

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **LINCROFT MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Oakley, Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109708

Headteacher: Mr M P Lavelle

Reporting inspector: Dr K C Thomas  
3390

Date of inspection: 10 - 13 March 2003

Inspection number: 249149

Short 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: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Station Road  
Oakley  
Bedford

Postcode: MK43 7RE

Telephone number: 01234 822147

Fax number: 01234 825923

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Carr

Date of previous inspection: 28 April 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		
3390	Kenneth Thomas	Registered inspector
16472	Catherine Stormonth	Lay inspector
10905	Alan Brewerton	Team inspector
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Ltd

Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

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33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school educates boys and girls from the age of 9 to 13. It is larger than average, with 663 pupils on roll. Pupils enter the school with standards of attainment that, although wide ranging, are broadly average overall. The school serves the village of Oakley and more than 20 surrounding Bedfordshire villages, many of which are generally socially advantaged areas. A large proportion of pupils travel to and from school by bus.

Almost all the pupils are white, with around two per cent from families of Asian, Chinese or Afro-Caribbean origin. Just over two per cent of pupils have English as an additional language, none are in the early stages of English language acquisition. The main languages, other than English, spoken by pupils are Panjabi, Italian, Cantonese and Gujarati. The proportion of pupils on the register of special educational need is below average. About two-thirds of them are at the stage where they receive extra help from school staff. Twenty-one pupils have formal statements of special educational needs and so receive both school and other professional help. Six of these are in a special unit for pupils with autism. Other pupils with the highest levels of need mostly have moderate learning, specific learning (dyslexia), or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is broadly average.

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

This is a very good school, with some excellent features. Pupils achieve well because of the excellent attitudes to learning that the school fosters and the very good teaching. By the time pupils transfer to the upper school at the end of Year 8, standards in English and mathematics are above average, and in science they are well above. The personal development of pupils is excellent; they are courteous, very well behaved and responsible young people. The headteacher and senior leadership team, with good support from governors, give very effective leadership. The school provides very good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve very well. Overall, standards are above average in comparison with all schools and well above in comparison with similar schools.
- Very good teaching succeeds in motivating pupils and leads to very good learning and above average standards in all subjects.
- Pupils' attitudes are excellent and their behaviour is very good, contributing well to their own learning and the sense of community in the school.
- Pupils' learning and interest in school are enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities, from which many pupils benefit.
- Very good leadership, with good support from governors, ensures that the school has a positive ethos in which pupils are provided with a very good quality education.

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

- The accuracy of the assessment of pupils at the higher end of the attainment range in some foundation subjects.
- Some aspects of the accommodation.
- Administrative support for school financial management.

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

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

The school was last inspected in April 1997. Since then, improvement has been very good. The quality of teaching is considerably improved and is now very good overall. Attainment in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6 has improved steadily in line with the national trend, and has been above or well above the national average for the last four years. The leadership and management of the school have been strengthened and, as a result, the work of the school is monitored very well. This information is being used effectively to continue to improve standards.

Action has been taken on the key issues identified in the last report. The use of assessment information for target setting is much improved, particularly in English, mathematics and science, although there is room for further improvement in some foundation subjects. The improvement seen in teaching has led to more opportunities for pupils to take part in independent learning activities and to develop their personal study skills. Significant improvement has been made in the teaching of religious education and the subject is now allocated enough curriculum time. Planning for pupils' spiritual development has improved markedly. Considerable improvement in teaching and learning in information and communication technology (ICT) has led to a substantial rise in standards. As a result of these improvements all statutory requirements are now met, except for the one to provide a collective act of worship every day for all pupils.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by eleven-year-olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	Compared with				Key
	all schools			Similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	B	A	B	A	well above average    A above average        B average                 C below average         D well below average    E
Mathematics	C	C	C	B	
Science	A	A	A	A	

Attainment on entry, although wide ranging, is broadly average overall. Standards in English and science are slightly above those in mathematics. Pupils achieve very well. The results of the 2002 National Curriculum tests show that the overall standards of attainment at the end of Year 6 are above average in comparison with all schools and well above average in comparison with similar schools, based on the number of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals. Pupils achieve very well in English and the 2002 test results were above average in comparison with all schools and well above in comparison with similar schools. Inspection evidence indicates that standards in English are maintained through Years 7 and 8 so that attainment is above national expectations when pupils transfer to the upper school. Pupils achieve very well in science and the most recent test results, as in previous years, were well above average in comparison with all and similar schools. These standards are maintained through Years 7 and 8 so that attainment by the end of Year 8 is well above national expectations. The progress pupils make in mathematics through Years 5 and 6 is not as fast as that made in English and science and so attainment at the end of Year 6 is consistent with expectations rather than above. This is reflected in the 2002 test results, which were average in comparison with all schools and above average in comparison with similar schools. However, rapid progress is made through Year 7 and 8 and pupils achieve very well so that attainment is well above national expectations when pupils leave the school. Although girls achieve better results than boys in English there are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics and science. Targets for Year 6 in 2002 were achieved and those set for 2003 are also likely to be achieved. Literacy and numeracy skills are well above average and help the pupils to achieve well in their other subjects. Speaking and listening skills are excellent. Attainment is above average in all other subjects. All groups of pupils are making equally good progress. The achievement of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, the very few with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs is comparable with that of their peers.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES



Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are interested, highly motivated and keen to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good. Around school, pupils are considerate of each other and polite. The vast majority behave exceptionally well in lessons and this helps them to learn.
Personal development and relationships	The personal development of pupils is excellent. They are taught to be considerate and co-operative. Relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance levels are very good, well above the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 and 6	Years 7 and 8
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good

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

Teaching is very good, overall, with some excellent teaching. Teachers' very good subject planning and preparation, along with the excellent relationships they establish with their pupils, are real strengths. Many teachers are subject specialists and this helps them to extend the learning of the pupils. Pupils show high levels of concentration, work well with others and are keen to find things out for themselves. Teaching meets the needs of all pupils well. Homework is set diligently and extends the work done in class. Literacy and numeracy are taught very well in English and mathematics and reinforced very well across other subjects in the school. Teaching is very good in English and science, and good in mathematics. Teaching seen in religious education was excellent, and very good in art, French, ICT, music and physical education. Teaching seen in design and technology, geography and history was good, and satisfactory in personal, social and health education (PSHE).

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum in Years 5 and 6 is enhanced by specialist resources and teaching beyond that normally found in a primary school. The curriculum is enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Effective support enables pupils to achieve well. Very good support with reading for pupils in Years 5 and 6 considerably assists their understanding and progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils at an early stage in acquiring English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Pupils' personal development is excellent. Provision for social and moral development is excellent, and for spiritual and cultural development it is very good. Pupils become tolerant, responsible and co-operative young people.
How well the school cares	The very good academic and personal support the school provides are

for its pupils	important factors in pupils' academic success and the highly positive way in which they respond to what the school has to offer.
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The school has very good links with parents. The quality of information it provides for them is good. Systems for assessing and recording pupils' attainment and progress are good and improving. The very supportive Parent-Teacher Association raises substantial additional funding for the school.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher's leadership of the school, aided ably by his assistant heads and other members of the leadership team, is very good. School and subject management are good overall. The management of English, science, religious education, physical education and ICT are very good indeed. There are weaknesses in some aspects of financial management. The principles of best value are applied to all spending decisions.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors fulfil their responsibilities well. They monitor the work of the school effectively and have a good understanding of its strengths and areas for further improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good; systems for monitoring and evaluating performance are effective and the information obtained is used well to guide planning. Senior managers also seek the views of parents and pupils on the quality of education the school provides.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its resources well. Resources are satisfactory and staff suitably qualified. Several aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory.

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

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The school has high expectations of their children and is enabling them to be mature and responsible.</li> <li>The good progress their children are making.</li> <li>They think that teaching and behaviour are good.</li> <li>They think that the school is well led and managed.</li> <li>They are happy to approach the school with problems.</li> <li>Their children like school.</li> <li>The range of extra-curricular activities the school provides.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amount of homework that is set.</li> <li>The closeness with which the school works with them.</li> <li>The information they receive about how their children are getting on.</li> </ul>

The responses of parents were overwhelmingly positive and confirm the high degree of parental support for the school. Inspectors agree with all of their positive comments. However, they do not agree with the criticisms made by some parents. Clear information on pupils' progress is provided through informative reports and parents' evenings. The school works well with parents, and responds readily to their concerns. Homework is set regularly and is usually interesting and challenging so that pupils extend their learning well.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **Pupils achieve very well. Overall, standards are above average in comparison with all schools and well above in comparison with similar schools**

1. Pupils enter the school with standards of attainment that, although wide ranging, are broadly average overall. Standards on entry in English and science are slightly above those in mathematics. Pupils achieve well through Years 5 and 6 and results in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6 are improving at the same rate as results nationally. The results of the 2002 tests show that overall standards at the end of Year 6 are above average in comparison with all schools and well above average in comparison with similar schools, based on the number of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals. The vast majority of pupils attain at least Level 4, the nationally expected level for children of their age, in the English, mathematics and science tests. This has been the pattern for the last four years. In 2002, with a large entry (172 pupils), 82 per cent of pupils attained at Level 4 or above in English, 83 per cent in mathematics and 97 per cent in science. These percentages are significantly higher than those for the country as a whole. Many more than the average percentage of pupils attained Level 5 in English (40 per cent) and in science (59 per cent), than in mathematics, where the percentage attaining the higher level (28 per cent) matched the national average. The results represent good progress through Years 5 and 6 in English and science and satisfactory progress in mathematics. Targets for Year 6 in 2002 were achieved and those set for 2003 are also likely to be achieved.
2. Pupils make very good progress through Years 7 and 8, where the methods for target setting and for monitoring their progress towards their targets are particularly effective. These procedures, together with high expectations that are well supported by very good systems for monitoring the effectiveness of subject teaching, promote very good achievement by the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8. This is particularly apparent in mathematics, where pupils' progress through Years 5 and 6 is not as fast as that made in English and science and so achievement at the end of Year 6 is consistent with expectations rather than above. However, the impact of more specialist teaching and higher levels of challenge, together with the effective use of target setting and monitoring, lead to more rapid progress through Years 7 and 8. As a result, pupils achieve very well and overall attainment is above national expectations, with that of many pupils well above, by the end of Year 8.
3. The monitoring of different groups of pupils shows that all groups make equally good progress. Girls achieve better results than boys in English and the difference between the boys' and girls' results in 2002 was slightly greater than that observed nationally. However, the performance of boys was not only better than boys nationally but also very close to the national performance of girls. Nevertheless, raising the attainment of boys in English is identified as a school development priority. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics and science. The achievement of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, the very few with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs is comparable with that of their peers. The school employs a specialist teacher to support pupils with specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), usually on a one-to-one basis. As a result of the support provided, these pupils make very good progress alongside other pupils. The needs of the higher-attaining pupils are recognised and they achieve very well, although there is a need for greater accuracy in the assessment of such pupils in design and technology, history and art.
4. Very good standards of literacy enable the majority of pupils to make the most of their education. A variety of staff development activities, together with the effective use of the Literacy Hour, have helped teachers to gain a good understanding of issues related to literacy, and very good examples of the development of pupils' literacy skills are seen in all subjects. Standards of reading are very good. Regular practice across a range of subjects leads to pupils becoming competent readers, able to understand texts and to identify different layers of meaning. In French, geography and history, for example, pupils are required to read a wide range of source

material and to make accurate notes and use summarising techniques. Speaking and listening skills are excellent. Pupils are articulate and speak with confidence in groups of all sizes. They are able to understand and use specialist vocabulary in, for example, English, geography, physical education and design and technology. Pupils' writing skills are very good. Most pupils can write in a range of styles, and standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar are very good.

5. Numeracy skills are well above average. The school has successfully adopted the National Strategy for Numeracy and this is being implemented effectively in all subjects. Most pupils use multiplication tables very effectively. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 in particular make very good links between fractions, decimals and percentages. Numeracy skills are used particularly well in science, ICT and geography in measuring, collecting and recording data and in presenting information in graphical form. Adherence to the school numeracy policy ensures a consistent approach in the application of the very good basic skills that pupils are taught in mathematics.
6. The quality of the pupils' work is very good and attainment in all other subjects is above national expectations, especially in French, religious education and ICT. Consistent with the differences in performance observed nationally, the attainment of girls is above that of boys in most subjects. Pupils start learning French in Year 5, which is two years earlier than is statutorily required, and by the end of Year 8 almost all pupils attain standards that are well in advance of those expected nationally. Improvements in provision for religious education and ICT since the last inspection have led to a significant rise in standards and attainment is now well above expectations in both subjects. Standards in music and drama are strengths of the school. There is a very large school orchestra, which performs in many concerts throughout the year, and there are regular drama productions. A high proportion of pupils have instrumental tuition. The school is very successful in inter-school sporting events, reflecting the above average standards in physical education lessons and the many extra-curricular activities.

### **Very good teaching succeeds in motivating pupils and leads to very good learning and above average standards in all subjects**

7. Teaching is very good, overall. Examples of excellence in teaching were seen in English, science, French, geography, physical education and religious education. The quality of pupils' learning reflects the very good quality of teaching and this is directly linked to their good achievement at the end of Year 6 and very good achievement at the end of Year 8. Although teaching is very good throughout, it is slightly more effective in Years 7 and 8 because of an increase in opportunities for independent learning. Progress is very good, overall, because teaching succeeds in stimulating pupils' interest in their studies and helps them to develop good learning skills. Teaching is very much improved since the last inspection when 13 per cent of lessons were found to be unsatisfactory. During this inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Just over half of the teaching observed in the school was very good or excellent, with good teaching in almost all other lessons. This improvement is due to the very good progress that has been made in the monitoring and development of teaching and learning over recent years. At the time of the last inspection it was noted that teachers did not match learning activities well enough to pupils' prior attainment. There was a lack of support for lower-attaining pupils and not enough opportunities for pupils to engage in independent learning. Weaknesses in teachers' subject expertise in ICT and religious education were also noted. All of these weaknesses have been tackled successfully. Improvement in ICT and religious education has been such that these subjects are now strengths of the school.
8. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and, in most lessons, adapt work very well to meet their needs. Teachers expect pupils to achieve their best and they respond accordingly. This makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved. For example, in an excellent Year 7 French lesson pupils made rapid progress in sentence construction and the development of oral skills because the lesson was conducted almost entirely in the foreign language and at a challenging pace. High demands were made on the pupils, who sustained intense concentration as they responded to the questioning and guidance of the teacher. One of the features of this lesson was the effective support provided by a learning support assistant, which ensured that

pupils with special educational needs were fully engaged in the lesson. The impact of the National Key Stage 3 strategy can be seen in lessons throughout Years 5 to 8. Teachers provide clear explanations of learning objectives at the start of lessons and, in order to consolidate learning, review the progress made at the end. This practice helps pupils both to structure their learning in lessons and also to place this learning within their developing knowledge and understanding of the subject as a whole. This was seen in an excellent Year 8 science lesson where pupils gained a greater understanding of heat transfer because of the skilful way in which the teacher built on the previous work on how particles move in good and poor conductors. This systematic development of pupils' knowledge and understanding is a consistent feature in the good and very good teaching observed in almost all lessons.

9. One of the features of teaching in English and science is the extent to which pupils are encouraged to reflect, to speculate and to hypothesise. Learning in many English and science lessons is a journey of exploration in which pupils are challenged to think for themselves and to take risks in formulating responses. The result is that progress is more rapid as pupils share and test out their ideas. This was seen in an excellent Year 8 English lesson, for example, where the reading of part of Fergal Keane's 'Letter to my Father' led to a high quality discussion on the nature of anger, hatred and remorse. The encouragement and support given to pupils as they offered their personal views made a significant contribution to the excellent progress made in the lesson. Similarly, in a very good Year 6 science lesson on factors affecting solubility, pupils made rapid progress in understanding how some solids dissolve in water to produce solutions while others do not, because of the encouragement given to pupils to offer their own explanations for the processes being observed. These features are also seen in the teaching of mathematics in Years 7 and 8 and contribute to the more rapid progress made in the subject in the upper years.
10. Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils and this leads to pupils enjoying their lessons and working hard to please their teachers. This was evident in an excellent Year 8 geography lesson on 'rescuing the rainforest'. Pupils had been working in groups to investigate the viewpoints of different interest groups and engaged in role-play to present their findings and be questioned on them by their classmates. Having their views open to critical comment could have been destructive. However, the teacher had an excellent relationship with the class and used this to ensure that pupils were able to question and answer without disharmony. As a result, they learned a great deal and demonstrated well above average speaking, listening and debating skills. Similarly, in an excellent Year 8 religious education lesson, the high quality of the relationship the teacher had with the class created an unusually open atmosphere in which pupils, who themselves represented different ethnic origins and religious beliefs, engaged in a very well-informed discussion of forgiveness from the point of view of different faiths.
11. Subject expertise is generally very good. Subject leaders have considerable knowledge and skills in the subjects for which they are responsible. This is spread through the rest of the school by example and through structured professional development activities. The models of excellence provided by the subject leaders in English and science make a significant contribution to the quality of teaching and learning in these subjects. Teachers in turn are enthusiastic and keen to share their expertise and to learn from each other. This willingness to share good practice has contributed to the improvement and greater consistency seen in teaching and learning since the last inspection.
12. Lessons are very well prepared to offer an interesting and appropriate range of activities to interest and motivate pupils. Teachers make clear at the beginning of lessons what the pupils are going to learn and little time is wasted as pupils set about the lesson activities. Reviews of the learning objectives towards the end of the lesson then help to consolidate learning. A Year 6 mathematics lesson on two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes provided a very good example of this. The learning activities stretched and engaged pupils at all levels of attainment and learning was consolidated by the effective use of questioning at the end of the lesson.
13. Lessons are planned to meet the needs of all the pupils in the class. The school has identified raising the attainment levels of boys as a development priority and teachers take care to ensure

that both boys and girls are fully involved in all class activities. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers support pupils well and promote the learning of literacy and numeracy skills amongst all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Learning support assistants are used effectively in lessons and they provide good support to pupils with statements and to other pupils with learning needs. Particularly effective planning for pupils of different levels of attainment is seen in music. In a very good Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils made not only very good progress in the acquisition of musical skills, but also in the development of their social skills because of the way in which the lesson was planned to provide different levels of challenge and to allow pupils to work independently. A particular feature of this lesson was the very good planning to ensure that six autistic pupils were able to take a full part in the lesson.

14. A few parents expressed concern about the nature and timing of homework. Inspection evidence does not support these concerns. Homework is set regularly and well planned to consolidate and extend classroom learning. The majority of pupils are conscientious in tackling their homework and generally complete it successfully. The school has a clear homework strategy, which is partly aimed at developing pupils' self-management skills. Where some pupils appear at times to be overburdened with work to be completed at home it is mostly because they have not managed the time allowed for the completion of the work efficiently.

**Pupils' attitudes are excellent and their behaviour is very good, contributing well to their own learning and the sense of community in the school**

15. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school and behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school. Pupils' excellent attitudes in lessons have a significant impact on their learning. Their eagerness to learn also contributes to the strong sense of community and excellent relationships that are evident in the school. Pupils work well together, sharing equipment and supporting each other in small-group and paired work. Pupils enjoy their lessons and all the interesting activities that enrich their learning and provide a very good quality school life. Pupils try very hard to achieve their learning goals. They sustain concentration and respond very well when given appropriate challenges. When interviewed they say that they really enjoy challenges in subjects such as science and physical education. Pupils display considerable maturity from as early as Year 5. This was seen in a Year 5 history lesson where the ability of pupils to draw inferences about social attitudes from an examination of Victorian children's toys led to a greater understanding of the differences between childhood in Victorian times and the present. Pupils identified as having special educational needs also display excellent attitudes to learning in mainstream classes and when, occasionally, they are taught in small withdrawal groups. They work co-operatively and their behaviour enables them to respond well to the opportunities offered, including the extra help given by learning support assistants and others. Pupils with specific learning difficulties respond well to the strategies employed by the specialist staff.
16. The developing maturity of pupils is also seen in the way in which they interact with and support pupils from the Rainbow unit for autistic pupils, which is located in the school. Pupils from the unit attend some mainstream lessons where they may engage in paired work with Lincroft pupils. This was seen in a Year 8 food technology lesson, for example, where two pupils from the Rainbow unit successfully made savoury scones in collaboration with two Lincroft pupils. The attentiveness the whole class gave to the Rainbow pupils as they later described how they had made the scones was an indication of their strong desire to see these pupils succeed. The supportive culture of the school is clearly seen in the large number of pupils who regularly and eagerly care for Rainbow pupils, in the classroom, at lunchtimes and in the playground.
17. Behaviour is very good in classrooms and around the school. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. Expectations of behaviour are high and these are made explicit in the school rules, which pupils know and understand well. Pupils are orderly as they move around the school, and they act in a very responsible way, for example, when they queue for lunch. The overwhelming majority of pupils show respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others, and this is a strength of the school. Pupils have a good understanding of the impact of

their actions on others. This is fostered through the attention to pupils' moral development that permeates the curriculum, but is particularly evident in religious education and PSHE. No instances of inappropriate behaviour were observed during the inspection. The school works hard to support pupils with challenging behaviour and exclusions are rare. During the last school year there were no permanent exclusions and only one temporary exclusion. The school takes a serious view of bullying, and the procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying are included in the staff handbook. Notices declaring that bullying is not tolerated are prominently displayed in classrooms and corridors as are the names and photographs of Year 8 pupils who have been trained to act as peer counsellors. Parents are involved as early as possible if any instances are reported and bullying is discussed as a topic in PSHE lessons. Pupils interviewed during the week of the inspection reported that, although occasional incidents of bullying had taken place, the school had dealt them with effectively. They were confident that any future incidents would also be dealt with effectively.

18. Pupils and parents are proud of their school and this is reflected in the smartness of pupils' appearance when they come to school. They settle to their learning tasks quickly and show respect for their books and other equipment. Pupils' efforts are recognised through the awarding of merits, with merit certificates awarded at the Friday school assembly. Pupils make the most of the opportunities provided for them to accept responsibility and develop their independence. They show good levels of independence in their learning, especially when they are given the freedom to choose activities and resources, and carry out work largely unaided. In science, for example, pupils are able to follow instructions, make observations and come to logical conclusions without close supervision. Pupils listen attentively and assimilate new information and ideas quickly. This is seen in mathematics where pupils are able to apply new learning to solve problems effectively. Pupils have many opportunities, individually and in groups, to review evidence and identify key facts, for example in English, history, French and religious education. Their discussions strengthen both their understanding of the subject and also their language skills. Pupils are willing to help each other to solve problems. This was seen, for example, in a Year 8 citizenship lesson where the sharing of ideas helped pupils to increase their knowledge and understanding of the lifelong implications of parenthood.
19. Pupils willingly carry out duties such as becoming members of the School Council, acting as register monitors and distributing and collecting resources in lessons. Pupils in physical education lessons readily help to set out and remove chairs and tables in order that the hall may be used for school lunches. Pupils are encouraged to express their views through PSHE lessons. The PSHE programme makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. All year groups are allocated one hour each week for personal development and this is linked with year group assemblies that follow related themes.
20. The vast majority of pupils are keen to come to school and this is reflected in the attendance rate, which is very good. This picture accurately reflects the view, expressed by parents at the pre-inspection meeting and through the questionnaire, that their children like coming to school. Pupils are punctual at the start of the school day and lessons start on time. Boys and girls from all backgrounds work well together and willingly share materials and ideas. Their high levels of interest and enthusiasm are seen in the very large number of pupils who take part in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities the school provides. This is an inclusive, vibrant and supportive community where the ethos is very positive.

**Pupils' learning and interest in school are enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities from which many pupils benefit**

21. The excellent range and quality of extra-curricular activities provide clear evidence of the high level of staff commitment to widening pupils' experiences at school. These activities provide pupils with a very wide range of opportunities as well as giving them the chance to excel in areas where they are especially talented. This makes a significant contribution to the overall standards achieved as the extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities considerably enhances the very good curriculum the school provides.



22. Large numbers of pupils take part in a wide range of inter-house competitions, field trips and inter-school competitions where pupils have achieved notable success. Opportunities for sporting activities are outstanding. The school holds the Sportsmark Award in recognition of the quality of its work, with some activities taking place before the start of the school day, and achieves considerable local, regional and national success in a wide range of sports. Regardless of this success, however, one of the most notable features of the school's extra-curricular sporting activities is that these are not confined to the most talented boys and girls. Many more pupils are given the opportunity of taking part in inter-school competitions because the school runs two or three teams in each of the major sports in every year group. The main sports are: soccer, rugby, hockey, netball, basketball, cross-country and athletics. A large number of inter-house competitive sporting and other events extend opportunities for pupils to compete in an activity that appeals to them.
23. A wealth of other extra-curricular opportunities contribute a great deal to pupils' personal development as well as to their academic achievement. Pupils have numerous opportunities to engage in musical activities and they perform to a high standard. Many perform in the school choir, concert band and the school orchestra, which is the largest middle school orchestra in the county. There are many educational visits. Every year group is provided with a residential experience, some of which are abroad, and pupils are also offered an outward bound course in the Lake District. Many departments provide opportunities for pupils to extend their experience in their subjects, for example through the use of fieldwork in history, geography and science and through visits to mosques and temples in religious education. There are numerous clubs and societies including chess, computer, art, design and technology, library and drama clubs. Pupils are also provided with many opportunities to engage in charitable work and to raise funds for others in less advantaged circumstances. All of these activities make a considerable contribution to pupils' personal development. Parents and pupils recognise the richness of the programme of extra-curricular activities. They much appreciate the high commitment of staff in providing these worthwhile experiences.
24. The school makes excellent provision for gifted and talented pupils. They take part in a variety of inter-school challenges and competitions with much success. They also attend Children's University activities during the Easter and summer school holidays.

**Very good leadership, with good support from governors, ensures that the school has a positive ethos in which pupils are provided with a very good quality education**

25. The very good leadership of the headteacher and his senior colleagues is well recognised by parents, staff and pupils. Governors have confidence in the headteacher's leadership and make their own valuable contribution to planning change and evaluating the quality of what is achieved by staff and pupils. The senior leadership team, which is now made up of the headteacher, two assistant heads and two heads of year, has been extended and restructured since the time of the last inspection with the two assistant headteachers having been appointed to replace a deputy headteacher. These appointments have been made wisely, as has the restructuring of roles and responsibilities, so that all make significant contributions to the leadership and management of the school. All members of the leadership team have clear line management responsibilities for subject or pastoral team leaders, whom they meet on a regular basis to review progress towards targets. Formal departmental reviews are becoming firmly established and form part of the school's strategy for continued improvement through self-evaluation.
26. Underpinning the quality of education the school provides are the very good strategies used for evaluating performance. The effectiveness of these strategies is seen in the ways in which educational provision has continued to improve since the last inspection. All of the issues identified for action in the last inspection report have been tackled vigorously and successfully.

The quality of teaching has improved, because the leadership team is very supportive of staff and has created systems that recognise the central importance of the quality of teaching and learning to ensuring pupils' success. Leadership has also much extended the resources available for learning. The range of computers and other ICT equipment has greatly improved since 1997 and pupils make purposeful use of the Internet for research in, for example, geography, history and English.

27. The school is making very good progress in the collection and use of assessment information. The assistant head with responsibility for assessment has established a comprehensive database, and detailed analyses of pupils' performance in National Curriculum and standardised tests are carried out. This information is used effectively to monitor the progress of pupils and to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. The information is presented to subject leaders who are making increasingly effective use of it in the planning of teaching and learning. Very good use is made of the information to identify pupils who might be underachieving so that additional support may be provided. The use of assessment information in this way is making significant contribution to pupils' achievement.
28. The professional development of staff is managed effectively by the other assistant headteacher. The very good quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection is a very positive indicator of the effectiveness of staff development. The continued improvement of teaching and learning remains a key priority in school planning. This shows that there is no complacency in this school, even though standards are consistently above and often well above average. The particular needs of newly qualified and newly appointed teachers are identified well; they receive very good support and recognise it as such.
29. Another contributory factor to the improvement seen since the last inspection is the overall good quality of subject leadership, which provides a clear educational direction for work in all subjects. Particularly effective leadership is seen in English, science and physical education, and in religious education and ICT, where significant improvement has been made since the appointment of the present subject leaders. Subject leadership in English and science is inspirational in nature and makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved. Subject leaders are increasingly taking on responsibility for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning in their subjects. The process of performance management is well integrated into the school's management systems and is being used well to support continued improvement.
30. Governors provide the school with good support. They are conscientious in carrying out their responsibilities and have a very good sense of best value in spending. This is seen, for example, in the evaluation of the quality of the school's catering services, which has led to the school directly employing the catering staff and has much improved quality and service. It is also seen in the decision to employ a professional librarian to manage the school library. This has led to an excellent standard of service to teachers and pupils, with the use of the library fully integrated into teaching and learning. With the exception of the provision of a daily act of corporate worship, governors fulfil all statutory responsibilities. They are vigilant about health and safety, and excellent arrangements for child protection are in place. They work closely with the headteacher and senior staff and are committed to helping the school to do its best for its pupils.
31. Contributions to the positive ethos of the school are also made by the administrative and clerical staff who work very effectively and support the teachers well. This enables teachers to concentrate on their teaching roles. The caretaking and cleaning staff work effectively to ensure that the school buildings and grounds are clean, tidy and attractive. This also contributes to the positive ethos of the school.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED?**

## **The accuracy of the assessment of pupils at the higher end of the attainment range in some foundation subjects**

32. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress have strengthened considerably over recent years and the school is now able to set more precise targets for pupils' performance at the end of Years 6 and 8, and to measure the 'added value' effect of teaching and learning. The targets for pupils in Years 7 and 8 are based primarily on National Curriculum test results and Teachers' Assessments made at the end of Year 6. In the main, these are accurate and provide a reliable basis for evaluating achievement, making predictions about future performance and informing pupils and parents about the standards achieved. However, in design and technology, history and art, not enough attention is paid to the assessment of pupils at the upper end of the attainment range. In each of these subjects virtually all pupils were accurately assessed as achieving the expected Level 4, but very few were assessed as achieving the higher Level 5 or above. This is inaccurate as a significant proportion of pupils are achieving above expectations in all three subjects.

### **Some aspects of the accommodation**

33. The high popularity of the school is reflected in the rising numbers of pupils on the school roll. The headteacher and governors have worked hard to secure the funding necessary in order to ensure that the accommodation is adequate for the increase in numbers, and significant improvements have been made in a number of areas. There are new computer suites, for example, and the school library has been redesigned to provide a learning resource centre in which ICT resources are thoughtfully integrated with books and journals. Teachers strive hard to maintain a bright and cheerful learning environment and the walls of corridors and classrooms contain highly attractive displays that celebrate pupils' work and the extensive range of activities in which pupils participate. The English teaching rooms are exemplary in this respect. The quality of display in these rooms is exceptional and the rooms provide highly stimulating environments for learning. However, the overall quality of the accommodation is unsatisfactory. The increase in pupil numbers has placed an inevitable strain on the accommodation, with every available space fully utilised. There is a general shortage of teaching space, even though six temporary classrooms have been provided, and several teaching rooms are barely adequate for the number of pupils they accommodate. Some connecting areas have had to be adapted and used as classrooms with the result that teachers and pupils have to pass through these rooms in order to reach other classrooms. This inevitably leads to some distraction, no matter how considerate those passing through the rooms try to be. There are not enough science laboratories for the number of science classes in Years 7 and 8 with the result that some science lessons have to be taught in classrooms.
34. Although the school enjoys excellent outdoor facilities for physical education, indoor accommodation is unsatisfactory. The school hall, which is the only large indoor space available, has to be utilised for school lunches as well as physical education lessons. As a result, physical education lessons taking place in the hall immediately before lunch have to finish early in order to allow chairs and tables to be put out, and lessons taking place immediately after lunch are delayed because the furniture has to be put away. Furthermore, although the floor is swept after lunch, it is inevitable that some debris remains and this is a health and safety hazard. The headteacher and governors are in the process of negotiating the funds necessary to build a sports hall, which is urgently needed. Pupils and staff are deserving of a quality of indoor physical education accommodation which matches the very good quality of learning and standards that they achieve.

### **Administrative support for school financial management**

35. Financial management, overall, is satisfactory. The school's improvement priorities are carefully costed and all additional funding received by the school is used for the intended purposes. However, the most recent audit report was unsatisfactory and made a significant number of recommendations for improvement. Many of these related to changes in financial procedures that arose when the school changed from grant maintained to foundation status under the financial oversight of the LEA. The school responded well to the auditor's report and an appropriate action plan has been formulated by the headteacher and governors to tackle the identified shortcomings. However, because the school bursar has been on long-term absence through illness, the headteacher has taken on considerable financial duties in addition to his other responsibilities. As a result, the workload of the headteacher is too heavy, even though an additional clerical appointment has been made to support financial administration. There is an urgent need for additional financial administrative support for the headteacher.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

36. This is a very successful school. In order to continue to improve and to raise levels of attainment even further, the governors, headteacher and teaching staff, with the support of the local education authority, should:
- (1) Ensure that more accurate assessments are made of higher-attaining pupils in design and technology, history and art so that the use of assessment information is consistent and equally effective across all subjects.  
*(Paragraphs: 3, 32)*
  - (2) Continue to argue the case for improvement to the accommodation, particularly with regard to:
    - indoor accommodation for physical education;
    - the number of science laboratories;
    - more classrooms.  
*(Paragraphs: 3, 34)*
  - (3) Improve financial management by:
    - ensuring that the financial action plan is fully implemented;
    - providing additional financial administrative support.  
*(Paragraph: 35)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	33
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	29

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	7	10	11	5	0	0	0
Percentage	21	30	33	15	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 three percentage points

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	663
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	63

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	21
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	91

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	14

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	18
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.6
National comparative data	6.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
National comparative data	0.3

*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
	2002	84	88	172

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	63	69	83
	Girls	78	73	84
	Total	141	142	167
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	82 (93)	83 (86)	97 (100)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	68	71	78
	Girls	78	81	80
	Total	146	152	158
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	85 (87)	88 (88)	92 (97)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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 Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
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
617	1	0
3	0	0
22	0	0
3	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0
3	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)	33.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.8

### Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	24
Total aggregate hours worked per week	449

### 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	25.4
Key Stage 3	25.3

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	1,482,940
Total expenditure	1,420,874
Expenditure per pupil	2,143
Balance brought forward from previous year	34,044
Balance carried forward to next year	96,110

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	11.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	663
Number of questionnaires returned	234

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	52	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	59	4	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	69	3	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	56	17	3	3
The teaching is good.	35	59	2	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	50	11	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	35	7	1	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	31	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	26	58	13	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	46	48	3	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	41	53	4	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	41	5	0	3