

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **ABINGTON HIGH SCHOOL**

Wigston Magna

LEA area: Leicestershire

Unique reference number: 120311

Headteacher: Mr A Green

Reporting inspector: Mr Anthony Shield  
3569

Dates of inspection: 19 – 21 May 2003

Inspection number: 249215

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: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 10 - 14 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Station Road  
Wigston Magna  
Leicestershire

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Dr G Hall

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
3569	Anthony Shield	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils' taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
13395	Joanna Illingworth	Lay inspector		<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents</p>
4455	Natalie Moss	Team inspector	English	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
19526	Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics	
7428	Ray Jardine	Team inspector	Science	
31779	Vivien Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology	
18638	Christopher Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design	
29212	Melanie Smith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Citizenship	
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	History	
20247	Roger Parry	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs	
8360	Frederick Peacock	Team inspector	Music	

25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education	
18673	Richard Wilkins	Team inspector	Religious education	
30438	Roger Guest	Team inspector	Educational inclusion English as an additional language	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Abington High School is a middle school for boys and girls aged ten to 14, situated in Wigston Magna on the southern edge of Leicester. It draws its pupils both from the surrounding area and the city of Leicester itself. The range of socio-economic backgrounds is wide and average overall. At around 12 per cent, the proportion of pupils eligible for free meals is average. There are 712 pupils on roll, bigger than most middle deemed secondary schools. There are slightly more girls than boys on roll although this varies from year to year. Numbers on roll have been increasing in recent years, and the school is oversubscribed. Attainment on entry has been improving and is now close to, but still just below average, although the full range of ability is represented in the school. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is about average, with 78 pupils (18 per cent) with identified special educational needs. Most of these are for learning difficulties, although there are also some with emotional and behavioural problems. Twenty-two pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs; this is above average. Most pupils are of white UK heritage, and although 36 pupils have English as an additional language, none of these is at an early stage of language acquisition. The school was awarded a School Achievement Award in 2003.

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

This is a good school with some very good features. Very good relationships, a friendly atmosphere and a commitment to the care of all pupils help to promote good achievement. Although standards in Year 6 are broadly in line with the national average, by the time the pupils leave in Year 9, they are above average and pupils have made good progress. Teaching is consistently good and is often better. The very effective leadership of the headteacher, strongly supported by his staff and governors, is promoting continuing improvement. The school offers good value for money.

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

- Good leadership and management are ensuring a common sense of purpose and a commitment to improve further.
- The good personal development of pupils and very good relationships within the whole-school community are the result of the good provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and the very good pastoral and tutorial system.
- Effective links with partner schools ensure a smooth transition between the different phases of schooling.
- Good teaching and the very good attitudes of pupils to learning is leading to good and often very good progress.
- The provision and support for pupils with special educational needs enables them to make good progress.
- The programme for the more able pupils is very well considered and ensures high levels of challenge.

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

- The use of information and communication technology to support learning in subjects, particularly in mathematics, science, history, music and design and technology.
- Opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility and a more active part in their learning.
- The procedures for sharing best practice in teaching and learning.

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

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

Overall, improvement since the last inspection in May 1997 has been good. Test results in both Years 6 and 9 have improved and much of the high quality provision reported at the time of the last inspection

has been sustained. The quality of teaching has improved, with a higher proportion of very good lessons observed than during the last inspection. Unsatisfactory teaching has all but been eliminated. Key issues from the previous inspection have mostly been tackled. There has been a marked improvement in the provision for the more able pupils, but the school still does not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
End of Year 9 tests	C	C	B	A

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

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 in English and mathematics in 2002 were well above average and above average in science. When compared with schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, the school's performance was well above average in each subject. Results have been improving over the last few years and those in 2002 were particularly high. Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 6 were below average in English and well below average in mathematics and science. However, the school only takes the pupils for one year before taking the tests, and the good teaching has had a relatively short time to impact on the pupils' performance. In 2002, the challenging targets the school set were exceeded in Year 9 tests but not quite met in Year 6 tests.

In work seen during the inspection, attainment in English, mathematics and science was above average in Year 9, not quite as high as the test results in 2002, but in line with the school's own targets. In Year 6 standards seen in English, mathematics and science were average, representing good achievement for pupils from their attainment on entry just two terms previously. In other subjects, attainment is broadly in line with the national average in Year 6, although it is above average in French and physical education. By the time pupils are in Year 9, their standards are above average and well above average in French, reflecting the good progress made by pupils through the school. Both boys and girls achieve well, and pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make good progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are keen and enthusiastic about the school and their learning in lessons. They respond very well to opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities. Positive attitudes to learning make a strong contribution to the progress the pupils make.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils are polite and courteous. Many examples of thoughtful and sensitive behaviour both in and out of classrooms were witnessed during the inspection.
Personal development and relationships	Very good relationships amongst the whole-school community contribute strongly to pupils' good personal development and the school's values.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Overall, levels of absence are average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Year 6	Years 7 - 9
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.*

The quality of teaching is good in English, mathematics and science and all other subjects. It is very good in history, geography, music and modern foreign languages. Strengths of the teaching include the very good relationships between staff and pupils and effective classroom and behaviour management that encourage pupils to respond positively. Teachers are very secure in their subject knowledge and understanding and know how to present the activities in lively and interesting ways. Planning is mostly detailed and thorough, and is well adapted to the needs of all pupils in the class. Teachers clearly identify what it is that they expect pupils to know, understand or be able to do by the end of the lesson. Marking is good and mostly, though not always, used to acknowledge progress, diagnose problems and identify the next step. Where teaching is less effective, it is usually because the pace of learning is too slow, and teachers over-direct the learning, failing to allow for more active participation by the pupils in their own learning.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy is good. Pupils' learning is good in almost all lessons. Their learning is characterised by a keen and lively interest in their work. They work hard and conscientiously.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The breadth and balance of the curriculum is good, and the provision for more able pupils is a strength. The very good range of extra-curricular activities contributes strongly to the range of opportunities for learning.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils' individual needs are well catered for through a programme of support in lessons and withdrawal when necessary. The study support centre is developing well as an effective resource for a wide range of pupils.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Although there are no pupils at an early stage of language acquisition, support is very effective for those pupils whose mother tongue is not English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Very good provision for the pupils' social, moral and cultural education makes a strong contribution to pupils' good personal development through the school. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. The school's values are reflected in its caring and sympathetic working atmosphere.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Teachers know and care for their pupils well. Comprehensive and thorough procedures for assessing and monitoring individual pupil's progress are in place.

The school works successfully to involve parents and to work in partnership to ensure that all pupils achieve their potential.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good leadership by the headteacher is providing clear educational direction and inspires the trust of the whole-school community. He is given committed and energetic support by his senior team and middle managers.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors are committed and hardworking. They have good procedures for monitoring the school's work, and through their regular visits and meetings, governors have good insights into the school's work.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's procedures for self-evaluation are thorough and increasingly effective.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school applies the principles of best value to its spending decisions, and good budgetary planning closely reflects identified educational priorities.

The match of staff, including support staff, to the needs of the curriculum is good. The teaching is supported by a satisfactory level of resources, including computers. The accommodation has not improved to match the increasing numbers on roll and is now only just satisfactory. Some of the classrooms are too small and offer cramped conditions for learning.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard</li> <li>• The teaching is good and, as a result, their children are making good progress</li> <li>• Their children enjoy coming to school</li> <li>• The school works hard to develop a good partnership with parents</li> <li>• Behaviour is good</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed and is very approachable</li> <li>• The school provides an extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small minority think that the school does not give the right amount of homework</li> </ul>

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, although a very small number are critical of the arrangements for homework. Inspectors agree with the positive comments that parents make. By and large the quality and amount of homework given is satisfactory.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. On entry to the school in Year 6, teacher assessments indicate that attainment is close to, but just below average, and that pupils of all abilities are represented. Attainment on entry has been improving, and the range of ability in Year 6 is higher than that in Year 9, where there are more pupils of below average attainment than the average.
2. At the end of Year 6 in 2002, standards in national tests in English were below average and well below average in mathematics and science. In comparison with schools with a similar proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals – 'similar schools', the performance in English was also below average, and in mathematics and science was well below average. However, by the time pupils at Abington take the tests, they have been in the school for less than one year. The comparison with similar schools is not, therefore, entirely valid. Progress through this year is good, and pupils' achievements are good given their attainment on entry. However, good teaching through Year 6 has had a relatively short time to make a significant impact on their attainment at this stage. Results in all three subjects improved significantly in 1999 but have levelled off since. The overall trend since 1998 has been in line with the improving national trend. There are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls, and pupils from all ethnic backgrounds make similar progress.
3. In national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2002, the pupils' performance in both English and mathematics was well above average, and in science it was above average. In comparison with similar schools, performance in all three subjects was well above average. Since Year 2000, results have been improving and there has been a marked improvement since the last inspection. The 2002 results were very good and value added measures suggest that this particular group of pupils achieved very well and well above average.
4. Year 6 targets set by the school in 2002 were not met but those for Year 9 tests were exceeded in all three subjects. Targets for 2003 and beyond are ambitious and challenging, ensuring that the school continues to seek improvements in its standards.
5. Standards overall in work seen during the inspection were average in Year 6. This is higher than last year's performance in national tests would suggest, but given the improving attainment on entry and the consistently good teaching, pupils are making good progress and achieving well. In Year 9, pupils' attainment overall in work seen was above average, lower than national test results in 2002. The school is predicting that the results in 2003 will not be quite as good, as the current Year 9 is not such an able year. However, pupils' achievements continue to be good through Years 7 to 9.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their individual targets. Those with literacy difficulties improve their reading and spelling. Other pupils with emotional, behavioural and social difficulties make good progress in understanding themselves better so that their academic progress is helped to advance. Records of pupils' attainment show that pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils by the end of Year 9.
7. The school identifies its more able and very able pupils, and higher attaining pupils are usually given challenging work in class and additional opportunities for extension work. As a consequence, their progress through the school is very good.
8. In English, standards are average in work seen in Years 6 and above average in Year 9, and pupils' achievements are good given the language and literacy skills with which they enter the school. On entry pupils' speaking and listening skills are the least well developed and teachers work hard to provide good role models. As a result, by Year 9 most pupils can use appropriate styles of speech

for different occasions, speak in a structured manner and listen well to their teachers and each other. Reading skills are above average, and most pupils are fluent, expressive and confident. In Year 6 written work often shows weaknesses in spelling, punctuation, sentence structure and grammar, but these improve rapidly as pupils move up through the school. In Year 9 most pupils present work carefully and neatly.

9. In work seen during the inspection in mathematics, standards are close to the average in Year 6, and above average in Year 9. Pupils' achievements are good. Pupils' basic numeracy skills are good, and most pupils are able to use and apply numerical skills well, despite an over reliance on calculators in some situations. Other aspects, including pupils' knowledge of shape and space and their ability to handle data are good. However, pupils' investigative and problem-solving skills are less well developed.
10. Standards in science are average in Year 6, and above average in Year 9. Pupils' achievements are good, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Pupils have a good knowledge of science, but their investigative skills and ability to apply scientific concepts are less well developed.
11. In other subjects, in work seen during the inspection in Year 6, standards in all subjects are average except French and physical education (PE) where they are above average. After just one year in the school, pupils' achievements are good given their prior attainment on entry. Most pupils are making good progress. Progress continues to be good through the school and in most subjects, pupils' achievements are consistently good in Years 7 to 9. Pupils with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other groups in the school. In work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 9 are above average in all subjects, although they are well above average in French.

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

12. Overall, pupils' attitudes, values and personal development make a positive contribution to their academic attainment and progress. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning and become increasingly mature and responsible during their years in school. Their behaviour is very good and they have very good relationships with one another and members of staff.
13. Pupils show considerable enthusiasm for school, and are keen to make the most of what it has to offer. Many are involved in a number of extra-curricular activities including homework clubs, music and sport. Most pupils are highly motivated, want to learn and are eager to make progress. They settle down quickly, show interest in the tasks that they are set, and concentrate well. Unsatisfactory attitudes are rare. However, in a few lessons where the learning lacks pace, some pupils have difficulty in sustaining their concentration for the whole lesson.
14. Standards of conduct are high as a result of the school's positive ethos and very good provision for social and moral education. There are clear and consistent expectations regarding behaviour and discipline, and pupils respect these, abiding by the school's rules and behaving very well in lessons. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong, and are polite and considerate to other people. Although they are keen to answer questions in class, they wait their turn to speak and are prepared to listen to each other. Overall, pupils' very good behaviour creates an environment that is conducive to good learning and progress. It also promotes the school as an orderly community. Pupils are courteous and self-disciplined when moving around the site between lessons and during the lunch hour. They treat the school's property with care. The grounds are very tidy and there is no evidence of vandalism or graffiti.
15. The school has a small number of difficult pupils whose behaviour sometimes causes problems. Last year six boys and five girls were excluded for serious breaches of discipline. There were three permanent exclusions and 14 fixed exclusions. The figures are above the national average for middle schools, but reflect the school's insistence on high standards rather than the overall quality of pupils' behaviour. The number of exclusions has fallen since the previous inspection, and is continuing to fall, showing the success of the school's work to improve behaviour and promote inclusion.

16. The quality of relationships is very good. Pupils are open, friendly and confident. Instances of bullying and aggression are rare. Pupils and parents say that the school deals very effectively with the few incidents that do occur. There is no evidence of racism, sexism or other forms of harassment. Relationships with members of staff are based on trust and mutual respect, and this enhances the quality of lessons and promotes good learning. Pupils work hard because they want to earn the approval of their teachers. They also co-operate well with each other in lessons. They are mutually supportive and work successfully in pairs and groups. They are considerate and have respect for other people's feelings. This is evident in poems that Year 8 pupils wrote last year on the subject of 'bullying'. Their work shows a mature understanding of the problem and great sympathy for the victims. It is also a reflection of good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
17. Pupils develop mature and responsible attitudes as they move through the school. Their personal development is good overall. When pupils get the chance to exercise responsibility and use their initiative they respond very positively. They participate in the school's charity week with great enthusiasm, and successfully organise fund-raising events for good causes of their own choice. Pupils also undertake responsibilities in the day-to-day life of the school. For example, all members of Year 9 take turns to act as monitors, and elected representatives of each form serve on the school council. The latter makes significant decisions, such as the choice of charities to support, and has a real influence on the running of the school. Pupils enjoy the challenge of taking on responsibilities and carry out their duties in a conscientious and mature manner. However, few pupils exercise responsibility for their own learning. In class they are sometimes over dependent on teachers because they do not receive sufficient opportunities to make decisions or investigate matters for themselves.
18. Attendance is satisfactory. The school's attendance rate and incidence of unauthorised absence are in line with the national average for middle schools. Most pupils have good records of attendance of pupils and this makes a positive contribution to their standards of attainment. There are very few pupils who are regularly away or absent for long periods.

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

19. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The high quality of teaching reported on at the time of the last inspection has been maintained and the proportion of very good teaching has improved. Around seven out of eight lessons were judged good or better and over one in three was very good. Unsatisfactory teaching has all but been eliminated.
20. Pupils are making good progress and their learning in lessons overall is good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and this means that they try very hard and work with high levels of concentration and motivation. They demonstrate a good degree of interest in the work they undertake. The only weakness in their learning is the extent to which they are prepared to take responsibility for organising their own learning, for solving difficulties on their own without relying on the teacher and for making decisions about how to tackle a problem.
21. The quality of teaching is good in English, mathematics and science, and in all other subjects. It is very good in history, geography, modern foreign languages and music. Characteristics of the good teaching are the very good relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils, and the effective classroom and behaviour management strategies that encourage pupils to take a lively and co-operative interest in the lesson activities. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and understand how to present it in interesting ways. Planning is detailed and thorough, identifying what the pupils are expected to know, understand or able to do by the end of the lesson. With the learning objectives made clear to pupils, they are able to approach the work with confidence and know exactly what they are supposed to achieve.
22. The teaching of literacy throughout the school is good. Most teachers work at improving speaking and listening skills and provide good role models. The school promotes the use of the library and teaches advanced reading skills well. Literature is used very well in the curriculum to encourage

pupils' interest in reading. There are, in most subjects, examples of writing for a variety of purposes.

23. Literacy skills are now being more consistently stressed throughout the school, so that there are many areas in which pupils demonstrate a good level of competence. The school has a recently developed policy for literacy across the school, which is being implemented in the form of word banks of useful vocabulary for specific subjects and a wide range of styles of writing for different purposes. Not all subjects are yet fulfilling this role consistently, but there is a growing awareness of its need, ably supported by the co-ordinator for the policy.
24. The teaching of numeracy is good in mathematics where pupils' basic numeracy skills are effectively reinforced during most lessons. In addition, there is a planned programme of numeracy work for pupils to follow during one tutor time per week. This is helping to sustain standards, and there is appropriate follow up from mathematics teachers. Elsewhere strategies for teaching and reinforcing numeracy are satisfactory. Most subjects have numeracy as part of their scheme of work, and effectively incorporate skills as needed. In science, graphs and numeracy work are used appropriately, although there is no clear strategy for promoting better numeracy. There is, however, some good use of charts and graphs in religious education to provide effective displays of work. Pupils weigh and measure accurately in practical subjects, and other subjects such as physical education indicate that there is confident use of data handling skills in recording and displaying information.
25. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good with the result that these pupils learn as well as other pupils. Teachers have very good information on pupils' particular needs and their current targets for improvement. They provide pupils with tasks that are appropriately matched. This means they can work independently and cover the same work as the class. Pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs receive very good support across the curriculum from learning assistants when it is needed. For example, in a history lesson, a Year 8 pupil with communication difficulties was encouraged to ask a question. Use of appropriate language and modified demonstration helped pupils with special educational needs to develop good techniques in a gymnastics lesson for a Year 7 class.
26. It is the expectations that teachers have of what pupils can achieve that distinguishes the best teaching from the less effective. Where expectations are high, pupils are challenged, the pace of lessons is brisk and the pupils' learning is very good. This very good learning takes place within a well-planned and well-ordered lesson that meets the needs of all pupils, taking account of their different starting points. For example, in a very good Year 8 history lesson, the pupils were learning about the Reformation in England. In this very well-planned lesson, the work built successfully on previous learning and individual learning needs were met through varied support for the teacher and teaching assistants, different levels of resources and as well as different set tasks. In addition, the homework set was also planned effectively to follow up issues and consolidate the pupils' learning according to their individual level of understanding. Excellent attitudes contributed to very good gains in learning made, but above all, it was the high expectations of what all pupils could achieve, which led to very good progress.
27. A Year 8 English lesson on Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' provided another example of very high expectations leading to very good learning. The teacher's lively exposition established good relationships with the pupils and focused their interest. Although this was a difficult class to manage, with a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs, the teacher's patient approach ensured that the pupils became absorbed almost against their will. Work was very well planned to meet the varying needs of the pupils, particularly those with special educational needs. The teacher was very good at inspiring the pupils to emotive and expressive delivery of their lines and to an understanding of the Shakespearian vocabulary used. This was skilful teaching in which the pupils' self-esteem, confidence and independent learning were encouraged.
28. In some lessons, very good questioning by the teacher encouraged the pupils to explain and reason, leading to pupils developing their learning and thinking skills. In a Year 8 French lesson skilful use of questions ensured that the pupils had a firm grasp of the principles of using the

perfect tense and when and why they must use agreement. Pupils worked hard and were challenged to think more deeply by the teacher's effective questioning technique. Other subjects in which teachers were observed using questions to good effect were music and history. In a Year 8 science lesson on predator/prey relationships, the teacher used quick-fire questions on key terms to effectively reinforce work already covered. As the lesson progressed, pupils made good gains in their understanding, but these gains could have been greater if the pupils had worked through examples of predator or prey adaptations themselves instead of relying on the teacher to supply the information.

29. A tendency for the teacher to over-direct the learning is characteristic of the teaching that while often good, does not encourage pupils themselves to get actively involved, to solve problems on their own, for researching ideas for themselves or for taking more responsibility for organising their own learning. In a Year 9 English lesson on 'Buddy' by Nigel Hinton, the teacher was seeking to extend the pupils' strategies for locating and extracting information and to look at how an author establishes a character. The teaching was well planned and pupils showed good attitudes to the lesson. As a result, progress was satisfactory, but the pace was too slow and activities were allowed to go on for too long. The teacher dominated and failed to give pupils the encouragement to learn by themselves. Lessons in which the pace of learning was too slow and the teacher over directed were observed in mathematics and science as well as in English.
30. Sometimes it is the lack of space in classrooms that inhibits a more active approach to learning on the part of the pupils. This can discourage teachers from adopting a more varied range of learning strategies. This was observed in some mathematics lessons in particular, but is also a feature of learning in science and ICT.
31. In general, the teaching is adapted to suit the needs of the range of pupils in the class. This is because the teachers know individual pupils well and are able to respond well to their individual learning needs. Grouping by prior attainment in English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science and some other subjects is helping teachers to plan particular activities to match the learning needs of specific groups. High attaining pupils in particular are well challenged, not just through the school's programme for more able and very able pupils, but through the careful planning in lessons to ensure that work matches their need. There is still work to be done in citizenship and design and technology to ensure that work is always set to challenge all pupils whatever their prior attainment.
32. Most lessons begin with a clear identification of the learning intentions, carefully explained to the pupils. The most effective lessons returned to these, not just at the end but at various points during the lessons, to remind pupils of the learning objective and to assess progress. Homework is used to support learning in a number of different ways. A small minority of parents indicated some dissatisfaction with the amount of homework set. In most cases, the quality and quantity of homework set is appropriate
33. Characteristic of much of the teaching are the very good relationships established between staff and pupils. Many teachers have established trusting and productive relationships with their pupils. As a consequence, good learning takes place in a friendly atmosphere. Classroom management and discipline are very good, and examples of unsatisfactory or challenging behaviour are rare. Instances of lack of concentration or restlessness amongst the pupils are also uncommon.
34. Teachers are increasingly confident in their use of ICT. Improved access to computers is ensuring that computers are increasingly seen as a natural tool to enhance learning. Some good use of computers was observed in art and design, English and geography. However, despite the good number of computers in the school, opportunities are sometimes missed to use ICT to support learning, particularly in mathematics, science, design and technology, history, music and physical education.
35. Marking is good overall in most subjects. In science, ICT and religious education much marking is regular and supportive with detailed guidance on how to improve. Sometimes, however, marking,

although regular, fails to give enough guidance to the pupils on how to improve. As a result, pupils are not always sure of what they should be doing to reach higher levels of attainment.

36. A small number of parents identified the regular setting of homework as an issue of concern. Inspectors found little evidence to support this concern. Homework is generally set according to a timetable and is often well used to support and extend work done in class.
37. The good quality of teaching overall, is a significant factor in the good progress pupils make. The school now needs to do more to ensure that best practice is shared more widely and that there is a continuing focus on what works and what is less successful.

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

38. The school's curriculum provision is good and meets statutory requirements in all years. The main strengths are the breadth and balance of the curriculum, the very good provision made for pupils with special educational needs, the effectiveness of strategies for improving literacy skills, the very good range of extra-curricular activities, very good provision for the teaching of personal, social and health education, an all-pervading ethos of social inclusion and the contribution made by the community to pupils' learning, together with the very good relationships with partner institutions. All these have a positive impact on teaching and learning, and prepare pupils very well for life in multicultural Britain.
39. The range of subjects in all years provides a broad and balanced curriculum for pupils. Overall, time allocations are adequate to teach the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. In Year 6 pupils benefit from the provision of French lessons, which prepares them well for their work in Years 7 to 9.
40. The school makes very good provision for pupils with special educational needs. The school shows a strong commitment to promoting an inclusive education and works hard to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all pupils with special educational needs. Additionally, where appropriate, pupils are taught individually or in a small group outside a lesson so particular problems are addressed, such as spelling, reading and concentration. Extraction from lessons is kept to a minimum and is negotiated with subject teachers. In subjects where this occurs support is provided in class so progress and continuity are maintained. Year 9 pupils volunteer to listen to Year 6 pupils read. The study support centre is used as a very attractive base for learning support and houses its resources and administration. Very good support is given by external agencies where appropriate. For example, during the inspection a member of the schools' psychological service visited to arrange a series of meetings to help pupils to manage their anger. Outside lesson time several club activities, such as for spelling improvement, take place and are well attended.
41. Equally, the school provides very well for higher attaining pupils, through its more able and very able programmes. Carefully planned extension work both in and out of school, much of which is done in conjunction with pupils of similar ability in other local schools and colleges, ensures that these pupils are enabled to reach their full potential. Criticised at the time of the last inspection, the school has made significant progress in adapting its curriculum to challenge its higher attaining pupils.
42. The teaching of literacy across the subjects of the curriculum is generally good. Although the implementation of a whole-school policy for teaching literacy skills is relatively new, the school has been conscious for some years of the need for all subjects to participate in the reinforcement of these skills and this is now showing its value in pupils' general standard of literacy.
43. Strategies for teaching numeracy are satisfactory. While the teaching of basic skills is good in mathematics, and good opportunities are taken in tutor time to reinforce some skills, opportunities are sometimes missed in other subjects to promote a more confident approach to handling and manipulating number.
44. The provision for pupils' personal, health and social education is very good. The school aims to help pupils to develop personal confidence and self-esteem, as well as learning about social factors and acquiring a sense of values on life. There is a very well-planned scheme of work, which also encompasses the major aspects of citizenship. Sex education is taught effectively, as is drugs and substance misuse, smoking and the use of alcohol. In addition, the scheme supports the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils very well. The subject does much to aid the strong ethos of tolerance, respect, friendliness and good behaviour to be found throughout the school.

45. The school provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There are many opportunities provided for an extensive range of sports, which allow all pupils to develop and enjoy physical skills and encourage the talented sportsmen to excel, through both recreation and competition. There are many activities taking place both at lunchtime and after school. Many pupils, parents and staff take part in these activities, which are greatly valued by pupils and do much to broaden pupils' learning experiences. There is a good range of clubs, such as art, ICT and mathematics, as well as a homework club and a breakfast club. Musical activities are a strong feature of school life, through choir, orchestra and musicals. The school holds 'special' days, such as a recent Divali Day and there are many trips and visits to broaden pupils' experience, as well as a residential trip to Wales. Pupils' enthusiasm for activities is shown by their pleasure in achievements such as the making of a CD as their prize for writing a song and carrying off the debating prize in the 'Children's Parliament' competition associated with subjects to enrich pupils' special interests. There are also many fund-raising events where the money raised is split between three charities.
46. A good programme of careers education is in place. Year 9 pupils are introduced to the well-resourced careers library to help them to consider career aspirations. The school has made very good links with the local community, which further broaden pupils' experiences. Sports teams compete in a wide range of local, regional and national competitions and there are well-established links with local churches, as well as many voluntary helpers from the local community.
47. The curriculum is carefully planned in collaboration with first schools and takes full account of the work previously covered by pupils, as well as that to be covered in their senior schools. The school has very good links with primary schools, upper schools and the local college. Teachers meet regularly to discuss curriculum subjects and the transition from school to school is made as smooth as possible for all pupils. Links with upper and other educational institutions are used particularly well in providing opportunities for the higher attaining pupils to access high level extension work.
48. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Opportunities exist for pupils to explore the beliefs and values of Christianity and other faiths and assemblies provide points in the day to consider meaningful themes, many of them with a spiritual dimension. The school has worked hard to improve the provision for spiritual development since the last inspection. Pupils take part in a project on the holocaust and contribute to a Divali assembly that includes Asian dances. The school observes a two minutes' silence on Remembrance Day to reflect on the horrors of war and those who have died. However, these good opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of spirituality are not consistently found in some year assemblies. Although the 'Thought for the day' is displayed in classrooms it is not always acknowledged or discussed in tutor time. Inconsistencies remain in the school's practice. In some lessons opportunities are made for reflection, as for example, when the study of the Reformation in a history lesson also raises questions about the belief of martyrs and why this was so important that they were prepared to die for their faith.
49. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good and most parents believe that the school helps pupils to become mature and responsible individuals. The code of conduct is promoted consistently throughout all aspects of school life with fairness, integrity and respect for people of all races and cultures. The system of rewards and sanctions is well established and exclusions and detentions have been reduced; the yellow report card is no longer needed. Through regular fund-raising activities pupils learn about the work of charities and they regularly raise money to support African children. Opportunities are used in some subjects to explore bullying and violence and to raise local issues about vandalism and security. Literature gives examples of moral dilemmas and the story of the 'Pied Piper of Hamelin' was used to raise issues of cause and consequence of decisions taken. Sex education and the dangers of drugs including alcohol and tobacco are part of the school's health programme and are covered in various areas of the curriculum.
50. The provision for pupils' social development is very good. The wide range of activities that take place during lunchtime and after school enables pupils to pursue personal interests and work with others from different age groups. There are opportunities for pupils to act as prefects and monitors

and all pupils are involved in making nominations for the school council and voting in elections. The school is successful in developing a spirit whereby pupils' social well-being is fostered through friendship groups, tutor groups and harmonious relationships between all races. Pupils mix well and there is much reinforcement of belonging together through assemblies, team activities, residential experiences and school concerts. There is mutual respect and high ideals of participation and involvement. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and this contributes to the smooth running of the school. The school council is a valued forum where pupils can confidently raise issues for discussion. There is close co-operation with parents and with the local community and an e-mail link with pupils in France and Germany. The parent-teacher association is an effective body that organises social and charitable events for the benefit of the school.

51. The provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. Pupils develop an enjoyment and appreciation of art, music and literature through work in these subjects. They learn about the diversity of cultures, which prepares them for life in a multicultural society. Pupils participate in clubs, visits and field trips, and displays and exhibitions reinforce the school's cultural values. In music lessons, pupils study world music and develop their knowledge; for example, of Indian ragas. There has been an African drumming project and joint musical events with partner schools. Organised trips allow pupils to experience life in France and Austria. There is a wide range of extension opportunities such as poetry writing, booster classes in English, mathematics and ICT, making T-shirts at the Emtex Centre and support from sports professionals. There have been visits to local churches and a Sikh temple and a school trip to Wales, all of which reinforce the idea of the school as a mixed community working to increase racial harmony.

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

52. The quality of pastoral care and academic guidance is very good and successfully underpins the school's academic curriculum. It creates a secure environment in which pupils feel confident and are able to make the most of opportunities for learning. The school's support systems are, therefore, very effective in enhancing personal development and academic progress. Pupils value the school's pastoral care. They know that members of staff have genuine concern for their welfare and will always try to meet their individual needs. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection when inspectors judged the standard of care to be good. Overall, arrangements for ensuring pupils' welfare, including the procedures for child protection are very good.
53. Pupils receive very good care during their transfer from primary school. They benefit from a full programme of induction events that helps them to get to know one another and to understand school routines. They are, therefore, well prepared for the change and settle quickly. The smooth transfer of pupils is assisted by the very good links that the school has with its partner primary schools. There is also very close co-operation with Guthlaxton College over the next stage of education. As a result, pupils in Year 9 have access to very good guidance on their options for GCSE.
54. Procedures for supporting and promoting pupils' personal development have many strengths and are very good overall. The school's very good programme of personal, social, health education and citizenship prepares pupils very well for life in the outside world. It also helps them to understand and deal with problems that they might encounter within school, such as bullying and racism. Arrangements for monitoring and supporting the personal development of each pupil are very effective. Form tutors and heads of year remain with the same groups for up to four years and get to know pupils well as individuals. The tutorial programme does not provide much time for interaction between tutors and members of their form. However, pupils who need help with personal problems can speak to their tutors at break or the lunch hour, or if they prefer, they can consult their head of year. Furthermore, each pupil has two progress review meetings per year with his or her form tutor in order to discuss progress and set personal targets. The school provides a wide range of support systems and sources of advice. For example, members of Year 7 act as 'buddies' to the new intake in Year 6. There is also a comprehensive programme of study support. This is particularly valuable in promoting the progress of average and higher attaining pupils, as

well as those with special educational needs. The school keeps very good records on personal development. Consequently, members of staff identify pupils who are experiencing difficulties and give them the help that they need. There is little chance of individuals with serious problems falling through the pastoral safety net.

55. The school has very good procedures for monitoring behaviour and promoting good conduct. Members of staff have consistently high expectations and act as good role models. They give pupils a very clear understanding of what is and what is not acceptable behaviour. The vast majority of pupils respond positively to this by behaving well in lessons and around the school. The school's system of sanctions deals effectively with relatively minor misdemeanours and its scheme of rewards successfully encourages good behaviour. The minority of pupils who repeatedly breach the school's code of conduct are given special help to modify their behaviour. There is close co-operation with outside experts, such as the educational psychologist, on provision of support for pupils with serious problems. The system is usually successful in keeping them in school, as the fall in the number of exclusions shows. The school's behaviour procedures, therefore, make a significant contribution to its policy for social and educational inclusion. Exclusion is used as a sanction or last resort. In the last two years the school has only excluded pupils for very poor behaviour, after other options have been exhausted.
56. The school is extremely effective at eliminating oppressive behaviour. Its programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship includes modules that examine and discourage bullying, racism, and sexism. Arrangements for the supervision of pupils are good, and restrict opportunities for rough play and aggression. Procedures for dealing with instances of bullying are very effective. Parents and pupils are confident that the school will tackle such behaviour promptly and firmly.
57. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good. The school analyses the registers very thoroughly and follows up all unexplained absences. It identifies and addresses cases of unsatisfactory attendance. Members of staff are prompt in contacting parents by telephone or letter. When there is reason to suspect that someone is playing truant, the office will telephone home on the first day of absence. The school works well with the education social worker to support pupils with poor attendance. It also actively encourages good attendance. For example, pupils with 100 per cent records are rewarded with certificates.
58. The school makes very good arrangements to safeguard the welfare of its pupils. It has a very good policy on child protection, and all members of staff receive a thorough briefing on the procedures to be followed in the event of a case occurring. There are comprehensive and effective procedures for regular health and safety checks and risk assessment. There are some minor health and safety concerns arising from shortcomings in the school's accommodation. For example, some lessons in food technology take place in a room that is also used for design and technology. The previous inspection report noted that there was a circular saw that represented some risk to pupils, in one of the design and technology classrooms. This is still the case because of lack of space.
59. Teachers are aware of pupils' special educational needs because excellent individual education plans and meetings inform them very well. At least once a term study support meetings for the whole staff provide the opportunity to discuss any pupil who gives concern. Statements of Special Educational Needs are fully implemented so that resources go to the pupil as required. They are reviewed annually and adjusted if necessary. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is tracked through the school's assessment system so the staff know pupils' rate of progress. Pupils attend review meetings and discuss, with special educational needs teachers, the targets that will help them make progress.
60. The school's assessment policy provides a very good framework for ensuring that assessment is used effectively to help raise standards. It is being implemented very effectively by the deputy headteacher responsible who has helped the staff appreciate the important role good assessment procedures can have in raising standards. The school works in close partnership with its feeder primary schools to gain valuable information about pupils' attainment in English and mathematics,

based on standardised tests administered to pupils in Year 5. In addition, teachers from almost all the schools also provide a measure of attainment covering all other subjects. This information is used with further testing on entry to help set expectations for every pupil in all National Curriculum subjects. Training has been provided for all staff involved to ensure the target setting process, and particularly the level of challenge set, is appropriate.

61. Pupils' progress is monitored regularly by teachers across all subjects and progress reported to senior managers twice yearly to inform reviews with every pupil. The grades and assessments provided are analysed in a number of ways. A particular strength in the procedures is the clear role of key staff such as heads of year, heads of departments and form tutors in using this information. For example, form tutors hold twice-yearly reviews with each pupil, informed by assessments from each subject area, and short-term goals are agreed and recorded with them. Those pupils identified as underachieving are supported and encouraged in a number of ways; for example, heads of year or senior managers may mentor individual pupils and some may attend booster or catch up classes. Parents are also informed at an early stage and an additional report is sent to them on their child's progress. Overall, the arrangements for supporting pupils' academic progress are very effective.
62. Assessment is used effectively by key managers to guide curricular planning and the focus of improvements. Within most subjects, rigorous procedures are in place for assessing pupils' standards and their progress through standardised assessments, many of which are based on national tests. These assessments guide teachers' judgements about pupils' attainment in the National Curriculum and teachers meet with others in neighbouring schools to ensure that their judgements are consistent. The use of assessment is particularly effective in subjects such as English, history, geography and physical education to closely monitor pupils and to identify and act on strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum. In a few subjects, such procedures are less developed but are currently being improved; for example, science. Senior managers also use the school's central database of assessment to evaluate the impact of its provision on vulnerable groups such as the least able, those with English as an additional language and those more able pupils that the school has identified on its register.

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

63. The school values the contribution that parents make to pupils' learning and has succeeded in establishing a very good partnership with them. Home/school links are strong. Parents actively support their children's education, and their involvement has a very positive impact on standards of attainment. The school has a very good reputation with pupils' parents and enjoys their full confidence.
64. Parents have a very high regard for the school and are pleased with all aspects of its work. In the inspection's survey of parental opinion, the majority of answers expressed great satisfaction with what the school does. The replies show that parents are extremely pleased with its expectations regarding hard work and the quality of its leadership and management. They strongly believe that home/school links are good. All of them say that they would feel comfortable about approaching members of staff with queries and concerns, and more than nine out of ten think that they are well informed about how their child is getting on. Parents are also very happy with pupils' progress, the quality of teaching, the range of extra-curricular activities and the way in which the school helps children to become mature and responsible. Although just over one in ten of respondents were unhappy with the amount of homework set, inspectors judge the quality and quantity of homework set to be appropriate.
65. The quality of information for parents is good and has many strengths. The school prospectus is very attractively presented and easy to use. It contains a helpful summary of the curriculum, school routines and provision for pastoral care. In contrast, the annual report of the governing body is a very brief document that barely meets legal requirements. It is particularly weak in reporting on the success of the school's policies for pupils with special educational needs. Information on the curriculum is good. The school has effective procedures for updating parents on the latest developments through open evenings, newsletters and workshops, such as the ones that it has

held on literacy and numeracy. The school newsletter, which is published on a regular basis, contains information on the curriculum and homework. It also notifies parents of pupils' achievements, changes to school routine and forthcoming events. Day-to-day communications between home and school are good. Homework planners provide parents with a regular source of information on what pupils are learning in lessons and are expected to do at home. The majority of pupils maintain their planners well and conscientiously use them to record homework tasks and targets for improvement.

66. Parents are happy with information on pupils' progress. Almost all the respondents to the inspection questionnaire said that the school kept them well informed about how their child was getting on. There are good arrangements for consultation evenings at which parents and teachers discuss children's progress and targets for improvement. Parents receive at least two written reports per year. These give them a wealth of information on the grades that pupils have achieved. Parents, therefore, get a very clear picture of their child's effort and level of attainment relative to the rest of the year group. However, some teachers' comments are too general and give only a very broad indication of areas for improvement.
67. The school's aim of establishing strong and effective links with parents is set out in the draft policy on home-school partnership. This is a formal statement of the work that is already going on. The school constantly encourages parents to support their children's learning and to work with members of staff to solve problems. The pastoral system plays a significant role in this area. Form tutors and heads of year get to know pupils' families well, and this promotes good relations between home and school. Parents are, therefore, very willing to co-operate with teachers if the latter express worries over children's work or behaviour. They are also free to raise their own queries and problems with members of staff. The school takes parents' views very seriously and does its best to address their concerns. It has good procedures for canvassing their opinions through questionnaires, and through the use of reply slips on end-of-year reports. The school gets a very positive response from parents, and this enhances pupils' learning. Parents sign the home-school agreement and accept the obligations that are set out in it. They ensure that pupils attend school every day and support members of staff over behaviour discipline, even though a small minority of parents tacitly condone truancy. As the inspection survey shows, parents are supportive of pupils' work at home. They are very keen that their children should get the right amount of homework, and they encourage them to complete their homework tasks. Parents attend consultation evenings and school functions in large numbers. They give good support to trips and extra-curricular activities, and this extends pupils' opportunities for learning. For example, parents are willing to pay for instrumental music lessons for their children. They also play an active part in the life of the school. There is a successful parent teacher association that organises fund-raising and social events. In recent years it has made a very valuable contribution to improvements to the school's accommodation and resources.
68. The learning support department has very good arrangements for informing parents of the provision for special educational needs. Induction meetings are held before pupils start at the school and subsequently opportunities occur at parent consultation meetings and review meetings. Parents' views are encouraged and they contribute to the targets agreed with pupils. The provision is highly regarded by parents.
69. The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. It has successfully maintained a partnership with parents, which contributes strongly to pupils' attainment and progress.

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

70. Leadership and management are good. The school has maintained its improvement since the last inspection, and is now well placed to continue moving forward. The school's aims and values are reflected in the school's commitment to achieving high standards within a happy, caring and disciplined framework. The school is socially and educationally inclusive and values individual achievement.

71. The headteacher provides the school with a clear sense of direction and purpose. His comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the school is based on secure procedures for monitoring its work. He has gained the support and trust of the whole-school community, including governors, parents and staff. His vision is shared by all, and he is effectively and conscientiously supported by his deputies who bring considerable experience and commitment to the school. Their complementary roles enable the school to run efficiently.
72. The senior management team meets weekly. These meetings are a good forum for both strategic planning and the day-to-day management of the school. The school's management systems are effectively in place. Assessment data and other performance evidence are used very effectively to support and justify developmental priorities. Although line management is largely informal, communication is very good. Annual departmental reviews carried out alternately by the senior team and within departments enable practice to be monitored carefully. Performance management has been implemented successfully and is now an integral part of the school's performance review cycle.
73. Management at all levels is good. Heads of department and heads of year have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities. Heads of year are taking an increasingly active role in monitoring the academic as well as the personal development of pupils. Staff morale is high and all staff are committed to improvement and share the school's values and ideals. The school's capacity for further improvement is good.
74. The school development plan is a comprehensive document that builds on previous years' plans and places improved pupil progress at its heart. Subject plans are an integral part of the plan. It provides a good framework for school improvement. The plan is securely based on an audit of current standards and provision, and priorities identified are appropriate.
75. Monitoring of teaching and learning through lesson observations is carried out by senior staff and through peer observations. All teaching staff are observed. This process now needs to be more sharply focused on what works and what is less effective to ensure that the drive to ensure more consistently good standards of teaching and learning is constantly on the agenda. The introduction of recent national initiatives, such as the Key Stage 3 Strategy, has been well managed and has led to a reconsideration of teaching practice. However, the school can do more to ensure that best practice is shared and that the effectiveness of learning strategies in particular is continually levered up. The further development of teaching and learning strategies is a priority in the school's development plan.
76. The special educational needs department is very well led and managed by the special educational needs co-ordinator. She manages learning support very effectively. The school has successfully addressed the issue of extraction from lessons from the previous inspection. The new study support centre provides an excellent base for special educational needs resources, small group and individual teaching, and for meetings. ICT facilities could be improved in the centre and access for physically disabled pupils and adults to the upper floors of the school. These items are identified for development. The governor for special educational needs is experienced and visits regularly. The governors' report to parents could demonstrate more that well-managed resources improve the achievements of pupils with special educational needs.
77. Governors are committed and hard working. They bring a good range of experience and professional expertise to the school's governance. They are well informed about both day-to-day issues and more strategic planning. Governors are involved in the ratification of the school development plan and in monitoring progress towards meeting its targets. Discussions in committee and full governors' meetings are detailed and comprehensive. Governors are increasingly confident in their ability to challenge and question the senior management. Statutory requirements are largely met, although the provision of a daily act of collective worship remains unmet.
78. The school's budget is being well managed, and the budget is planned to ensure that resources match educational priorities. Governors have a good overview of the budget and are kept regularly

updated with monitoring statements. They monitor the educational impact of spending decisions and have a good understanding of issues related to value for money. The school seeks best value wherever possible in its spending decisions. The most recent audit of the school's financial systems and controls was in August 2002 and indicated that all controls and financial procedures were satisfactory. Designated funds, including those for special educational needs and social inclusion, are used appropriately. The school is efficiently administered and it makes good use of information systems to process data and ensure that information is readily available for governors and staff to manage the school effectively. It manages the bureaucratic demands from both local and national sources well.

79. Staffing levels overall, are good throughout the school and there is a reasonable match between teachers' qualifications and experience and their deployment in most subjects. Even in Year 6 where non-specialists are teaching a wide range of subjects, it is rare for this to impact on the quality of provision. On the other hand, a number of subjects in Year 6 are taught by specialist teachers, and the benefits of having specialist teachers of science, physical education, music, art and design and modern foreign languages are very positive.
80. Good systems are in place for the induction of new staff and newly qualified teachers. The number and expertise of support staff are good. The school is well served by its administrative staff and there is an appropriate level of effective technician support. The help pupils with special educational needs receive from the learning support assistants is of a good quality and contributes significantly to their progress. Performance management has been implemented successfully and is effectively integrated with the professional development programme.
81. Accommodation is adequate overall. It has improved since the previous inspection thanks to the addition of the new study support centre. There are a number of other strengths, such as good music rooms, spacious grounds and buildings that are well maintained. However, some of the weaknesses noted by the previous report still exist. Many classrooms are small for the size of the classes using them. This restricts teachers' choice of activities and teaching methods. Several rooms are not directly accessible from corridors. They can only be reached from other classrooms, and this sometimes causes interruption to lessons. The accommodation for science is barely adequate. Two of the four laboratories are too small to meet the needs of classes of 30 pupils, and there is a shortage of storage space and preparation areas. Two of the four laboratories are also old and in need of refurbishment. Design and technology has to share the use of a room with food technology. While this does not impair standards of attainment, it is not an ideal situation with regard to pupils' health and safety.
82. Learning resources are adequate to meet the needs of the curriculum. Departments have a satisfactory range of relevant textbooks, equipment and other subject materials. The overall provision of computers has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. ICT resources are good in some subject areas. Learning in music is enhanced by the use of a keyboard laboratory, design and technology resources include computerised design and cutting equipment and in science, pupils have the benefit of ten, new data loggers. Access for whole classes to computer suites is limited in some subject areas; for example, art and design and mathematics. The school library provides a good range of texts to support pupils' work across the curriculum. Patterns of borrowing are monitored in order to gauge reading habits and provide the most appropriate reading materials for pupils and staff. The librarian has identified a need for more literature to support pupils with English as their second language. The careers library is a well-used resource. Pupils' appreciation of artwork is enhanced by the school's own good art collection. Resources available within the school are supplemented by visits outside, including theatre visits, and trips to museums, art galleries and places of worship. Language groups have weekend visits to Boulogne and residential stays near Paris. Annual residential activities are organised for Years 7 to 9.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

83. In order to maintain and improve standards of attainment and the quality of provision, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
- 1) improve the use of information and communication technology to support learning in subjects, particularly in mathematics, science, history, music and design and technology by:
    - ensuring that access to ICT is always possible to support the learning across all subjects;
    - reviewing schemes of work to ensure that opportunities are taken to use ICT to enhance learning.(paragraphs 34, 96, 102, 116, 118, 130, 135, 145)
  - 2) provide more opportunities for pupils to take greater responsibility and a more active part in their learning by:
    - reviewing the opportunities that teachers provide for pupils to take more responsibility for their learning;
    - offering more opportunities for pupils to research ideas independently of the teacher.(paragraphs 29, 30)
  - 3) make sharper the procedures for sharing best practice in teaching and learning by:
    - adopting more formal approaches and a sharper focus to the sharing of best practice;
    - continuing to improve teachers' confidence in self-evaluation.(paragraph 75)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	101
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	59

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	36	52	12	1	0	0
Percentage	0	35.6	51.5	11.9	1.0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y6– Y9
Number of pupils on the school's roll	712
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	88

Special educational needs	Y6 – Y9
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	22
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	128

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	36

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	6.1

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.3

*Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	88	87	175

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	60	58	72
	Girls	67	53	67
	Total	127	111	139
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	73 (71)	63 (53)	79 (86)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	57	53	69
	Girls	67	43	71
	Total	124	96	140
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	71 (73)	55 (55)	80 (73)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage (Year 9)**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	99	86	185

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	82	80
	Girls	78	64	58
	Total	155	146	138
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	84 (67)	79 (74)	75 (70)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	39 (21)	60 (45)	42 (40)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)
Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	82	78
	Girls	70	67	67
	Total	147	149	145
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	79 (69)	81 (71)	78 (69)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils	School	38 (34)	50 (38)	42 (38)

at NC level 6 or above	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)
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Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Ethnic background of students

### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	647	14	3
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	32	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded.

### Teachers and classes

### Financial information

#### Qualified teachers and classes: Y6 – Y9

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	34.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.5

Financial year	2002/3
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#### Education support staff: Y6 – Y9

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	384

	£
Total income	2,155,108
Total expenditure	2,042,375
Expenditure per pupil	2,869
Balance brought forward from previous year	117,814
Balance carried forward to next year	112,733

#### Deployment of teachers: Y6 – Y9

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79
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#### Average teaching group size: Y6 – Y9

Key Stage 2	26.6
Key Stage 3	24.9

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.1
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	712
Number of questionnaires returned	184

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	47	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	58	41	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	51	1	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	54	9	2	1
The teaching is good.	51	49	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	38	4	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	70	30	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	24	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	47	51	2	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	65	33	1	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	46	1	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	55	39	2	1	4

**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**

- Teaching and learning are good, sometimes very good.
- Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 are well above average and have improved over the past five years.
- Pupils make good progress throughout the school, whatever their needs, and higher attaining pupils make very good progress by the end of Year 9.
- The Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy has been effectively implemented and has helped to raise standards.
- The curriculum covers a wide range of literacy skills and makes very good use of literature in teaching them.
- The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is well used to aid their further progress.
- Leadership and management are good.

**Areas for improvement**

- The consistency of constructive marking of pupils' work.
- The use of the monitoring of teaching to spread the good practice in the department.

84. In 2002, the results of the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 were below the national average and below those obtained by similar schools, but were better than results in both mathematics and science. The percentage of the higher than expected levels was below that obtained nationally, although there was no difference between the performance of boys and girls. Over the last five years results have generally remained at a similar level and have been broadly in line with the national trend. Progress has been good, in the light of the wide range of pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school, which is close to, but below the average in literacy skills. Standards observed during the inspection, however, indicate that Year 6 pupils are now in line with the national average and are making good progress, especially in the light of the short time they spend in the school before taking the end-of-year, Year 6 tests.
85. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above average, both nationally and when compared with those obtained by similar schools, with a good percentage of pupils reaching the higher than expected level. These results show a very high level of value when these pupils' results are compared with their results at the end of Year 6. Again, there was little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. There has been very good improvement over the last five years and pupils have made good progress.
86. Pupils' work seen in the current Year 9 during the inspection indicates that standards are above average, slightly lower than in 2002, but that this is because this is not such an able year group. However, pupils are achieving well and in line with their abilities. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers, through good support from their teachers and support staff, who provide them with much extra attention, specific targets and a high level of intervention work to ensure their progress.
87. By the end of Year 6 attainment in work seen is average. Pupils achieve well given their attainment on entry and many pupils speak articulately and with a good vocabulary. Higher attaining pupils are able to discuss, debate and present arguments clearly and coherently. However, pupils of average and lower attainment often find it difficult to use an appropriate tone and style for different occasions or to speak in an extended manner. By the end of Year 9, most can adapt their speech to a wider range of situations and audience when provided with the opportunity. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils were provided with interesting and well-supported opportunities to read

Shakespeare's dialogue, in the form of a scene from 'Romeo and Juliet', with understanding, interest and enthusiasm. However, all pupils listen well to teachers and each other. The less confident pupils are too willing to allow others to make all oral contributions, unless they are specifically promoted to do so by their teachers. The school has rightly made a priority of speaking and listening, which is the literacy area most in need of improvement. Teachers work hard to encourage speaking and listening skills, although currently, because of staff changes, there is little opportunity for formal drama to enhance this area.

88. By the end of Year 6 most pupils can read appropriate texts fluently and with good word-building skills. By the end of Year 9, pupils' reading skills are much stronger, with many reading with expression, understanding and clear comprehension of what they are reading. Most pupils read with accuracy and independence. They are introduced, from an early age, to much good literature, both in lessons and in their private reading, and literature is very well used as a tool for the teaching of basic skills. For example, pupils in Year 9 were observed studying Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est' and Adrian Mitchell's 'To Whom it May Concern' with interest and sensitive response. Written work is wide in range, covering many appropriate styles and genres. Pupils accomplish a great deal of sustained writing, the higher attaining pupils in Year 9 undertaking research projects of a high quality, such as work seen on George Orwell's 'Animal Farm' and on J.B. Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls'. Lower attaining pupils make very good use of writing frames provided to meet their needs. Pupils are taught well to plan their work carefully and shown the need to redraft it to improve its quality. Sometimes, especially for the average and lower attainers, writing is technically weak in areas such as spelling, punctuation and grammar, but the department works hard to improve these areas. The presentation of pupils' work is nearly always good, with clear and legible handwriting.
89. Teaching and learning are good overall, and sometimes very good. The school has carefully implemented the Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy, as well as using the Key Stage 2 Strategy in Year 6. This has meant that lessons are well planned and structured and that work is carefully graded to suit the needs of all abilities. This is evident in the department's success in raising the attainment of lower attaining pupils and the good progress made by those with special educational needs. Above all, the department is now promoting higher attaining pupils to their full potential and is enabling them to develop both their skills and personal response to a high level. Basic skills are taught well throughout the school, and re-inforced in all subjects so that pupils are secure in their grasp of speaking, reading and writing. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils, in the main, which does much to improve their confidence and to raise the self-esteem of average and lower attaining pupils. Management of pupils is very good, often seemingly effortless, creating an atmosphere of calm, interested and purposeful work in classrooms. Time is generally used to good advantage and support staff are well deployed to aid and assist those pupils most in need of help. Teachers regularly and productively set homework to reinforce work done in lessons and work is always marked, but not always consistently constructive in telling pupils how to improve their work.
90. Leadership and management of the department are good. In the last two years there have been significant changes in staffing of the English department. The very good head of department has worked hard to create a cohesive team. Schemes of work have been redeveloped to include the National Literacy Strategy and to ensure that parallel classes within years cover the same ground and acquire all desirable skills. The progress of all pupils is carefully tracked, in order for them to be grouped in ways that best suit their needs, and work is well presented and graded to suit all pupils. Assessment is good and forms the basis for many intervention and booster classes to offer the maximum help and encouragement to pupils. Resources are well used and subject planning includes good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, as well as citizenship and the use of ICT. Departmental policy documents and action plans are clear and focused on raising pupils' attainment. Teaching and learning are formally monitored to provide guidance on how to improve, although there is too little focus on the sharing of the very good teaching practice within the department. Overall, the subject has made good progress since the previous inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

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

#### Strengths

- The well above average results in the national tests for pupils in Year 9 because of the good progress made during Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Consistently good teaching that encourages good progress by pupils.
- The very good relationships that exist between teachers and pupils that have established pupils' confidence in their mathematical ability.

#### Areas for improvement

- The use of computers to further enhance learning.
- The analysis of test and examination performance to develop and enhance teaching strategies.

91. Pupils' results in the 2002 national tests for pupils in Year 6 were well below the national average for all schools and similar schools. These pupils had only been in the school for two terms and as such the school had little time to develop these pupils. However, pupils' performance in the national tests for pupils in Year 9 were well above average for all schools and similar schools. The relative achievement of boys and girls varies from year to year but there is no particular pattern. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language also achieved well. Results have been rising over time.
92. In work seen, attainment in average in Year 6 and above average in Year 9. However, pupils achieve well throughout the school because of their positive attitudes fostered by good teaching. From work seen during the inspection the standards of pupils when they enter the school are rising slowly and the current Year 6 are close to the national average so that most are working at or above the nationally expected Level 4. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 are numerate, being able to estimate answers as well as calculate. They know the correct names of mathematical shapes and the associated properties. They can analyse simple sets of data and draw graphs in all four quadrants. Pupils of average attainment reinforce their number skills by using simple fractions and percentages and display data using different techniques. The lower attaining pupils have different activities designed to reinforce their number skills and know basic angle properties or different plane shapes.
93. A majority of pupils in Year 9 are working at or above the national average and because of good teaching have made good improvement on the standards achieved at the end of Year 6. Higher attaining pupils can use Pythagoras' theorem and trigonometry to solve right-angled triangles. They analyse data and confidently use a wide range of algebraic skills to solve problems. Average attaining pupils confidently work problems involving shape and space, and use their knowledge of algebra to solve equations. Lower attaining pupils confidently use a range of metric measures to solve questions involving perimeter and area. All pupils apply their knowledge to investigations; this is an integral part of their work. Pupils are grouped by ability and this enables those who are gifted and talented to be extended and those with special educational needs to receive extra help in small groups. This enables all pupils to make good progress.
94. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils learn well because they work hard in lessons; all of which are well planned and contain material that is stimulating, challenging and encouraging. The relationship between teachers and pupils is good and this has helped pupils to become confident in their use of mathematics. Pupils are encouraged to think and explain their work and at times explain their answers to questions to the rest of the class. This was used to good effect in a Year 9 lesson where pupils were encouraged to link various parts of the syllabus to solve problems. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their work and there was some good evidence of collaborative working in the display of a statistical investigation undertaken by one class.
95. The National Numeracy Strategy is well understood and lessons generally consist of a short numeracy based starter. This is followed by clear teacher explanation and practise of the current topic and a short summary at the end. Classrooms are small and the numbers of pupils in each class are relatively large. This limits the available strategies that teachers can use. Group work and practical investigations are restricted by lack of space, although having little apparent effect on standards it does restrict the wider appreciation and use of mathematics. The lack of suitable

screens limits the use of an overhead projector and the extra dimension given by the visual approach to mathematical situations is missing. Pupils' work is well marked and comments are encouraging, but there is a lack of information given as to how pupils could improve or extend their work. Strategies to reinforce numeracy in other subjects are satisfactory.

96. The department is well led and managed. All teachers are suitably qualified, use their secure subject knowledge to plan lessons well and hence contribute to the development of mathematics in the school. The monitoring of teaching and learning has helped to raise standards because teachers are mutually supportive and good practice is informally shared. Pupils are grouped by ability, and regular assessments are used to monitor standards and to make changes to these groups if necessary. At present there is little analysis of these assessments to seek improvements to future teaching of topics that appear to have been answered less well than others. The use of computers is underdeveloped because of the limited access to facilities. The accommodation is in adjacent rooms and there is a communal area outside these rooms that has attractive displays of work to enhance the atmosphere in which mathematics is taught.
97. This is an effective department that has sustained improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen in relation to national averages, especially in recent years. There have been changes due to the changes in national strategies and these have been successfully encompassed in the developing work of the department.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- Pupils of all capabilities achieve well in their knowledge and understanding of key scientific facts and concepts spanning biology, materials and physical processes.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have a good knowledge of science that guides their clear explanations and good questioning skills.
- Lessons are well planned, stimulating and challenging and relationships are good. Pupils respond enthusiastically and enjoy learning.
- New technical terms are introduced and constantly referred to so that pupils assimilate them quickly into their spoken and written language.

### Areas for improvement

- Too little attention is given to developing pupils' scientific enquiry skills.
- ICT, especially data logging, is not used effectively to help raise standards.
- Patterns in pupils' assessments are not analysed sufficiently to help guide the focus of curricular improvements.

98. In the 2002 national tests for pupils in Year 6, standards were well below the national average and those of similar schools. The trend in the school's standards has lagged behind the national trend in recent years for this age group. However, the standards of pupils in Year 9 were much better in 2002; well above those of similar schools and above the national average. Pupils of all capabilities achieved well by the time they left in Year 9 but particularly the higher attaining. The results in 2002 were a significant improvement over the previous year. There is no significant pattern of difference in the achievement of boys and girls in recent years.
99. Attainment in Year 6 seen during the inspection has improved since last year and is broadly average. This improvement has come about as a result of changes to curriculum plans for Year 6 and closer liaison with primary schools that have enabled teachers to better build on pupils' prior learning. By Year 9 pupils reach above average standards. Their progress is good, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. Those with special educational needs are supported effectively in class and the more able pupils also progress well; a significant improvement since the last inspection when they were not achieving enough. There are particular strengths in pupils' knowledge and understanding of key facts and concepts in all areas of science, but their scientific enquiry skills are not as well-

developed because insufficient emphasis is placed on this aspect in the curriculum and in teachers' planning.

100. Almost all pupils in Year 6 acquire a sound understanding of key concepts such as food chains and some predator-prey relationships within them. They know about a range of forces and their effects and more able pupils describe what happens when forces are balanced and when not; for example, in a falling parachute. Many know key facts about the solar system and about a third can explain the causes of night and day and variations in day length during the year. By Year 9 pupils of all capabilities and groups make good progress in their understanding and application of important scientific principles. For example, many are able to use a particle model to describe solids, liquids and gases and the more able have a good understanding of changes of state in terms of the particles involved. Most pupils can describe features of chemical changes such as the action of acids on alkalis and metals and over a third are using chemical symbols and formulae appropriately to represent them. Teachers provide clear explanations of new ideas and help pupils explore and develop their thinking about them through well-chosen and stimulating activities. In one Year 9 lesson about specialised animal and plant cells, the teacher's effective questioning and discussion enabled all pupils to build on their knowledge of cells to consider how they are adapted for particular functions. Through a challenging activity, groups discussed pictures of specialised plant and animal cells, decided on their type and function and made very good progress as a result.
101. Pupils' scientific enquiry skills are not as well developed as they move through the school; a weakness also identified at the time of the last inspection. While almost all can carry out a fair test in their experiments by Year 6, few are acquiring higher skills such as considering the value of repeating measurements and where their experiments can be improved. By Year 9, pupils' practical skills improve as they learn to use more laboratory equipment correctly, modelled well by their teachers. They work safely and very effectively on shared tasks. However, teachers sometimes direct pupils about their working methods too much so that they are not having enough experience of planning a strategy and solving problems for themselves. For example, pupils seldom carry out a trial run to resolve any practical problems when planning a strategy before carrying out more careful experiments. Neither do teachers focus enough attention on the range, sufficiency and quality of evidence pupils are collecting so that by Year 9 few are considering how reliable and repeatable their evidence is or taking account of this when drawing conclusions. There is no clear strategy for teaching scientific enquiry skills progressively within the department and teachers do not include attention to such skills sufficiently in their lessons so that opportunities to practise them are sometimes missed. In one Year 8 lesson about weathering of rocks, pupils compared the absorbency of some rocks experimentally, but were not prompted to predict which would be most absorbent drawing on their knowledge about each or consider likely errors and shortcomings in their methods as they worked.
102. Teachers pay close attention to the introduction and use of technical terms. Key words are displayed in laboratories and teachers routinely draw attention to new vocabulary in the early part of lessons. Pupils write extensively about scientific ideas in many styles such as letter writing and reports. As a result, their literacy skills develop well in science and they quickly assimilate new vocabulary into their spoken and written language. They estimate and measure, and increasingly calculate variables such as pressure, speed and moments of forces by Year 9. While pupils display data from experiments graphically, they seldom use ICT in their experiments. In particular, data-loggers and sensors are not routinely used to gather and process data, although new equipment is now in school to address this gap in provision. Neither are teachers using models and simulations to help pupils to understand and interpret key concepts sufficiently. However, pupils regularly research and present information from the Internet and other sources; for example, about features of the solar system.
103. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In some lessons it is very good. Teaching is better in Years 7, 8 and 9 and there is very little that is unsatisfactory. Lessons are well planned and structured around clear objectives, mainly relating to new knowledge and understanding. Teachers provide stimulating and challenging contexts for lessons. Relationships are very good throughout and, as a result, pupils are willing learners, they behave very well, respond positively to

the questioning and tasks given and most enjoy science. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subjects that underpin their clear explanations and probing questions, although illustrations on the board are sometimes poor and computer projectors are not yet used to enhance the quality of discussion. Most lessons maintain a good balance between class discussion and group or individual work, although in some lessons, pupils are directed too much in their tasks so that they are not having to make decisions or solving problems for themselves. Where teaching is less effective, the demand of some of the tasks is beyond most pupils' capabilities so that they are unable to make much progress with them. Homework is set regularly and appropriately extends the learning from lessons, for example, by encouraging pupils to do further research and summarise it. Marking is regular and pupils receive comments and correction to help them improve. They understand the grading system used and how well they are progressing to their targets.

104. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. The head of science, who has been temporarily in charge for almost a year, shows a strong commitment to further improvements and is providing sound leadership and direction. The department development plan is detailed and contains some important priorities. Teaching is monitored and supported effectively by senior managers. Arrangements for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are well developed and remedial action is taken by teachers and senior managers where necessary. However, patterns in pupils' progress are not yet being used as effectively to help guide the focus of curricular improvements, and pupils' scientific enquiry skills are not systematically assessed. While equipment resources are satisfactory, two of the four laboratories are too small for some classes and this constrains some practical work. The preparation area is also too small for the number of laboratories it serves. The technicians are hard working and provide effective support for practical work.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Good achievement; pupils attain above average standards.
- Teaching is good overall, and often very good.
- Critical analysis of the work of artists, craftsmen and designers.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including citizenship.
- The development of pupils' literacy skills.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of sketchbooks.
- Larger-scale work and group work.
- The range and variety of media used.
- Pupils' independence in the selection of styles and materials.

105. The school assesses pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 as average and at the end of Year 9 as above average. The inspection confirms these standards. Basic drawing skills and visual vocabulary are well established in Years 6 and 7. By the time pupils are in their final year they are able to produce exciting and original work in a range of media, including digital images incorporating photography. Graphic work is often outstanding. Pupils learn how to explore examples of the work of other artists and designers, such as Picasso and Keith Haring or the work of ancient and modern Aboriginal artists. Higher attaining pupils can very effectively combine and incorporate these ideas and styles into their work, which they evaluate and improve to produce a final image. Pupils also learn to use resistant materials such as wood, plastic and metal to make individual craft work in art deco or art nouveau styles. However, work in charcoal, paint and collage is less adventurous and pupils have few, if any, opportunities to print, use clay or make larger-scale work. Pupils rarely collaborate to make group pieces or decide on the final outcome of their work.

106. Pupils come into Year 6 with below average knowledge and skills in art and design so that achievement is good throughout the school. As is the case nationally, girls do better than boys at each stage. The department has addressed this by providing more 'boy friendly' topics, such as graffiti, and by involving pupils in links with the design industry. Both boys and girls are proud of their achievements in these areas. Teachers take care to include and challenge pupils with special educational needs and those more able pupils in art and design so that they achieve equally well.
107. Teaching is good and often very good at all levels. Teachers plan lessons very well and explain the aims and objectives very carefully, leaving pupils in no doubt what is expected of them. Pupils work hard. Relationships and behaviour are usually excellent. Teachers also give pupils very good help to learn artistic and other vocabulary. Pupils are also given lots of opportunities for writing, reading out loud and researching in books and on the Internet. Pupils develop confidence and knowledge, which helps them understand the development of and reasons behind the work they undertake. All these facets were employed in a very good Year 8 lesson. The teacher was able to develop some sophisticated concepts of symbolism with an average group of pupils using a very well-paced series of challenging exercises. These culminated in the study and imitation of Aboriginal paintings. Pupils were clearly delighted with this knowledge and responded enthusiastically. Teachers also make good use of the school's collection of the work of local artists as well as a good range of more famous artists. Good use is made of ICT to support learning. Less successfully, lessons are often too carefully controlled with few opportunities for pupils to organise their own workspace or choose the materials they use or the scale of their work.
108. The leadership and management of art and design are very good and the school has made very good progress since the last inspection when attainment was average. Drawing and painting and the study of the work of other artists and designers have also improved and the use of assessment to improve teaching and learning is now good. The co-ordinator for art and design is also in charge of design and technology and this very much influences the style of the work that is produced. The content of the work, however, is overwhelmingly creative. The artists chosen reflect the teachers' commitment to the pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development. Issues such as poverty, religion and environment are combined with self-exploration and social interaction. Having captured the hearts and minds of the pupils, the school can now afford to allow pupils more freedom in lessons to develop individually, to choose and to learn from mistakes. This already happens in the popular art club, which is open to pupils of all ages and ability. Given the enthusiasm and commitment of the teachers and pupils, the school has a very good potential to make further improvements.

## CITIZENSHIP

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

### Strengths

- The quality of planning and consultation for the development of the subject.
- A comprehensive audit of citizenship across the curriculum has enabled a good policy to be developed.
- The leadership and management of the subject.
- Subjects are actively involved in the teaching of the citizenship programme.
- The school council is effective in involving all pupils and this and other initiatives successfully promote participation in community activities.

### Areas for improvement

- Teaching materials need to be more closely matched to the attainment of pupils, particularly the highest and lowest attaining pupils.

109. Standards are above average in Years 6 and 9. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of democracy and the role of central and local government. This is well demonstrated through the humanities and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme. Pupils understand their rights and responsibilities in a democratic society. Most can justify their opinions about social issues orally and in writing and they use their skills effectively to discuss issues and

plan change that would help the local community. For example, in a Year 9 PSHCE lesson, pupils were able to discuss their concerns about their environment and decide how they could influence local councillors. Pupils also have a good appreciation of world issues such as pollution and global warming. For example, in a Year 8 geography lesson, pupils considered the problem of pollution in the North Sea and discussed the need to act as 'global' citizens. They showed a very good understanding of what exactly a citizen was and were able to talk knowledgeably about the European Parliament in Brussels. The school has won regional and national recognition in the 'Children's Parliament' competition.

110. Teaching is good overall, and pupils achieve well. A strength of the overall programme is that it is firmly embedded across the curriculum and departments have shared responsibility for delivering different aspects of citizenship. As a result, teachers are committed and show good subject knowledge. Most have high expectations and work from clear citizenship objectives, which they share with pupils. In history, for instance, pupils consider the role of the monarchy, democracy, bias and propaganda. In a Year 9 art and design lesson pupils explored the concept of art as propaganda and in physical education, pupils learn how to resolve conflict and the importance of team building. Teachers in religious education, humanities and modern languages help pupils to appreciate global issues and how different cultural backgrounds affect people's attitudes. Because of this, citizenship makes a good contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. Pupils' literacy skills are also well developed as they learn how to write well-informed and persuasive letters. For example, the Year 8 pupils' discussion about pollution in the North Sea, culminated in the writing of a formal letter to their Member of the European Parliament. Pupils are encouraged to develop informed opinions and challenge the opinions of others. Teachers' skilful questioning ensures that balanced points of view are given. They use a variety of attractive resources very effectively to engage pupils' interest and stimulate discussion. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups, are very successfully integrated into the lesson.
111. The citizenship theme of participation and responsibility is well established through the school council and the monitor system. Pupils engage in the democratic process and exercise leadership and responsibility. They have been involved in decisions concerning aspects of the school environment such as the wildlife area, via the school council. Pupils participate enthusiastically in many aspects of school life, with approximately 90 per cent of pupils also taking part in some form of extra-curricular activity. The wide range of activities outside lessons helps pupils to become responsible citizens. They regularly participate in fund-raising activities for international as well as local charities and a lot of planning, hard work and enterprise goes into the annual charities week. The contribution of the subject to pupils' personal development is, therefore, very good.
112. The whole school is involved in planned PSHCE activities during one period a week. Staff have received training from senior management and the co-ordinator, and teaching is regularly monitored. The school draws well on the local community by inviting magistrates, police and the mayor to talk to pupils. This effectively raises pupils' awareness of the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society.
113. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Senior management has led the introduction of citizenship well. A comprehensive audit of citizenship across the curriculum enabled a good policy to be developed, and planning for the subject's introduction has been handled well. The co-ordinator was appointed to the role relatively recently, but is managing the PSHCE programme and the cross-curricular aspects of the subject very well. Attractive teaching materials have been developed for each year group, but these could be further improved by the development of support and extension activities for the lowest and highest attaining pupils. The school is well advanced in the planning for the assessment and reporting of the subject.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths
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- Good teaching leads to pupils achieving well and good standards of practical work.
- Good relationships ensure a positive working atmosphere.
- Good assessment procedures and the setting of targets for pupils.

#### Areas for improvement

- Greater use of ICT and in particular opportunities for computer aided design and manufacture and control.
- Ensure that tasks are challenging for all ability levels, including the opportunity for independent investigations.

114. Attainment in Year 6 is average overall, and shows an improvement from the last inspection where it was below average. Pupils achieve well and in line with the national average for Level 4. Higher attainers use good, labelled drawings, good colour and consideration of vitamins for example in a drinks project in food technology. Average and lower attainers can find some designing skills difficult, for example, drawing frames accurately in a structures project. Practical outcomes are usually well made.
115. Standards of work in the current Year 9 are above average overall, and in line with recent teacher assessments. From average or below average attainment on entry in terms of design and technology experience, pupils make good progress over the four years in the department. Girls usually produce a better standard of work especially in their design folders. Good work by higher attainers is seen in all material areas. In particular, pupils produce good drawings of processes and tools in resistant materials in Year 7, good use of colour, ICT and annotated drawings in a Year 8 food technology muffin project and good work in all material areas in Year 9 including meaningful evaluations. Weaker work by average and lower attainers is mainly due to poorer presentational skills, both written and graphical, ideas not developed in depth and work incomplete or untidy.
116. Pupils' literacy skills are well supported by the good use of technical vocabulary and each pupil has a dictionary of key words used in each material area. Numeracy skills are satisfactory and the use of ICT in pupils' work has improved considerably since the last inspection. However, control technology is not addressed in the department and the use of computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) is not yet implemented. Pupils' attitudes are good. They settle quickly to lessons and are keen to learn. In most lessons pupils are appropriately challenged and they respond well. Pupils can talk confidently about their work and are proud of their achievements.
117. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with a proportion of very good and satisfactory teaching seen. In the best lessons learning is increased because teachers use good subject expertise to develop or expand ideas, have appropriate teacher intervention, use effective strategies and have good pupil management. This was seen in a Year 6 lesson where pupils made good gains in learning about frame structures and how to use simple electronic components. In a Year 7 lesson pupils increased their understanding of materials through a very active practical approach using a range of tools and equipment. In a Year 8 lesson pupils worked in teams developing practical and social skills linked to industrial practice and a Year 9 lesson ICT was used to good effect to gain information about manufacturing processes. Weaknesses in lessons are seen when pupils are not sufficiently challenged with appropriate work, where pupils are unable to see demonstrations clearly or where there is idle chatter not readily addressed by the teacher. Pupils are not always given the opportunity to investigate alternative solutions to problems in designing or making.
118. Department leadership is good. The new head of department has a good vision for future developments and has addressed a number of issues from the last inspection. Documentation is well prepared outlining policies and practices. There is a good assessment policy that has been simplified since the last inspection. The development plan has appropriate priorities that are linked to training needs and whole-school planning. Relationships are good and there is a good team approach to the work. Schemes of work have been revised to allow for more continuity and progression from Years 6 to 9. There are some weaknesses in the curriculum: control and electronics are not addressed, and the use of computer aided design and manufacture are not

implemented in pupils' work. Some tasks are not always sufficiently challenging, especially for the higher attainers, and there is some inconsistency in the marking of pupils' work. There is a need to continue monitoring across all areas in order to standardise expectations. Technician support is insufficient at present.

119. Accommodation is satisfactory overall. The resistant materials rooms are traditional in style and restrict opportunities for multimedia work. Teaching of food technology and textiles in one room is not ideal and the circular saw is inappropriately positioned in one teaching workshop. There is a good display of pupils' work in the main foyer of the school and in corridors. This work in resistant materials and textiles is of a good or very good standard. Resources have improved since the last inspection especially in ICT facilities.
120. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards of pupils' work have improved, schemes of work reviewed, increased use of ICT, revised assessment procedures to include target setting, good display of pupils' work and good links between the department and other schools have been developed.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils learn very effectively because teachers make the subject interesting for all pupils.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and behave very well because lessons engage them fully.
- Pupils have very clear information on their attainment and targets for improvement.
- Excellent leadership and management.

### Area for improvement

- Opportunities to experience fieldwork in all year groups.

121. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2002 indicate well above average standards of attainment. Girls' attainment was better than that of boys. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2002 were broadly in line with national expectations but below school targets.
122. In work seen pupils attain standards broadly in line with the average by the end of Year 6. Given their attainment on entry, this represents good achievement. They learn how the British Isles is divided into climatic regions. They extend their knowledge of the world through a detailed study of India. Standards of presentation vary, although girls are better than boys. Lower attaining pupils have weak literacy skills. By the end of Year 9 pupils attain well above expectations and their achievement is very good. Higher attaining pupils write at length. They draw and annotate diagrams very well. Pupils handle statistics confidently, and use them to draw a range of graphs. They use ICT effectively for research using the Internet and reference CD-ROMs. They present work using word-processing techniques. Pupils learn fieldwork skills such as landscape sketching of river features. They develop the ability to present a balanced argument; for example, the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear energy. Pupils with special educational needs make as much progress as other pupils.
123. The quality of teaching is very good. Teaching was not observed in Year 6 because no lessons of geography were timetabled. Pupils learn very effectively because they concentrate and are very interested in the topics they study. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly to take account of the learning needs of different groups of pupils. They provide tasks and resources so those pupils with special educational needs work independently and make good progress. Pupils who work quickly receive tasks to extend their learning. A range of methods, such as group work, role play, writing letters and newspaper articles retain the interest of pupils. In all lessons literacy is strongly emphasised so pupils improve their written and oral expression and develop subject vocabulary. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the subject. For example, pupils in Year 7 considered the social implications of an earthquake disaster. Teachers create many resources, including topic booklets. These provide pupils with challenging tasks,

such as deciding the causes and effects of earthquakes, from statements on cards. Teaching is successful because pupils are active learners. They use a range of skills to classify and understand facts so they can propose solutions to real geographical issues. For example, in a Year 8 lesson pupils perceived the problem of North Sea pollution from a variety of perspectives taking on the roles of an expert on fish population levels or the managing director of a major oil extracting company. A Year 7 class had challenging homework on where to live in an earthquake zone. They had to take account of the facts and explain why they would choose or not choose to live in five locations indicated on a cross section diagram.

124. The head of humanities provides very good leadership and management of geography. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. Higher attaining pupils are extended and so more attain higher National Curriculum Levels. Good information on levels and what to do to reach higher targets inspires all pupils to do better. Pupils assess their own work and other pupils also assess it. This contributes to very good attitudes to study, and corresponding very good and sometimes excellent behaviour. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 benefit from fieldwork experience on industrial location and rivers. Pupils in other year groups ought to share similar experiences.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Very good teaching promotes very good achievement.
- Curriculum planning is very good, literacy skills and citizenship are developed very well.
- Links with other schools to ensure that continuity and progression are strong.
- Pupils respond very well to the subject.
- History makes a very good contribution to the moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- Use of ICT in the classroom is insufficiently developed, although computer suites are well used.
- There are not enough resources for Year 6.
- Classroom space is limited and because of this some pupils do not have enough experience of working in groups.

125. During the inspection no lessons were observed in Year 6 and judgements are based on discussions with pupils, scrutiny of pupils' work and planning documents. Standards are similar to those seen in other schools and pupils achieve well. Standards in Year 9, in teacher assessments and as observed in lessons are well above average and pupils achieve very well. In most lessons attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils work hard, take responsibility for their own learning and enjoy the activities planned for them.

126. Progress is very good because of these positive attitudes and the very effective teaching that enables pupils to develop skills in history alongside a good level of knowledge and understanding. In Year 6 pupils can write about aspects of life in Mexico before the Spanish conquest and explain why Cortez easily conquered the warlike Aztecs. The highest attaining pupils can talk about the differences between life in Athens and Sparta and average attaining pupils can give examples of the importance of Ancient Greece in establishing the Olympic Games. Although some pupils find difficulty in recalling detail and in writing accurately they clearly understand that life, for example, for women, was very different then. It is clear that work in Year 6 is very carefully planned and that links with primary schools are good, but there are not enough resources and artefacts for use in class.

127. The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout the school. Because of the range of teaching activities most Year 9 pupils have good research and investigative skills and they can write and talk about history topics well. Excellent features include the way pupils are encouraged to think and investigate for themselves. However, lack of space limits the use of group work in some classrooms. Year 9 pupils have good understanding of the task facing the peacemakers in

1919 and lower attaining pupils clearly understand why no one wanted another war. Higher attaining pupils are able to talk about complex issues such as the future of Alsace and Lorraine with real maturity. Learning for all pupils is very good. The quality of support available for pupils with special educational needs enables them to actively participate in lessons. The highest attaining pupils are challenged by the provision of higher level work, both in class and in carefully planned homework tasks. Pupils who are using English as an additional language are well supported and individuals are producing excellent work.

128. In Year 7 written work shows good knowledge and understanding of events after 1066 and of the life of native Americans. Teachers are promoting skills while providing a really interesting range of topics. By Year 8 pupils understand about the range of sources available and that some information about the past can be gained from a study of written records, but that this will often present a particular view. Higher attaining pupils understand that the Foxe's Book of Martyrs' is only one version of events in the reign of Mary Tudor and that she was perhaps motivated by faith rather than cruelty. The way pupils study this period of history is very valuable in developing their spiritual awareness, and the approach to learning provides very good support for social, moral and cultural education. Lower attaining pupils know that the lives of rich and poor were different and that many people could not read the 'Bible' even when it was written in English. They find out about the monarch and parliament in a way that helps their understanding of citizenship.
129. Celebration of other cultures in the past is a strong feature of curriculum planning and the essential skills of the historian are being effectively established especially an understanding of change over time. Research skills, especially the comparison of different sources of evidence, are well developed and there is a very good focus on literacy skills and key vocabulary.
130. Pupils consider the history of their own area in an oral history project on the 1930s and in visits to museums and castles. Links with other subjects are good. Computers and numerical information are used well, but at present there is insufficient development of ICT to promote learning in history in the classroom.
131. The head of faculty provides very good leadership. Assessment procedures have been well developed and are used very well in planning lessons and setting tasks. Planning is very good and the benefits of a humanities approach are fully utilised. All pupils are active participants who are able to investigate the past independently because work is planned that challenges all levels of ability. Standards have remained high and improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Good achievement; pupils attain above average standards, particularly in communicating information and control programming.
- Teaching is good overall, and often very good.
- Pupils enjoy learning and behaviour is usually excellent.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used equally well in all areas of the curriculum.
- Access to up to date computer equipment is limited in some areas.
- ICT rooms are cramped and pupils can rarely use a computer individually.

132. Standards at the end of Year 6 are in line with the national average. Pupils are able to produce word-processed documents and simple multimedia displays for different audiences. They are less clear on how to model, for instance, profit and loss, using a spreadsheet. By the end of Year 9 the school's assessment of attainment is well above the national average. The inspection finds that this is true in some areas, such as desktop publishing and multimedia where there is some outstanding work. However, in other areas such as modelling, the use of databases for research

and sensing and recording measurements, the pupils' work is average. Overall, attainment is above average at this stage. Pupils come into the school with below average attainment in ICT so that these standards represent good achievement throughout the school. Although girls do better than boys, this is in line with the national picture. Pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted or have a special talent for ICT are very well catered for, and also make good progress.

133. Teaching is good overall, and often very good in Year 6 and Years 7 to 9. The teachers make very good use of a range of powerful online software tools and a data projector so that pupils are clear about the processes and steps they should take. Links to the Internet enable pupils to use live data, such as weather forecasts, as well as being able to see the social and cultural effects of ICT. Pupils are excited by this and work with very good concentration and interest. Teachers plan lessons very well and set work that challenges pupils at different levels so that they can make equally good progress. Excellent attitudes and behaviour also contribute to the learning. In a very good lesson with Year 9 pupils, the teacher set a brisk pace through a series of tasks that enabled pupils to build on knowledge and skills learned earlier. They learned how to identify and classify different types of data. Speaking and listening skills were developed by feeding back their findings to the class. Pupils then planned their own interactive information system for a theatre. Higher attaining pupils were able to say which type of multimedia software would be best for the task. Information systems were also the theme of a less successful lesson with Year 8. Here the teacher did not provide sufficiently clear criteria for evaluating meteorological information and lower attaining pupils struggled to complete the task.
134. The leadership and management of the department are good and is very well focused on the care and inclusion of all pupils and helping them to improve. The school has made a good improvement since the last inspection. The new co-ordinator for ICT has made rapid strides in improving the curriculum and resources. For instance, pupils now write sophisticated programs to control traffic lights or a simulated 'water-splash' ride. The ongoing assessment of work involves pupils in planning targets and this makes an important contribution to the progress that they make; pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
135. All subject areas now involve ICT in the teaching and learning. It is particularly good in art and design and in English where it is used very creatively to produce dramatic and expressive work. In geography pupils research using the Internet, explore databases and produce graphs. It is less good in other areas such as science and design and technology, where opportunities are missed. However, newly arrived equipment will shortly remedy these omissions. The computer rooms are accessible but very small and cramped. Pupils are rarely able to have a workstation each and sight lines are limited. This not only limits the range of activities and teaching opportunities, but produces difficulties when assessing each pupil's contribution to a joint piece of work. Teachers who are less confident with the newest technology are reluctant to take a large class into this situation. The school has very clear plans for improving both the access to computers, the filing system and e-mail, which should help with curriculum coverage. Given the commitment and interest of the teachers and the enthusiasm of the pupils, the school has a very good potential for further improvement.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Standards in French at the end of Year 9, which are well above average.
- Lessons are well planned and are characterised by pace, variety and challenge.
- Tasks are well matched to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities within a group.
- The emphasis on the teaching of grammatical concepts enables pupils to be creative with the foreign language.
- The use of ICT as an aid to teaching and learning in lessons.
- Assessment procedures are thorough and target setting is effective.

Areas for improvement

- Raise the attainment of boys.
- Explore ways of making plenaries more pupil led.

136. Attainment is above average by the end of Year 6, given that pupils begin their study of French a year before required by the National Curriculum. Pupils benefit from this early start to their language learning and make rapid progress, particularly in their listening and speaking skills. By the end of Year 6, they can give and understand simple personal information about themselves and others. In 2002, the results in the teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9, rose for the third consecutive year and are now well above the national average. Higher attaining pupils attained particularly impressive standards. Pupils from ethnic minorities performed well, achieving standards above the national average. The difference between the performance of boys and girls was similar to the national picture, with girls outperforming the boys. This represents very good achievement since when these pupils entered the school their attainment, as measured in English tests, was below average. Lower attaining pupils in Year 9 are attaining standards below the national average, but nevertheless, are achieving well given their prior attainment. Pupils who start German as a second modern foreign language at age 13 make good progress and attain standards above expectations in the amount of time allocated.
137. In work observed in lessons, books and discussions, the standards of attainment of average and higher attaining pupils currently in Year 9, reflected the teachers' assessments. These pupils show a very good grasp of grammatical concepts. They can use a variety of tenses and structures as well as pronouns, with confidence and accuracy, to enhance both their spoken and written French. In a very good Year 9 lesson, for example, pupils in the top set were challenged to create their own extended account of a shopping trip, which they managed successfully both orally and in writing. In another very good Year 9 lesson, lower attaining pupils could recall basic phrases for use in simple dialogues to discover train departure times, and were able to use and understand the 24-hour clock.
138. Standards of behaviour are very good and pupils' attitudes towards language learning are very positive. Pupils of all attainment levels are kept fully engaged and challenged by their teachers and, as a result, respond enthusiastically. They willingly volunteer to come out to the board, work sensibly in pairs and listen respectfully to each other's contributions.
139. Teaching remains a strength. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers always state their teaching objectives at the beginning of lessons and relate them to previous work, which gives pupils a clear understanding of the direction of their learning. Teachers recap on new language at the end of lessons, but could also use this time to allow pupils to share what they have gained from the lesson. Teachers plan their lessons carefully to include a logical sequence of enjoyable activities, which enables pupils of all abilities to achieve well. Pupils' learning is enhanced by the linguistic competence of their teachers, all of whom use the foreign language for a significant part of the lesson as an effective means of communication. Teachers use a wide variety of resources and teaching methods to stimulate communication, which they link to the perceived needs of their pupils. In a good Year 6 lesson, for example, a game which involved counting softer and louder to direct a pupil to the location of a hidden object was well suited to these younger pupils, whose exuberance was well channelled! Teachers' high expectations are reflected in the punctual completion of homework, pupils' concentration in lessons and in the generally high standard of work seen in pupils' exercise books. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, with effective management of pupils' behaviour. This, along with activities that are well matched to pupils' individual needs, ensures that a brisk pace is maintained and pupils achieve well. In a good Year 8 lesson, for example, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, were able to write about a 'café' scene using the past tense. This was because the teacher had prepared worksheets offering three different levels of support. There is an emphasis on the teaching and reinforcement of grammatical concepts, which enables pupils to become more independent learners. Teachers skilfully encourage pupils themselves to explain different grammar points, from gender in Year 7, to the formation of the past tense in all its forms in Years 8 and 9. During the inspection a significant amount of homework was set. Tasks are explained clearly and are well chosen to provide continuity and consolidation of pupils' learning in

class. As a result, most pupils do their homework when required and to the best of their ability. Assessment procedures are particularly effective and closely linked to the National Curriculum Levels of Attainment. Pupils' progress in each skill is regularly monitored and recorded. Pupils also assess their own progress, set themselves targets and are aware of what they need to do in order to achieve the next level. Pupils' develop their linguistic and ICT skills simultaneously through their involvement in the 'Epals' e-mail exchange, which has proved particularly successful in motivating pupils to communicate in the foreign language. The subject also develops pupils' literacy skills through its emphasis on accurate spelling and the regular use of dictionaries and grammatical terminology. Pupils' numeracy is developed through reference to numbers, quantities, currency etc., although more calculation in the foreign language would further improve this. Trips to Boulogne and Paris enrich pupils' cultural development.

140. The head of department provides very good leadership and manages the department very efficiently. Roles and responsibilities are appropriately delegated, which leads to a cohesive department that works together effectively as a team. The monitoring of teaching is actively undertaken and comprehensive subject documentation is in place. The department is actively involved in several new initiatives. Resources and accommodation are adequate.
141. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen consistently and the issue of pupils' independent use of the foreign language has been successfully addressed. ICT is now an integral part of language learning.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The teachers' very good subject knowledge enables pupils to learn very well.
- The well-planned lessons motivate pupils; this encourages very good relationships and attitudes towards the subject.
- There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and many pupils play instruments.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to support learning.
- Consistent use of homework to consolidate learning and help pupils to become more independent in their learning.

142. Standards of work seen during the inspection are average by the end of Year 6 and well above average by the end of Year 9. These standards are achieved because teaching is very good overall, and is a key factor in improving pupils' learning. Very good attitudes and behaviour also contribute to the progress that pupils make. This represents very good improvement since the previous inspection.
143. By the end of Year 6 attainment is average, with all abilities making progress and achieving well compared with their prior learning. Attainment by the end of Year 9 is well above average. This represents very good achievement in the four years pupils have been in the school. Musical knowledge is improving because of the lively teaching. Higher attaining pupils understand and use technical language well: less confident pupils struggle to find the right word to describe musical elements. Pupils with special educational needs play a full part in the lessons and make good progress. Those recognised as talented are often the first to answer questions. In the lessons seen there was no significant difference between the work of boys and girls.
144. Teaching is very good in Year 6 and lessons are planned to motivate pupils and improve their learning. In very well-planned lesson pupils improvise a walking piece on keyboards and demonstrate their understanding of 'ostinato', 'pulse' and 'beat'. Many pupils use repetition to make their music more memorable and write the notation in their books for future reference. Very good questioning on sequences and pitch lifted the learning to a higher plane.

145. Very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 raises pupils' expectations so that all abilities learn and make very good progress. Year 7 pupils compose songs for primary pupils to sing. The very good teaching of this project inspires pupils to be creative. They repeat words, sing counting patterns and include lyrics and actions that amuse younger children. Year 8 pupils understand 'drone', 'tala' and 'raga' and because of knowledgeable explanations by the teacher, they improve their group performances of Indian music. This contributes to their social and cultural learning. Many pupils in Year 9 have well-developed improvisational skills and they reach a high standard in their arrangements of 'Kije's March'. Classes work in the keyboard laboratory and competently use the editing and layering techniques available on the keyboards. This shows positive learning over time because of the very good teaching taking place. The department has three computers but currently these are not used extensively. Homework is not used consistently to promote independent learning and consolidate what has been learnt in class.
146. There is very good leadership of the department and both teachers work well together for the benefit of all pupils. Management is very effective and all policies are in place. The scheme of work has been completely rewritten to give a very rich diet of music to stimulate pupils and make them want to learn. Over 100 pupils play instruments and some are members of the county orchestras. The school orchestra is large and gives regular concerts that get sold out. Many pupils sing in the choir. Good records are kept and pupils' progress is assessed regularly. National Curriculum Levels are used and known to pupils. The close liaison with feeder schools and the local high school gives continuity to the subject throughout the whole statutory school age. Music is so popular that 35 pupils have already chosen to do GCSE music when they go to the high school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

#### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good; teachers plan lessons with a range of activities that allow all groups of pupils to learn well.
- Standards are good at the end of Years 6 and 9.
- Leadership is very good and the department works successfully as a team.
- The very good extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all pupils to extend their learning.
- There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils, who have very positive attitudes to their work.

#### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- The specialist indoor space and the hard court area are inadequate in relation to pupil numbers.
- Procedures for engaging non-participants in evaluative work, are inconsistent

147. In the teachers' assessments made at the end of Year 6 in 2002, the pupils achieved results that were above the national average. Pupils at the end of Year 9 achieved results that were very high in comparison with national expectations. There was no significant difference in the results for boys and girls. Trends in results are generally above the national average, but are distorted by the achievements of last year's exceptional Year 9 pupils. High attaining pupils, including the talented, achieve very well in a range of sports at district and county levels, particularly in football and athletics.

148. Inspection evidence shows that standards towards the end of Year 6 are above average. This represents good achievement, given these pupils' average attainment on entry. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The very good extra-curricular programme allows talented pupils to refine their skills; they achieve very well. Most Year 6 pupils understand the reasons for warm-ups, show good safety awareness and demonstrate a range of individual skills. Their performance in swimming is characterised by good stroke technique. Higher attaining pupils show very good levels of technical competence and tactical awareness. The few lower attaining pupils, in tennis, show limited spatial awareness and hand-eye co-ordination; their performance in swimming is affected by below average stroke synchronisation.

149. Inspection evidence shows that standards towards the end of Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement across Years 7 to 9. Most Year 9 pupils understand fitness principles and can evaluate performance; they show good technique in athletics and cricket. Higher attaining pupils, including the talented, use a variety of skills and tactics to outmanoeuvre opponents. They analyse and correct technique well; for example, in athletics. A few are attaining below average standards due to their lack of basic speed, technique and hand-eye co-ordination. Most pupils, across all years, show good numerical skills; for example, in scoring and measuring performance. Pupils listen well, speak confidently and use appropriate technical vocabulary. Pupils' ICT skills in the subject are underdeveloped, due to lack of opportunity in lessons.

150. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good in all years. Very good management of pupils creates a purposeful and safe learning environment. Teachers' specialist knowledge and schemes of work that build on previous learning promote good progress across the age range; work is planned to suit all pupils. In a Year 8 tennis lesson, lower attaining pupils progressed well because the teacher modified tasks, used demonstrations and provided short-handle rackets. The learning of higher attaining pupils, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and the extensive extra-curricular sports programme. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to learn independently in most lessons. For example, in a Year 7 swimming lesson, pupils planned and performed life saving techniques, evaluated peer performance and suggested improvements. Learning is less effective in the small proportion of lessons where teaching is more prescriptive and pupils are given fewer opportunities to explore their own ideas.

151. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes. They are co-operative, maintain good relationships with their teachers and work at a productive pace. Most pupils, across all years, improve their numerical skills through opportunities to score, measure and record performance.

Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These approaches improve the technical vocabulary, speaking skills and listening ability of pupils across the attainment levels. The subject makes little provision for pupils to develop their ICT skills.

152. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a strong commitment to improvement and success and is ably supported by a team of dedicated specialists. Good procedures exist to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and pupils' standards. Assessment systems are very good and are used well to monitor pupils' progress and set targets. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
153. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The curriculum is more balanced, due to the increased time allocation for gymnastics, dance and tennis. The good quality of teaching has been maintained and standards in Year 6 have risen, and are now above average. To improve further, the department needs to develop the use of ICT, increase specialist accommodation and hard court space and engage non-participants more, in evaluative work.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Attainment is above the expectations of the agreed syllabus in Year 9.
- Pupils' achievement is very good from Year 6 through to Year 9.
- The subject makes a very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Very good leadership and management.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers do not always give pupils enough responsibility for their own learning.

154. There are no national standards for religious education at ages 11 and 14 years. However, by Year 6, pupils' attainment is in line with the expectations of the Leicestershire Agreed Syllabus. They understand, for example, how the canons of the Old and New Testaments were formed, the relationship between them and their significance to the Jewish and Christian faiths.
155. In Year 9, pupils' attainment is above the expectations of the agreed syllabus for their age. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the richness and diversity of religion, of the place of Christianity and other principal religions in the country, and of their origins and distinctive features. They understand why the beliefs of practising members of faith communities are important to them, and how they shape their lives. Within that context, pupils' skills in making a personal response to religious questions are particularly well developed. However, their understanding of religious insights into contemporary moral and social issues is less secure.
156. Both boys and girls of all levels of prior attainment achieve well throughout the school. They achieve well because they are very keen to learn, and are taught consistently well, by teachers who challenge them with work of increasing depth and complexity as they move through the school. The transferable skills pupils bring to lessons from their study of history and geography, within the framework of the humanities faculty, make a positive contribution to raising the level of their achievement.
157. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those with special educational needs, achieve very well because teachers create a secure ethos in the classroom, in which they feel able to take risks in their learning, knowing that their contributions will be received with respect. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very well because the school plans effectively to fully stretch their potential, both within and outside lessons.
158. For timetabling reasons, there was no opportunity to observe lessons in Years 7 and 8 during the inspection week. In Years 6 and 9, the quality of teaching was at least good. It was very good in nearly half of lessons. Where teaching is strongest, teachers have a good grasp of their subject,

know clearly what they wish their pupils to learn and routinely share their aims with them. They plan their lessons very well to achieve their aims, and catch and hold their pupils' interest through a good variety of interesting and challenging activities and tasks, which are very well matched to their individual needs.

159. For example, Year 6 pupils made very good gains in understanding the 'Parable of the Prodigal Son', because the teacher made very good use of Rembrandt's painting of the parable, to lead the pupils to empathise with the feelings and emotions of the father, and elder and younger sons. Through body sculpture, pupils were then able to explore and express their own personal responses to the teaching of the parable. Such teaching makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual development. Teachers also plan very well for pupils' moral, social and cultural development, and the development of their literacy skills. Pupils make good use of ICT to support their learning.
160. Learning is enriched by the very good use of visitors to the classroom, and visits outside school; for example, to places of worship. Teachers regularly set meaningful homework that extends the learning in class. They mark work conscientiously and supportively, and most marking does much to help pupils to understand how to raise the levels of their attainment. Teachers make excellent use of pupil and group self-evaluation to help pupils to understand how well they are learning and achieving.
161. This good teaching is underpinned by teachers' high expectations of pupils, and the very good relationships they engender in the classroom. Where teaching is less secure, it is overly directive in style, and does not give pupils enough responsibility for their own learning. The cramped classrooms hinder the range of learning strategies that teachers can deploy.
162. Leadership and day-to-day management of the subject are very good. The teacher in charge has a clear vision of the educational direction the subject should take if standards are to be further raised. He has successfully engaged in wide-ranging developmental work to move the subject on in a short space of time.
163. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' achievement is significantly higher by Year 9. The subject makes a very much stronger contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and to the development of their basic skills. This is because the quality of teaching has been significantly raised, schemes of work and learning resources much improved and very good strategies for assessing pupils' attainment and progress put in place.