. Standards of attainment in art and design are above average in all years and show good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were judged as average in Years 5 and 6. These standards represent very good achievement over the four years in school as pupils often enter school with below average standards in practical work and knowledge of art and design in general. The quality of specialist and non-specialist teaching

is good, which secures good quality learning. Pupils have very good attitudes to their teachers and the subject and these, coupled with very good behaviour, secure interest and concentration.

95. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 6 are above average. Skills in drawing are particularly high. Pupils complete plenty of work in sketchbooks to use as inspiration for larger pieces of work. They understand the value of close observation and easily spot the relationship of one object to another. For example, pupils in Year 6, drawing a still life of geometric objects, recorded detail carefully and represented tone and shadow effectively by first determining the light source. Knowledge of artists' work and lives is mainly confined to the few they hear about in lessons, such as Hockney and Warhol, but appreciation of art and artefacts from people of different countries and cultures is strong. Pupils know about, for example, the Impressionists, Aztec, African and North American art and create drawings, paintings and models reminiscent of the times and cultures. A display of ceramic totem poles shows good understanding of tribal symbols, shape and sympathetic use of colour.

96. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 8 are above average. Pupils build on well to their early experiences and produce lively interesting work. Displays in the art and design room and around the school show work in both two and three dimensions and from a wide variety of starting points. By the end of Year 8 skills in drawing and painting are above average. Pupils control pencils successfully, know about mixing colours and use colour boldly and brightly. They look at the paintings of real artists who inspire them and gain from comparing different techniques. For example, a study of Clarice Cliff has resulted in an impressive display of papier-mâché pots, some with copied designs, but many with original ones well reminiscent of the artist's style. Pupils are extremely creative when working on pop art and many use their initial drawings on posters and ceramic boxes, creating interesting optical illusions. Pupils transfer their skills confidently and they coped well with stained glass at a recent workshop, headed by a visiting artist. The resulting panels in the entrance hall are well designed and competently finished, using a vibrant range of coloured glass.

97. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in practical aspects of art and design. The ones who are gifted and talented make very good progress as they are encouraged to be independent, set themselves appropriate challenges and produce more written work than others to supplement their studies. There are no significant differences in attainment or attitude between girls and boys. Literacy skills are suitably reinforced in art and design, as pupils write about what they see and do and learn to use new vocabulary. Numeracy features strongly in lessons where pupils show pattern, perspective and proportion on drawings and where they use co-ordinates to scale pieces correctly. Some pupils, but mainly the higher attaining ones, use the computers confidently to search the Internet and download information to supplement their art and design studies.

98. Pupils have very good attitudes to art and design, say they like the subject and behaviour is very good. They listen attentively, watch demonstrations with interest, examine artefacts closely and are keen to start their work. As pupils have confidence in their teachers, many ask questions for clarification and some of the higher-attaining pupils offer comments, showing increased understanding. Pupils are responsible for setting out their work areas, selecting equipment and for storing and retrieving their work. They share fairly in class and relationships are very good. A few of the more confident pupils offer helpful suggestions to others and many point out their good works, showing friendship and genuine appreciation. During lessons they concentrate hard and keep busy, showing increased pride by offering their work to the teacher for approval or appraisal.

99. The quality of teaching overall is good from both specialist and non-specialist teachers and secures good quality learning. In lessons seen during the inspection there was no unsatisfactory teaching and lessons were good or very good. The greatest strengths in the teaching stem from the very high expectations which teachers have of pupils, very good subject knowledge, and very good classroom management. These aspects bring out high attainment because pupils see correct techniques in skilful demonstrations and from well-chosen resources; they hear accurate information and are encouraged to be creative and innovative. Pupils have scope for personal work but the teachers insist that pupils must always make good efforts and produce the best work possible. They are helped by effective dialogue with their teachers and the thorough and encouraging marking system, which informs pupils of how they can improve. Homework is set regularly and is always linked appropriately to classwork. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good and pupils are treated equally and fairly. Teachers are very patient in helping individual pupils with problems, from which the lower-attaining pupils benefit most as they gain in confidence. Teachers value pupils' work and display it prominently in the art and design room and around the school. This raises self-esteem; it allows pupils to see what others can do and sets high standards.

100. Leadership and management are good and the department has made good progress since the last inspection. The co-ordinator gives clear guidance to less experienced colleagues and help with planning lessons. This has brought about improvements in the quality of teaching and standards, especially in Years 5 and 6, which were criticised in the last inspection report.

101. She attends local school meetings to ascertain that standards are as they should be and that the curriculum is beneficial to pupils' education. The newly redrafted scheme of work is suitably aligned to the requirements of the National Curriculum and the school intentions to improve numeracy, literacy, and ICT. The latter two aspects are hindered as the department lacks reference books and computer software programs. The subject has a very good effect on pupils' cultural education as it includes more direct observational drawing and aspects of world art history, both of which were weaker aspects at the time of the last inspection. There is a programme of visits by local artists which extends the curriculum, but as yet there are few planned visits to galleries, museums and places of local interest and national heritage for pupils to see art and design in other settings. Since the last inspection, the time allocated to art and design in Years 5 and 6 has been reduced to below the recommended minimum although the time allocated in Year 7 and 8 is generous. This has not affected standards.

CITIZENSHIP

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

Strengths

- Good leadership.
- Good teaching.
- Collaboration with other local schools is very effective and has a beneficial effect on planning.

Areas for improvement

- The range of books and other resources for learning need to be improved.
- More use of ICT to support pupils' research work.

102. The course in citizenship is new and was introduced six weeks before the inspection. It is a three-year course with two years taught at Birkenshaw and one year in the high school. The course is a collaborative venture involving other middle schools and the high school to which most of the pupils will transfer. Two lessons were observed during the inspection.

103. In Years 7 and 8 standards are above average. During the Year 7 lesson about fireworks pupils learned about their responsibilities to other people and the difficulties that fireworks can cause. Many pupils understand how fireworks can affect animals and of the need to take care of them and their oral and written work were above average. In the Year 8 lesson about foxhunting pupils learned how different newspapers deal with the same issue: they made good progress and had started to appreciate and understand different viewpoints. Boys and girls do equally well in these lessons.

104. Teaching is good. Teachers use well question and answer sessions and make good use of pupils' responses. Relationships in lessons are often very good and pupils are very willing to answer questions and make suggestions. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject and explanations are careful and clear so that in the lesson about fireworks pupils developed a very good understanding of the dangers of fireworks. Good use is made of a variety of newspaper articles that stimulate the pupils to think and interest them because they are relevant, topical and challenging. In the first lesson about foxhunting pupils found it difficult to find the information they needed. However, they made good progress in developing their research skills. During discussion and reporting sessions pupils improve their speaking and listening skills and awareness of their social responsibilities. Pupils behave well and their attitudes to the subject are very positive. They work hard and sensibly, and cooperate well during group work. All pupils including those with special educational needs make good progress in these lessons and learn well.

105. The course is well managed. The teaching programme is well organised with contributions from visitors to the school including the community constable, theatre groups and the fire brigade. There are regular meetings and discussions in the pyramid of schools that share the course and ideas are shared and the pupils benefit. A good range of newspaper articles is used to provide up- to- date study materials but there is a shortage of books and few opportunities for ICT to be used for research work.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Behaviour and attitudes in the subject.
- Range of learning opportunities.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' work

Areas for improvement

- Size of teaching groups in all years.
- Technician support.
- Opportunities for computer aided design and computer aided manufacture.

106. Attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. Pupils arrive with some knowledge but their range of experiences is varied. During Years 5 and 6 pupils gain a sound understanding of the design process and have a good number of opportunities to make products in food, textiles and resistant materials. By the end of Year 6 they have reached the standard expected with a small number reaching a higher level. Pupils'

achievement in Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory. Pupils identified with special educational needs attain at a level to match their capabilities. Whilst little variation in attainment between boys and girls was seen in lessons, teacher assessments at the end of Year 6 indicate that girls out perform boys. Girls were seen to be generally more attentive, taking greater care to present their ideas accurately. Pupils reaching the end of Year 8 are achieving satisfactorily, with most working towards or at the expected level.

107. Pupils in Year 5 have a good understanding of simple mechanisms, making correct use of technical terms in describing the different movements. The higher attaining pupils make good, fluent oral contributions demonstrating their understanding. Average and lower attaining pupils find some of the language challenging but still show an understanding of how the mechanisms work. Year 6 pupils worked maturely on theme boards designing covers for mobile telephones. They demonstrated an awareness of safe practice when using the vacuum-forming machine, assisting one another responsibly. They were able to work from their own written instructions with minimal supervision. Year 8 pupils know the benefit of testing designs through making a prototype. Most pupils can identify areas for modification and record what they have done to improve the design. Work in Year 7 on hand held games illustrated the thorough way in which pupils research their work, making good use of the Internet and resources brought from home. Higher attaining pupils use a good range of sources to illustrate their work. Throughout their four years in the school pupils make steady progress and build on their prior knowledge and understanding of design and technology.

108. Teaching overall is satisfactory and some is good. What pupils are to learn is clearly displayed and explained ensuring that pupils know what should be achieved. To aid understanding, current pupils' work is used as an integral part of demonstrations. Pupils are motivated by this way of designing and constructing. Teachers have good subject knowledge and their regular and appropriate use of technical language supports learning well. Their lesson planning ensures that a good range of resources is available, which enables pupils to realise their designs. Teacher assessment helps to improve understanding, providing guidance for pupils on how to improve their work. Time is usually well managed although on occasions more could have been achieved within the lesson. Tasks set do not always stretch the higher attaining pupils. Teachers are aware of those pupils with special educational needs and provide good support through additional guidance. Tasks are designed to be accessible to all although there is less emphasis placed on the needs of the most talented in the subject. Homework is set according to the school timetable and provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills away from the classroom. The management of pupils is generally effective despite the use of a limited range of strategies when a more assertive approach is required. Generally pupils' attitudes are good and behaviour is very good.

109. All aspects of the National Curriculum are covered although opportunities to use ICT are restricted. There is good liaison between the departments that does ensure that pupils have some limited use. Opportunities for computer aided design and computer aided manufacture are limited and resistant materials work is mainly in acrylic and medium density fibreboard. Class size in all years places a restriction on the amount of practical work that pupils can carry out safely. There is a good system in place for assessing and recording pupils' performance. This is a recent development and the benefit to pupils is yet to be realised. Currently existing information is not used effectively to guide planning.

110. An enthusiastic and positive coordinator who has worked hard in planning for the development of the area now manages the subject. All documentation is the result of her efforts over her brief time in the school. The area does benefit from having a subject specialist but suffers from a lack of technician support. In addition there is no additional support for pupils with special educational needs during the design and technology lessons.

Resources are adequate with the exception of sufficient appropriate equipment to allow pupils to design and manufacture using computers.

111. Changes in staffing have affected the subject since the previous inspection. Attainment has remained broadly in line with national expectation. ICT opportunities remain limited but are developing as a result of the good links between the two departments. Pupils continue to research well and now have an increased understanding of their level of attainment. The co-ordinator has put schemes of work in place and provided direction for the subject. Overall there has been satisfactory progress.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Good teaching throughout ?
- Teachers manage pupils skilfully so they behave very well.
- Leadership provides a clear sense of direction. ?

Areas for improvement

- The system for recording and using assessment information
- The quality of fieldwork opportunities in Years 7 and 8
- Monitoring effectively to evaluate teaching, assessment and pupils' work ?

112. Pupils' overall level of attainment at the end of Year 6 is average. When teachers assessed pupils' work in 2002 at the end of Year 6, results indicated that the overall standard was average, but no national comparisons can be made at this stage. One fifth of pupils reach levels that are above average. Overall girls gained higher levels than boys. During the inspection the overall standard of work seen was in line with that nationally.

113. By the end of Year 6, pupils have a good knowledge of their local area and what a small number of places in the wider world are like. They clearly understand the difference between physical and human geography, and higher attaining pupils understand that there are links between people and the natural world. In Year 5 pupils read maps accurately, for example, to describe a route using the key to note landmarks. In Year 6, they successfully use an atlas to find and label places and features accurately on a map. Pupils collect information effectively from books, photographs, maps, and computers.

114. By the end of Year 8 pupils' overall level of attainment is average. Girls reach higher levels than boys as they pay greater attention to detail and extend written answers more fully. Pupils have a good knowledge of some geographical features such as volcanoes and different types of rainfall. They have difficulty in using this knowledge to explain geographical patterns, for example, why more rain falls in the west of the British Isles than the east. Pupils understand the causes of geographical phenomena, how they affect people's lives, and their response. Higher attaining pupils, for instance, used their good knowledge to write well-reasoned letters outlining proposed flood prevention measures. Pupils' knowledge of where places are is weak.

115. Written work is generally accurate, and in Years 7 and 8 there are few spelling errors. Answers to questions, particularly those of boys, tend to be brief, but pupils produce well-structured extended pieces of writing. Higher attaining pupils write fluently and demonstrate a good knowledge of geographical terms by making use of them in their writing. Pupils draw climate graphs accurately and analyse them correctly, but have difficulty in comparing different graphs.

116. Achievement is satisfactory overall as pupils maintain an average standard throughout. Strategies for improving pupils' work, including a greater focus on enquiry activities, have been implemented but there has been insufficient time for these to have an impact on improving standards. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons, because teachers provide well focused support and suitable encouragement to complete work which is matched closely to their individual needs. They have a sound basic understanding of the subject and can describe features and places, but find giving reasons for what they describe difficult. Higher attaining pupils make satisfactory progress, but they are not challenged sufficiently in Years 5 and 6 with rigorous questions and specifically designed materials.

117. The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are always well prepared and organised so they start promptly and move smoothly from one activity to another. Teachers use their secure knowledge of the subject to provide clear explanations, illustrated with well-chosen examples to gain pupils' interest and ensure a full understanding of the topic. Lessons are thoughtfully planned with a series of appropriate activities, and provide opportunity for pupils to practise their skills and reinforce their understanding. In one lesson, for example, pupils in Year 6 were studying the island of St Lucia. Following a brisk and lively review of previous work, the pupils worked in groups to successfully reinforce their understanding of human and physical features by listing those shown in a photograph of the island, and then raised appropriate questions for further investigation. They reviewed the good progress they had made, in extending their geographical knowledge of St Lucia, by sharing their findings with others in the class.

118. Relationships with pupils are friendly but firm. Behaviour in lessons is very good and an industrious working atmosphere is rapidly established, as teachers are quick to ensure pupils retain their focus on the tasks set. They know the pupils well, generally involve all the pupils in the lesson, and pitch the work at the appropriate level. In a minority of lessons the pace of learning is slowed by unnecessarily repetitive work, or by pupils finding concentration difficult during overlong working sessions. Teachers give good attention to developing pupils' linguistic skills by focusing on key geographical terms, and encouraging a range of opportunities for extended writing through reports, letters, and news items. One group in Year 5, for instance, used appropriate writing to persuade people that the local area was a good place to live. Few lessons conclude with a review to effectively assess how much progress has been made. Relevant homework is set regularly.

119. Pupils learn well. They are keen, well motivated, and work hard and conscientiously to solve problems and carry out research because teachers make lessons interesting and encourage all pupils to be involved in the work. Teachers expect good behaviour and careful and accurate work, with the result that pupils listen intently, settle to work quickly, try hard to be accurate, and present work neatly. They co-operate readily with each other in groups, and listen to alternative points of view. Pupils work effectively on their own and complete research tasks enthusiastically, finding information on computers and in local newspapers, and by taking their own photographs.

120. The curriculum is detailed and written clearly. Liaison with the main contributory secondary schools is effective. Good opportunities are provided for fieldwork in Years 5 and 6, including a visit to the Yorkshire Dales. The provision in Years 7 and 8 does not build on these earlier experiences and is insufficient. Pupils make satisfactory use of ICT for research and word processing. The subject makes a useful contribution to pupils' personal development. They study the moral issues underlying the destruction of the tropical rainforest, and the culture of other places such as Brazil. The timetabling problems reported at the time of the previous inspection have been resolved, and a specialist teacher now teaches pupils in Years 7 and 8. The system of assessment is good and marking is up to date, often with comments explaining what was done well and what could be improved.

Methods for recording and analysing such information are not systematic enough to guide lesson planning and support pupils' self- assessments and target setting.

121. Leadership of the subject is effective and provides a clear sense of direction. Development planning is well focused with clear priorities, but is not sufficiently informed by systematic monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching, assessment and pupils' work. Resources have improved since the time of the previous report, but there is still an insufficient breadth of resources such as books, photographs and maps to widen the range of activities that are provided. The subject is managed and organised efficiently, and teachers work effectively as a team. They have the capacity and commitment to raise standards further. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Provision has improved well since the last inspection following the appointment of a specialist subject co-ordinator.
- Management is good and leadership effective.
- Good teaching is developing pupils' knowledge of history.
- Most pupils have a positive attitude and respond well in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment of pupils' written work to ensure that they know how to improve in history
- Opportunities for independent study and research by pupils.
- The range of extended writing exercises set for pupils.
- Opportunities for debate and discussion in lessons.
- Resources for ICT.

122. Standards attained by Year 6 pupils are average. They understand that the past can be divided into different periods of time and can describe in simple terms important differences between the past and the present. They can describe some of the main people, events and changes in the past, using information from sources and can give some reasons for the changes. They are weaker at identifying different ways in which the past has been represented and interpreted. They are evidently making progress in their study of history and their achievement is satisfactory. Good support by teachers for pupils with special educational needs enables them to achieve satisfactorily.

123. Year 8 pupils attain average standards. They have sound factual knowledge of the main features of the period they are studying and can recall effectively previous learning. They understand how to use source materials to study the past and that some sources may be more reliable than others. They can draw upon their factual knowledge to explain significant features of the sources they are using, for example in using dates to assess the reliability of the author of written sources. Higher attaining pupils often achieve above average standards. When questioned, they can explain clearly why a primary source may not be reliable evidence and can give reasons to support their opinions. Pupils are less confident in selecting and evaluating sources independently and in selecting those which are useful for particular kinds of enquiry. Pupils in Year 8 including those with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. The teacher has provided suitably adapted materials for these pupils and they are making satisfactory progress in their knowledge of key events and personalities from the past and in their understanding of chronology. There is no significant difference in the standards attained by girls and boys.

124. Teaching and learning are good. The best lessons were characterised by the teacher's good subject knowledge which facilitated the planning of well-structured lessons developing pupils' subject-knowledge and study skills, especially in the use of sources. Good teaching in a Year 8 lesson about Henry VIII had clear aims, time was very well managed and pupils were productively engaged in using primary and secondary sources, written and visual, to compare different opinions of the King. Lessons are planned to engage pupils actively, especially by question and answer sessions which are used to recall previous learning and to reinforce learning at the end of lessons. Pupils respond well to this approach. In some lessons there is too much input from the teacher, pupils are not encouraged to extend their answers, or to debate issues with each other and insufficient attention is given to developing their independent study skills. Opportunities are provided in some lessons for pupils to develop extended-writing skills. The range of these activities is, however, too limited. Pupils are given few opportunities to write in different styles such as, for example, reports, analyses of data and to present arguments from a particular viewpoint.

125. Evidence from the written work of pupils in Years 5 and 6 indicates that the quality of teaching is good. Timetabling arrangements for the week prevented any direct observation of lessons. The blocked teaching units are well planned and cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. The variety of activities planned by teachers help to develop pupils' knowledge of the past and their understanding of key events and important people. They are helped to develop observational and note-taking skills and as part of their assessment in Year 6 are shown how to do simple research and present information in a formal manner. Pupils respond well to this, work co-operatively and produce work which clearly indicates their interest and ability, for example in their study of the Aztecs.

126. The great majority of pupils have a positive attitude towards the subject, behave well in class, work diligently and with concentration on the tasks set and co-operate well with each other. When questioned they talk confidently about what they are doing, understand the work which they are given to do and evidently enjoy their lessons.

127. The assessment of pupils' work is done conscientiously. Careful records are kept of pupils' attainments against the levels of the National Curriculum for history. These are used to monitor their progress. Written work is regularly marked and often contains encouraging comment, but insufficient guidance is given to pupils about how they may improve in history.

128. The history curriculum provides opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of their cultural heritage and their learning is enhanced by visits to places of historical interest such as the Royal Armouries and York. Improvements have been made in staffing and provision for history since the last inspection. The subject co-ordinator is a qualified historian and the subject is now taught as a separate discipline in Years 7 and 8. This has improved continuity and progression in pupils' learning especially as pupils move from year to year. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Developmental targets have been clearly identified. Resources are adequate, except for ICT. Improvement has been good since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning overall is good and sometimes very good.
- Energetic ICT co-ordinator aware of the issues for the department.
- Recent significant investment has ensured good quality and appropriate resources.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment procedures.
- Planning, management, teaching and monitoring of ICT in all subjects.

129. Since the last inspection staffing problems have contributed to the lack of significant developments in ICT. The appointment of a new coordinator, in the summer term 2002, has led to a marked improvement in the management of the department.

130. The level of attainment of pupils has improved but is still currently below the national average. Pupils' files for Years 5 and 6 show evidence of work which is below the national average for each year group. There is little development or extended work and most files contain a number of simple pages showing basic text or graphic work. There is an introduction to the use of spreadsheets, but no work on modelling, measurement or control. Pupils made little progress in Years 5 and 6. In Year 7 pupils received a basic introduction to spreadsheets. This was limited with no evidence that pupils understood the use of spreadsheets in modelling, nor how to effectively use formulae. In last year's Year 8 there was some work on databases, but again at a basic level. Overall progress was poor so that by the end of Year 8 most pupils were producing work below the expected level.

131. All pupils in Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 now have timetabled ICT lessons each week. New schemes of work based on National Curriculum materials were introduced in September 2002. Lesson plans do not show how ICT can contribute to the spiritual and cultural development of pupils although they do cover some social and moral issues and attention is given to numeracy and literacy. Pupils now acquire a wide range of skills and knowledge and the work in each year is appropriate to the age of the pupils and their level of development. They develop their knowledge of ICT terms and extend their expertise in manipulating the software.

132. Year 5 pupils can use a painting package to produce a screen collage. They have a good knowledge of the software and are able not only to demonstrate how they use the facilities of the painting package but also to explain why they are editing. They are imaginative when doing presentations using basic mathematical shapes. They are able to explain a number of relevant computer terms and how they are applied. Year 6 pupils can search the Internet and other large databases to obtain information for a word-processed document on a geography or design and technology topic. They can demonstrate the use of a complex search and explain how they have undertaken it. They effortlessly transfer the information from the Internet into their own documents and edit appropriately.

133. Year 7 pupils can critically assess multi-media presentations. They create well their own presentations following effectively teacher guidelines. Pupils can use a range of hardware including digital cameras and scanners and willingly present and explain their work to classmates. They recognise the need to ensure that the colour and size of text are appropriate in their presentations and understand that any graphics and sound must match the content of their presentations. Year 8 pupils can import meteorological data from a text file to create graphs. They effectively label the graphs and explain the contents and meaning

of them. They select information for different purposes and appreciate what is a 'public information system' and can explain terms such as *sensors*, *tables*, *refresh*.

134. Pupils are confident in using their knowledge and skills. They are able to explain why they use certain formatting and understand the need to make the content, structure and formatting of their work attractive to an audience. Since the introduction of new schemes of work pupils are achieving well and extending their skills and knowledge of ICT. Year 7 and 8 pupils are now improving more than in previous years. They are making up for the previous low levels of attainment. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 now have opportunities to progress at a level in line with national averages.

135. There is no difference in the attainment and progress of boys and girls. They both work effectively and are eager to contribute to lessons. The structure of lessons ensures that pupils with special educational needs are given appropriate support and assistance. In some lessons this is provided by a classroom assistant, in others they work with fellow pupils. The teacher always ensures that individual pupils can undertake the basic requirements of the set task so they can make progress. However, the tasks are also open ended so that the high attainers can demonstrate their extended knowledge and skills. They produce work which is above average.

136. Teaching and learning overall are good with all the lessons observed being at least good. This represents considerable improvement since the last inspection. The teacher's knowledge of the subject is extensive and he has a good command of the hardware and software. His obvious knowledge of the subject instils the pupils with confidence so that they willingly seek his support. The teacher plans each lesson thoroughly and provides quality worksheets, which challenge the pupils and extend their knowledge and skills. He uses good demonstrations and engages pupils in stimulating discussions. Targets are fixed for each lesson and fully outlined. Individual assistance is given so that pupils are able to meet those targets. The set tasks stretch the pupils and give them the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge of the software and the appropriate use of ICT. Good evaluations at the end of each lesson allow pupils to demonstrate their progress. The pace of lessons is brisk with all pupils contributing and keeping to task. The good quality teaching ensures that pupils' learning is positive and progressive.

137. Behaviour is good in all years and pupils respond in lessons with a very confident attitude to ICT. They are energetic about the subject and enthusiastic. When they have to share computers they themselves plan how much time each has on the computer and co-operate in a friendly and supportive manner. They show respect for each other, the teacher and the equipment. They recognise the value of the various pieces of equipment and handle them with care and consideration. Class discussions are lively with most pupils contributing in a controlled manner. Concentration is thorough and it is sometimes difficult to conclude a lesson, as pupils are eager to continue with their work. They work with excitement on the computers and have a pride in their work. They are anxious to show what they have learned and fluently discuss their work and achievements.

138. There is ongoing informal assessment during each lesson and homework is sometimes used to evaluate how much pupils have achieved. However, there is no continuous monitoring of progress with only a formal assessment at the end of each term. Targets are set for each piece of work so there should be a structure for evaluating how well each pupil has completed that piece of work against appropriate criteria. The good worksheets could be extended to include the targets and what the pupils have to do to achieve various levels. This would allow them to be involved in assessing how much they have achieved with that piece of work.

139. The department is now led by an energetic co-ordinator. He appreciates the issues and has implemented a number of strategies to redress the poor attainment of previous years. Relevant departmental documentation has been written and it is planned to extend this to include polices which currently are not included. The department and resources are now well managed. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection in the number of computers in the school with one fully networked room. The plan to network the satellite unit in the Year 5 area will ensure better provision across the school. However, class sizes are often larger than the number of computers. This is undesirable and may compromise the good quality teaching and learning. In all lessons and in every year pupils should have access to their own computer. There is no technician, but limited support is provided for two hours a week from an external source. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection and recently progress has been good, although there are still areas for further development.

Key skills:ICT

140. There has been very limited improvement since the last inspection in the use of ICT across the curriculum. Good and effective use of ICT and the ICT room was observed in art and design. Modern foreign languages are well resourced for ICT. Other subjects use ICT such as English, music, geography, history and religious education. However, opportunities are missed in mathematics, science and design and technology to extend pupils' use of ICT to enhance their expertise and knowledge. The school needs to develop this aspect of the whole curriculum as a matter of priority. There is no structure or working group to develop, manage, monitor and assess the use of ICT across the curriculum. The ICT room is available for booking for at least eleven periods each week to achieve this aim. There has been a range of ICT training provided to teachers, but no full audit of staff expertise has been undertaken. This would help in producing a strategy to ensure that all teachers have appropriate ICT skills and knowledge.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

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

Strengths

- Good teaching in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils' attitudes are good.
- Assessment is used well to monitor pupils' progress.

Areas for improvement

- The accuracy of pupils' written work
- The marking of pupils' written work

141. Pupils begin French in Year 7. Teachers' assessments of pupils' work at the end of Year 8 in 2002 suggested that nearly half of the year group reached the national expectation by that stage of the course. In work seen during the inspection, pupils' overall standards of attainment in French are average. Pupils' oral skills are generally good. They answer questions about themselves and family, and most of the pupils speak confidently and from memory. Some Year 8 pupils are beginning to provide short presentations of four or five sentences. Pupils' understanding of the foreign language, which the teacher uses or which they hear on cassette, is good. In a listening exercise, for example, higher-attaining pupils in a Year 7 class of beginners successfully extracted information from different conversations that they heard on cassette. Over time, pupils write about classroom objects, their family, the weather, likes and dislikes and street directions to different places. Accuracy, both in copying

and in extended writing, varies, especially with the use of accents. Few pupils redraft their work or complete corrections to improve its accuracy.

142. Pupils achieve well during their course. They acquire a good knowledge of topic vocabulary and consolidate their oral skills in pair work. They learn the correct names for different parts of grammar and how to use *-er* with different persons. Many of the pupils in Year 8 display a sound knowledge of the verb *aller*, which will soon be used to introduce them to another tense. Higher attaining pupils in Year 7 develop good listening skills. Key phrases on the wall relate to the topic that is being covered, and these act as prompts for pupils. Pupils consolidate their knowledge of French by watching television programmes, which involve different people, adults and children, using the same vocabulary that they are learning. The island of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean is introduced to pupils as an example of other countries where French is spoken. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

143. Pupils with special educational needs are catered for in small groups but have only half the teaching time of the other groups in Years 7 and 8. One lesson per week means that pupils find retention of past work more difficult because of the gap between lessons: this results in the teacher taking more time in each lesson with revision of past work, and pupils with special needs do not progress as well as those in the other groups. Their achievement is unsatisfactory. In the one lesson observed in Year 8, pupils contributed well orally, with reasonable confidence, but much of their pronunciation was approximate.

144. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the subject are at least good. They respond well to working in pairs and co-operate with each other, asking and answering questions in French. Relationships are good. Year 7 pupils sang very enthusiastically, and began the lesson by talking in pairs in French, without first having been asked to do so by the teacher.

145. The quality of teaching and learning is good. One teacher teaches the majority of classes, with support for three other classes in Year 7. Subject knowledge is good, expectations are high and the lessons contain different activities and skills to help the pupils maintain their concentration and interest. Effective questions about past work make pupils think back to previous topics. There are good opportunities in lessons for pupils to speak in pairs in order to consolidate their constructions and to develop confidence. Songs are introduced to emphasise a particular feature, for example, numbers. Resources are used well in lessons, and pupils are managed effectively. Tasks for end of unit assessment are marked thoroughly: the marking of pupils' written work, however, is too superficial and does not contain comments to help pupils improve.

146. The department is well led and managed and makes a good contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Assessment information is used well to monitor pupils' progress through the different units of the course. Good links have been established with the other middle schools in the pyramid and with the local high school. The department has improved its contribution to developing ICT skills with the acquisition of appropriate software and termly assignments. The allocation of time for French within the curriculum has been reduced this year: this will have implications for departmental planning. In addition, higher-attaining pupils in Year 8 lose 20 minutes each week, and the two special needs groups have only half of the allotted time which affects their rate of learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Standards in music are above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Pupils enjoy music and are very enthusiastic in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils, particularly boys, do not sing well in tune
- Pupils are not fully aware of how well they are doing and how they can improve.
- Appropriate keyboards are needed for use with the computers when pupils are composing.

147. Standards in Years 6 and 8 are above average. Pupils' achievements by the end of Year 6 are very good. In Year 6 pupils accompany their song *Calypso* using a variety of percussion instruments. Pupils who play other instruments join in too, playing appropriately demanding parts for their abilities. The way they play together is commendable, even though not all pupils are feeling the beat yet. This was far better demonstrated in the song *Human Drum Kit*. In a Year 6 lesson, they kept a steady beat going while only the kit sounds were said out loud and the words were said to themselves. By the beginning of Year 8, pupils compose melodies using steps and leaps. They rely on sound as the criteria for composing. They notate their pieces melodically and when using staff notation can notate the rhythm as well. They understand how to compose in a particular shape, having listened to and analysed several examples. Pupils in all years sing with considerable enthusiasm and rhythmic energy which is very appealing. In spite of improvements made to pupils' singing since the last inspection, many, especially the boys, still find it difficult to sing well in tune. Instrumental lessons provide appropriate standards of work for higher attainers and talented pupils. Pupils accompany hymns in the assemblies and during the inspection week a small group of instrumentalists very ably accompanied the singing of *Let it Be*. In the same assembly the Samba Band played their piece very energetically.

148. Standards are good as a result of very good teaching and learning. Pupils' interest and enjoyment in music is very apparent and this makes a considerable impact on their learning. They remain interested during lessons because there is a good variety of activities and tasks. Pupils concentrate very well in lessons which are taught at a very good pace. This was particularly evident during warm up sessions when pupils promptly echoed the teacher's clapped rhythms. Their concentration was quite intense as this was developed to imitating longer rhythms. Pupils behave very well in class, even though they are lively and excitable. Teachers motivate the pupils and use their natural enthusiasm for music very well. Teachers have very good musical skills and accompany and play for songs and other pieces of music for their pupils. Very occasionally teachers do not spend sufficient time establishing pupils' basic musical skills such as keeping a steady beat when playing. Pupils understand musical terms because they are taught to use them in their scores and performances. Where they cannot remember the correct term, they show their understanding by describing well what they mean. They also write descriptively about the music they listen to. Teachers encourage pupils to work on their own or in small groups. Several pupils work outside the classroom when the need arises, because the music room is too small for these activities. This they do very responsibly and ably. Most pupils organise their group work well and co-operate very well to achieve a good result. Lower attaining pupils, especially boys, find it more difficult to organise their rehearsal time well, but the teachers are patient and persistent and above all encouraging, so that these pupils achieve as well as others. Pupils with special educational needs are very successful when doing practical work and make very

good progress. Teachers make sure that they include all pupils in all activities. There is special work for pupils of all abilities and needs. In a Year 8 lesson on composing an extended melody, there were work sheets for pupils at every level. Some pupils used one of the computers for their composing but as yet there is no suitable keyboard for them to play in the notes and this is a weakness. In a Year 7 lesson a hearing impaired pupil worked with a group on a percussive pulsation piece. She uses a hearing aid and transmitter, which the teacher makes certain are available to her. She joined in the ensemble very successfully and later helped demonstrate their piece to the remainder of the class.

149. Teachers assess pupils' work accurately and regularly and keep good records of pupils' progress. They know well their pupils' strengths and weaknesses but generally do not share these sufficiently with them. In a few lessons pupils are encouraged to think and talk about the quality of their work and this is beginning to have a positive impact on standards. At the end of Year 6 and Year 8 pupils are assessed according to the National Curriculum levels of attainment in music. This information is not used yet to inform department planning to raise standards and has not been required by the school. The local education authority supports the department well, and there is now consistency between what is taught in all local middle schools.

150. Music plays an important part in the life of the school and provides very good opportunities for the moral, social and cultural development of its pupils. There are good activities outside lesson times for pupils to share, such as a choir and orchestra. The teachers' orchestra performed a concert for Year 7 pupils during the inspection week. The programme was varied and interesting and pupils joined in with percussion instruments and by singing and even conducting. This was a marvellous and probably unique experience for these pupils whose enjoyment was palpable.

151. The department is well led and managed and this is having a positive effect on the department. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. Standards have improved because teaching and learning and the attitudes of the pupils have improved. The department should continue to develop the use of computers for composing, particularly with the use of a keyboard, and should attend to pupils' inability to sing well in tune.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching and learning.
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour in lessons.
- Pupils' very good achievement over time.
- The tracking and measurement of pupils' progress.

Areas for Improvement

- A department development plan should reflect the school improvement plan.
- The quality of risk assessments.

152. Pupils' standards on entry to the school in Year 5 are below average. Progress in Years 5 and 6 is good, and standards are average. When pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8 their standards are above average. This represents good achievement over four years.

153. In the work seen in Years 5 and 6, there is no discernible difference in the progress of boys and girls. The same is true of different groups of pupils. Pupils with special needs are included fully in lesson activities and their requirements are taken into account in teachers' effective planning. All pupils arrive promptly at lessons, and change rapidly into the correct clothing for physical education. This clearly benefits learning as they spend more time on task. The achievement of all pupils is very good. In lessons pupils are able to modify their ideas and their performances in response to changing circumstances. They demonstrate increasing control and levels of accuracy in gymnastics, with most pupils displaying good body-lines and extension as they create innovative movement sequences. Pupils have a good understanding of health-related fitness and of the effects of exercise on the body. They know how and why to warm up before strenuous activity. They can confidently name the parts of the body being prepared for activity and express their evaluations of their own and others' performances. Pupils are clearly benefiting from specialist teaching.

154. The standard of work at the end of year 8 is above average. A small number of pupils work at a standard well above the national average. There are very few other pupils whose skill levels are below that which would be expected of pupils of their age. In lessons, all pupils consolidate the firm foundations laid in Years 5 and 6. The more able pupils can apply the principles of games play effectively and proficiently. Some pupils achieve success both individually and as team players, gaining local honours in a range of activities. In lessons, pupils work hard to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subtleties of high quality gymnastic movement.

155. Across all year groups, pupils with special needs make good progress. They are supported in an unobtrusive manner with appropriate work. More able pupils also make good progress. Their advanced skills are used to good effect in demonstrations, and they are able to support teachers in helping other pupils to improve their skills. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make similar progress to other pupils.

156. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good. They respond well to the challenges created by the purposeful and flexible approaches used by their teachers. They are enthusiastic, very well turned out for all activities and show real enjoyment of the subject. They are friendly, polite and very well behaved, and work in a co-operative and supportive manner. In gymnastics, they work co-operatively to build sequences of balances, using flight and rotation in linking movements. They are attentive and listen carefully, and the capacity of most to sustain concentration is good. In hockey, pupils work hard, repeatedly adjusting and modifying their stick control to improve accuracy and speed of passing and reception. Relationships between teachers and their pupils are very good. In all lessons, pupils work well both as individuals and when collaborating in groups of varying sizes. All pupils are quick to recognise and celebrate the achievement of others. They are tolerant of the different abilities and views of their peers. They react positively to the high expectations of their teachers and are capable of showing initiative and a sense of responsibility for their own learning when they are encouraged so to do.

157. Teaching is very good overall and one lesson was excellent. Skilful teachers have very good knowledge of the subject, and use effectively a wide range of teaching methods. This means that pupils learn very well. In well-planned lessons, teachers pay appropriate attention to health and safety. They have high expectations of their pupils and give clear and precise explanations and demonstrations. Clear learning targets, shared with pupils, together with brisk pace and appropriate levels of challenge, ensure that class management is very good. The full use of technical vocabulary contributes to the development of pupils' literacy skills. There is a positive atmosphere of successful participation for all, based on challenge combined with support. The ethos is one of hard work and mutual respect. Pupils are encouraged to develop their skills of working independently, and often have

opportunities to observe, analyse and refine their own and others' work and to comment on performance against specific criteria.

158. Leadership and management are good. The teachers form a well-balanced, stable and experienced team. Their skills are complementary and they support each other well, ensuring equal opportunity for all pupils. There is a satisfactory range of extra curricular activities and fixtures with other schools. This provides opportunities for pupils of all abilities and interests to take part in activities at levels best suited to their individual needs. In a quietly effective manner, staff place high value on personal standards of behaviour, fair play, and commitment. This contributes well to pupils' spiritual, social and moral development. Schemes of work are detailed with assessment opportunities included. Most of the activities are designed to meet the different needs of all pupils. The departmental handbook is clear, but there is no subject development plan. Risk assessments for the general teaching environment are at best cursory. Assessments are related directly to the schemes of work and are used well in relation to curriculum planning. The allocation of curriculum time is appropriate for meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum. Resources for the subject are good. The accommodation overall is good, with extensive fields and appropriate hard areas. However internal space can be an issue when the weather is inclement.

159. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Strengths have been maintained. The quality of teaching has improved and the vast majority of pupils are fully involved in lessons. Achievement and attainment are both good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Lessons encourage pupils to relate religious belief and practice to their own lives.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- A more detailed scheme of work.
- Planning of lessons to ensure that high attaining pupils can achieve higher standards.
- Assessment, so that pupils know how to improve the standard of their work.
- A clear plan for the subject's development.

160. Due to the absence of the subject co-ordinator during the week of the inspection it has not been possible to report in detail on some aspects of provision.

161. The standard attained by a majority of pupils in Year 6 matches the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' written work shows that they know some of the main features of the religions they are studying and understand some of the specialist words used, for example when writing about places of worship or the main beliefs of the religion. They know that religious teaching requires a certain way of life from believers and can, in outline, explain what this is.

162. The standard attained by a majority of pupils in Year 8 matches the expectations set out in the locally agreed syllabus and the written work of higher attaining pupils shows that, on occasions, they exceed these expectations. They have a sound knowledge of some of the key features of the religions they study, for example, the life and teaching of the Buddha, and understand the motivation which lies behind the practices of believers as for example, in the purpose of the monastic community. Older pupils do not, however, analyse or evaluate

the religious beliefs and practices they study and pupils in all years are not developing the higher level skills set out in the syllabus. There is no significant difference between the standard attained by boys and girls.

163. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They are making progress in the factual knowledge of religion. The use of modified learning materials by the teacher enables pupils with special educational needs to reach a satisfactory level of achievement. The achievement of higher attaining pupils could be improved if they were given work more suited to their abilities.

164. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teacher's subject knowledge enables her to cover the main requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, with a particular emphasis on developing pupils' subject knowledge. Pupils are being systematically introduced to the major world religions. Lessons give them opportunities to reflect on what they are learning and to relate this to their own experiences. Pupils respond well to this. A Year 5 pupil, writing about "thanksgiving", thanked her teacher for "teaching the things that started me thinking more about them". Several pupils in Year 8 wrote about suffering and the life of the Buddhist monk which showed real insight and understanding of this aspect of the tradition. There is little evidence from pupils' written work of planning to meet the different ability levels of pupils or of providing pupils with opportunities to develop skills such as investigation, evaluation and analysis. Pupils' work is regularly marked but the assessment method does not yet reflect the guidance offered nationally for assessment in religious education and does not give enough advice on how pupils can improve.

165. During the week of the inspection lessons were taught by an experienced specialist supply teacher. These were satisfactory lessons in which pupils responded well to opportunities to apply their subject knowledge in group work and written exercises. The task of the supply teacher, however, was made more difficult because lesson planning documentation was not available. In lessons and from the evidence of written work, it is clear that the majority of pupils have a positive attitude to the subject. Most written work is completed, presentation is generally good and sometimes pupils use computer programmes to present their work.

166. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development. It provides opportunities for pupils to consider their own beliefs and values and encourages respect for the beliefs of others. There is some extra-curricular enrichment by a visit to York Minster.

167. The subject co-ordinator has only been in her current post for just over one term. Overall, management is satisfactory. A good start has been made in organising the subject. Further work has still to be done on clearly identifying and costing subject developments, on creating a more detailed scheme of work and in applying national guidance on assessment to the assessment of pupils' work. In addition, consideration needs to be given to lesson planning so that work set in lessons matches the needs of all pupils and is sufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils. The scheme of work and documentation about classes and lessons need to be kept in the school to ensure continuity of pupils' education in the event of staff absence. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.