

INSPECTION REPORT

ROYSIA MIDDLE SCHOOL

Burns Road, Royston

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117545

Headteacher: Mr P J Fielden

Reporting inspector: Denis Pittman
16976

Dates of inspection: 10th – 12th June 2003

Inspection number: 249197

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 - 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Burns Road Royston
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Telephone number:	(01763) 241555
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D Brynjolffssen
Date of previous inspection:	16 th June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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16976	D Pittman	Registered inspector	Mathematics	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils and students taught? How well is the school led and managed?
14347	J Lindsay	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils?
31685	V Girling	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology	
15372	P Walker	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
15706	R Crocker	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Music	
4372	R Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Roysia is a smaller than average middle school educating pupils between the ages of nine and 13. There are 233 pupils at the school: 110 boys and 123 girls. The school is popular with parents and admission numbers have been increasing in recent years. Most pupils are of white heritage; the number of pupils who do not have English as their first language is small but increasing. The school serves an urban area of Royston; pupils come from socio-economic backgrounds that are broadly average in national terms.

Overall, pupils' standards of attainment when they join the school are improving and are now average; in recent years they have been below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above average but for those who have statements it is below.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Roysia is a good school that is continuing to improve. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well. Pupils are enthusiastic, interested and actively involved in the wide range of opportunities provided. The school is an orderly community with very good provision for pupils' personal development. The relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the children themselves are very good; these positive features contribute to the 'family' ethos in the school. It is well led and has a clear sense of purpose. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve well in most subjects by the end of Year 8.
- The provision for art and French is very good.
- Teaching is good which promotes effective learning for pupils.
- Personal development of pupils is very good. It is enhanced by the very good extra-curricular, social and moral education provision.
- The school is well led, ensuring that standards continue to improve.
- Relationships are very good. Pupils have a very positive attitude to their work, contributing well to the learning atmosphere in the school.

What could be improved

- The provision in design and technology is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils are not getting enough opportunities to use computers other than in information and technology lessons.
- There is insufficient attention given to the teaching of numeracy skills in lessons other than mathematics.
- Assessment procedures are not consistent in relation to marking and monitoring progress.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good progress since it was last inspected in 1997. Standards have improved in most subjects and are now above average by the end of Year 8. The quality of teaching has improved significantly so that pupils are achieving well. Staff have high expectations and most pupils are being appropriately challenged in lessons. Assessment information has improved but there are still some inconsistencies in the procedures that are used in subjects. However, most of the major criticisms raised at the time of the last inspection have been addressed and those weaknesses relating to financial planning, the identification of priorities and senior management monitoring have been changed into strengths.

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
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	C	C	C
Mathematics	D	D	D	D
Science	C	C	C	C

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

Results in the national tests have been improving at a similar rate to that seen nationally. Standards across all core subjects have been consistently in line with the national average for the last three years. Standards in the 2002 tests were average in English and science, but below average in mathematics. The overall results are comparable to similar schools, except in mathematics which are below those of similar schools. The school met its 2002 targets and the current ones and those for future years are demanding, reflecting the increased emphasis placed upon raising standards.

By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average in most subjects; they are above average in English, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and French. Standards are below average in mathematics and design and technology but are well above average in art. Pupils achieve well in nearly all subjects; achievement in art and French is particularly good. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in mathematics and design and technology, given their relatively low prior attainment in these subjects. By the end of Year 8 the standards seen in a number of subjects are above average. Standards are average in English and mathematics but below average in design and technology. In general, achievement is good; pupils continue to achieve particularly well in art and French. Achievement in design and technology is satisfactory. Overall, pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented make good progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very eager to learn and maintain their concentration and enthusiasm in lessons very well.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. There have been relatively few exclusions for at least two years. There is little bullying or aggressive behaviour of any kind.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils show a real understanding of how their actions affect others. Relationships with teachers and other pupils are very good. Pupils develop a good degree of initiative and responsibility.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is in line with the national average; there is only a small amount of unauthorised absence. Punctuality is good.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5- 6	Years 7 -8
Quality of teaching	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 most subjects; it is very good in art and French. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics and design and technology. The major strengths in the teaching are the way that all teachers concentrate on improving pupils' reading and writing, their high expectations of pupils, teachers' subject knowledge and the way that they control pupils' behaviour. The good quality of teaching promotes a positive learning environment.

The same emphasis on teaching basic skills is not as apparent in terms of numeracy as in literacy. Although still satisfactory, there is not yet the same co-ordinated approach to teaching number skills as there is to reading and writing. One weakness in the teaching is the lack of planned opportunities for pupils to use computers in their day-to-day lessons.

Teaching meets the needs of all pupils well, including those with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English. Higher attaining pupils are appropriately challenged. As a result, pupils make greater gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding than would usually be expected.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. It is broad, well balanced and relevant to the needs of pupils. All statutory curriculum requirements are met in all subjects and religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. In Years 5 and 6 the teaching of French is an additional dimension to the curriculum. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons. Informative individual education plans help teachers plan their work well for these pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Teachers are very supportive and pupils are given every encouragement to succeed; their own peer group also gives them support.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The school makes very good provision for pupils' moral and social development as well as good provision for their cultural development. The provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Respect and personal responsibility are features emphasised by the school.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. There are good procedures for improving behaviour and for ensuring that pupils are safe. Procedures for monitoring attendance are satisfactory.

The school works very well with parents, allowing them to feel part of the school community and enabling them to make a real contribution to school life.

The school works very hard to ensure that all pupils are treated equally. There are some inconsistencies in the way assessment information is recorded and used in subjects. However, parents of pupils with

special educational needs are fully involved and informed about their child's progress towards agreed targets.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. There is a clear focus on improving standards and a good level of commitment on the part of all staff to meet this aim. The headteacher has successfully created a supportive, collaborative ethos in the school. An efficient and hard-working senior management team ably supports him.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and play a supportive role in moving the school forward.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has good systems for improving the quality of teaching and its priorities for development are good.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school development plan priorities are appropriately matched to its resources. Financial planning and control are very efficient.

The governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus both have some statutorily required items missing. The overall management of subject areas is good, but unsatisfactory in design and technology. The school is well staffed; teachers are supported by an appropriate number of well-qualified support assistants. The accommodation is satisfactory but there are areas in need of development, such as changing rooms and the provision for food technology. The ventilation in the ICT room whilst it has been improved is still not adequate. The school has a good supply of resources for its needs. The headteacher and governors are effective at ensuring they are providing the best value for the money they receive, especially in terms of consulting with parents and pupils.

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 make good progress. • Behaviour is good. • Teaching is good, and staff have high expectations of pupils. • Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school with issues or questions. • The leadership and management of the school are good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very small number of parents were dissatisfied with the amount of homework being set. • The range of extra-curricular activities was limited.

The inspectors agree with the parents' positive views. Overall they found the use of homework to be good and that there was a wide range of activities available at lunchtime and after school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' standards on joining the school are now average but have been below average in recent years. By the time pupils leave the school at the end of Year 8 their standards are above average in a number of subjects and they are achieving well. Standards have improved since the last inspection, particularly in art and French.
2. Results in the national tests for 11 year olds in 2002 were average in English and science but below average in mathematics. In comparison with similar schools, pupils' standards in English and science were broadly the same as those schools but were below average in mathematics. Generally results rose at the same rate as the national rate of improvement. There was a significant difference in the results of girls and boys in mathematics, where girls did not perform as well, but this was not reflected in other subjects. The school met its targets for 2002.
3. Standards of work seen in lessons, by the end of Year 6 are broadly average; they are well above average in art. An emphasis has been placed on raising standards in mathematics and design and technology, which are currently below average. Standards are now above average in English and science but below average in mathematics. Standards are also above average in information and communication technology (ICT) and French. Where standards are at least above average then achievement is good.
4. By the end of Year 8, standards are well above average in art and French. Standards are above average in all other subjects, except English and mathematics where they are average. Standards continue to be below average in design and technology. The pupils currently in Year 8 attained standards that were broadly below average when they were in Year 6, so they are achieving well in those subjects where standards are now average and particularly well where standards are above average.
5. Pupils' skills in literacy are average. A range of texts, in all subjects, encourages the use of technical and specialist vocabulary, especially in science, French and English. The development of literacy in French is good because it is planned for and taken seriously as a way to improve standards. The library supports all subjects, for instance, by stocking specialised texts and some multimedia materials. The English department has dictionaries available and used in each classroom. Key words are displayed prominently in most classrooms to familiarise pupils with these words. Pupils discuss their work enthusiastically and sensibly in most subjects and show respect to their peers and staff by listening attentively. Pupil passivity and teachers' over-direction lead to lower standards in speaking and listening in design and technology. Reading fluency is encouraged and seen to particular effect in English and French. Most subjects undertake the teaching of basic literacy skills conscientiously. With the support of the English and special educational needs departments, pupils gradually make improvements to their spelling, reading and writing skills.
6. Pupils receive a satisfactory grounding in basic skills in their mathematics lessons; they are taught soundly. Their standards in numeracy in other subject areas are more variable. Pupils in Year 7 science lessons were taught how to interpret line graphs referring to temperature changes. Numerical skills are reinforced through volume calculations. Pupils make effective use of their numeracy skills in geography by working out distances and using grid references. However in other subjects numeracy skills are not reinforced as effectively as literacy.
7. Generally, there is little difference in the progress made by different groups of pupils such as boys and girls, which is a reflection of the emphasis placed upon equal opportunities for all pupils. The standards of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) at age 11, whilst below those nationally, are better than would be expected, based on what they had achieved on entry to the school. One

reason for this is the good procedures for assessing and testing pupils and using the results to plan support. The standards SEN pupils achieve by the end of Year 8 are better than would be expected. These pupils make good progress from the standards they achieved when they were 11 year olds. The good quality individual education plans (IEPs) for pupils with special educational needs are available to teachers, contributing to the ethos of care, support and inclusion in all departments. As a result pupils with special educational needs make good progress towards the targets set out in their IEPs as well as good overall progress in lessons. In particular, pupils make very good progress in Years 7 and 8 in French. Pupils who arrive with extremely low levels of literacy and for whom English is an additional language, make good gains towards their targets and for some progress is very good.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils of all ages display very good attitudes to school, an even more positive picture than seen at the last inspection. They enjoy coming to school and the very high number of parents who stated that their children like school confirm this. Pupils talk very animatedly about various aspects of school life including their favourite subjects and the residential visits. In lessons, pupils generally show a very high level of interest and involvement in the activities set for them. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson for example, pupils listened well to the teacher and then concentrated on drawing their own regular polygons. Similarly, in a Year 5 personal, social and health education lesson, the pupils watched a video avidly and then worked together very well in mixed pairs to record the changes that take place in puberty.
9. Outside of lessons, pupils play together very enthusiastically at lunchtime and at the morning break. For example they organise games of giant chess or basketball and play amicably and energetically. Pupils are also very eager to become involved in the very many extra-curricular clubs that are available for them and attendance levels are high; a lunchtime rounders club was very well attended by many pupils.
10. Behaviour has also improved since the last inspection and is now considered to be very good. Again, most parents feel that behaviour is good. The staff work hard to achieve such high standards by applying positive behaviour strategies adapted to suit different age groups. As a result pupils are very aware of the school's code of conduct and respond positively to it. Lessons are very rarely disrupted because of poor behaviour and this, combined with the very good attitudes of pupils, has a positive impact on learning.
11. Behaviour outside of the classroom is also very good. Pupils are trusted to be allowed in different parts of the school at break times and lunchtimes and they do not abuse this trust. The very spacious outdoor area means that pupils can become involved in a variety of activities outside and they behave very well when doing so.
12. There was no evidence of any oppressive behaviour during the inspection, such as sexism, bullying or racism. Pupils and parents are very confident that when any such problems arise, they are dealt with swiftly and fairly.
13. The school has a relatively low number of exclusions with only two temporary exclusions during the last reporting period and none in more recent months.
14. In normal lessons the attitudes and behaviour of pupils with special educational needs are good on the whole, in art they are excellent. This is because of the excellent planning and deployment of learning support assistants (LSAs), the quality of questioning and the fact that the work is really well matched to the needs of all pupils. In French lessons, the behaviour of pupils with special educational needs is very good because they are kept well on task and appropriately occupied. Where these pupils receive extra support from LSAs other pupils usually accept this and themselves often ask for help.

15. Relationships are very good throughout the school making a very positive contribution to the warm, friendly atmosphere. All adults on the staff treat pupils with a high level of respect and they respond by acting in a mature way, using this in their relationships with each other. The very good rapport seen in lessons between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils themselves makes a positive contribution to learning. Good relationships are encouraged through the assembly themes such as on forgiveness and also through the well planned programme of work for personal, social and health education, which includes topics such as bullying and being fair to each other. As a result, pupils have a very good understanding of the impact of their actions on others and a very high level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Pupils mix very well together regardless of background, race or educational capability.
16. The extent to which pupils show initiative and take on responsible roles is good overall. They act responsibly in their jobs such as school council representatives, reporting the thoughts and ideas from their peers and feeding back to the year groups. Older pupils have the opportunity to become team captains and others volunteer to help with the 8 to 5 lunchtime club, run by members of Year 8 for pupils in Year 5. There is not such a wide range of responsible roles for younger pupils but they are willing to help when asked, for example, in returning registers or helping to hand out equipment in lessons.
17. Attendance levels are in line with the national average, but the number of authorised absences is above average. The school reported no unauthorised absence, which is better than the national figure, but the registers show that a very small minority of pupils are now marked as having unauthorised absences, because of parentally condoned absence. The slight decline in attendance is largely as a result of more parents removing their children from school for family holidays.
18. Punctuality to school is good. There are few persistent latecomers and lessons start promptly.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. The overall quality of teaching is good and pupils learn well. Teaching is satisfactory in mathematics and design and technology but good in most other subjects. The overall quality of teaching in art and French is very good. Teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection, with a marked reduction in the number of unsatisfactory lessons.
20. Some strengths are common to most subjects in the school: the subject expertise of teachers, the development of literacy, the way that teachers control behaviour and the high expectations of achievement. In the most effective science lessons teachers have good subject knowledge and use a variety of teaching styles. They use their background knowledge well; for example in a Year 8 lesson when the teacher used anecdotes to help pupils understand how an image is formed when a mirror reflects light. Teachers give clear explanations of concepts, helping pupils to learn. Good use of questioning is a feature of many lessons, enabling pupils to clarify their understanding in relation to key ideas. For example, in religious education lessons when teachers involve pupils in discussions, their good subject knowledge enables them to pose questions effectively, both to challenge pupils' thinking and to evaluate their learning. In French lessons pupils develop good listening skills because teachers have a good command of the target language and use it well.
21. The emphasis that the school has placed on improving reading and writing has led to teachers being fully aware of the role that they can play in raising standards in this important area. Most teachers are adept at identifying the most important new words that pupils will come across in a lesson. These 'key words' are then emphasised by being written on the board, or posted on the wall. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson on percentages and decimal conversions, pupils were encouraged to explain their solutions. They made good oral contributions and promoted their own mathematical thinking.
22. Teachers' high expectations, obvious from the start, are maintained as lessons continue. The right level of challenge is evident in most lessons. In English teachers' offer a high level of challenge to

all pupils, but balance this with good quality support to enable pupils to rise to the challenge. Pupils relish grappling with a new or more challenging idea and make good progress in this way. In a very good Year 8 English lesson on Shakespeare, pupils showed a good understanding of the language used. They responded very positively to the task of writing about the character of Puck. In ICT lessons there are appropriate expectations of pupils to complete tasks set. In a Year 6 science lesson on animal habitats, the interesting range of activities was well suited to meet the different needs of pupils. The expectations of the teachers were reflected in the good quality of responses. In geography, pupils take a pride in their work and the standard of presentation in exercise books is usually good. However the quality of presentation is not so consistent in design and technology folders and mathematics exercise books. In some design and technology lessons expectations are too low. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, based on assembling a model vehicle, the activities were not challenging enough for these higher attaining pupils. This resulted in inattentiveness and insufficient progress being made.

23. Teachers manage their pupils well. In French lessons well-established classroom routines, which ensure that pupils know how they are expected to behave and that they are expected to work hard, are a key factor in their good learning. Unsatisfactory behaviour is rare in lessons, because teachers ensure that pupils concentrate on their work. Teachers are good at judging when intervention is needed and able to control behaviour because relationships are so good and the school is successful in getting pupils to understand the importance of rules and the impact that their actions can have on others. Throughout most lessons the teacher's interaction with pupils contributed significantly to learning and progress. Teachers always make sure that all pupils are involved in the work and discussions and that pupils with special needs receive the extra support they require so as to play a full part in the lesson. In art lessons the high expectations of pupil behaviour and standards of work mean that pupils respond positively by making every effort to do their best. A lively delivery and timed tasks ensure that interest is maintained throughout the lessons.
24. Most teachers plan their lessons thoroughly, both in terms of classroom organisation and ensuring that work is accessible to all pupils. For example in a Year 8 science lesson on sound the teacher organised pupils into groups to provide greater challenge for higher attaining pupils who were asked to find out how musical instruments produce sound, whilst others were supported in the more basic task of measuring the loudness of various sounds. In English lessons teachers' plan a wide range of interesting activities to maintain pupils' interest and hard work and pupils respond with enthusiasm and the desire to do well. Teachers make good use of questioning and discussion to challenge pupils' thinking. Pupils respond very well to the opportunity to hear the ideas of others' by listening respectfully and using new ideas to help them refine their own. This was well illustrated by a Year 8 history class, investigating the injustice of the transatlantic slave trade, where they dealt with sensitive material in a very mature manner.
25. Some other aspects of teaching, such as the way that homework is used or the attention paid to the marking of work, are predominantly good. Most teachers mark work regularly and frequently, but occasionally some do not go into enough detail about how the pupil can improve. In geography marking is encouraging and supportive but it is inconsistent in its identification of strengths and weaknesses and on what to do to improve further. In particular there are no periodic assessments in geography and so there is not a systematic identification of levels of attainment or assembling of more detailed data regarding pupil strengths in various skill areas. In general there is insufficient use of ICT across the curriculum.
26. Pupils with special educational needs are taught in normal lessons and supported by learning support assistants (LSAs) in many of these. Teachers know the needs of these pupils and plan their lessons to meet these needs well. In French lessons, for example, pupils with special educational needs are in small sets and taught demandingly, yet with appropriate work. Setting arrangements in English and science enable teachers to focus well on those pupils with special educational needs in small groups. All English lessons have aims that address the differing capability range of pupils and a 'pilot' Year 5 'catch-up' course has been introduced. In science, teachers always plan appropriate support for those pupils with special educational needs. In

religious education, pupils with special educational needs receive good support and guidance and the work set is well matched to their needs.

27. LSAs provide effective help and support to those pupils with special educational needs as well as to other pupils who ask for help. In French lessons, for example, the quality of their support is particularly good when teaching is not actually addressed to the whole class. In science, LSA support is particularly good with regard to practical work, for example, in the manipulation of equipment and posing questions such as 'Why are you adding water to the soil?' Teachers and LSAs work together closely thus enabling pupils with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English to make good progress.

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

28. The curriculum is well managed and thought has been put into providing a broad range of learning, leisure and personal development opportunities for all pupils. It is broad, well balanced and relevant to the needs of pupils. Statutory curriculum requirements are met in all subjects and religious education meets the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. There is an appropriate personal and social educational development programme, which deals effectively with drug and sex educational issues. In Years 5 and 6 the teaching of French is an additional dimension to the curriculum.
29. The allocation of time spent in lessons each week is well above the national recommended minimum in Years 5 and 6 and above the minimum in Years 7 and 8. The introduction of French gives pupils a valuable base from which to begin the National Curriculum French in Year 7. Additionally, pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from two extra hours of literacy each week, which support the reinforcement of key literacy skills and give opportunities for a broader study of English than is specified in the National Literacy Strategy. In Years 7 and 8 pupils have an appreciably higher than average time allocation for English and mathematics and in nearly all other subjects the allocation of time is at least as the national average. The time devoted to history and geography is lower than the national average. Generally there is insufficient use of computers in subjects. The curriculum is enhanced by the provision of special days devoted to the reinforcement of learning in such key areas as drugs awareness and through drama week, when pupils in Years 7 and 8 benefit from a series of workshops run by a professional actor.
30. The use of literacy across all subjects of the curriculum is generally good. In Years 7 and 8 the implementation of the Key Stage 3 National Strategy for literacy is generally good, although there is no written policy for this. Teachers have received training in the teaching of literacy skills in their subject and the English subject leader is given regular opportunities to update them. All subjects have identified where opportunities for the use of literacy skills exist in their schemes of work.
31. The development of numeracy skills across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. An audit of instances where numeracy may occur in the curriculum has been conducted but this has not resulted in any specific policy for implementation. This cross-curricular element has not been co-ordinated effectively with the net result that subjects teach numeracy skills in an ad-hoc manner.
32. The school makes good provision for the two pupils who are at an early stage of learning English. On one day a week they have English lessons with a specialist teacher of English as an additional language. In other lessons they receive good help from their subject teachers and learning support assistants who are sensitive to their needs. Their English classmates, also, have volunteered to join a rota to sit with these two pupils in lessons and help them understand new words and ideas. Together with these pupils' keenness to do well and their cheerful, positive attitudes, this support is instrumental in helping them to make good progress and become happily settled into the life of the school. In a Year 8 French lesson, for example, a Kosovan boy made very strong headway in describing what clothes people were wearing and their colours. The teacher ensured he was fully

integrated into the lesson and a student teacher was on hand to help him with words he did not understand.

33. The curriculum is well planned and co-ordinated through good co-operation with the other schools in the Royston pyramid. There are regular, clearly documented meetings between the schools, which ensure that the transitional stages between them operate seamlessly with planned progression within subjects. A good example of this is the way in which the two local middle schools plan to teach the same unit of work in English, using the same texts, in the period immediately prior to transition to the high school. This unit leads directly into the preparation for National Curriculum testing at the end of Year 9.
34. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good; there is a very good range which is planned to meet the needs of all pupils. Some of the activities are slightly unusual, for example the gardening club, the decorative results of whose work were very evident in the school grounds during the inspection. The school choir has sung in the Royal Albert Hall and the music club also offers training for the school orchestra and a wind chime ensemble. Particular strengths of the provision are the residential trips, a different one for each year group, including the youngest pupils and culminating in a visit to Le Touquet for older pupils. The enthusiasm and gratitude of the pupils who went on the French trip, and the valuable contribution which it made to their personal and cultural development, was clear from their discussions of it during the French Club. There is a good range of sporting activities. Particularly popular is the lap-training club which makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' self-organisation as well as to their fitness. There is a study support activity which is open to all pupils each lunchtime and which is particularly helpful to pupils with special educational needs since a learning support assistant is on hand to help to encourage their interest in reading. All activities are open to pupils of all ages and both genders. Participation rates in activities are good, particularly the French trip, in which a considerable majority of Year 8 pupils took part. The art club and the lap training, which in the hot weather during the week of the inspection required great commitment, are also popular.
35. There is generally good equality of access opportunity for all pupils. The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is good and they make good progress. There is a very small number of pupils in the school with English as an additional language and even fewer who are at an early stage of acquiring English, but the provision made for them is good. Teachers and pupils alike take great pains to ensure that they understand as much English as possible, learning some words and phrases of these pupils' home language to make this process easier. Pupils speak warmly of their friendships with pupils who have been in this country only a few weeks. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls. Although in some subjects inspectors have observed a high level of challenge given to higher attaining pupils there is a less clear structure for strategies to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils.
36. The school has clear and concise policies in place as regards equal opportunities, citizenship and inclusion. The school shows a strong commitment to promoting an inclusive education and works hard to ensure access and equality of opportunity for all pupils. As a result all pupils are enabled to make good progress throughout their time at Roysia.
37. Overall, curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The SENCO has ensured the introduction of the new Code of Practice for special educational needs. The special educational needs department and the school show a strong commitment to promoting an inclusive education. These pupils receive effective support and are enabled to access the full curriculum on offer. There is no specific extra-curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs outside normal curriculum time because there is no dedicated special educational needs base. However, the daily lunchtime homework club in the learning resources area is run by LSAs. As a result, pupils with special educational needs, along with others, have the opportunity to ask for and receive any extra subject or specific support and guidance they feel they might need.
38. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has remained at the good levels seen at the previous inspection with some very strong aspects.

39. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. It is promoted through religious education lessons and through assemblies, as well as through various strands of personal, social and health education. Pupils have the opportunity to explore different beliefs and to respect and value others'. They are encouraged to empathise with others, such as how it must feel to come to school in a totally different culture and not understand the language. In addition, they have the chance, through different subjects, to appreciate the wonders of nature, for example by looking at the great variety of life in a pond and by studying aspects of space. Pupils can also reflect on themselves and their own development through assembly themes such as courage and perseverance. Some lessons, for example in art, also provide opportunities for self-evaluation and to reflect on their own performance and think of ways it could be improved.
40. There is very good provision for pupils' moral development. The school has a very clear moral code that pupils understand and that is promoted consistently throughout. Pupils are encouraged to express their own views on moral issues, particularly through the Years 7 and 8 Citizenship Club that debates issues such as human cloning. All adults in the school are very successful at modelling principles such as fairness, honesty and respect for others and this is reflected in the very positive relationships that exist throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to respect the environment and nature and this is evident in the care taken by the Gardening Club to enhance the school grounds as well as the way pupils treat insects and other animals that they find whilst pond-dipping during a science lesson. Wider issues such as the war in Iraq are brought into subjects such as art through comparisons with Guernica. Overall, the very wide range of opportunities provided has a very positive impact on pupils' moral development.
41. The school also makes very good provision for pupils' social development. The staff has been very successful at fostering a caring, family ethos in the school by ensuring that all pupils are included whatever their capability, race or gender. Older pupils are encouraged to socialise with younger ones through for example, the lunchtime 8 to 5 club. Opportunities are provided for pupils to socialise away from school, such as on ice skating trips for Year 8 pupils. The residential visits, arranged for each year group, are particularly important for pupils' social development. Pupils speak very enthusiastically about these visits and appreciate the opportunities they give them to see others in a different setting. Pupils also have opportunities to participate in the running of the school through the school council. This body meets regularly and is effective in bringing about improvements such as to the outdoor equipment. Pupils also have opportunities to appreciate the needs of others in the wider community through collecting for various charities and by visiting a local day care centre. The result of the many opportunities given to pupils to develop socially is that pupils are mature and very well behaved and show a high level of respect for others.
42. Overall, the provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in cultural activities, particularly music and art; the annual Arts Week is very well regarded by pupils and parents. Pupils have the opportunity to work with a professional artist and to produce impressive works such as pottery and mosaics. Similarly the choir and orchestra have opportunities to perform at such venues as the Royal Albert Hall as well as locally. Pupils study Aboriginal poems and also look at Islamic art. Occasional visits take place to museums and galleries and this is an area that the school hopes to expand. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about other European cultures particularly France. The residential visit for Year 8 pupils is an excellent chance to understand the similarities and differences of a different culture. Also pupils can learn about other cultures through the history and geography curriculum. However, there are still opportunities to develop and celebrate other cultures represented, in today's multicultural society. For example pupils do not have the chance to visit other religions places of worship and there are no links with schools in another culture or in a more diverse multicultural area of Britain.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

43. The procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory overall with some good elements. The headteacher is the designated coordinator for child protection but he has not yet had the opportunity to be formally trained. The policy is clear and made available to staff and procedures are satisfactory but the staff handbook does not specify who the designated coordinator is. However, the current staff are aware of the school's procedures. There is not yet a

policy for the physical restraint of pupils and as yet no one has been formally trained in this aspect. Many staff are trained in first aid and procedures for recording and treating any accidents or illnesses are effective.

44. The health and safety policy is comprehensive and the school has regular risk assessments undertaken by the local education authority. In addition, the governors carry out an annual site and building inspections and the site supervisor ensures that the buildings are kept in as safe a state as possible on a day-to-day basis.
45. Overall, the educational and personal support and guidance for pupils is good with some very strong aspects.
46. The school has satisfactory procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance. Attendance levels have fallen marginally since the previous inspection largely as a result of an increase in the number of holidays taken during term time. The school is trying to address this by ensuring parents seek written permission and by discouraging the practice through regular reminders in newsletters and other communications with parents. However, it is not yet rigorous enough in recording some parentally condoned absence in registers as unauthorised. There is a system of contacting parents on the first day of absence and this has been effective in that the majority of parents now telephone the school first. The education welfare officer visits the school regularly to check registers and to follow up on any pupils giving cause for concern. The school promotes good attendance by awarding certificates for very good attendance throughout the year.
47. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. Poor behaviour is monitored through the use of incident slips and pupils who require additional support may be put on the report so that a detailed record of their behaviour can be built up. All staff, including support staff, share information very well in relation to pupils with challenging behaviour and parents are kept well informed at an early stage if there are concerns. Good behaviour is promoted through a variety of ways adapted to meet the needs of different age groups. For example, Year 8 pupils have the incentive of collecting merits to attend off-site activities such as ice-skating or to "earn" a place at the end of year disco. Younger pupils are also encouraged to behave well and collect merits to earn privileges such as playing table tennis or being allowed into the nature area. These incentives are very effective and play an important role in the very high standards of behaviour seen during the inspection. The school has been very successful at reducing oppressive behaviour. Pupils have different methods of reporting any concerns for example by recording something in the "bully book" or by writing in their own reflective diaries. Those who have used these vehicles say that teachers take such issues very seriously and act promptly and swiftly.
48. The school has appropriate systems in place to record and report the very few racist incidents that occur.
49. Pupils' personal development is also very well supported and monitored. The great majority of parents feel that the school is helping their child to become mature and responsible. There is a very high level of care evident amongst all the staff who are knowledgeable about the pupils and their families. Information is exchanged if there are any concerns and the staff ensure that pupils know they can talk to someone if they have any worries. The reflective diaries, used by Year 5 and Year 6 pupils, are especially useful in this regard and are appreciated by pupils. In addition, the school nurse is a regular visitor and pupils know they can also talk to her. Pupils who have disputes with one another are encouraged to talk to each other and are well supported when trying to resolve their difficulties. The annual pupil progress report that goes to parents is also a useful means to report on and track pupils' personal development.
50. The school has effective relationships with outside specialist agencies – further enhancing the quality of support for those pupils with special educational needs. Annual reviews are effective and support those pupils with statements of special educational need as they move through the school. The school meets the curricular requirements as outlined in pupils' statements of special educational need.

51. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory overall, though with wide variations between subjects. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science teachers record outcomes of regular assessments, building on assessment data received when pupils first enter the school. Point scores from National Curriculum tests are well used in these subjects to measure progress and to set targets for future performance. In geography and history on the other hand, no formal assessment is carried out, while in music assessment is based on an outdated version of the National Curriculum.
52. The school makes satisfactory use of assessment data to identify achievement, but again there is inconsistency between subjects. The science curriculum has been recently modified to allow assessment of the various aspects of scientific enquiry and this is beginning to raise standards. In mathematics assessment information has been used to identify underachievement by girls, but not used to devise appropriate action. Lack of formal assessment in geography and history means no data are available to track pupils' progress over time. While pupils are usually aware of their target National Curriculum levels in the core subjects, few know exactly what they need to do to achieve them.
53. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are good, largely because teachers have good knowledge of individual pupils and use it effectively to support their learning needs. In science, teachers keep records of pupils' attainment readily to hand and class teachers and the subject co-ordinator frequently review the progress of individuals. As a result, pupils are often supported in their learning, by modifying the language used in worksheets to make them more accessible, for example.
54. Improvement since the last inspection has been only just satisfactory because too many of the inconsistencies mentioned then still remain. Suitable procedures for assessment are in place in most subjects, but not used to full effect in raising standards.
55. The SENCO uses and is able to draw upon a range of assessment data to enable her to identify those pupils who need support and place them appropriately on the school's list of pupils with special educational needs. When statements of special educational need are reviewed annually, the review draws upon a range of professional opinion and consultation with parents or carers and the pupils themselves. This provides for and effectively informs the updating of pupils' records on a regular basis. Individual education plans (IEPs) are in place for all pupils at action plus and above. Targets set are generally clear, concise and challenging, yet attainable by pupils. Overall, IEPs are of good quality and enable teachers to plan their lessons effectively to address the needs of pupils with special educational needs.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. There are very effective links established with parents and parents make a positive impact on the work of the school.
57. The results from the pre-inspection questionnaire and the comments from the parents' meeting show that overall, parents have very positive views of the school. In particular they feel that teaching is good, the staff are approachable, the school has high expectations and that it is well led and managed. Inspection findings would confirm all of these views. A very small number of parents were dissatisfied with the amount of homework although some felt there was too much and some felt there was not enough! However, overall, inspectors find that the use of homework is good; it is consistently set and meaningful. A few parents also felt that extra-curricular activities could be improved. However, they are judged to be very good, with a wide range of activities available at lunchtime and after school, as well as visitors. The residential visits arranged for each year group are particularly important extra-curricular events.
58. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory overall, with some good elements. The annual progress report that parents receive is good and gives a clear indication of progress made in each subject and uses National Curriculum levels in some subjects to enable progress to

be tracked. Guidance is also given about what each pupil needs to do to improve further. Parents receive regular school newsletters and parents of Year 8 pupils get an additional information sheet once a fortnight. Curriculum information is given at the start of each term to enable parents to support their children as much as possible. Parents speak highly of the home school diary system as a means of communication and this is effective in keeping parents informed of any minor concerns. Parents also have formal opportunities to meet with teachers in the autumn and spring terms and to view pupils' work. In addition, the staff and the headteacher are very accessible to parents on a day-to-day basis.

59. The governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus both have some statutory required items missing. This was also the case at the last inspection. For example, the governors' report does not include information about school security, the school's targets for Key Stage 2 assessments, a statement about the progress in implementing the action plan following the previous inspection and there are no national comparisons for Key Stage 2 national tests. The prospectus does not give enough information about admissions nor the school's attendance rates.
60. Parents and carers attend the annual reviews of pupils with statements of special educational need and are fully involved in the annual review process. They are thus kept fully informed of their child's progress towards the targets set out. The school prospectus and the annual governors' report to parents meet the requirements for the information they should include about special educational needs.
61. The contribution that parents make to their children's learning at home and at school is good. Throughout the year parents support the school well in a variety of ways such as by helping on visits and at the annual fireworks display and sports day. The Friends' Association, through regular fundraising events, provides a substantial sum of money to help in various ways such as in funding some of the computer equipment. Parents also support their children by helping with homework and regularly checking the home-school book. The role that the majority of parents play in partnership with the school has a positive impact on learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

62. The school is well led and managed. The good leadership provided by the headteacher has led to a continuing improvement in standards. He is ably supported by senior management who work effectively as a team in the interests of pupils and staff. Central to the school's success lies its commitment to putting the pupil first. This commitment is reflected in the additional support that is given to pupils of all capabilities and the range of opportunities provided to promote pupils' personal development. The quality of what the school does in these areas has a clear impact on pupils' standards of achievement.
63. Many other features of the school are led and managed well. The quality of leadership and management in most subjects is good. The management of art, French, religious education and science and physical education is very good but in design and technology it is unsatisfactory. Areas that were previously weak, such as ICT, have been improved and standards are now above average. In general staff are encouraged to discuss ideas and actions to improve teamwork further and raise standards.
64. The SENCO is an experienced practitioner and provides good quality leadership for the provision of special educational needs in the school. The special educational needs handbook is an informative working document and each member of staff has their own copy. However, some fine-tuning is needed to ensure the school's policy for special educational needs meets the statutory requirements for the information it should include fully. Indicative of the school's commitment for provision is the extra funding that is made available beyond that which is delegated by the local education authority. An experienced and supportive governor with responsibility for special educational needs has recently been appointed. There is limited use of ICT to help support administration of provision for special educational needs. LSAs are deployed effectively for the number of pupils with statements as well as those at the school action and school action plus

stage of the Code of Practice. As yet, LSAs have no formal appraisal procedures to guide their professional development.

65. Governors play a good role in leading the school. They have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and can talk in detail about aspects such as accommodation, literacy and staffing issues. Governors play a supportive role in drawing up plans for the school's continued improvement and remain firmly focused on raising standards. Some statutory requirements are not met in their annual report with regard to school security, the school's assessment targets and progress in relation to the action plan. The ways that governors obtain information about the school's performance are effective, ensuring that they are well informed about the statistical data.
66. The monitoring of teaching is good, with a regular timetable of observations carried out by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The headteacher has taken a leading role in promoting a focus on teaching and learning outcomes in the school. The good action taken to address these issues has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching and, especially, a reduction in the amount of teaching that was unsatisfactory. In the broader context of monitoring, some subject co-ordinators are not getting enough opportunities to observe the good practice of other teachers to make sure that standards are consistently maintained.
67. Financial management and the planning of the use of resources are appropriately related to the school's priorities. The school's financial resources are appropriately related to a concise school development plan, which has relevant goals. An above average proportion of the budget is allocated to learning resources for subjects. The quality of financial control and provision of budgetary information to senior management is very good. In financial administration, there are correct divisions of responsibility and good procedures for ordering, receiving and paying for goods and services purchased by the school. The last financial audit indicated areas for improving financial efficiency. These have been corrected. Competitive tendering is used for the ordering of goods or services and the school works hard to achieve the best value in its financial decisions. The administrative staff are efficient and greatly assist the smooth running of the school.
68. The school provides a good education for its pupils. The staff show a good commitment to improvement. Standards are continuing to improve and teaching is mostly good. The school provides good value for money.
69. The school is well staffed with qualified teachers who are supported by an effective team of non-teaching staff. It is the school's policy to make maximum use of specialist teachers so that pupils of all year groups, including Years 5 and 6, benefit from their expertise. In science, ICT, art and French, for example, teachers are experienced specialists who teach pupils of all ages, contributing materially to achievement. Where subjects are taught in Years 7 and 8 by non-specialist staff, the support for these teachers is good and standards are not generally compromised. Non-teaching staff make an important contribution to the life of the school. Learning support assistants, for example, are well deployed to complement the work of class teachers in giving individual help to pupils with learning needs or to those at an early stage of learning English. Good procedures are in place for the induction and professional development of staff. The school has well established links with a Cambridge college for the initial training of student teachers who speak highly of the support and help they have received.
70. The school has sufficient rooms, some of which are of good quality, but there are areas in need of development such as the changing rooms and the provision for food technology. The ventilation in the ICT room, whilst it has been improved, is still not adequate; it creates a difficult learning environment for pupils. There is a good provision for resources in most areas; the library is appropriately resourced and is a focal point for learning despite the fact that the school does not have a qualified librarian.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. To raise standards and improve the quality of education, the headteacher and governors should:

- Improve standards in design and technology by:
 - ensuring that monitoring and assessment procedures are more rigorously applied, and
 - placing greater emphasis on the design process and the quality of the final product;

[paragraphs: 3, 22, 63, 105, 106, 108]

- Improve standards in ICT by providing greater access for computers to be used in lessons across the curriculum;

[paragraphs: 29, 64, 89, 94, 99, 128, 134, 138, 144, 149]

- Improve the consistency in the use of assessment data to monitor and track pupil progress particularly in relation to girls' achievement in mathematics and science. Ensure that marking and assessment policies are applied more systematically;

[paragraphs: 25, 51, 52, 54, 80, 90, 107, 108, 114, 121, 136]

- Give greater emphasis to the teaching of numeracy skills in subjects across the curriculum.

[paragraphs: 6, 31, 107, 120, 149]

Other issues for consideration

- Ensure the statutory requirements in the Governors' report and prospectus are met.

[paragraphs 59, 65];

- Improve the accommodation in the changing rooms and for food technology

[paragraph 70].

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	22	27	14	1	0	0
Percentage	3	33	41	21	2	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. 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	233
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	19

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	3
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	26

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

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	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.3
National comparative data	6.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	23	31	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	18	18	22
	Girls	23	17	26
	Total	41	35	48
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76 (79)	65 (65)	89 (98)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	20	21
	Girls	21	21	29
	Total	38	41	50
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (64)	76 (64)	93 (80)
	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 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
220	2	0
0	0	0
4	0	0
4	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
0	0	0
1	0	0
1	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)	12.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.6

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	166

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	83
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	24.3
Key Stage 3	18.5

Financial information

Financial year	2002-2003
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	£
Total income	791350
Total expenditure	791804
Expenditure per pupil	3398
Balance brought forward from previous year	48407
Balance carried forward to next year	47953

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	233
Number of questionnaires returned	90

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	43	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	57	41	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	27	62	4	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	61	10	1	0
The teaching is good.	53	46	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	44	52	1	2	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	24	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	26	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	44	51	2	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	61	37	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	57	39	3	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	39	7	0	9

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

- There is a commitment to raising attainment, which is proving successful.
- Achievement is good.
- Teaching is consistently good.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for development

- To involve pupils more fully in understanding their own progress.

72. Standards at the end of Year 6 in the 2002 National Curriculum tests were in line with the national average. They were also in line with the standards of schools in similar circumstances. These test results indicated that, in comparison with the Key Stage 1 results of pupils from all other schools, the added value made by the school was very good. The percentage of pupils attaining at the level expected of pupils of this age was in line with the national average, while the percentage attaining the higher grades was just below average. The gap in attainment between boys and girls is considerably smaller than is seen nationally. This has been brought about mainly by a considerable improvement in boys' attainment since the previous inspection, but also because girls' attainment has remained static over the same period and is now a little below the standards of girls nationally.
73. Standards of work seen in lessons for Year 6 are just above what is seen nationally. This agrees with the assessments made by the school and indicates that the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 will be higher than the national average for 2002, while the percentage attaining the level expected of pupils of this age will remain similar.
74. Until recently, the standard of pupils when they entered the school, at the start of Year 4, was below the national average. When the current Year 6 joined the school their standards were slightly below what is seen nationally. Their achievement has been good to reach in a period of two years standards just above the national average. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and those at the first stage of learning English is also good.
75. Pupils across the ability range make good progress in, for example, the development of their extended and creative writing, using a growing vocabulary more adventurously to enhance what they write. All pupils develop an enthusiastic, sensitive and very well informed response to literature. Most pupils use a range of specialised critical language accurately and confidently and, during the inspection, used this to discuss some very mature responses to the poetry of Tennyson. Good progress is made in writing for a range of purposes and audiences, including persuasive and letter writing. Higher attaining pupils make good progress in using a more complex sentence structure and in understanding more demanding grammatical concepts. The speech of nearly all pupils is confident and clear and they make good progress through listening to the ideas of others. Lower attaining pupils make insufficient progress in spelling accurately and consistently.
76. The standards of work seen in Year 8 are in line with the national average. There are indications that a significant percentage of pupils will attain the higher grades in their National Curriculum tests, still almost a year away and that their attainment overall is likely to be above the national average. The predictions made by the school for the previous Year 8 before they left to go on to Year 9 have been ratified by their new school and they are on course for attainment that is higher than is seen nationally.

77. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection which judged standards to be generally satisfactory.
78. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 make good progress in their appreciation and analytical response to literature. In particular those in Year 8 have made good progress in their preparation for the demands of their Year 9 tests by studying a Shakespeare text. Their response is enthusiastic and mature and a significant number of higher attaining pupils are making good progress in interpreting the unfamiliar language and contextual references. All pupils show an understanding of plot and character and most pupils are beginning to use the text to interpret character accurately. Pupils make good progress in writing for a range of purposes and audiences and in understanding why particular audiences will respond to a particular kind of language. All pupils make good progress in the use of discussion and the contributions of other pupils to inform and refine their own ideas. Lower attaining pupils do not make sufficient progress with the accuracy of their written work and spelling is a particular weakness. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
79. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. The high teaching standards reported at the previous inspection have been maintained. Teachers' lesson planning is very good and makes good provision to meet the needs of all pupils. Teaching objectives are clear and they share them with pupils, who know what to expect and what is expected of them. Teachers' plan a wide range of interesting activities to maintain pupils' interest and hard work and pupils respond with enthusiasm and the desire to do well. They make good use of questioning and discussion to challenge pupils' thinking and check their progress. Pupils respond very well to the opportunity to hear the ideas of others by listening respectfully and using new ideas to help them refine their own. The less successful lessons offered pupils less opportunity to exchange ideas and learn from each other as well as the teacher. Teachers offer a high level of challenge to all pupils, but balance this with good quality support to enable pupils to rise to the challenge. Pupils relish grappling with a new or more challenging idea and make good progress in this way. The support offered to pupils with special educational needs, by both teachers and learning assistants, is good. Although the marking of work is regular it gives pupils insufficient advice on what they need to do to improve and to fully understand their own progress.
80. The quality of leadership and management are good. There is a clear commitment to raising standards and a range of good strategies in place designed to bring this about. Good use is made of the setting of teaching groups from Year 6 onwards to offer challenge to higher attaining pupils and at the same time to support lower attaining pupils in very small classes. A new initiative is in place to support pupils in Year 5 who arrive at the school with lower than average attainment levels. Pupils in all years benefit from generous allocation of additional teaching time. The measures, which were put in place some time ago to raise boys' standards, have proved very effective, but in the meantime the girls' standards have not improved. Schemes of work are detailed and informative for all teachers and ensure good compliance with the National Curriculum and consistency across all classes. There are good procedures for the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress and these are applied consistently. Good use is made of this information to record progress and make accurate predictions, but insufficient use is made to involve pupils fully for taking some responsibility for monitoring their own progress. The subject leader monitors pupils' work very regularly and thoroughly. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Achievement by the end of Year 8 is good, particularly given pupils relatively low prior attainment.
- Relationships with pupils are positive, supportive and encouraging.
- Pupils' attitudes are good; they enjoy learning.

Areas for Improvement

- Standards in National Curriculum tests are below average; girls are underachieving.
- There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of work within the subject.
- There is not enough planned use of ICT; access to computers makes this difficult to achieve.

80. Standards on entry to the school in Year 5 are below average. As a result of predominately sound teaching and their own hard work, pupils make good progress, especially in Years 7 and 8; standards are improving. By the end of Year 8 pupils are reaching average standards. Given the pupils' relatively weak prior attainment, achievement over time is good for most pupils. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
81. Results in the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2002 were below the national averages and were below average when compared to results from similar schools. The test results followed the pattern of previous years. School assessment data shows that standards are likely to be better this year but still below average.
82. Standards of work seen at the end of Year 6 are below average. On entry to the school there are significant weaknesses in pupils' numerical skills. During Years 5 and 6 pupils not only gradually improve their skills, in most aspects of mathematics and particularly in number, but also develop good working routines and positive attitudes to learning. There is an appropriate emphasis on getting pupils to talk about their work and explain their methods and they develop a more secure understanding of mathematical ideas. These approaches provide the foundation for the improving standards in lessons but, as yet, are not reflected in national test scores. The good achievement in Years 7 and 8 is shown in average standards reached by the end of Year 8. Higher attaining pupils in all years reach above average standards but the relative achievement of girls is not as good as the boys. Lower attainers reach well below average standards at the end of Year 6. They make steady progress and some reach below, rather than well below, average standards by the end of Year 8. Nearly all pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good and this contributes to their good achievement.
83. The 2002 national tests at the end of Year 6 showed a significant difference in standards reached by girls against the national picture; these were below average. This was not evident to the same degree for boys. There was no noticeable difference in the standards achieved by girls and boys in the school. This is also true in work seen during the inspection. Pupils with special educational needs, those who may speak English as a second language and gifted and talented pupils make similar progress to others in their classes, due to sound teaching and to the way pupils are grouped for lessons, which helps teachers to provide suitable tasks and activities for all pupils, whatever their needs. Teachers and learning support assistants also work effectively with individuals, especially when class sizes are small.
84. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils can use algebraic skills to answer questions involving sequences of numbers. Average attaining pupils can calculate angles in regular polygons. They can find the area and perimeter of basic shapes, although some pupils have difficulty in using the correct units. Lower attaining pupils can recognise multiples of two-digit numbers but the recall of their multiplication tables is not so secure.
85. By the end of Year 8, higher attaining pupils can solve linear equations involving brackets and fractions. They can use formulae to find the area of parallelograms and trapeziums. Pupils showed good analytical skills in probability investigations. Average attaining pupils can solve simple linear equations; some having problems with use of negative numbers. Lower attaining pupils can add decimals and can multiply decimal numbers by multiples of ten. They have an increasing understanding of probability terms. A few pupils needed prompting as to the correct position of the decimal point.
86. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Effective preparation, based on good planning and secure knowledge of mathematics, provides a clear framework for each lesson. The lesson structure is usually used appropriately to provide variety and interest. In particular the range of starting activities teachers use gets pupils to think mathematically and puts them in a receptive

mood for learning. Well-established classroom routines, which ensure that pupils know how they are expected to behave and that they are expected to work hard, are a factor in their satisfactory learning. Teachers encourage pupils to participate actively in lessons and pupils respond by contributing to discussions. They are not afraid to answer questions, even if unsure as to whether they have got the answers right. This positive attitude helps them to tackle problems that initially appear difficult and extends their understanding more rapidly. Homework is used satisfactorily to help pupils make progress by reinforcing topics covered in class. Regular assessment of units of work helps teachers to see how well pupils are doing and to see what topics need further work. However, there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking and the expectations about the standard of pupils' written work from different teachers. The use of target setting and the analysis of progress data to identify the underachievement of girls are not sufficiently rigorous.

87. When teaching is satisfactory and occasionally unsatisfactory, the pace of learning slows in the middle of the lessons. Sometimes this is because the teacher is giving too much attention to some pupils and some others become restless. The plenary session at the end of some lessons is sometimes too brief and does not reinforce learning as well as it could.
88. There is some good use of ICT in mathematics, for example presenting data by different types of graphs. However, difficulty in gaining access to computers means that this is not planned as systematically as it should be.
89. The subject provision is co-ordinated satisfactorily. The co-ordinator has innovative ideas for improving the quality of pupils' learning. However, teaching is not monitored regularly; a consequence of the other significant ICT responsibilities he has carried temporarily. The training opportunities provided by national mathematics initiatives have been used appropriately to improve the variety and effectiveness of teaching methods. Assessment is used to record and track the progress of individual pupils. However, it is not used rigorously and regularly to identify the achievement of different groups of pupils.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers use their knowledge of individual pupils effectively in helping them progress.
- Pupils behave very well and concentrate throughout the full length of lessons.

Areas for improvement

- Continue to develop pupils' skills in using ICT in science in Years 5 and 6.
- Ensure that pupils know how to reach their individual targets.
- Place greater emphasis on materials and their properties in Years 5 and 6.

91. The results of National Curriculum tests at age 11 were in line with the average nationally in 2002 and were similar to those in the previous two years. Pupils made better progress than expected in relation to their prior attainment. As in other subjects, boys usually do better than girls in the tests. Results in 2002 were similar to those in English but better than in mathematics.
92. Standards seen in lessons and in pupils' written work at the end of Year 6 were above average and higher than those suggested by National Curriculum tests, reflecting improvements in teaching and focus on using thinking skills in scientific enquiry. In Year 6, almost all can explain how they would test unknown materials to see whether or not they are electrical conductors. Pupils achieve well in lessons and their good achievement continues into Years 7 and 8. Standards are above average at the end of Year 8 as a result of good progress for these pupils from their National Curriculum test results two years earlier. By this stage, the great majority can

use scientific understanding to explain some differences between the properties of solids, liquids and gases.

93. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are given good support in science, allowing them to make similar progress to other pupils. Learning support assistants are very effective in helping them organise practical work and encouraging them to think more carefully about their observations. The small number of pupils who are learning to speak English are also well supported, often by specially designed worksheets that associate key words with explanatory pictures. This was the case in Year 8 when a pupil recently arrived from eastern Europe was enabled to participate in practical work by means of a worksheet and support from other pupils.
94. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are beginning to appreciate the importance of information and communication technology (ICT) in science, for example using data loggers to investigate the effectiveness of different types of sound insulation, but this is not yet so in earlier years. Pupils develop good investigative skills from an early stage in Year 5; they handle laboratory equipment carefully and safely. Although pupils draw on all aspects of the programme of study in science lessons, their understanding of materials and their properties is comparatively weak in Years 5 and 6 because this area is insufficiently emphasised.
95. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Nearly half the lessons seen were very good and all the rest were at least satisfactory. Most teachers are specialists in science and use their subject knowledge to good effect, for example having the confidence to use pupils' unexpected results to explain that this sometimes happens to real scientists who must then check their results very carefully before drawing valid conclusions. On other occasions teachers use their background knowledge of science to capture and maintain pupils' interest by pointing out the relevance of their learning or by using interesting examples. For example, in a Year 8 lesson the teacher used anecdotes to help pupils understand how an image is formed when light is reflected by a mirror. In less good lessons, learning is sometimes restricted because teachers lack confidence, for example not anticipating that pupils would have difficulty in adding just the right volume of water to soil to expel all the air, or not building on an unexpected opportunity to show pupils how a newt is adapted to its habitat. Teachers plan their lessons thoroughly, both in terms of classroom organisation and ensuring that work is accessible to all pupils. This was the case in Year 8 when the teacher organised groups of pupils to investigate aspects of sound, providing greater challenge for more able pupils who were asked to find out how musical instruments produce sound, while others were supported in the more basic task of measuring the loudness of various sounds. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations of good behaviour, even when they are not under the direct supervision of the teacher. In Year 6, for example, investigation of animal habitats in different parts of the school grounds provided opportunities for them to drift off task, but none did so. Homework is set regularly and extends or consolidates pupils' learning from lessons. It is often used effectively to challenge more able pupils, as was the case in Year 5 when they had to find out the uses of air; the more able were challenged to link uses with reasons. Marking of pupils' written work is generally good, though the quality of comments varies. Most teachers write comments that help pupils improve, often posing questions for them to follow up, but a small proportion of comments are less helpful, relating mainly to presentation rather than scientific content.
96. Leadership and management are very good. The subject co-ordinator has engendered a spirit of supportive teamwork and other teachers speak highly of the help they have received. A number of innovations, for example in connection with the new strategy for science teaching, have been carried through to effective implementation in Years 7 and 8. Pupils' performance is closely monitored; individual targets for improvement, based on past performance, are set and regularly reviewed. However, pupils are not always sufficiently aware of precisely how they will achieve the targets set. The laboratories are well equipped and well cared for, further enhancing pupils' positive experience of science.
97. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Although National Curriculum test results are a little lower now than at the time of the last inspection, improvement in teaching and focus on aspects of scientific enquiry are beginning to result in higher standards in lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, provision for art is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching promotes effective learning.
- The art curriculum makes a very good contribution to pupils' cultural development.
- Vibrant, plentiful displays of artwork enhance the school environment.

Areas for improvement

- There is insufficient access to computers.
- There are insufficient visits to museums or galleries to stimulate and inform pupils.

98. Standards of work seen by the end of Year 6 are well above average; they are above by the end of Year 8. Overall, this represents very good progress when related to standards on entry to the school.
99. Very good progress is evident in pupils' acquisition of basic skills and knowledge. They also show a good understanding of artist's work and its relevance to their own art. The work of higher attaining pupils demonstrates their understanding of using pencils, pens and charcoal and chalk to successfully create various textural and tonal effects, for example using chalks to create smudgy cloud effects but pens to draw spiky twigs. Drawings done on location around the school have been effectively developed into three-colour block prints and work inspired by Picasso has resulted in very striking three-dimensional card models and paintings. Computers are used for some projects and in small numbers but there is inadequate access for whole groups. Sketchbooks are used regularly but do not show enough development of ideas and experimentation to record the progress from initial research to final outcome successfully.
100. Teaching and learning are very good with some excellent features. Planning is very good; it ensures that the needs of every pupil are met. For example varying the level of questioning and task together with effective deployment of learning support assistants enables those with special educational needs to make the same very good progress as their classmates. High expectations of pupil behaviour and standards of work mean that pupils respond positively by making every effort to do their best. A lively delivery and timed tasks ensure that high levels of interest are maintained throughout the lesson. Very good pupil attitudes contribute positively to their very good learning. Pupils enjoy art lessons and wish to do well.
101. Leadership and management are very good. Long-term planning sets appropriate priorities to raise standards, and short-term planning is excellent. The procedures for assessment and monitoring are very good and they are used very well to inform planning. However, the relationship of the school marking scheme to National Curriculum levels is not clear enough to pupils and procedures to explain this are necessary. The provision of 'Artsweek 2003' involved local artists in activities in the school and proved a valuable addition to the school calendar. A lot of good quality artwork on display around the school raises pupils' self-esteem and enhances the environment. The art curriculum makes a valuable contribution to pupils' cultural development by looking at the work of artists and craftspeople both here and abroad. Pupils would benefit from first hand observation of good quality artefacts and seeing work in situ to create a sense of context; for example to see Henry Moore's work in landscape locally and to visit Kettle's Yard, in addition to the Fitzwilliam Museum, both in Cambridge. Progress since the last inspection is very good.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Very good leadership has led to the development of a good citizenship programme.

- The programme makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- There are a wide range of learning activities provided for pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The contributions of other subjects to citizenship education need to be broadened.
- Assessment procedures are not sufficiently detailed and outcomes not used to inform planning.

102. Overall, pupils achieve standards that are consistent with expectations and sometimes above by the end of Year 8. Their written work across a number of subjects such as English, science, mathematics, religious education and history suggests that they are enthusiastic and enjoy the content of the programme, particularly that concerned with relationships, skills and the development of attitudes and values. Achievement is satisfactory across all year groups.
103. All pupils make good progress due to careful thought and attention that the school pays to this aspect of pupils' personal development. The teaching of the subject was not observed, but the work of pupils provided valuable evidence of the approach to it. Citizenship education is taught through subjects and is supported by related themes in PSHE and religious education. Pupils also have many opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process through activities such as the well-organised school council. Their involvement in local projects, fund-raising and visits to a local day care centre all provide good opportunities to exercise responsible citizenship. The use of citizenship themes such as responsible actions, issues of war and peace, decision making and equal opportunities enable pupils to discuss and develop a clear understanding of a wide range of issues. The citizenship club also enables pupils to reflect on important issues and take action in exploring the rights and wrongs of various national and international matters. Overall, these activities provide a wide range of opportunities to enhance the development of citizenship and ensure that, by the end of Year 8, pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of what responsible citizenship entails. Citizenship is currently integrated well into the personal, social and health education programme, although there are some aspects of the citizenship curriculum such as government and political dimensions that are underdeveloped. Furthermore, more work needs to be done to develop the systematic use of assessment.
104. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and make a significant contribution to pupils' progress in the area. The teaching of citizenship is very well supported by a comprehensive scheme of work and there are plans to develop a pupil self-assessment procedure that enables the coverage of topics across subjects to be recorded. Well-focused training will help to promote higher standards in PSHE and citizenship as these subjects are making a valuable contribution to the ethos of the school as a whole. Citizenship makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils both in terms of the curriculum on offer and teaching styles that encourage pupils to develop attitudes and values. Although citizenship is in the early stages of development, good progress is being made, providing a firm base for further improvement.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, provision for design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Strengths

- A committed and hard working team teach design and technology.

Areas for improvement

- Standards of attainment are below average at ages 11 and 13.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory and the monitoring of work in the subject is inadequate.
- The quality of outcomes in resistant materials is unsatisfactory.
- Provide more opportunities for the training needs of non-specialist teachers.

105. Standards of work seen by the end of Year 6 and Year 8 are below average. Because the standard of work of the majority of pupils remains below average, over both key stages, they make only satisfactory progress. However, levels vary quite widely and some higher attaining pupils do achieve standards that are close to average. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress; this is similar to their classmates.
106. By the end of Year 8 all pupils develop an understanding of the design and make processes through a range of projects involving resistant and non-resistant materials. Some higher attaining pupils in Year 8 demonstrated their aptitude when being introduced to computer-aided design (CAD), by producing a design for a vehicle using the Pro Desktop program. Others have produced exciting cushions in a textiles project and decorated them using tie-dying techniques and block printing on the theme of "Seasons". However, a greater emphasis on achieving high quality completed products across design and technology is necessary to raise standards. Standards of finish are predominantly poor, especially in resistant materials. Too large a quantity of work is incomplete. Standards of presentation of written and design work are unsatisfactory, although the exercise books used by Years 5 and 6 are generally better presented than loose work in Years 7 and 8.
107. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Valuable contributions are made by non-specialists teaching in Years 5 and 6, some of whom have undertaken training to enable them to be more effective. Teaching is best where lesson objectives are clear and planning is comprehensive, enabling pupils to achieve well. In some lessons however there is insufficient challenge or class management is ineffective. The teaching of basic skills is not sufficiently rigorous and some assessment procedures are inconsistent and therefore unsatisfactory. In these circumstances teaching is no better than satisfactory.
108. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Procedures are yet to be put in place for monitoring of teaching across the subject. Although there are meetings of all the design technology teachers to agree on levels of work, there are no strategies yet in place to effectively raise standards. The workshop has been improved and equipment upgraded to create a pleasant working environment. Display is used well to show pupils' work and to inform them about their projects. New assessment procedures are being piloted and reviewed, but at present appear unwieldy and are not understood clearly by some teachers or pupils. Although there have been many improvements recently and a great deal of effort has been made to raise the department from its previous low base, these have not kept pace with standards in schools nationally and therefore progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

GEOGRAPHY

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

Strengths

- Standards by the end of Year 8 are above average.
- Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- There are good opportunities to develop numeracy and literacy skills. The subject provision contributes well to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Areas for improvement

- There are inconsistencies in marking and assessment.
- There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching.

109. Standards are generally in line with the national average by the end of Year 6 and are above average by the end of Year 8. These standards are achieved as a direct result of enthusiastic pupil responses to sustained good teaching.

110. In Years 5 and 6 most pupils' work is average. This judgement is based on an analysis of the quality of written work available because only one lesson in this age group was observed. Most pupils made good use of geographical language and write clearly and they demonstrate good use of geographical skills, such as in mapping, analysis of evidence and geographical enquiries.
111. By the end of Year 8 most pupils' work is above average. This improvement from the levels identified in Years 5 and 6 is a direct result of the sustained encouragement of high standards of literacy. Very good and careful use of geographical language and high levels of sustained and fluent written work reflect these efforts. This work enables pupils to demonstrate their good understanding of physical processes, such as river flow and coastal erosion and of the social and economic geography of culturally different areas such as India.
112. Achievement is good; a direct response to a well-planned and challenging teaching and learning programme which is presented in a very encouraging manner. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they find the learning accessible and interesting and they are carefully supported. Higher attaining pupils also make good progress because they are challenged, within the same work, to be thoughtful and independent in their approach to learning. This was well exemplified by a Year 6 class who were working on the tourist potential of Royston and who were exhibiting very good enquiry and analytical skills on what was available in the town. Many pupils were able to conduct independent research for information, both from local sources and via the Internet.
113. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is characterised by very thorough lesson planning, high expectations and challenge, a very encouraging atmosphere, good pace, a strong emphasis on numeracy and literacy skills, active learning and good use of support staff. These strengths compensate significantly for the fact that all of the teaching is by non-specialists. The work in lessons is appropriately geared to the differing capability levels. Challenge for all pupils is ensured because of good support strategies that develop appropriate levels of challenge and enquiry. Marking is encouraging and supportive but is inconsistent in its identification of strengths and weaknesses and on what to do to secure further improvement. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are strongly promoted, especially in terms of attitude formation in important environmental and cultural studies, to the extent that they are fostering active citizenship.
114. Assessment is a weakness. The informal identification of National Curriculum levels has been relatively accurate but the department does not carry out periodic formal assessments and so is not systematically identifying levels of attainment and assembling more detailed data regarding pupil strengths in various skill areas. This means that it does not yet have the capacity to monitor or track pupil performance or provide targets for improvement or indeed use assessment information to help develop the curriculum. The new leadership is fully aware of this deficiency and has already identified assessment as an area for urgent action in the development plan.
115. Leadership and management are good. In response to the last inspection the teaching and learning strategy and schemes of work have been reviewed and revised. These good developments indicate that the weaknesses in assessment and the need to monitor and evaluate professional performance, to eliminate inconsistent practice in marking, so as to contribute further to raising standards are well within the capacity of the present leadership.

HISTORY

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

Strengths

- Standards at the end of Years 7 and 8 are above average.
- Pupils have a positive attitude to learning.
- There are good contributions to literacy development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

Areas for improvement

- The marking and assessment of pupils' work is insufficiently rigorous.
- There are missed opportunities to promote numeracy.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is inadequate.

116. Standards are average by the end of Year 6 and above average at the end of Year 8. These standards result from the good quality teaching and the enthusiastic response of pupils.
117. By age 11 most pupils' work is in line with national expectations. A detailed analysis of pupils' written work confirmed this level of attainment because only one lesson could be observed. Most pupils make good use of historical vocabulary and write clearly and they demonstrate good use of historical skills such as empathy, enquiry and the analysis of evidence.
118. By the end of Year 8 most pupils' work is above national expectations. This improvement in standards from the end of Year 6 is a direct result of the sustained encouragement of literacy skills. Very good and careful use of historical vocabulary and high levels of clear and fluent writing show this. Pupils use historical skills well and sensitively.
119. Good achievement is the hallmark of learning and this occurs as a result of the very positive and enthusiastic pupil responses to well-planned and challenging teaching. Throughout the school pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they find the learning accessible and interesting. They are carefully supported. Higher attaining pupils also make good progress because they are being challenged to be thoughtful and independent in their approach to learning. The participation of all pupils in plenary presentations in lessons shows that they have been well taught in how to synthesise and present material. Pupils listen well to each other, a trait that has been effectively used over time. This was well illustrated by a Year 8 class who were investigating the injustice of the transatlantic slave trade where they dealt with very sensitive material in a very mature manner; and by a Year 7 class who were studying Islamic scholars in the past. They reflected a very positive response to what were strong emphases on spiritual, moral, social and cultural education within the curriculum.
120. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is characterised by careful lesson planning, very careful resourcing, high expectations and challenge, good pace, a strong emphasis on literacy skills and active involvement and good use of support staff. These strengths compensate remarkably for the fact that much of the teaching is by non-specialists who do not have a background in the subject. Marking is encouraging and supportive but it is inconsistent in its identification of strengths and weaknesses and on what to do to secure further progress. Currently, there is insufficient monitoring of teaching within the subject. There is insufficient emphasis on numeracy but the use of ICT is developing satisfactorily.
121. Assessment procedures are not strong. The identification of National Curriculum levels has been relatively accurate but there are no formal assessments made of pupils' strengths in various skill areas. Teachers do not use systems to monitor or track pupil performance or provide targets for improvement. The new co-ordinator is fully aware of this deficiency and has already identified assessment as an area for urgent action in the development plan.
122. Leadership and management have several strengths and are satisfactory overall. Schemes of work have been reviewed and revised and access and challenge have been strengthened. The effectiveness of these developments indicate that the weaknesses in assessment, the monitoring of professional performance and the inconsistency in marking are within the capability of the present leadership to improve. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall the provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

Strengths

- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Standards are improving across all years.
- There is strong and effective leadership and a shared willingness to succeed.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient activities for higher attaining pupils.
- The accommodation has unsatisfactory features.
- Computers are not used sufficiently regularly in other subjects.

123. Standards on entry to the school are below average but improving. Standards in Year 6 are above expectation for the majority of pupils due to good coverage of the subject in ICT lessons. Standards in Year 8 are average; some pupils are on target to attain levels above national average in 2004. Most pupils leave the school with a firm grounding in the use of basic skills in ICT.
124. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve very well in presentations, desktop publishing and the use of the Internet. Graphs and charts are of a particularly high standard due to the use of examples provided. In Year 5 the use of spreadsheets provides good examples to interpret findings, question answers, and recognise that ICT can also lead to unreliable results. In Year 6 pupils achieve as expected and show a good range and quantity of work in folders and on the network server, especially in developing ideas and finding things out. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the match of the work to their needs and the support provided. All pupils use appropriately levelled sheets in which word banks, reminders of instructions and best practice in the use of animations help the achievement of the lower attainers in basic ICT skills.
125. In Year 7 the use of spreadsheets to sequence numbers and to check percentages is very effective because it shows whether or not the use of ICT to support learning has been applied correctly. In one piece of work, where the answer for several calculations on insulation qualities was always the same, pupils were made to focus on the method used even more intently. Some Year 7 pupils are working below expectation in comparing their use of ICT and its use outside of school. Similarly others did not know that spreadsheets could be used to record and interpret sports results. Presentation software is used extensively and the standards achieved by some pupils are high, due to the importing of a range of objects including use of the Internet to find examples to support their work. Most Year 8 pupils are on course to achieve good standards in 2004. Pupils sometimes work together at lunchtimes in the library to prepare work for lessons.
126. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are brisk and well structured using a wide range of methods, frequent reviews and a crisp approach. In Year 5 learning was good when pupils were engaged in a whole class starter activity on the layout of presentations and how many words to be used on a single slide. The use of prompt sheets with different types of task and useful hints and questions such as "Why use IT?", helped to structure pupils' learning effectively. Some boys find basic formatting skills tedious because they cannot see an immediate outcome. The use of presentations greatly enhances the learning of all pupils. Learning is affected adversely by the unsatisfactory nature of the main ICT room, which is unacceptably hot, noisy and cramped. Measures to deal with this situation are under review. Support for pupils with special educational needs, by working to a previously planned programme discussed by learning support assistants with the class teacher, is good.
127. In Years 7 and 8 there were effective activities when pupils used spreadsheets to recalculate large amounts of data. The inputting of the data took some pupils too long because of excessive chatter. However good learning took place on number sequences and the use of formulae. Higher attaining pupils were appropriately stretched by use of formula examples. These pupils respond to the challenge of reviewing and assessing their use of ICT but the lesson length restricts this in Year 8. Most pupils have produced a work folder, which displays a good depth of study and the teacher relates prior learning to examples created previously for the lesson. The discussion that followed, about the quality of certain aspects of design, was good.

128. The range of extra-curricular activities is limited. Computers are available in the library before school and at lunchtimes but other year group area resources are not used sufficiently. During the inspection very little use of the computers in the library or in classrooms was seen. Assessment to monitor and record pupils' progress is robust and a pupil self-assessment system is in place. The teacher verbally provides good helpful comments on work and what to do to improve.
129. Since the last inspection there has been an improvement in standards, an increase in the use of ICT in some areas of the curriculum and in the supply of some new equipment. Senior management has supported ICT through resourcing and staff training. A new ICT coordinator has been appointed and there is a shared will to succeed to provide ICT in support of teaching and learning of very good quality. Weaknesses in resourcing and accommodation continue but with the help an ICT technician and external advice, creative solutions are being sought to help with these issues. The department is in a good position to move forward.

FRENCH

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

Strengths

- Standards are above average and pupils achieve very well.
- Pupils make very good progress as a result of very strong teaching.
- Pupils behave very well and have positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils benefit greatly from starting French in Year 5 and being taught by experienced specialist teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have too few opportunities for writing.
- Year 7 pupils have very little opportunity to use ICT.

130. Pupils in Year 8 reach standards overall that are above the national average. Given that many pupils enter the school with below average attainment, this means that they are achieving very well. This is explained by three positive factors. First, by the time pupils reach Year 7 they have already made a good start in French. Second, pupils learn very well because the teaching they receive is very lively and demanding. Third, they help themselves by their sensible behaviour and their obvious enjoyment of French.
131. Pupils in the higher set in Year 8 are doing work that is well above average. They understand their teacher's fluent French and respond immediately to instructions in the language. A good number of these higher-attaining pupils can also speak quite confidently in simple French, giving opinions and adapting verbs in different tenses to change meaning. In the two important skills of speaking and listening boys achieve as well as girls. Equally good progress is made by pupils with learning needs and those from families where English is not the main language. They are in smaller sets where they receive close individual attention. These pupils have good comprehension and often speak with quite authentic accents and pronunciation. Pupils now have more opportunities of reading French and their understanding of written French is increasing. Writing, however, is the least well developed of the skills. Pupils in Year 7 and 8, particularly those of higher attainment, need more chance to write freely and at greater length to give them practice in using what they have learnt.
132. In Year 6 standards are also above expectations although the school has no obligation to teach a foreign language at this stage. The start that these younger pupils have made is a bonus that benefits them when they reach Year 7. Pupils are all achieving very well and clearly enjoying French. They can make simple statements about themselves in well-pronounced French and their good understanding of spoken French reflects the persistence with which teachers use it in the classroom.
133. Teaching is very good overall. This explains why pupils are happy learning and are making such strong progress. It applies equally to boys and girls and to pupils with particular needs or from homes where English is the second language. Pupils learn very well in the orderly working environment created by the teachers through a combination of lively good humour and firm structured management. Lessons start briskly in French and quickly get pupils into a learning frame of mind through activities that build on previous successes. Teachers use French abundantly in lessons and pupils learn to understand the language spoken at speed and with good pronunciation. Carefully planned activities give pupils ample chances to practise and rehearse new language so that they learn to speak as much as to listen. In a very good lesson with low-attaining pupils, for example, the teacher used colourful images on the overhead projector to encourage pupils to say what clothes people were wearing and their colour. All pupils were eager to answer questions, even an overseas pupil with very little English and they all learnt successfully by virtue of frequent repetition. Through clear explanations of grammar and how language works and frequent use of dictionaries, pupils increase their literacy well in the course of learning French.

134. In three respects pupils' learning could be even better than it is. In Years 7 and 8 pupils receive too little homework that allows them to write at length. Pupils in Year 8 have good opportunities of using ICT for extending their knowledge. However, Year 7 pupils do very little French through ICT and they are missing out on their entitlement in this respect. Finally, although pupils speak French confidently, they do not use it enough for everyday requests such as asking to borrow a pen or apologising for being late.
135. Pupils learn all the better because they behave very well in lessons and bring positive attitudes to the classroom. Pupils of higher attainment work with real maturity and clearly enjoy lively teaching that challenges them. Those who struggle with language try hard and have not lost their keenness to learn. All pupils co-operate well so that teachers can trust them to work productively in pairs or groups, or on their own. In this respect and in the very courteous way in which teachers interact with pupils, they contribute well to pupils' personal development.
136. The department is very well led and efficiently managed. Teachers work harmoniously as a team, sharing ideas and good practice. They are open to change and forward-looking in their adoption of new ways of teaching and learning. The subject leader frequently observes teaching and is very effective in evaluating performance. Pupils' progress is tracked well through regular assessments. However, there is scope for better identification of pupils who are underachieving by using this information to compare with the individual's prior attainment. The well-established links that exist between the department and those of other schools in Royston ensure good continuity from one phase to the next. Pupils benefit in many respects from the annual well subscribed visit to northern France.
137. The department has made good improvements since the previous inspection. Teaching has improved so that all of it is now good or very good. As a result pupils achieve better and standards are higher. The department is well placed to make further improvements.

MUSIC

Overall the provision for music is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning especially in Years 7 and 8.
- Composing activities.
- Range of music activities, including singing.

Areas for improvement

- Use of assessment to inform planning and pupil progress.
- Use of ICT to enhance composing activities for all pupils.

138. Attainment on entry to the school is variable. Pupils cover a wide range of activities including singing, the playing of instruments including those from other cultures, composing and the use of music notations. Standards in Year 6 are as expected for the majority of pupils. A three-part lesson structure helps the pupils but warm-up activities are not always present to support on-going musical skills. Pupils achieve very well, for example in the relationship between sound and symbol, the use of musical shapes, patterns and textures and when the activity is related to singing and performing rhythmically. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well when using music as a non-verbal language, especially by those with English as an additional language. Effective practice supports literacy in activities using 'tongue twisters', memorising sentences in different patterns and in the use of choral speech. The use of information and communication technology is limited to the use of electronic keyboards and does not include recording, manipulation or refining sounds. In instrumental lessons provided by the LEA music service pupils achieve as expected.

139. Standards in Year 8 are currently on course for most pupils to attain above the national average in 2004. Some Year 7 pupils are working below expectation in singing and in the development of performing skills but this is not the case for composing and appraising. Pupils' work on activities related to the scheme of work, for example on *'Love me Tender'*, where pupils compose, rehearse, perform to the class, record and appraise their work. Different activities in performing and composing are provided for some pupils who are completing work earlier than the rest of the class and in extra-curricular classes when they achieve beyond expectation. Pupils with special educational needs are achieving good standards because of group activities and use of a 'buddy system'. There is an improvement in singing and in composing for most pupils by Year 8. Attitudes towards music are always good and most pupils benefit from a warm-up starter activity at the beginning of lessons. Some find the long morning affects their performance in the afternoon session. All pupils leave the school with a very good understanding of musical concepts, experience of original compositions and of performing as a member of a group. Information and communication technology is not supported by the use of recording devices or sequencers, restricting the progress of pupils in composing. In extra-curricular activities standards are always good and sometimes very good when dealing with the ways in which to practise and use time effectively.
140. Teaching and learning overall is good but there are weaknesses in Years 5 and 6 where there is a lack of skills work and a lack of the consolidation of previous knowledge. The additional activities in performing and composing provided for some pupils enable them to exceed the expectations in all year groups. These include the use of instruments learned elsewhere. Learning is good when pupils are engaged in brisk skills sessions such as warm-up singing activities, for example in studying Tudor music and *'The Carnival of the Animals'*. The memorisation of melodies and pupil performances are helped by the teacher using hand signals. In these situations, learning is enhanced and brisk progress is made. Learning is satisfactory when the pace is slower and when the task lacks challenge. Support for pupils with special educational needs, by working to a previously planned programme, is good.
141. In Years 7 and 8 activities are linked to prior learning. Pupils ask appropriate questions of each other and the teacher such as "Why does this piece sound angry (happy or sad)?" All pupils make advances when controlling sounds and writing compositions using instruments. This takes place when using a small group of notes on a *modal* pattern to help understand melodic lines in different types of music, for example to help understand shape and form. There are effective moments when pupils reflect on their work and the work of others. There is insufficient written analysis or taped work of pupils' strengths and weaknesses to support their learning and the current process of assessing pupils' work is not matched to the National Curriculum 2000.
142. Most pupils do not sing together for extended periods as a class or contribute individual pieces of work. In Year 8 pupils leave lessons knowing how a *Raga* is different from a western style of music. In instrumental music lessons teaching and learning ranges from good to very good. A flute lesson has effective short cuts for pupils to improve their performance in examinations.
143. The range of extra-curricular music activities is good. These include choir, orchestra, recorder and woodwind, hand chimes groups and individual instrumental lessons, given by peripatetic teachers from the Hertfordshire County Music Service. A small number of pupils participate in county music events such as the *'Hertfordshire Music Gala'* and school music groups perform regularly in Cambridge and London. These levels of involvement by pupils are better than similar schools according to feedback the department receives from local high schools.
144. Since the last inspection there has been some improvement in resources, although this remains unsatisfactory. Staffing and planning for the future are better, but the monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently rigorous. Information and communication technology and assessment practice are priorities for the next stage of development. The music studio doubles as a drama room but this is a very good resource. The *'Friends of the School'* have further enhanced funding for the subject and the department is well poised to move forward under the strong leadership of the very able coordinator.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Good teaching results in effective learning and good progress by all pupils.
- Very positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils.
- Good extra-curricular provision extends and contributes well to personal development.

Areas for development

- Formal and planned opportunities for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and, particularly in Years 7 and 8, ICT skills.
- Schemes of work do not all fully meet the requirements of National Curriculum.

145. The attainment of the majority of both boys and girls by the end of Year 6 is average. In track athletics, pupils are developing their knowledge and understanding of the principles of hurdling well. This represents good achievement, since attainment on entry was variable for many pupils. No lessons were seen in Year 8 but subject assessment records of attainment show the majority of pupils are already working at Level 5, the expected age related level for the majority of pupils at the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 7, attainment of the majority of boys and girls is average. The more physically capable pupils are developing the effective use of both lead and trail legs when hurdling. The less physically capable, however, are still 'jumping' as opposed to 'running over' the hurdle.
146. Across all years pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of the principles and procedures of warm-up activity. Older pupils, in particular, clearly understand the need for practice to improve their skills and techniques. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated and supported and make good progress in relation to their capabilities. Physically talented pupils also make good progress in lessons and are provided with further opportunities through playing in school teams.
147. Teaching and learning are good and result in good progress by pupils. Lessons are well organised and structured with pupils being given responsibility for starting their own warm-up activities, ensuring they are quickly involved. Pupils are told what they will be doing but more effective use could be made of the whiteboard to explain more clearly the learning objectives as well as highlighting the terminology being used. Planning provides for a variety of structured and progressive activities with appropriate challenge for the full range of physical capabilities. This helps ensure pupils are motivated and remain on task. Very good teacher/pupil relationships and very good class management skills are also helpful in this respect.
148. Pupils' attitudes are good and behaviour is very good. They work very well together as pairs and small groups and respect the capabilities of one another. This results in a positive learning atmosphere in all lessons. In a Year 7 track athletics lesson, for example, pupils responded very well when asked to coach and evaluate one another and were thus enabled to refine and adapt their own techniques of hurdling. In other lessons, though, there are sometimes insufficient opportunities for pupils to be involved in this way. Teachers' breakdown of skills and techniques is effective and indicative of their good knowledge and understanding of the activities taught. This also ensures pupils are made aware of what they need to do to make progress and is indicative of teachers' high expectations in terms of discipline and work. Pupils are made aware of their capabilities because teachers circulate well, offering praise and constructive criticism. In a Year 5 track athletics lesson, for example, effective questioning enabled the teacher to assess what pupils knew and understood and also enhanced their speaking and listening skills. At the end of lessons, coverage is discussed with pupils but sometimes there is not always sufficient attention paid to what has been learned.
149. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is socially inclusive. However, not all schemes of work reflect the requirements of the physical education National Curriculum fully as regards the

teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and, in Years 7 and 8, the use of ICT in lessons. Extra-curricular provision is good throughout the year and extends pupils' learning opportunities, 26 per cent of pupils having represented the school in competitive fixtures. Assessment procedures are good but it is not clear how assessment data is being used to monitor pupils' performance or to inform planning. The quality of outdoor accommodation is good and allows for a good range of games and activities to be taught throughout the year. Changing rooms are cramped and shower facilities do not provide the privacy expected by both boys and girls because there are no cubicles. This does little for pupils' self esteem or for their knowledge and understanding of personal hygiene. Good leadership and management have enabled good progress and improvement since the previous inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Standards are above agreed syllabus requirements at age 13.
- Teaching is always good and occasionally very good.
- Pupil management is very good.
- Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of extra-curricular activities.

150. Overall standards are above expectations in relation to the Hertfordshire LEA agreed syllabus. Achievement across the whole age range is good.
151. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 5 and 6 is in line with expected levels. There are good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. They make sense of what they study, although some pupils do find some difficulty in relating it to their experiences. In Year 5, pupils recognise the difference between ultimate and non-ultimate questions in religion. As a result of a well-structured lesson, pupils respond very well to questions of life and death. In Year 6, a well-directed discussion by the teacher enables pupils to demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the relationship between humans and the environment. They explore their feelings about cruelty and relate these to different religious views. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through the good use of worksheets appropriate to their needs. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion were useful aids in improving pupils' speaking, listening and writing skills. Overall, learning is good.
152. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, attainment in Years 7 and 8 is above expected levels. There are many good examples of pupils developing their knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils generally are able to relate religious principles and concepts to their own lives. In Year 7, pupils made significant gains in understanding the difference between beliefs and opinions through the examination of Christian love. The use of a variety of approaches by the teacher enables pupils to make good connections between the Christian view of forgiveness and their own experiences. In Year 8, pupils developed a good understanding of the importance of non-violent protest through the study of the life of Ghandi. A well-structured exercise by the teacher allows pupils to explore their own feelings about good and evil actions. Pupils are able to form their own views, whilst respecting the different attitudes of others. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. Overall, learning is good.
153. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by pupils of different gender or ethnic background. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or talented make good progress.

154. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They behave very well, are generally well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate well with each other and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and pupils is very good and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupil behaviour makes a very good contribution to pupil achievement and progress.
155. Teaching is good, with some very good features and has a significant impact on achievement. Planning is very good, assisting pupils to focus on information learnt in previous lessons. Lesson aims were shared with pupils in all cases. Teachers make good use of questioning to consolidate current learning and to review previous work. They use a suitable range of styles such as discussion, video and audio material and worksheets that match the needs of individual pupils. This enables pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion and assists them to maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Resources are well used, especially worksheets. These enable pupils with different needs to learn well. Teachers manage pupil behaviour very well, contributing to a good climate for learning. Extension work and homework are used to good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed and these are effective in contributing to pupil achievement.
156. Assessment of pupils' work is generally good and very helpful comments are made in exercise books. The procedures provide a good basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. Assessment is now beginning to inform the teaching and learning cycle and the planning of new work. The department sets targets that are related to levels of attainment. Consequently, pupils are clear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve.
157. Religious education also makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, so providing opportunities for pupils to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. However, the range of extra-curricular activities is limited.
158. The department is managed very well, with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Pupils are provided with a rich diet of religious education. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. There is excellent support from other departmental staff. Planning is very good. The departmental development plan does address appropriate priorities and forms a good basis for future action. Documentation is very good. Accommodation is good. The quality of display is very good and celebrates pupil achievement. Resources are generally good.
159. Since the time of the previous inspection, the quality of teaching, leadership and management, pupil management and the contribution the subject makes to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils have all improved. Overall, these improvements have made a good contribution to pupils' attainment, achievement and progress.