

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **WOODHOUSE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Biddulph

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124432

Headteacher: Mr Jack Pedley

Reporting inspector: Brian Rowe  
1695

Dates of inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> September 2002

Inspection number: 249241

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Woodhouse Lane  
Biddulph  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
Postcode: ST8 7DR

Telephone number: 01782 297875

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of acting  
chair of governors: Mrs K Singleton

Date of previous inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Brian Rowe 1695	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
Catherine Hinds 10173	Lay inspector	Inclusion	How high are standards? (attitudes and behaviour) How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with its parents?
Kathleen MacFarlane 3472	Team inspector	Mathematics	
Chris Morris 12568	Team inspector	English	
Mohindar Galowalia 20832	Team inspector	Science	
Vera Griggs 12331	Team inspector	Art Design and technology	
David Wasp 10895	Team inspector	Religious education History	
John Flinn 20649	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Geography	
Sue Jones 22501	Team inspector	Music	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
Roger Bailess 12110	Team inspector	Modern languages	
Bob Batty 2866	Team inspector	Physical Education Special educational needs	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Woodhouse School is a mixed middle deemed secondary school for pupils aged 9 to 13 years, situated in Biddulph, a small town north of Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire. The majority of the pupils live in the immediate area, but increasingly more travel from further afield. The school is currently very close to full capacity. Many of the children live in an area that is economically advantaged, but in recent years a greater proportion of pupils come from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Overall, unemployment in the area is average. There are currently 472 pupils on roll, making it larger than an average-sized middle school. There are fewer boys than girls - 203 compared to 269 - although the number varies between years. Only a very few pupils come from minority ethnic groups, a very much lower proportion than average. All of them are fluent in the English language. There are no refugees or pupils from a traveller background. About 11 per cent of pupils receive free school meals, which is slightly less than the national average. Pupils' attainment on entry is close to the national average. About 17 per cent of the pupils have been placed on the special educational needs register, of whom 3 per cent have been assessed to have a high level of learning difficulty. These proportions are below average when compared to other middle schools. Ten pupils have statements for special educational needs; this is close to average.

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

Woodhouse Middle is an effective and improving school that provides its pupils with a good standard of education. By the time pupils reach the end of Year 8 they attain academic standards that are just above national expectations. The most recent test results and quality of work seen indicate that by the end of Year 6, attainment overall is just above average for all schools and for schools with pupils of a similar background. Pupils' attendance rates are broadly average. Pupils behave very well and are keen to learn. Overall, teaching and learning are good and in nearly half of the lessons they are very good. In recent years, the headteacher and senior staff have ensured significant improvements in academic standards and in the quality of teaching and learning. The governing body and senior staff now provide a clearer direction for the school's development. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve well and their attainment, including the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, is improving.
- Good-quality teaching ensures pupils are keen to learn and make good progress.
- Pupils develop very positive attitudes to school and their work, behave very well and co-operate harmoniously with each other and adults.
- Pupils develop a sense of responsibility and maturity, a positive moral code and social awareness.
- The school works hard to involve all pupils fully in school and develop their potential.

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

- Clearly identifying, defining and strengthening the roles and responsibilities of governors and senior managers
- The review and monitoring arrangements for all aspects of the school
- The quality of longer term planning at all levels of school management.

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

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

Overall, the school has made good improvement since the last inspection that took place in June 1997. The recommendations identified in the last inspection report have been mostly addressed. For example, the school has improved the standards achieved in English and mathematics, the quality of teaching and learning and the arrangements for the curriculum. In addition, the effectiveness of management has much improved, although further refinements are still required. There has been some recent

improvement to assessment procedures, but further development is also still needed. The school has successfully implemented the national strategies for literacy and numeracy, which are raising standards in English and mathematics.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	C	D	C	C
Mathematics	C	D	C	C
Science	B	C	C	C

**Key**

well above average      A

above average          B

average                  C

below average          D

well below average      E

Pupils' attainment as they enter the school is close to the national average, but many of them are capable of achieving high standards. The above table shows that in the 2002 tests for 11-year-olds, pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science was close to the national and similar school averages. The 2002 test results indicate a marked improvement on the previous year. Significantly, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher grades in English, mathematics and science improved considerably and are just above average. The quality of pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms the attainment indicated by these latest test results. In Years 5 and 6, pupils achieve well and for many their progress is good. There are a number of factors have contributed to this. They include improvements in teaching, departmental management, curriculum and time-table arrangements and making better use of assessment data. From 1997-2001, boys outperformed girls, contrary to national trends, but the overall rate of improvement has been broadly in line with national trends. In art, attainment is above expectations and in all the other subjects it is close to expectations. In religious education, standards are in line with local requirements.

In Years 7 and 8, pupils continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding and their progress is usually good. In English, the attainment of the current Year 7 is above average, whilst Year 8 pupils are performing close to expectations. In mathematics and science, pupils' attainment in Years 7 and 8 is above expectations for their age. In art, design and technology and music, pupils achieve well and the standard of their work is above expectations. In all other subjects, pupils make sound progress and their attainment is as expected for their age. The implementation of the National Key Stage 3 and Literacy and Numeracy strategies is good, resulting in standards that are above average by the ages of 11 and 13 years. In all years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of good teaching and effective support. The school has set realistic academic targets for 11-year-olds.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes, which is a distinct strength of the school that has improved since the previous inspection.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The very good behaviour of pupils reflects the care taken by all staff to promote positive behaviour throughout the school. Pupils are rarely excluded from school.
Personal development and relationships	The school acknowledges the importance of each pupil and ensures they make very good gains in their personal development. Relationships in the school are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils attend the school regularly. Unexplained absence is rare.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

During the inspection, the overall quality of teaching was good in all years and has significantly improved since the last inspection. Teaching is at least satisfactory in every subject. Most teachers have high expectations and provide a purposeful working atmosphere, which promotes good concentration and learning by the pupils. Strengths in the teaching include the deployment of staff to utilise their subject expertise, the way that teachers manage the pupils and the good relationships that exist between them. Areas for development include improving the effectiveness of marking and making greater use of information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects, although some teachers do use computers satisfactorily and pupils' work is enhanced by use of the computer suites. Additionally, the school does not have a consistent approach to assessment and does not consistently match the tasks set to challenge all pupils, especially the most able. In all years, the teaching of literacy, numeracy and science is good. The official frameworks of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy are helping to strengthen provision for English and mathematics throughout the school.

Good use is made of classroom assistants to support pupils with special educational needs. Most individual education plans are targeted carefully to help pupils learn. However, there are few teaching assistants and consequently, the level of support for these pupils across the curriculum is not always effective.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The quality and range of learning opportunities are now good overall, but the amount of taught curriculum time is substantially less than the recommended guidelines, especially in Years 7 and 8. Opportunities for pupils to participate in activities outside lessons are good overall and very good in music and physical education.
Provision for pupils with special educational need	The provision for pupils identified as having special educational needs is satisfactory overall and organised well by the co-ordinator.
Provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development. It also has very good arrangements for promoting moral and social development. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development are well promoted.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school is a harmonious community where all pupils matter. Staff work hard to know and care for all the pupils as individuals. The school is committed to equal opportunities and promotes the importance of racial harmony. The school does not collate all the academic and personal development information available about each individual pupil and this restricts its ability to determine whether all pupils are making the very best progress.

Parents have a high level of satisfaction with what the school provides and achieves. They regard Woodhouse School highly because they recognise that it helps their children to become responsible young citizens. They say their children like coming to school, are taught well, work hard and make good progress. The school has established positive links with parents and the local community.



## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior staff have been effective in raising standards and providing a good education for all of the pupils. The school has the capacity to ensure that improvements will be sustained. The senior staff ensure the school operates well on a daily basis and have created a positive team approach.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governors provide good support to the school. They successfully fulfil their statutory requirements and have developed a sound knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have ensured good improvements have been achieved. However, they lack a longer-term strategic plan to steer the priorities of the more immediate school development plans.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring by the headteacher, senior staff and some subject managers has improved since the last inspection and has identified many of the strengths and areas for development. However, review and monitoring arrangements are still not sufficiently regular and rigorous enough. The governors and senior managers have not fully developed the school into a self-evaluating institution.
The strategic use of resources	The school uses its specific grants for special educational needs well. It is beginning to make better use of new technology in aspects of its work. The school applies the principles of achieving value for money to major purchases.

The school has sufficient appropriately qualified staff to teach the curriculum effectively and to meet the needs of pupils. The school operates on the minimum number of support and administrative staff. Overall, learning resources are satisfactory. The library is satisfactory, but used as a classroom, which limits its potential and use. The accommodation is adequate for the numbers on roll.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school sent out 470 questionnaires of which 61 (13 per cent) were returned. Twelve parents attended a meeting prior to the inspection to express their views about the school.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their children like school</li><li>• The progress their children make</li><li>• Pupils' behaviour in school</li><li>• The quality of teaching</li><li>• They feel comfortable in approaching the school with problems</li><li>• The high expectations of staff</li><li>• The management and leadership of the school</li><li>• The school helping children to become mature and responsible</li><li>• The range of activities outside the classroom</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The information about their children's progress</li><li>• The school working more closely with parents.</li></ul>

The inspection team mostly agrees with the positive views expressed by parents. In reference to the areas the parents would like to see improved, the school does provide satisfactory information about their children's progress, although the annual pupil reports could be improved, and it endeavours to make parents feel welcome and to work with them.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

##### **Years 5 and 6**

1. Pupils start school in Year 5 and their overall level of attainment at entry is close to expectations. However, there are several pupils in each year, who are capable of achieving the highest grades in the national assessments.
2. In the 2001 tests, taken at the age of 11, pupils' attainment overall was below the national average. During the same year, attainment in English and mathematics was below average and in science it was average. When compared with similar schools<sup>1</sup>, English and mathematics results were below average and in science they were average. In the 2001 tests, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics was below the national average, but close to average in science. The 2001 results, when compared to similar schools, show the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 grades was well below average and this indicates that many of the higher-attaining pupils were underachieving. From 1997 to 2001, boys have outperformed girls, contrary to national trends. The school found it difficult to improve attainment substantially during this period, but the rate of improvement has been broadly in line with national trends and standards have steadily improved since the last inspection.
3. In the most recent 2002 tests results improved significantly. These results indicate that attainment in English, mathematics and science is close to the national and similar schools averages. Significantly, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 grades in English, mathematics and science improved considerably and are just above national and similar school averages. The quality of pupils' work seen during the inspection confirms the level of attainment indicated by these latest test results. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are now achieving well and for many their progress is good. There are a number of factors that have contributed to these improvements, especially in English and mathematics:
  - the appointment of effective heads of department and other staff;
  - deploying more staff to teach their subject specialism;
  - improvements in the quality of teaching and learning;
  - grouping and teaching pupils in ability sets;
  - successfully implementing the national strategies for literacy and numeracy;
  - refining the timetable, improving curriculum plans and department schemes of work;
  - making better use of assessment information to set pupils targets for improvement.
4. In most lessons seen during the inspection, pupils made good progress. However, the very highest-attaining pupils were not always set work that was sufficiently challenging. This was because tasks were not always well matched to their different needs, so that these pupils often complete the same work as other pupils before they can move on to work that is pitched at a level that will challenge them. Pupils with special educational needs achieved well in their learning, especially when they received specific support in lessons. The good support they received often allowed them to make good progress.
5. Inspection evidence suggests that pupils are currently attaining at a similar level to the 2002 national tests in English, mathematics and science, reflecting the fact that for a few years the school has made these subjects the priority for development. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels has increased and is now above average. Attainment is also above expectations in design and technology. In all the other subjects, pupils' attainment is close to

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<sup>1</sup> Similar schools are identified by using the number of pupils claiming free school meals.

national expectations. In religious education, standards are in line with local requirements. There were no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls. The school has set targets for 11-year-olds, based on their attainment at the end of Year 2, in mathematics and English. Although demanding, they are within reach.

## **Years 7 and 8**

6. Although the school assesses the progress of pupils in Years 7 and 8 and administers optional test papers, there is no national data with which to make valid comparisons. In all subjects, pupils continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject and progress is usually good. In English, the attainment of the current Year 7 is above average, whilst Year 8 pupils are performing close to expectations. In mathematics and science, pupils' attainment in Years 7 and 8 is above expectations for their age.
7. In art, design and technology and music, pupils achieve well and the standard of their work is above expectations. In all other subjects, pupils make satisfactory progress and their attainment is as expected for their age. Pupils with special educational needs continue to make good progress as a result of good teaching and effective support.

## **Literacy and numeracy**

8. The implementation of the National Key Stage 3 and Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is good, resulting in standards that are above average by the age of 11 and 13 years. The pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are being well developed and this makes a positive contribution to other subjects. Reading skills are good and this enables pupils to have full access to the work in other subjects. In writing, pupils have sufficient technical skills to meet the demands of all subjects. In many areas, pupils have a very good command of subject-specific vocabulary. Literacy skills are well used in most subjects and standards are improving steadily.
9. The majority of pupils are both confident and competent when using their numeracy skills as a result of regular opportunities to practise their skills at different levels and in different contexts in mathematics lessons. They cope well with the mathematical needs of other subjects. Numeracy skills are used to good effect in science, ICT, design and technology, art and geography.

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

10. Pupils have very good attitudes, a distinct strength of the school, which has improved since the previous inspection. Parents report that their children are keen to come to school, a view confirmed by the inspection team during their time in school. Pupils' happy faces as they join classmates in the playground before the morning bell reflect their pleasure in their life at school. They say they like their school and relish the wide range of activities open to them. Music and sport are particular favourites. Pupils happily recall their participation in the Jubilee Concert in the Royal Albert Hall. Year 8 pupils rush to play badminton at lunchtimes, taking full advantage of this well-earned privilege.
11. The attitudes of pupils to their learning are equally good and make a significant contribution to the good progress made. In lessons, pupils are confident, join in the activities with enthusiasm and work hard. Boys and girls longed to contribute ideas in a Year 7 personal and citizenship education lesson about the best environment for doing homework. A pupil deduced that if eating helped maintain concentration then perhaps the school should consider allowing eating in lessons. Everyone burst into spontaneous applause, including the teacher, who obviously appreciated this thoughtful, but light-hearted reply.
12. The very good behaviour of pupils reflects the care taken by all staff to promote good behaviour throughout the school. In lessons, pupils respond to the very clear expectations of the teacher.

This response stimulates their desire to do their best and leaves little time for inappropriate behaviour. Pupils also behave very well in the playground. They play well together with evident enjoyment and vigour. They are kind to one another and are careful to not just notice, but also accommodate the needs of others as they move around the school. Pupils are very careful with property, treating their own and the school's equipment with very high levels of respect. Lockers are now available for older pupils, an idea emerging from the successful school council. Pupils use the lockers sensibly and very maturely to store their own books and materials. Pupils are rarely excluded from school, a testimony to the school's effort to fully include pupils in school life.

13. A few of the boys have difficulty conforming to the school's high expectations of their behaviour. The school handles the minor disturbances sensitively and does not allow disruptions to the learning of others. The school rarely excludes pupils. Reports from pupils and parents indicate that bullying seldom occurs and, if it does, staff handle incidents very promptly and effectively.
14. Relationships in the school are also very good and this is another improvement since the previous inspection. All pupils, boys and girls, younger and older, enjoy being with one another, whether in the classrooms or around the school. They offer each other very good support in lessons and automatically and modestly help each other. Pupils, for instance, comfortably share computers and help any classmates, who are struggling. Offering a helping hand comes naturally to these pupils, both in lessons and around the school. A young pupil immediately helped older pupils struggling to stack chairs at lunchtime.
15. A significant feature of these very comfortable relationships is the natural ease with which all pupils are included in school life. Those pupils, who have special education needs, are totally involved with their friends in work and leisure activities. No-one is left out of the clubs and activities or the fun in the playground. Pupils are considerate of others, who have particular challenges because of their individual circumstances. They accept that some children have problems always behaving properly and make allowance for these children. They accept that some children have specific disabilities and make no fuss about the implications of these situations. Stunned silence greeted the description in a school assembly of a Year 5 pupil's tears of compassion for a Downs Syndrome playmate during the recent summer holidays.
16. The school is a harmonious community where pupils relate equally well with adults. The pupils are charming citizens, who are eager to share a smile, a word or a story with adults. Shared humour is evident in many of the interactions between pupils and adults. Pupils value the feelings and experiences of others. They listen attentively when teachers share stories about their own particular circumstances. They show high levels of interest in, and compassion for, the lives and needs of others. Almost the entire school participates in a sports challenge for under-privileged athletes. Even members of staff join the conveyor belt of participants as they jump, throw and run in the school hall.
17. The school acknowledges the importance of each pupil's personality and ensures that each makes very good gains in their personal development. This represents another improvement since the previous inspection. It is a feature of school life applauded by parents. Pupils take very good levels of responsibility for their busy lives in school. Many pack a lot into their busy week and they manage to have the correct equipment to hand. They take great care about hanging up any coats and make sure they have their books, pens and pencils ready to start their lessons. They take real ownership of any jobs they are given or volunteer for. Year 8 pupils, in particular, help the school run smoothly. They run the general office at lunchtime, commenting that this responsibility makes them more mature and confident. From Year 5, pupils are expected, and many offer, to carry messages or do jobs to keep the classrooms, corridors and grounds in good order. Classes take turns ensuring that the playground is left tidy and in good order at the end of breaks. Pupils glow with pride when chosen to help out. They are pleased, for instance, to participate individually in assemblies. Young boys and girls eagerly participated in an impromptu role-play in front of the whole school.

18. Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils attend the school regularly. Unexplained absence is rare. The apparent, but unreal, decline in attendance figures since the previous inspection is due to the use of different comparisons. Figures were previously matched against 11-16 secondary schools. A virus last winter accounted for very significant absence, otherwise the figures would have been above average for pupils of this age. Only a very few families do not fully support their children's regular attendance, despite suitable encouragement from the school. Pupils arrive at school promptly.

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

19. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school and there are examples of very good and excellent teaching in each year group. Of the lessons observed during the inspection, the quality of teaching was good in 36 per cent, very good in 37 per cent, excellent in 11 per cent and satisfactory in 15 per cent. In only one lesson did teaching not ensure pupils made adequate progress. The quality of teaching is now a significant strength of the school and has contributed to the progress pupils make and the raising of standards since the last inspection. In addition, the quality of teaching has a positive impact on pupils' personal development, their attitudes towards work and their behaviour in class and around the school.
20. The previous inspection report judged the quality of teaching to be satisfactory or better in only 81 per cent of the lessons, but satisfactory overall. In Years 5 and 6, one-quarter of all lessons were judged as unsatisfactory. The unsatisfactory teaching was closely linked to weaknesses identified in teachers' low expectations of what pupils could achieve, the inadequate subject knowledge by teachers working outside their subject expertise, the poor pace of work in lessons, that planning lacked detail and was too variable and there was no precise target-setting from use of assessment information. This resulted in key issues to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning, improve aspects of curriculum planning and the effectiveness of leadership and management. In particular, English and modern languages were highlighted as subjects with a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. Current inspection findings show that the school has addressed most of the key issues relating to teaching and learning successfully, although there is still room for further improvement in teaching ICT across the curriculum and ensuring the most able pupils, especially those who are gifted and talented, achieve to their full potential. The extent of good teaching was evident in all year groups.
21. The quality of teaching is good in most subjects and the main reason why pupils are making good progress and achieving well. During the inspection, teaching was especially effective in art, religious education, design and technology and history in Years 7 and 8. In geography and German, teaching was satisfactory, but not as effective as in other subject areas. Generally, teaching was especially effective because teachers had a high level of subject expertise and managed the pupils very well in class. In some subjects, teacher expectations were very high, but the most gifted and talented pupils were not always sufficiently challenged.
22. In the best lessons, teachers show good subject knowledge, which is passed on to pupils with interest and enthusiasm. The purpose of the lesson is shared with pupils and contributes well to their understanding of their own learning. Planning is very good, matching the scheme of work and ability of the pupils. Teachers use demonstration and explanation well to put across key teaching points. A significant strength of teaching is the successful management of pupils' behaviour. This is a result of high expectations for behaviour and pupils knowing exactly what is expected of them. In particular, pupils take pride in their work and the quality of presentation is often very good. Relationships are very good, with pupils being confident and secure with their teachers and support staff.
23. The quality of teaching literacy and numeracy skills in different areas of the curriculum is generally good throughout the school. All teachers are secure in their knowledge of the literacy

and numeracy strategies. They usually plan thoroughly, identifying clearly how the basic skills of literacy and numeracy for pupils of different abilities are to be covered. Teachers plan effectively with the teaching assistants, who give good support to individuals and groups of pupils. Teachers recognise the primary importance of literacy and, at times, create effective links between English and its application to other subjects. However, there are too few teaching assistants to support pupils throughout the curriculum. The provision for teaching numeracy skills across the curriculum and raising standards are developing well, but are not as advanced as for literacy. A number of subjects are using pupils' ICT skills within a planned series of lesson activities. Where these opportunities are emphasised by the teacher, pupils learn well. However, some subjects have yet to introduce a sufficiently wide-range of learning activities that enable pupils to use their computer skills to support and develop more fully their understanding of individual parts of the course.

24. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good because of the effective support offered by teachers and teaching assistants. This support enables them to complete similar work to the pupils in the rest of the class. Careful on-going assessment means that staff know their pupils well. Planning for lower-ability groups is clear in many lessons, but there is little evidence that the learning experiences planned relate to pupils' individual education plans. This is the case in subjects such as German, ICT, physical education and geography when teachers do not take sufficient account of the targets defined in their individual educational plans. At times, the comments made by teachers when marking work are not constructive and do not help pupils with special educational needs to make progress.
25. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, which guides pupils in their future learning. The quality of marking is satisfactory, but there are inconsistencies in the use of constructive comments. Teachers use the results of marking to plan future lessons as well as the assessments they make of pupils' learning. Overall, homework is used in a satisfactory way to support the development of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding, but there are inconsistencies between classes.

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

26. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good overall. Pupils are taught all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education and all curriculum statutory requirements are met. German is taught from Year 6 and swimming in Years 5 and 7. The time provided for teaching geography and history is low, but this has not adversely affected standards in those subjects. The provision for the development of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum and raising the standards achieved are developing well. The school successfully implements the national strategies for literacy and numeracy in Years 5 and 6. There has been a good start to addressing teaching literacy, numeracy and ICT in Years 7 and 8.
27. The amount of time pupils spend in lessons is less than published by the school because access into the building after lunch and break times is restricted by narrow entrances. Although pupils line up on the playground and enter the building sensibly, lessons usually start at least seven or eight minutes later than scheduled. Consequently, the amount of taught curriculum time is considerably less than the recommended guidelines, especially in Years 7 and 8.
28. The arrangements for personal, social and health education are good. The programme includes aspects of citizenship and all aspects of health education, including sex education and education in the misuse of drugs. Pupils respond well to lessons that are taught by tutors. The healthy-eating initiative is well supported by the school catering staff, who also encourage pupils to try different foods by taking a taste. The school has yet to undertake a full audit of its provision for citizenship because a co-ordinator for personal, social and health education has yet to be appointed.

29. Opportunities for pupils to participate in activities outside lessons are good overall and very good in music and physical education. For example, there is a wide range of competitive sports and in music, pupils can choose to learn an instrument and participate in a range of activities, including recorders, choir and orchestra. Many pupils enjoy using the computers at lunch times and after school and there are booster classes and breakfast clubs for pupils, who need help with their numeracy and literacy skills.
30. The school's links with industry and the community are very good. Year 8 pupils visit Manchester airport to support their learning in design technology and careers. The local environment is used well by the school through visits to local churches to enrich the religious education curriculum. Pupils have also contributed to 'Biddulph in bloom'. The curriculum is enriched by a number of visitors to the school. Year 6 pupils enjoy the visit by the ambulance service, which helps them to understand how a life can be saved. Pupils have enjoyed a visiting storyteller and have been involved in drama workshops, which have provided opportunities for improving their listening and speaking skills.
31. The school works closely with its partner schools. The staff liaise and meet regularly with their colleagues from the first schools and high schools for joint planning of the curriculum and training. Since the last inspection there have been important improvements to the curriculum, especially with the effectiveness of the arrangements for the time-table and grouping pupils by ability in several subjects.
32. The provision for pupils identified as having special educational needs is satisfactory overall and organised well by the co-ordinator. Overall, the school is meeting its policy for inclusion and equality of opportunity with respect to these pupils. It provides pupils with an appropriate curriculum mainly within the normal classes. On a few occasions, pupils are withdrawn for a short while for support. The targets recorded in the pupils' individual education plans are mostly appropriate to match their educational and social needs. These individual plans are reviewed as required with appropriate consultation with parents, teachers and specialists from agencies outside the school.

### **Educational inclusion, including race equality**

33. The school is a harmonious community where all pupils matter. Staff work hard getting to know all the pupils as individuals. Relationships are very good throughout the community, ensuring that newcomers are warmly welcomed and quickly feel at ease with all others. The school positively seeks opportunities to support those with difficulties. Parental comments endorse the school's sympathetic approach to, and care for, pupils and adults with particular needs, such as specific medical conditions.
34. The school has only one pupil for whom English is an additional language. The school arranges support to help the pupil learn when he/she needs it. The school is committed to equal opportunities for all. It promotes the importance of racial harmony, recently consulting the pupils and parents to establish their understanding.
35. Teaching is good throughout the school. Teachers plan work to match the needs of different pupils, including those with learning difficulties. The school provides equally well for the more able pupils. A few departments, such as English, mathematics, history and physical education, arrange participation in local schools' events to challenge the gifted and talented. The school does not, however, ensure that all departments arrange similar activities. There is not enough emphasis on ensuring the most able pupils achieve their full potential and the school does not keep a register of gifted and talented pupils. The school does not have an integrated, systematic and rigorous approach to identifying, monitoring and evaluating the progress of different groups of pupils. Few pupils are excluded from the school as the school works very hard to gain the

commitment of all pupils and parents. It demonstrates openness and fairness in any actions taken.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

36. Overall, the school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development. As soon as visitors enter the school, they become aware, through the smart presentation of the school and the calm and dignified demeanour of the community, that this is a caring school. Parents have a high regard for the school because they recognise that it helps their children, including those with special education needs, to become responsible young citizens. Parents recognise the very good behaviour of the pupils and rightly attribute this to the care the school takes to promote the pupils' respect for others. Through lessons, assemblies, extra-curricular activities and informal interactions with pupils, staff constantly encourage, inspire and recognise the individual contributions of all the pupils.
37. The pupils' spiritual development is well promoted. The school helps pupils experience feelings beyond their own particular knowledge and understanding through some lessons, but through the assemblies in particular. The pupils' anticipation of a positive experience is palpable. Pupils sit patiently and calmly whilst other classes enter. Complete silence immediately greets the assembly leader. Powerful messages are described very simply. Hymns are sung with grace and sincerity. On one occasion it was impossible not to be very moved by the response of the pupils. Even the few pupils, who can have difficulty remaining quiet and calm, were utterly serene and composed as they left the assembly hall. Eyes shone with a mixture of exhilaration and emotion. The school also involves pupils in all assemblies. A group of Year 6 volunteers were absolutely nonplussed as they responded to challenging questions about who they belonged to. The school fulfils its duty to provide a daily act of collective worship. Lessons in religious education contribute very significantly to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Year 8 pupils talked sensitively and carefully about wonder as they shared their inner-most feelings when handed various prompts such as a bible, a ring or a flower.
38. Woodhouse Middle School is a distinctly moral community. Pupils are well aware of the differences between right and wrong. The school carefully and deliberately nurtures the rights and responsibilities of every member of the community. The very good relationships fostered within the community and the clear expectations of correct behaviour create a secure framework for moral development. Pupils are given very good opportunities within lessons to consider moral issues. A group of Year 7 boys were eager to act out a bullying scenario, which they had prepared a week earlier. The teacher in a Year 5 personal and citizenship lesson suddenly produced a wooden cross-section of a large tree. This completely absorbed the pupils and stimulated them to explore environmental issues.
39. The school also has very good arrangements for promoting the social development of all pupils. A striking feature of these arrangements is the wide range of visits to other places and chances to take part in activities, either in or out of school, which they might otherwise not be able to do. Year 6 students visit an activity centre and take part in abseiling and canoeing. Visits are organised to Manchester Airport to learn about the world of work. The school successfully encourages pupils to take responsibility for themselves and others through, for example, developing the prefect system. Year 8 prefects are obvious around the school. They wear their badges with pride and willingly commit lunchtimes and breaks to looking after others and ensuring good order around the school. Pupils respond willingly when asked to take responsibility in lessons and respond well to the regular encouragement to use their own initiative. A group of boys and girls searched eagerly for information about Romulus and Remus in the library at lunchtime.
40. Cultural development is well promoted. Pupils talk with relish about their theatre trips to see *The Railway Children* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The school has satisfactory arrangements for



promoting multi-cultural awareness. Staff recognise the importance of increasing this aspect of the school's work. The school recently sent a questionnaire to pupils and parents. A good racial equality policy is now in place and most departments make some contribution to multi-cultural education. However, the school does not yet have a co-ordinated approach to the development of all these arrangements. This means that it cannot assess the impact of this provision on each individual and group of pupils.

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

41. Parents recognise that the school takes good care of all its pupils. Some of the arrangements have improved since the previous inspection and none have deteriorated.
42. The school fosters very good relationships between adults and pupils. This ensures that pupils feel safe and secure and always have someone to turn to comfortably for help and support. Parents and pupils say that all staff know the pupils, including the youngest, very well and are instantly prepared to attend to individual needs as they emerge. They provide comfort to troubled or worried children and good help and consolation to any who are sick or injured. Most of the school is in good condition and it is kept very clean. Teachers and well-trained support assistants supervise the pupils carefully during playtimes and lunchtimes. Departments take health and safety requirements seriously and site management staff ensure these are well co-ordinated. These features successfully reduce the risk to the health and safety of pupils and staff. The school is alert to child protection issues and procedures and carefully ensures that staff are confident in their approach. However, child protection procedures need to be strengthened by extending training of all staff to improve the level of care even further.
43. Support staff make very significant contributions to pupils' welfare and their learning. They ensure not only that all children are well supervised at lunchtimes, but that they are ably helped in the classrooms. They also ensure that information flows speedily and efficiently between office, classrooms and homes. The catering staff join the whole school's approach to the promotion of healthy living. Samples of unusual meals are available for pupils to taste at lunchtime to encourage variety in the pupils' diet.
44. Attendance at the school is just above average and, therefore, satisfactory when compared with all schools in the country. Unexplained absence is rare because staff are vigilant about recording absence and requesting notes on return. A few families keep pupils absent from school for a wide variety of reasons. The school has had poor or little support from the local Education Welfare Officer. A recent new appointment is proving much more supportive and current attendance is above the national average.
45. Staff have high expectations of the pupils' behaviour. The consistency now demonstrated is an improvement since the last inspection. Staff now expect pupils to take responsibility for themselves and encourage pupils to recognise when these high standards are not maintained. One look or raised eyebrow is often enough to divert a possible deterioration. The dignity of all pupils as they enter classrooms or the hall for assembly is a direct result of pupils' understanding the importance of good behaviour. Their very good behaviour in the playground demonstrates the care that staff take to teach and reinforce good behaviour. Staff constantly and deliberately praise good behaviour and reward pupils, who experience difficulty, but try very hard to conform. The school is very careful about how it uses the rarely-needed power of exclusion as the ultimate sanction. Parents and pupils recognise that the school is very successful in promoting an environment where bullying and harassment are not tolerated.
46. The school helps pupils learn well by providing good support for their personal and academic development. Subject staff know their pupils very well and carefully encourage them to try harder in areas of weakness. Some departments, such as mathematics, monitor progress very well. Careful analysis ensures that pupils' difficulties are identified and results given to suitable

staff. Staff then give pupils regular targets for improvement. However, there is no whole-school approach.

- 47. The school keeps a good range of records about pupils' personal development. Information flows quickly and efficiently between class and subject teachers, senior management and, where relevant, parents. The school keeps careful records, which enables staff to track progress and report accurately on annual reports.
- 48. The school has not yet co-ordinated and collated all the academic and personal development information available about each individual pupil. This restricts the school's ability to determine whether all pupils are making the very best progress. It also inhibits the school's ability to measure the progress of different groups of pupils.

## **Assessment**

- 49. The school now has satisfactory procedures in place for assessing pupils' attainment and progress, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. A number of improvements have been made since the last inspection. These include drawing together and using a wider range of data on pupils' attainment on entry to the school. Further information is also provided by additional attainment tests in Years 7 and 8.
- 50. A new assessment policy is in place. However, it does not yet ensure consistency of practice across the school. Its implementation is not sufficiently co-ordinated and monitored through subject departments by heads of department and senior managers. The English, mathematics and science departments have more established procedures in place to analyse and use data to group pupils and plan lessons and schemes of work. In these subjects, the use of detailed information has resulted in careful tracking of pupils' progress. This has led to changes in teaching methods, the ways pupils learn and the setting of individual targets. In English, for example, a detailed breakdown of pupils' strengths and areas for development is produced. This helps predict future achievement and identify trends and patterns in attainment.
- 51. Assessment information is also well used to help pupils improve their work in subjects such as English, mathematics, science, history and religious education. In other subjects, such as geography and physical education, for example, information on pupils' attainment and progress is not used so effectively. These inconsistencies result from a variety of different uses of assessment across different subjects. There is not a common approach to using assessment information across the school and data is not used to identify trends in the progress made of different groups of pupils.
- 52. Pupils with special educational needs receive satisfactory levels of support in classes through the use of the school's assessment procedures. Test results are effectively used to set targets and decide where extra support should be introduced. Assessment information is suitably used to group pupils according to their abilities.

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

- 53. Many parents had concerns about aspects of the school at the time of the last inspection. Parents recognise the improvements made in recent years. They are now very supportive of the school and recognise its particular strengths. All are rightly enthusiastic in their praise of the school's provision for the personal development of their children. They recognise the good progress their children make and the very good behaviour of the pupils. They applaud the good teaching and the care that staff take to identify and accommodate the needs of their children as individuals. The inspection team endorses these parental views.

54. Generally, parents now have no major concerns about the school. However, a few do not feel particularly well informed about the progress their children are making. Inspectors appreciate these concerns. Annual reports are satisfactory. They give good descriptions of the personal development of the pupils, but do not yet give sufficient detail about the precise curriculum covered during the specific year. Targets are given for each subject, but they are not always specific and clear.
55. The school has improved its partnership with parents. It welcomes and appreciates its parents. The presentation of the school is pleasing and the stimulating displays not only engage parents and visitors, but also give good insight into the range of activities available. Staff now commit significant time and energy to communicating with parents. The school provides a good range of general information for parents, including, for example, useful leaflets about homework and national curriculum levels. Parents are invited to open evenings to learn about various aspects of school life, such as forthcoming trips. The school values the support of an active Parent Friends Teacher Association and an increasing number of parents, who help in school. Parents actively support the many extra-curricular activities that the school organises. There are reportedly, and understandably, full houses at all school concerts.
56. Parents of children with special educational needs are well informed about the progress they make through contact with teachers and through the regular reviews of individual education plans and the yearly reviews of statements.
57. The school regularly consults parents about aspects of school life. Recently, for example, it has distributed questionnaires about uniform, racial equality and homework. The last showed, as inspectors concluded, that the school makes suitable use of homework to encourage parents to support their children's learning at home.

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

58. The school has made good improvement since the last inspection and has the capacity to ensure that these improvements will be maintained. Woodhouse Middle is an effective school and provides the pupils with a good quality of education. There is a clear focus and determination by governors, headteacher and senior staff to raise standards and improve the school. For example, the school has addressed most of the issues raised in the previous inspection report when many weaknesses were identified in the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of management. Consequently, there has been an improvement in the academic standards pupils now achieve, especially in English and mathematics.
59. The school is a pleasant, well-ordered and happy community that creates a positive environment where everyone works hard and learns well. The mission statement and aims of the school are reflected in the life of the school and pupils are happy to come to school. The school is committed to equal opportunities for all. It has recently adopted a policy on racial equality and promotes the importance of racial harmony through consulting the pupils and parents to establish their understanding of this issue. Although most pupils are challenged to achieve the standards of which they are capable, the provision for the most gifted and talented pupils has room to improve further.
60. The headteacher is supported well by three hard-working senior colleagues. However, all senior staff teach a high proportion of lessons. Whilst this gives all staff more time to undertake administrative tasks, it does restrict the capacity of the senior staff to perform essential review, monitoring and developmental work across the school. Staffing costs are high as many teachers are at the top end of the pay scale. This reduces the flexibility of governors to re-deploy or appoint additional staff and reduce this high level of teaching by senior staff. Together, the team of senior staff ensure the school operates smoothly on a daily basis and have created a good

team spirit amongst the staff. The school provides a positive environment for staff and pupils to work.

61. Monitoring by the headteacher, senior staff and some subject managers has improved since the last inspection and has identified many of the strengths and areas for development. However, review and monitoring arrangements are still not sufficiently regular and rigorous. The deployment of senior staff does not ensure that decisions made for future action are always followed through to their completion across all departments. The school does not have a planned programme for all subjects of when monitoring and support will take place. Little systematic monitoring has been possible in subjects other than English, mathematics and science. Lack of time for senior managers to monitor has inhibited the good practice now evident in English, mathematics and science from being disseminated to all other departments. The roles of the heads of academic and pastoral department are not being sufficiently developed as too few have regular release time to perform essential review, support and developmental work. Despite the improvements in review and monitoring since the last inspection, many of the procedures are still too informal and not sufficiently well documented. Consequently, the governors, headteacher and senior managers have not adequately developed the school as a self-evaluating institution. The leadership and management of the literacy and numeracy strategies are good and there has been an improvement in this area since the last inspection.
62. The school's development plan identifies appropriate priorities for raising attainment and improving the quality of education. There have been improvements made in development planning since the last inspection. The current plan has much merit, but does not sufficiently indicate the process of how and when it is to be devised. Currently, the school's financial planning and the development planning process are not adequately integrated. The development plan is written by the headteacher and senior staff and consequently governors and other staff are not sufficiently involved in the process. The current development plan is not sufficiently cross-referenced to academic and pastoral department action plans or a governors' longer-term strategic plan. For example, the individual subject action plans do not reflect the school's priorities or the outcomes of reviews carried out through the annual performance management arrangements for appraising teachers. The current development plan does not provide a clear focus for the governors to enable them to help the school to move forward.
63. The governors meet at least termly and provide good support to the school. They successfully fulfil their statutory requirements. Governors have developed a sound knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have ensured good improvements have been achieved. During the last few years, the governing body has developed its role as a 'critical friend' by becoming better informed about what happens in school. However, they lack a long-term strategic plan to steer the priorities of the more immediate school development plans. The governors do not have a plan for their own development that includes specifying how they will review and monitor the school's progress. The governors' role in strategic planning, financial management and reviewing the school's strengths and areas for development would be strengthened by setting measurable objectives for more areas of school performance. The priorities identified in the school's development plan are not always a focus of discussion at each meeting of the governing body.
64. The co-ordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. However, due to his commitments from other roles in school, the co-ordinator has insufficient time to monitor and evaluate the provision across the school, or to advise and support staff. This means that some teachers are unsure how to meet and evaluate the pupils' targets expressed in their individual education plans. There is insufficient monitoring of his work by senior staff. Funding for special educational needs is prudently and well used. Relevant training has been provided for the support assistants, who work with pupils who have special educational needs. At present, there are not enough support staff in post to support pupils adequately across all subjects. The governing body, in their annual report to parents, suitably report on the implementation of the

policy for pupils with special educational needs, but do not state their decision regarding access for disabled pupils.

65. The school's administrative officer is actively involved in the administration of the finances. She has a detailed knowledge of current budget figures and projected costs. The governors depend heavily on the headteacher for suggesting financial spending and have not developed a sufficiently strategic approach to financial matters for themselves. The school makes some use of the Local Education Authority to provide budget monitoring and maintaining the accounts. Principles of 'best value' are applied to major purchases, but there is room to develop this aspect of financial management, by measuring if value-for-money is achieved.
66. The school uses its specific grants for the purpose they were intended. For example, the grant for special educational needs is used correctly and provision for these pupils is satisfactory, but there are few teaching assistants in post to support pupils' learning. The school is beginning to make better use of new technology in aspects of its work. For example, it has started to use computer software to record and analyse assessment information.

### **Staffing, accommodation and resources**

67. The school has sufficient well-qualified and experienced staff to teach all subjects of the national curriculum. All staff are now well deployed to make the most of their subject expertise and experience. This is a significant improvement as during the last inspection many teachers taught outside their specialist area. Most teachers liaise well with the teaching assistants for pupils with special educational needs, who are well prepared for lessons. Their contribution impacts positively on all pupils. The contribution made by other support staff is also good and ensures the school operates efficiently on a daily basis.
68. The school supports newly-qualified teachers very well, but does not have a structured induction programme for staff new to the school. However, new staff do feel well supported, particularly by their department colleagues. A deputy headteacher effectively manages and monitors the continuous professional development of the staff. They are made aware of possible courses and submit applications through their head of department. Good records are kept of teachers' in-service training and feedback is given at the appropriate meetings. However, training needs are not fully identified in many of the department development plans as a strategy to implement the priorities identified for improvement. The school is still only in the first cycle of performance management and some slippage of time has occurred. Administrative and technical staff do not yet benefit from regular or formal appraisal procedures.
69. The accommodation is clean, very well maintained on a daily basis and generally in good order. The age of some of the mobile classrooms is such that they need replacing. Many of the classrooms are of a good size for the numbers of pupils taught in them and enable teachers to arrange a variety of activities with ease. However, accommodation for music is unsatisfactory. The music room is not big enough to accommodate pupils and instruments so that both whole-class and group work can take place. There are no small spaces for small groups to work on performance and composition. The food technology room is in urgent need of refurbishment. The reception and administrative areas do not provide suitable spaces for staff to work without distraction or in confidence. Many external doors are a significant cause of loss of heat in the school. The fields and outdoor play areas are a positive feature of the school and there is very good access to grassed space.
70. Available funds have been spent on appropriate improvements, such as re-felting the roof and new corridor lighting. The provision of new outdoor lighting has resulted in improved safety for pupils and parents attending events in the evenings. The site-manager carries out his duties efficiently and there is very little evidence of vandalism or graffiti in the school.

71. The last inspection reported that the level of resourcing was barely adequate. They were particularly inadequate in geography and art and resources for English, mathematics and modern foreign languages limited the effectiveness of homework and pupils' progress. Despite the overall budget restrictions for spending on educational resources, the school has made satisfactory improvements and now has adequate resources to teach the planned curriculum. With the exception of food technology, the resources in all subjects are now at least adequate and in mathematics, history, ICT and physical education they are good.
72. Library facilities have improved and are adequate, but somewhat limited for good fiction books and atlases for geography. However, the library is well organised and made readily accessible to pupils at lunch and after school. The school makes good use of the County lending library to supplement its own resources. This also ensures that books are updated at regular intervals. There has been good updating of resources for ICT. The software in use is appropriate, but limited in some subject areas.

### **Value for money**

73. In view of:
- the good progress made by pupils and the above average standards achieved overall;
  - the average level of attendance;
  - the good improvement since the previous inspection;
  - the very good behaviour and extremely positive attitudes of the pupils;
  - the effectiveness of leadership and management in raising standards;
  - the relatively low unit costs per pupil

the school gives good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

74. The governors, headteacher and staff should improve the leadership and management of the school by:

**1. Clearly identifying, defining and strengthening the roles and responsibilities of governors and senior managers by:**

- Strengthening the governors' role in strategic planning, financial management and reviewing the school's strengths and areas for development by setting measurable objectives for more areas of school performance.
- Ensuring the priorities identified in the school's development plan are a focus for discussion at each meeting of the governing body.
- Allocating departments to each senior manager, who then becomes responsible for their overall achievement and improvements.
- Developing a regular and systematic programme to review the work of one department each half-term.
- Setting precise targets for improvement and devising criteria to measure the success and areas of improvement in all departments.
- Defining whole-school procedures for assessment and ensuring they are applied consistently across all departments through regular recorded reviews.
- Ensuring the headteacher's termly report to governors includes an evaluative account of the progress related to school and department priorities.  
(paragraphs: 46, 50, 51 59-64, 109, 123, 130)

**2. Improving the monitoring arrangements for all aspects of the school by:**

- Providing a training programme for governors, senior managers, academic and pastoral heads of department to develop more robust systems for review and monitoring.
- Improving staff deployment to provide adequate time for regular monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Using the results of the monitoring to identify priorities and plan new targets.  
(paragraphs: 61, 114, 124, 143)

**3. Improving the quality of longer-term planning by:**

- The governors establishing a long-term strategic plan to steer the priorities of the more immediate school development plans.
- The governors establishing a plan for their own development, to include specifying how they will review and monitor the school's progress and record the results.
- Adjusting the timing of reviews so that strategic financial planning and the school's development planning are fully integrated.
- Strengthening the link between department action plans, the governors' strategic plan and the school's priorities.  
(paragraphs: 62, 63, 136)

## OTHER ISSUES WHICH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL

Governors may consider including the following less important issues in their action plan.

- Modify the timings of the school day to increase the amount of time pupils spend in lessons, especially in Years 7 and 8.
- Ensure marking is consistently and effectively used.  
(paragraphs: 25, 27, 80, 92)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	82
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	55

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	9	30	30	12	0	1	0
Percentage	11	36.5	36.5	15	0	1	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

	Nursery	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	n/a	472
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	n/a	50

FTE means full-time equivalent.

#### Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	10
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	78

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	11
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	5.6

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.5

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



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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2002	42	65	107

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	34	38	42
	Girls	60	56	65
	Total	94	94	107
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	80 (77)	80 (75)	91 (93)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 4 and above	Boys	39	38	43
	Girls	62	57	67
	Total	101	95	110
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 4 or above	School	86 (71)	81 (77)	94 (84)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	380	30	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	77	0	1

The table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only. It gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	22.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	20.6 : 1
Average class size	29.5

### Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	290

### Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	n/a
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	n/a
Total number of education support staff	n/a
Total aggregate hours worked per week	n/a
Number of pupils per FTE adult	n/a

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	1,078,479
Total expenditure	1,067,948
Expenditure per pupil	2,222
Balance brought forward from previous year	5,220
Balance carried forward to next year	15,751

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3.5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.0

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

13%

Number of questionnaires sent out

470

Number of questionnaires returned

61

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	58	38	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	38	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	54	44	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	41	46	11	2	0
The teaching is good.	46	54	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	26	52	18	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	38	5	0	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	77	23	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	25	57	10	5	3
The school is well led and managed.	50	44	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	54	44	0	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	41	5	0	2

### Other comments made by parents

- The school operates as a secondary school. One parent thought that this would be a problem when her child started at the school, but it wasn't.

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

### ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision for English is good.

#### Strengths:

- Improved standards of attainment in 2002.
- The quality of teaching and learning in all year groups.
- The care taken to involve all pupils fully in lessons.
- Very effective leadership and management of the department.

#### Areas for improvement:

- More consistent and effective marking.
- More opportunities for sustained writing for lower-attaining pupils.
- Provision of more literature from other cultures in Years 7 and 8.

75. Overall, standards in English are above average. Attainment in the 2001 tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 6 was below the national average and below the average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining the expected Level 4 was above average, but a lower than average proportion gained the higher Level 5. In 2002, however, there was an increase in pupils gaining Level 4 and a very substantial increase in those gaining Level 5. This indicates attainment above the national average. The standard of work seen during the inspection also reflects the same improved and above-average standard. Attainment in Year 7 is above national expectations and by the time pupils leave school in Year 8 their attainment is in line with expectations. The performance of boys is much closer to average than that of girls in relation to the national pattern. Very good leadership and management of the department, the deployment of specialist English teachers, good teaching and the successful implementation of the Literacy Strategy have all contributed to the recent improvement in standards.
76. In speaking and listening, the highest-attaining pupils are very accomplished at presenting arguments and justifying opinions by the end of Year 6. They talk effectively in role. Lower-attaining pupils are less able to adjust the tone and nature of their contributions in response to what is said by others. Standards of reading in Year 6 are above average. Many pupils read aloud fluently with appropriate emphasis, expression and intonation. They are well versed in using contextual clues to ascertain the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary. Weaker pupils find it difficult to ascertain meaning beneath the surface. Pupils generally enjoy reading and many read widely outside the classroom.
77. Higher-attaining pupils write effectively in a wide range of forms, including diaries, reports, autobiographies, informative brochures and instructional texts. Even lower-attaining pupils are often able to adopt the correct form and registers as shown by pupils, who successfully wrote diary entries for Bob Cratchit from *A Christmas Carol*. The resultant writing demonstrated both their understanding of the character and also the form in which they were presenting his views. A weakness of many lower-attaining pupils was an inconsistency in the use of tenses in their writing.
78. By Year 8, in speaking and listening, the most successful pupils are making extended contributions to discussions and within groups are well able to talk to explore and hypothesise. Within drama they are able to use a variety of techniques to explore issues, characters and texts. In reading, the highest-attaining pupils are well able to identify a range of literary devices successfully, but are less successful at commenting on the effect of such devices. There were, however, good examples of pupils commenting on the impact of particular vocabulary. Year 7

pupils reading *The Signalman* immediately described words such as 'dismal' and 'shadowy' as 'creating an air of foreboding'. One group of Year 8 pupils perceptively analysed the role of subordinate clauses in *Beowulf*. Lower-attaining pupils fail to identify the ways in which authors influence readers. In writing, the most successful Year 8 pupils write well for a range of purposes, using imaginative vocabulary and adopting some of the literary devices they have analysed in their reading. They are less accomplished with regard to the overall format and structure of their work. The weaker pupils experience difficulties in varying sentence structure.

79. Throughout the school, pupils' achievement in speaking and listening, reading and writing is good overall. Both boys and girls, and pupils of all abilities, including pupils with special educational needs, make good progress.
80. The quality of teaching and learning is good. There was no unsatisfactory teaching observed and the overwhelming majority of lessons were good or very good. This is a very great improvement on the last inspection. There is no significant difference in the teaching of different year groups and all teaching is characterised by very good relationships with pupils. Regular praise and positive feedback make it easy for pupils to try out new ideas and express opinions. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the subject and thus, are able to deal quickly and very clearly with questions. There is a high level of interaction with pupils in lessons. Lessons are well structured with starter activities relating well to the main body of lessons. Objectives are clearly explained and revisited in plenary sessions. Many lessons contain very active tasks to reinforce learning. Year 5 pupils discussing a character from a Robert Leeson short story were given a variety of drama activities in the middle of the English lesson in order to develop their views of the character. Year 8 pupils analysing Gothic fiction used different coloured highlighters to produce an effective visual analysis of the text. In these and in other lessons, the tasks set effectively enabled pupils to achieve the objectives. Teachers have a good knowledge of the attainment and achievement of their pupils and a major strength of the department is the consistent way in which staff attempt to involve all pupils as fully as possible. Occasionally, in the second half of the lesson, the pace flagged slightly and learning was not as effective. Assessment is used both to make decisions about allocation of time and extra guidance and to make decisions about curriculum objectives. Marking is usually thorough, but, although in many cases teachers suggest useful strategies for improvement, this is not consistently provided.
81. The response of pupils to the teaching they receive is very good. They are well motivated and keen to be involved. They collaborate well in lessons, are very attentive and clearly enjoy the subject. They also have the confidence to ask for help or clarification if necessary.
82. The curriculum is fully accessible to all pupils and provides equal opportunities for all to achieve well. However, for the lower-attaining pupils there is scope for more opportunities for sustained writing. Extra-curricular activities enhance all aspects of the subject and pupils' personal development. A drama workshop on bullying is an indication of the importance placed on the moral development of pupils. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are not provided with a good range of fiction from other cultures. Pupils are encouraged to take initiatives and show independence of thought and every year group undertakes a research project using ICT. The use of ICT is developing well and having a positive impact on teaching and learning. The department has responded to the National Numeracy Strategy by planning a range of opportunities for pupils to consider numerical concepts and the use of number.
83. There is very effective leadership and management of the department. As a result, there has been a marked improvement in all the issues raised in the last inspection. A very comprehensive curriculum analysis has been carried out and sensible priorities decided upon. There is very good morale within the department and a corporate approach to teaching the subject. The English strand of the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been implemented successfully and pragmatically.

## Literacy in other curriculum areas

84. Throughout the school, standards of literacy are good and successfully support learning across the curriculum. Reading skills are good and enable pupils to have full access to the work in other subjects. In writing, pupils have sufficient technical skills to meet the demands of all subjects. In many areas, pupils have a very good command of subject-specific vocabulary.
85. The teaching of literacy in different areas of the curriculum is generally good and, on occasions, very good. In many subjects, opportunities for speaking and listening are used for pupils to develop arguments and hypothesise. Pupils in ICT read a variety of on-line texts in order to identify and assess bias, whilst in geography they are given opportunities to use power-point presentations. In mathematics, they are given good opportunities to make up problems and there is appropriate emphasis given to written investigations. The importance of literacy is emphasised through art and the department runs a joint project with the English department. A particularly successful example of good literacy development occurred in a Year 7 religious education lesson where pupils had to devise metaphors for life.
86. The provision for literacy across the curriculum is good. The literacy co-ordinator conducted an audit of existing provision to ascertain priorities and sensibly identified issues such as non-fiction texts, reading for information, note-making and modelling writing. All departments produced literacy action plans. A successful whole-school training day was followed up with further priorities and training. A number of departments elected to undertake specific literacy activities. There has been good liaison with the local authority literacy consultant. Overall, there has been successful implementation of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is good.

### Strengths:

- Teaching is good and motivates the pupils to learn.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good. The department team works well together and is committed to success and further improvement.
- The implementation of the Numeracy Strategy across all years is very effective and has made a significant contribution to the standards achieved by pupils.
- There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

### Areas for improvement:

- The use of a more interactive questioning during long teacher input in the main teaching part of the lesson.
- Development of a consistent marking system that ensures pupils know what to do to improve.

87. Overall, standards in mathematics are above average at the end of Year 6 and also by the time pupils leave school in Year 8. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2001 was in line with national averages and has been improving steadily since the last inspection. Results in 2002 were much higher than those in the previous year and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels doubled. These improvements are largely as a result of good teaching, the successful implementation of the numeracy strategy in all years, the management of the department and careful analysis of the progress of individual pupils. In 2001, boys outperformed girls, in line with the national picture. Results in 2002 indicate similar standards achieved by boys and girls, but girls outperformed boys at the higher levels. Pupils in the current Year 8 are achieving standards slightly above what is expected nationally.

88. By the end of Years 6 and 8, the evidence from inspection is that standards are slightly above what is typically expected of pupils of these ages. Pupils are confident and competent in all areas of mathematics. For example, Year 6 pupils are confident with their multiplication tables and are able to apply this knowledge to the multiplication of four digit numbers by single digit numbers. The most able can multiply three digit numbers by two digit numbers using different written methods. High-attaining Year 8 pupils are able to generate sequences and express the general term in algebraic form.
89. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in mathematics. Many pupils, who arrive at school with special educational needs, make good progress in lessons and gain in confidence. All pupils make clear gains in their knowledge and understanding of the subject and their mental arithmetic skills are good. Pupils' progress is enhanced by their very positive attitudes to learning and the high levels of concentration in the majority of classes. They participate in lessons and are prepared to explain their solutions to their classmates.
90. The positive achievement and good progress made are the result of particularly effective teaching and learning across all year groups. This is an improvement on the previous inspection when teaching was described as sound in Years 7 and 8 and less than sound in Years 5 and 6. In half of the lessons seen in this inspection, teaching was very good or excellent.
91. When teaching is good, teachers deliver well-prepared lessons that include a variety of activities to meet the needs of all pupils. The objective for the lesson is shared with the group so that pupils are clear about what they are to achieve. All teachers use the National Numeracy Strategy's guidance and lessons begin with a starter activity that focuses the pupils immediately and often contributes to their good mental arithmetic skills. In a Year 6 lesson, this part of the learning allowed pupils to practise their multiplication tables whilst 'beating the clock'. Planning by teachers meets the needs of all groups of pupils. In most lessons, support for the least able and extension activities for the most able is clearly documented. In the main learning activity during the lesson, not all teachers keep pupils sufficiently involved due to long periods of teacher input. However, in a good Year 8 lesson on generating sequences, the teacher kept pupils fully involved by checking understanding when asking pupils to explain their answers and thinking. Teachers make good use of games, real-life examples and resources to keep pupils interested and maximise their learning. Dice are used successfully to generate random numbers, 'write on, wipe off' boards to ensure immediate assessment of understanding by teachers and the use of semaphore to check pupils' understanding of place value. Many teachers challenge their most able pupils to think and apply their knowledge. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on the multiplication and division of decimals by 10, 100 and 1000, pupils were given an answer and asked to find the question. A plenary takes place during each lesson, although in some cases the teacher does not leave enough time for pupils to explore what they have learned or for the teacher and pupils to check progress.
92. In most lessons, teachers have high expectations of their pupils, who usually respond by producing good work. Teachers provide their pupils with opportunities to investigate mathematical ideas, apply their knowledge to real life situations and think mathematically. In lessons, teachers and pupils enjoy very good relationships, as do the pupils between themselves. There is a mutual respect between teachers and pupils in lessons and teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to the provision of equality of opportunity for all pupils, whatever their ability, social group or gender. Mathematics teachers make a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development. They are good role-models and pupils respond well. Pupils are prepared to 'have a go' in this supportive environment and are not afraid to make mistakes. As a result, they make good progress and their standards are improving. The department has made a satisfactory, but limited, impact on the spiritual and cultural development of pupils using some exploration of the power of mathematics in solving real-life problems.

93. The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection. The department now monitors and records the progress of individual pupils. Each year, the test results are analysed in order that teaching can focus on areas where individual pupils have difficulty and appropriate support is given. This information is used well to plan lessons. However, apart from producing a gender breakdown of results, the department has not sufficiently analysed the results of, for example, the groups of pupils who arrive with low or high levels of achievement. Marking is completed regularly, but the systems of marking vary and there are few comments to inform pupils where they have been successful and what they need to do to improve. The record of achievement is good and includes comments that enable both parents and pupils to understand any targets for improvement that have been set.
94. The mathematics department supports literacy by ensuring that pupils can explain their work to each other and to their teacher. In addition, all staff in the department draw pupils attention to the mathematical vocabulary they are using. As a result, even the low ability Year 5 pupils understand what it means to 'partition' numbers. Currently, the English and mathematics departments are working together on writing up mathematical investigations.
95. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The team is committed to promoting high standards of achievement and teaching and give freely of their time outside lessons to support their pupils. The curriculum ensures that pupils have good opportunities to improve their skills and to develop as mathematicians and work is usually well matched for pupils of differing ability. The provision for high attaining pupils is challenging and supportive. Similarly, the provision for lower attaining pupils includes all the elements of a broad scheme with opportunities to revisit topics regularly and reinforce them in a variety of ways. The department's development plan is good and includes issues identified as a result of monitoring conducted by the head of department. Appropriate monitoring has taken place and outcomes shared at department meetings. The opportunities to use ICT in mathematics lessons have improved since the last inspection and are currently being extended. The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection.

### **Numeracy in other curriculum areas**

96. The provision for developing numeracy skills across the curriculum and raising standards achieved are developing well. The department is in the early stages of implementing a whole-school practice, but has had an initial meeting with all staff to encourage other subjects to support pupils' mathematical development. The majority of pupils are both confident and competent as a result of regular opportunities to practise their skills at different levels and in different contexts in mathematics lessons and they cope well with the mathematical needs of other subjects. The science and mathematics departments have worked together to standardise some methods of computation and the mathematics curriculum contributes positively to pupils' science work. In design and technology, good numeracy skills are evident. The standard of pupils' ability to measure accurately is very high as demonstrated in the production of working models. In geography, pupils understand how to use data and construct graphs, although they still need to improve their interpretation of graphs. This aspect was also apparent in their mathematics books. In ICT, pupils are confident with the mathematics needed for the spreadsheets and databases. The mathematics department also reinforces the basic skills of ICT when using it to support mathematics.



## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision for science is good.

### Strengths:

- Pupils achieve well and attain above average standards in all years.
- Teaching is good and ensures pupils make good progress.
- Pupils display good attitudes to learning science.
- Science is very well led and managed. All staff are highly committed to raising standards.
- The development of procedures for assessment and the use made of the results for setting targets, monitoring and evaluating pupils progress.

### Areas for improvement:

- Increasing the amount of specialised equipment so that pupils' rate of progress is not hindered.
- Pupils' graphical skills in recording the evidence from their investigations.
- The use of information and communication technology in teaching science.

97. Overall, standards in science are above the national average at the end of Year 6 and also by the time pupils leave school in Year 8. The standards pupils achieve by the end of Year 6 are similar to those at the last inspection. However, the overall level of attainment has continued to improve. The proportion of pupils now attaining Level 5 has significantly increased because of the provision of booster classes<sup>2</sup> and the department making better use of assessment information and teaching pupils in ability groups. Standards achieved by the end of Year 8 are also above average, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Both boys and girls learn equally well and make similar progress. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support in lessons and, as a result, make good progress.
98. The above average standards of Year 6 pupils are seen in their recorded work across all aspects of science. For example, pupils understand that relationships between plants and animals in a habitat can be identified in food chains, which are affected by other food chains and lead to a complex food web. Pupils with special educational needs acquire a clear understanding of food chains from the teachers' preparation of pictures showing direction of energy flows. Pupils understand why they need to use different apparatus to separate different mixtures. Lower-attaining pupils know that plants and animals in a habitat can be classified into predator and prey. However, they are less clear about producers, herbivores and consumers. Pupils are beginning to understand the difference between mass and weight and have an above average understanding of forces. They carry out a good range of practical activities. For example, they explore how different masses affect the stretching of an elastic band. However, pupils' graphical skills in recording the evidence of their investigations are weaker than other aspects of their work. The work of Year 8 pupils also demonstrates their above average standards. For example, higher-attaining pupils understand how populations grow. They know what factors affect this growth, for example, overcrowding, food, water, and predators. Average-attaining pupils write word equations for chemical reactions. Higher-attaining pupils do so using chemical formulae.
99. Throughout the school, good teaching means that pupils learn well. A very effective lesson in Year 6 provided excellent opportunities for learning. The lesson began with quick mental warm-up activities, which reviewed previous work. The teacher showed a high level of sensitivity and questioned pupils skilfully to encourage them to think and respond. She made sure that her questions included as many pupils as possible, including those with special educational needs. This increased their involvement and confidence. On questioning, 'do you have a producer?',

<sup>2</sup> Booster class. A term used to describe lessons designed to help pupils, who are working at a level below what would be expected and who need a 'boost' to help them catch up.

pupils showed toy rabbits and squirrels, indicating their misconceptions. The showing of a cabbage leaf by one pupil started an exciting discussion that developed clear understanding of producers and consumers. Consolidation of learning at the end of the lesson was equally exciting. Selected pupils were asked to show their understanding of food chains. The lesson ended with checking of targets set for pupils with special educational needs. In another excellent Year 5 lesson, the teacher made use of a superb range of models and stethoscope to provide highly motivating and exciting learning of the location and working of the heart. An example of very good learning in Year 8 consisted of very effective use of models, analogies and practical work that simulated part of the digestive system and promoted learning of the role of enzymes in digestion of starch. Pupils also performed a test for the presence of glucose and starch in the samples. Pupils' overall good attitudes and behaviour and their keenness to learn helped them to make good progress.

100. The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is good. In a high proportion of lessons, it is very good. All teachers are science specialists and have very secure knowledge of the subject. Their training in literacy and numeracy has helped them to integrate them with their science teaching and develop these areas well. Lessons are planned and structured for efficient learning. Mental warm-ups and lesson objectives are clearly planned and used to interest and motivate pupils. Management of pupils keeps them engaged and working at a good pace. Good discussions and questioning help teachers to monitor how well pupils are learning.
101. Management and leadership of the subject are very good. There is a clear focus on the achievement of pupils. Pupils' progress is monitored and formal target setting has started. Previous and somewhat informal arrangements have been helping pupils for some years to make better progress in science than in English and mathematics. However, the use of information and communication technology is not developed as well as that of literacy and numeracy. All teachers of the department and the technician are highly committed and collectively have a very positive effect on pupils' learning. Whilst resources are adequate, there are times when the shortage of specialised equipment slows down progress that pupils are capable of making. During the last inspection, the pupils were achieving above average standards. This standard and the high quality of teaching and learning have been maintained.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths:

- The very good quality of teaching results in good progress and high levels of attainment.
- Visits to a variety of locations brings art alive to pupils in all its forms.
- The use of ICT to enhance learning.
- Pupils learn well and are enthusiastic.
- The department is very well led and managed.

### Areas for improvement:

- There is insufficient emphasis on observational drawing to redress the below average standards of pupils on entry to the school.
- Some pupils in the large lower-ability groups, where there is no learning support, produce insufficient work.
- There are not enough reproductions of art to widen pupils' art experiences.
- Pupils' knowledge of National Curriculum attainment levels to improve their understanding of marking and assessment.

102. The evidence from inspection is that at the end of Year 6, standards match national expectations. By Year 8, standards are above national expectations. When pupils first come to the school their standards are below national expectations. They have had very little experience of observational

drawing or subtle colour mixing. This shows in their first artwork, where their painting is crude and they have little understanding of the use of line and tone. Therefore, all pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well to reach good standards by Year 8.

103. Pupils' artwork in Year 5, based on the work of Mondrian, already shows an awareness of the effects of colour, some showing subtle changes in colour and others vivid with contrasting colour. In Year 6, pupils show a good use of the imagination. For example '*Me in a Spoon*', showed how a pupil extended the perception of 'self' into a flight of fancy. The use of colour to explore shape in Year 7 is very well displayed in the large representations of leaves, where the subtle use of colour gives depth and movement. Pupils' understanding of the importance of composition is shown very well in a painting in the style of *Clarice Cliff*, where red, orange and yellow objects are effectively grouped. Portraits in Year 8 show a high degree of perception and creativity, for example, where the dominant colour used was blue, the portrait was to a very high standard. Three-dimensional work, such as the Year 8 masks, shows a good understanding of form. Pupils research well. For example in their *Art Deco* project, they explored many artists, which gave pupils an understanding of the extent of the decorative art movement.
104. The quality of teaching is consistently very good, reflecting the teacher's love of the subject, which results in a high level of interest and determination to succeed amongst pupils. Planning is very good, which ensures that the most important features are learnt and consolidated. This applies also to the scheme of work, where changes have been made to meet the needs of pupils. Questioning is very good. For example, "What else can we do"? made the pupils think of possible uses of the programme that they were using in their pattern making. Every opportunity is taken to move pupils on in their learning. This was seen when a pupil was asked "What if the vase was a cylinder, how would it be drawn"? This led to a discussion about shape and how pupils should draw what they see. The emphatic emphasis on the high standards of work expected results in pupils making rapid progress. Relationships are very good, which encourages pupils to ask for advice and to discuss their artwork amongst themselves. Pupils' work is carefully marked with clear targets given about how to improve. For example, one comment was "Look at the way light falls on an object, it will help you shade".
105. Pupils learn well and are enthusiastic. This was seen when a pupil showed an 'art deco' type drawing done at home, which was not part of set homework. Pupils know that the homework they do is very important, they listen to the teacher's individual feedback carefully and respond thoughtfully to questions such as "what is missing"? Pupils readily help each other and this was seen when pupils used the computers to develop patterns. Some were stuck in making temporary boxes permanent and others showed them what to do. Most pupils take great care with the presentation of their work and this was seen in one poster where the lettering was accurate and bold, in a combination of black and white.
106. The department is very well led and managed, with much thought given to policies, such as equal opportunities and differentiation. The scheme of work has recently been altered to reflect the changing needs of the pupils. Sketch books are used well throughout the school. However, pupils' work varies in quantity and this reflects the large numbers in some lower-band classes, for example 27 and 28 in Year 7. Here, there are also a high number of pupils with special educational needs and without learning support they cannot always receive the attention that moves them on quickly. Assessment is good, but pupils do not know their National Curriculum levels, which would assist in focusing pupils on the areas in which they could improve. Art makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual development, for example, when they thought about 'the eye is the window of the soul'. It also contributes to their cultural development through visits to art galleries and the study of the art of other cultures, such as Australian Aborigine art. The use of ICT is good, both in its use in art, such as distorting portraits, and for research. Art makes a positive contribution to literacy, through an emphasis on understanding the terms used and in pupils making written comments. In addition, the portrait project is planned in conjunction with the English department. Displays around the school make a visual impact and the art room

is stimulating with a wealth of pupils' artwork and artefacts. However, there are not enough reproductions to extend pupils' art experiences. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement as the preparatory work now done is demanding and drawing skills are well taught. Insufficient emphasis is placed on observational drawing when pupils enter Year 5 to rapidly raise standards from a low base. The most able pupil is encouraged to extend their artwork. The technical support is very good and effectively used.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths:

- The quality of teaching results in pupils achieving high standards.
- The very high expectations of teachers and pupils leads to high standards.
- Visits make the subject alive to pupils.
- The application of ICT in lessons enables pupils to advance their learning.

### Areas for Improvement:

- The food technology room is in need of refurbishment.
- Resources are inadequate in food technology to enable the subject to be effectively taught.
- Assessment does not relate to the individual areas of the National Curriculum levels.
- The use of tools in some classes where there is no learning support is a potential safety hazard and concern.

107. The evidence from inspection is that standards are above national expectations at the end of Year 6 and by Year 8. This is an improvement since the time of the last inspection. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well to reach these standards. Pupils make rapid progress when they enter the school. Immediately on entry at Year 5, pupils design motorised bugs to a high standard, with an understanding of the materials used. For example, one pupil explained that his first design would be too heavy to allow the bug's legs to vibrate. They also use magnetic switches to produce the movement and gain an understanding of how switches can be computerised to give different commands. This demonstrates a very high level of understanding. Pupils make models to a good standard. For example, Year 5 cut and finish wood when making their clock faces. The designs are detailed and the cutting is carefully done. Pupils make accurate plans, for example, when drawing plans for an automaton in Year 7. The accuracy in their measurements results in effective working models. The majority used more than one cam to transfer movement, which is also a good standard, and the most able included five movements in a model cow, where limbs moved as well as the whole model. Pupils understand well the properties of materials, for example, they explained that eggs can carry Salmonella and should, therefore, be cooked. Year 8 pupils know the purpose of the different projections and when to use them, which they do with confidence and to a high level of competence. Throughout all years, there is a high degree of experimentation, which is an improvement since the time of the last inspection.
108. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good, with many lessons that are excellent. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. In lessons, it is the love of the subject and the expectation that pupils can achieve the highest levels, which inspires pupils to succeed. For example, in a food technology lesson, pupils had not cooked for two years, but the expectation was that all would listen and achieve a good result, which they did. Planning is very good and has improved, with a tremendous amount covered in each lesson. However, there is never the feeling that pupils are rushed, for new concepts are carefully reinforced and pupils' learning is checked by the teacher's careful questioning. For example, to help pupils develop ideas for their automaton, they were asked 'how?' and 'what cams would you need?' The pupils were then encouraged to discuss ideas, which resulted in a good level of learning. The excellent lessons are superbly illustrated with video clips, demonstrations, examples and illustrations, which support the pupils'

learning. When much preparatory work had to be covered, the teacher changed the focus of the lesson midway to a different part of the room, which refocused pupils' attention. Pupils knew the proportions of materials used for cement and concrete after an intensive lesson, which showed that they had listened and learnt well. Very high-quality information is introduced, such as how to program a three-output switch, and pupils were not amazed when told that they would then be computer programmers. This was because of the high expectations of the teacher that all could advance very quickly in gaining knowledge. Relationships are very good, so that pupils are ready to discuss amongst themselves and to ask for help. Homework is used effectively.

109. Pupils learn fast, which results in the good standards achieved almost as soon as they enter the school. This is because of the very good teaching, which inspires them to learn. They all said that they 'really, really' liked the room. When Year 7 were told that they would be making automaton, there was a quiet 'yessssssss', which showed their excitement at the project. Pupils continue to work on their automaton when the project is completed, which also shows the high level of interest. They listen well and tackle the tasks with a remarkable intensity of application. They take great care with the presentation of their work, understanding that the subject is one of precision. They discuss their work purposefully. For example, when looking at their designs, a pupil suggested that a horse would be easier to cut out if it had a smoother outline.
110. The department is very well led and managed, although there is separate funding between resistant materials and food technology, with resultant inequalities. Resources in resistant materials are satisfactory, while they are inadequate in food technology. For example, the wooden spoons used were far too small to be efficient and all the reference books belong to the teacher. The food technology room is also in need of refurbishment. Assessment does not always relate to National Curriculum levels. This results in both pupils and staff being unclear on attainment in the separate areas within each level. Some classes are large, for example, there are 29 pupils in a Year 5 class. Without learning support for pupils, who have special educational needs when using tools, there could be a health and safety hazard. Visits add considerably to pupils' wider experiences of the subject, such as to a biscuit factory. The rooms are stimulating, with a wealth of display of pupils' work. The robot club thrives in the school and the most able are encouraged to develop their interests. The technical support is excellent and makes an invaluable contribution to the department. However, there is insufficient technical support in food technology for the necessary practical preparation to be done without considerable input from the class teacher. Design technology makes a positive contribution to pupils' numeracy skills through the emphasis on accuracy in measurement, and to literacy through the emphasis on the understanding of key words.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

### Strengths:

- Standards are in line with national expectations.
- Teaching involves pupils of all abilities in the learning activities.
- The increased use of computers as part of learning activities is raising pupils' attainment.
- Involvement of pupils in discussions is developing their understanding.

### Areas for improvement:

- Teaching methods so there is a wider range of learning activities to support pupils of all abilities.
- The progress and attainment of more able pupils in individual lessons.
- The quality of marking and use of in-depth comment on key pieces of pupils' work.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning in order to share good practice.

111. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 is in line with national expectations for pupils' of their age. Although many achieve the expected Level 4, few higher-attaining pupils achieve the higher grades in geography because the learning activities planned do not develop their full potential. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 8 is in line with national expectations. Many pupils are working at the expected Level 5, but few reach the higher levels because additional learning activities are not fully developed or sufficiently focused on their needs. The overall attainment of boys is similar to that of girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they receive good support in lessons from the teacher. Standards have improved since the last inspection.
112. In Years 5 and 6, pupils make sound gains in geographical knowledge because the lessons are planned to cover a variety of physical and human geography topics. In Year 5, pupils study a wide range of features of Egypt and this enables them to understand the natural processes along the River Nile as well as the problems of a major settlement through a study of Cairo. Pupils develop sound skills in the use of atlases and Ordnance Survey maps and can use them effectively to support their study of the local area. Pupils of all abilities develop a range of skills that enable them to add information appropriately onto outline maps and diagrams. The ability of pupils to draw their own maps and diagrams and to select the most appropriate method of shading is not well developed because teachers make too much use of commercial worksheets. By the end of Year 6, a significant number of pupils are using geographical terms accurately in their written work because teachers encourage pupils to use them accurately in class discussions. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. In a Year 5 study of the area around the school, pupils recorded the features they had seen and then used the words to produce a written description. In this lesson, as in all others observed, pupils with special educational needs were fully included in the learning activities because the teacher was aware of their individual needs and modified the written tasks. However, there is a lack of consistency in the methods employed to record key words in pupils' books so that they can be used correctly in later work.
113. During Year 7 and 8, pupils widen their understanding of geographical processes because the curriculum is planned to match National Curriculum requirements. Displays of Year 8 pupils' investigations into volcanoes indicate sound knowledge of the process and an understanding of how natural events affect people's lives. Discussion is used effectively to review what pupils have understood about each topic and teachers encourage pupils to suggest ideas and views of their own. As a result, pupils of all abilities consolidate their understanding of the basic information. Both boys and girls participate well in this type of activity and teachers make good use of targeted questioning to ensure that pupils of all abilities are able to contribute. However, there is no planned approach to enable pupils to bring information of their own to include in a class discussion. There is clear focus on pupils experiencing some elements of the topics studied at first-hand with, for example, Year 7 pupils visiting the Peak District. As a result, they understand how the features of the landscape are formed. This, and other visits, has enabled pupils to record and present information as maps and diagrams, but teachers do not clearly show pupils how to link diagrams with their written work. There is insufficient challenge for the more able pupils as few additional learning activities are provided within individual lessons for them to reach higher standards. When given the opportunity, pupils work well in pairs and groups to collect information. For example, Year 8 pupils working together to compare and give reasons for the locations of volcanoes. By the end of Year 8, pupils have undertaken sufficient learning activities to enable them to continue the subject successfully at their next school.
114. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. There are elements of good teaching within individual lessons, especially when the teacher clearly identifies the aims of the lesson, sets clear time targets and provides a variety of learning activities supported by visual materials. In the less successful lessons, pupils of all abilities in the class complete the same activities with the work based on a commercial worksheet. Good use is made of praise to recognise the positive efforts made by pupils. Teachers show sound subject knowledge. Those who are not geography specialists

describe and explain geographical information in an adequate manner. There are several innovative learning approaches, such as involving pupils in the creation of their own report about the local area linked to a local radio station competition and enabling groups of pupils to provide computer-generated images to display and explain information collected about volcanoes. These have enabled all pupils to reach higher levels of knowledge and understanding about an individual topic. However, in many lessons, opportunities to enhance learning are missed because the teacher uses few video clips, photographs or extra book resources to stimulate interest and understanding. Few lessons are planned to enable pupils to develop the skills necessary to learn independently of the teacher. Instead, most tasks are too tightly structured and this does not allow pupils to use their own initiative when completing the task. There is good support for literacy with poems read aloud by pupils about the kind of environment they are studying. A positive start has been made in the use of information and communication technology with the Internet used to collect information, for example, weather data for different countries. However, its use needs developing to support individual learning through the collection, display and analysis of information. Marking is regular, but written comment is rarely provided with the exception of clear, detailed comment on some Year 8 work. This approach needs further development so that, for key pieces of work, all pupils know clearly what has been done well and how to improve.

115. The head of department provides good leadership of the subject, which has ensured that the lesson plans match the requirements of the National Curriculum for geography. Good support is provided for the non-specialist teachers so that they can provide lessons that support pupils' understanding of the full range of geographical topics. Resources are satisfactory, but insufficient to support the development of additional tasks for the most able pupils or the development of independent learning. Management is satisfactory and the head of department has little opportunity to monitor the teaching of geography and, as a result, is unable to identify and disseminate good practice. Good liaison with the local high school ensures that there is continuity in the learning of all pupils.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision for history is very good.

### Strengths:

- The quality of teaching is very good or excellent in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils develop historical skills rapidly from Year 5 onwards.
- A wide range of activities is used to stimulate pupils' interests.
- The promotion of very good relationships gives pupils confidence in their learning.
- Pupils show high levels of commitment in their oral work and in their written presentation.
- The department is managed very well.

### Areas for improvement:

- A wider range of materials to suit the learning needs of lower-attaining pupils.
- Citizenship does not play a major role in the work of the department.

116. Overall, pupils' attainment is average by the end of Year 6 and when pupils leave in Year 8. Attainment in history is in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6 and many higher-attaining pupils achieve standards in Years 7 and 8 that are above national norms. From the outset, pupils in Year 5 are beginning to use a range of historical skills, including a sense of chronology and an understanding of the main features of different societies, such as that of Ancient Egypt. During Year 6, they become familiar with the use of sources and develop an understanding of the causes and effects of change within society. As a result of these advances, pupils are able to build upon their knowledge and understanding of the subject in Years 7 and 8. Oral attainment is good in all lessons and there is a commendable emphasis on raising standards of literacy through the use of historical terminology and debate. At this stage, pupils

also develop their writing skills to a greater depth and, in this context, some very good extended writing was seen from Year 7 pupils on life in medieval England. Higher-attaining pupils receive sufficient challenge through a wide range of resources that helps them to develop independent learning skills. This has addressed an issue arising from the previous inspection report. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are supported well in classrooms, but they sometimes struggle with their written work and need a wider range of materials to help them make better progress. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.

117. The quality of teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8. Classroom organisation is strong and specialist teachers use their subject knowledge very well to promote good learning. Lessons are planned very effectively with clear aims and objectives that are revisited at the end of each session. Very good relationships within the classroom give pupils confidence in their learning and, as a result, they are eager to become active participants in lessons. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 7 lesson on the Romans, during which a lower-attaining group clearly enjoyed examining sources and artefacts and discussed their reliability with confidence. The previous inspection report noted that there was a limited range of learning activities in some lessons. This is no longer the case. A wide range of activities is now used to engage the interest of pupils and to stimulate their learning. These include video, group work, artefacts, class discussion and short written tasks. Above all, there is a sense of rigour and purpose to lessons that encourages pupils to become historians in their own right. This was demonstrated to excellent effect in a Year 8 lesson, during which pupils developed their historical skills fully by examining pictorial sources on life in Tudor England and the causes and consequences of poverty during that period. The high quality of teaching engenders very positive attitudes on the part of all pupils. They clearly enjoy the study of history and all are keen to join in classroom activities. They show very high levels of commitment and respond very well to the expectations of their teachers. There is also a high level of presentation skills shown in their written work.
118. The department has a very strong and dedicated teaching team and is managed very well. There is clear documentation and the issue raised in the previous report about monitoring and assessment techniques has been addressed in full. Citizenship, however, has yet to be incorporated fully into the work of the department. The marking of pupils' work is consistent and helpful comments give pupils a clear agenda for improving their written work. The use of ICT is being developed very well in all years to enhance pupils' learning skills.
119. Overall, the department has maintained and built well on the high standards noted in the previous report. There is a very clear sense of enjoyment and purpose in history lessons and the department is to be commended on its achievements.



## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths:

- Good teaching is supported by good subject knowledge.
- Well-planned learning activities develop pupils' ability to use computers to find, organise and display information.
- Very good out-of-lesson support is available to all pupils.
- Good facilities support the learning activities.
- The leadership of the subject is very good.

### Areas for improvement:

- The development of additional learning activities to raise the attainment of the most able pupils.
- The use and analysis of assessment data to further improve all pupils' attainment.
- Wider use of information technology to support learning in all subject areas.
- Sharing of good practice through more systematic monitoring.

120. The standard of attainment achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 is in line with national expectations for pupils' of their age. Although many pupils achieve the expected Level 4, few pupils achieve the higher grades in information and communication technology. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 8 is close to national expectations. Many pupils are working at the expected Level 5, but few reach the higher levels because additional learning activities are not fully developed. The overall attainment of girls is similar to that of boys. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because they receive good support in all learning activities, both during lessons and as a part of computer club activities. Standards have improved since the last inspection.
121. During Years 5 and 6, the wide range of activities in lessons enable pupils to acquire an appropriate range of computer skills. As a result, they are able to use computers effectively within ICT lessons, as well as in a number of other subjects and at home, to gather and communicate information. All pupils have regular ICT lessons, which ensures that pupils in Years 5 and 6 can use a range of software, including the Internet for research, and can use word-processing and desktop publishing software to present their findings. Pupils work effectively in pairs to complete tasks, with Year 6 pupils co-operating effectively when set the task of producing a brochure of information that would help pupils new to the school. During this task, pupils of all abilities show sound abilities in terms of incorporating pictures and clip art as well as text in order to complete and create an eye-catching brochure. They are familiar with databases and can carry out simple, as well as in some cases complex, searches for information. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils develop the ability to devise questions that they then use as the basis for a search through a database of information about birds in order to find answers. Both boys and girls work well together and contributed ideas to the whole class discussion about the database findings. Limited opportunities are provided for individual pupils to use their existing skills to work in groups or pairs to support the understanding of other pupils, for example, at the start of Year 5, when a number of pupils have well-developed computer skills. In all lessons, pupils with a special educational need are fully involved in all activities because teachers are aware of their learning needs. The learning of more able pupils is not sufficiently developed because in most lessons all pupils complete the same tasks. The well-planned sequence of learning activities enables pupils to acquire skills that they can use to support learning in other subjects.
122. In Years 7 and 8, pupils build upon the skills they developed in previous work through regular ICT lessons. There is good development of pupils' ability to programme equipment to perform a sequence of events and to predict outcomes in advance of a practical test of the process. This type of activity provides pupils with the necessary skills to support their work in science and

design and technology lessons. Year 7 pupils use graphics and text to develop a multi-media presentation and, as a result, they learn a range of skills that they can make use of in later life. By the end of Year 8, pupils enter data they have collected, for example, from other pupils, and enter the numbers into a spreadsheet in order to assess the outcome of different patterns of spending. Good use is made of the Internet with pupils refining their search skills to collect more precise information than in earlier years. However, higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons because all pupils undertake the same task, although some homework assignments enable them to undertake additional tasks. Pupils are encouraged by teachers to explain the strategies they have tried out and this approach is effective in supporting the progress of all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of good support from teachers. Some bring skills they have developed in computer club activities to lessons. One boy, for example, explained how to carry out the most effective search and, as a result, helped the work of other pupils. The standards in ICT have improved since the last inspection.

123. A number of subjects are using pupils' computing skills within a planned series of lesson activities. For example, in English, pupils research and present information about an environmental issue and in history, pupils find and present information about Oliver Cromwell. Where the teacher uses opportunities to use ICT, pupils learn well. However, some subjects have yet to introduce a sufficiently wide-range of learning activities that enable pupils to use their computer skills to support and develop more fully their understanding of individual parts of the course.
124. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers ensure that all pupils develop the range of skills necessary to use computers in ICT lessons as well as more widely in school and at home. Specialist teachers show good subject knowledge and the ability to modify learning tasks when equipment problems occur. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Teachers make good use of resources and break down tasks into easily managed units, which enable pupils to understand and make good progress in their learning. Teachers use a good range of methods that include involving pupils through demonstration and questioning. Together with the positive use of praise, this involvement results in very good attitudes and progress in learning. In the best lessons, teachers invite individual pupils to demonstrate the techniques to the whole class, but this approach is not sufficiently used by all teachers. Few lessons encourage pupils to learn independently because the structure of the lesson and the sequence of activities are the same for all pupils. Most lessons end with a review, which enables pupils to show the extent to which they have coped with and understand the lesson activities. Pupils' work is assessed regularly and in a manner that enables teachers to link the information about standards achieved to the standards expected for each age group. Insufficient use is made of the subject's good quality data to develop or modify the teaching programmes or to more closely match the learning activities to the needs of individual pupils, especially the more able.
125. The head of department provides very good leadership of the subject. This has ensured that ICT lessons provide well-planned activities that match the requirements of the National Curriculum. As a result, pupils are well prepared to transfer to the local high school by the end of Year 8. Schemes of work are regularly reviewed and there is good planning in place to cope with changes in curriculum requirements. Over time, effective department planning has led to the school having levels of equipment that match those in similar schools. There are appropriate strategies in place to monitor pupils' use of computers and access to the Internet as part of a home-school agreement. The computer club is a strength of the subject as it enables pupils of all abilities to develop their interest and involvement in the subject through tasks based on lessons as well as leisure activities. Good technician support is provided for two days a week. This support is effective because the technician makes sure that the equipment functions efficiently as well as providing very good learning support for individual pupils in a number of lessons. However, the limited technician time available each week, as well as other responsibilities, limits the time the head of department has available to monitor the subject's

effectiveness across the curriculum and to identify and disseminate good practice. In spite of this, he has effectively aided the introduction of ICT into the school curriculum and supported the development of teachers' computing skills.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in German is satisfactory.

### Strengths:

- Teachers' use of spoken German develops pupils' understanding and knowledge.
- Lesson planning with clear objectives of what needs to be learnt.
- Pace of work in most lessons ensures pupils make progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to their work and behaviour in class.

### Areas for improvement:

- The use of assessment information to raise attainment.
- The range of activities in lessons.
- The active involvement of pupils in learning German.
- The use made of ICT to improve learning.
- Regular and formal monitoring by senior staff.

126. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is satisfactory in relation to the time they have spent learning German. This is also the case in Year 8, but with relatively better standards in writing and speaking. The majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress, particularly in Years 7 and 8. There are no significant differences in the attainment of boys and girls. The overall trend is towards an improvement in pupils' work. This is particularly true in written and oral skills that are better than at the last inspection.
127. At the end of Year 6, pupils accurately copy short dialogues with the help of worksheets and can write short personal descriptions. These cover details of familiar topics, such as home, family, pets and leisure interests. Pupils of average and higher ability read short letters about families and pick out five or six details correctly. They are carefully guided by worksheets. As a result, they progress to reading at greater length and with improved accuracy, although still requiring a good deal of support. The best attainment of lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs is in reading, copying and filling in single words or short phrases.
128. In a Year 6 class, pupils in their second week of German said their names and greeted each other. Higher attainers had learnt to do so confidently. Others needed prompting and further practice. The teacher made good use of the overhead projector, which resulted in pupils quickly matching different greetings to different times of day. Organising the class into different ability groups ensured that most pupils received good support and were included in the activities provided. However, the teacher's extensive use of English to manage behaviour reduced lesson pace. This resulted in some passive activity and limited opportunities for speaking German.
129. By Year 8, most pupils achieve satisfactory accuracy in writing short dialogues. Some more able pupils write at good length, for example, letters giving detailed travel instructions. Nevertheless, most continue to have difficulties with word order and the use of different verb tenses. In a Year 7 lesson, the rapid use of German by the teacher quickly focused attention. Good planning for revision in the lesson resulted in pupils confidently naming different rooms in the house from memory. A game of matching questions to answers gave extra practice. Pupils worked at a good pace. As a result of the teacher's regular questioning in German they developed good listening skills and followed instructions confidently. High expectations by the teacher led to high levels of co-operation and concentration throughout the lesson. This was in spite of the fact that some activities relied too heavily on direction from the teacher and encouraged passive listening. This was particularly true of activities that involved question and answer around the class.

130. In a Year 8 class, pupils began by naming parts of the body. A prompt start with resources all ready to hand ensured pace and full attention. Pupils answered positively with girls usually more confident than boys. The teacher's humour contributed to good relationships. By the end of the lesson most pupils could make eight spoken statements about parts of the body and aches and pains. This was a result of well-planned activities, such as practising orally in pairs. In this and other lessons, pupils were co-operative and well motivated.
131. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features in Years 7 and 8. In these lessons, the teachers use German for most of the time. Pupils learn effectively as a result of regular practice. There are clear expectations that they try to answer correctly and with accurate pronunciation. Positive contributions are made to the development of pupils' literacy skills through practising language patterns. In some lessons, however, the range of work is narrow. There is a need for imaginative activities, such as songs and games, which would appeal more to this age range and add to pupils' enjoyment and motivation. They would also ensure that all pupils of lower ability are more fully included in all parts of the lesson. Homework is carefully set and marked. The use of assessment, however, is not well developed. Specific targets are not sufficiently used and pupils lack an awareness of national curriculum levels to help improve their work.
132. Pupils have good opportunities to learn about Germany at first-hand. Visits, school links and pen-pals are provided. Through these, pupils develop an awareness of life as a young citizen in Europe. Good progress has been made on most of the issues raised at the last inspection. However, there is insufficient use made of computers to enhance pupils' learning. The teaching of German is well co-ordinated and organised, but there is not a planned programme to formally monitor the work of the department by senior staff. There is a positive approach to improving pupils' language learning in school.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

### Strengths:

- The quality of the teaching and learning ensures pupils make good progress.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils enhances learning.
- The contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Standards achieved by the extra-curricular music groups.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils promotes effective learning.

### Areas for improvement:

- Department development planning.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Assessment criteria for assessing pupils' work.

133. Overall, the standards in music are above expectations and pupils make very good progress in their learning from Year 5 to Year 8 as a result of the quality of the teaching. The standards achieved by the extra-curricular music groups, such as the recorder ensemble, are excellent. The quality of singing in assemblies is very good.
134. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment in music is in line with national expectations. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils in Year 6 perform music fluently and accurately in groups, maintaining their own part confidently with an awareness of how the different parts fit together. Their compositions show that they understand how to develop simple, melodic and rhythmic ideas within a structure.

135. By the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment is above that expected nationally for their age. Pupils sing enthusiastically and confidently in three parts and the quality of their singing is good. In their compositions they show good understanding of the relationship between melody and chords. Pupils read staff notation well and use it to notate their own compositions. They can use music-sequencing software successfully on computer to compose effective pieces in the style of Mozart. Their keyboard skills are less well developed because the keys on most of the keyboards are too small.
136. The quality of the teaching is good overall. There is also some very good teaching. Music lessons are well planned and pupils have clear ideas of what is expected of them because teachers share the objectives for the lesson with them. Teachers use effective strategies, such as using their own vocal skills to demonstrate, which develops pupils' aural memory and improves the quality of their singing. Teachers ensure that the musical resources, such as instrumental parts, and the questions they use are sufficiently challenging so that all pupils achieve well in lessons, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. Teachers use good strategies for developing pupils' literacy skills and, as a result, pupils improve their understanding of the words of a song and musical vocabulary. Pupils concentrate well and behave very well throughout lessons as a result of teachers' high expectations and their relationships with the pupils.
137. Overall, the leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department is very enthusiastic and very committed. However, priorities for department improvement planning are not yet linked to whole-school planning and reviewed regularly. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in the department are insufficiently rigorous and systematic. The financial management of the department is good.
138. The department's contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The use of information and communication technology is developing well in music because pupils have had access to the ICT suite to trial materials produced by Staffordshire Music Service. This has had a positive impact on pupils' composing skills and increased their motivation. The music accommodation remains unsatisfactory as at the time of the previous inspection. The music room is too small and there are no small spaces where pupils can perform or compose together in small groups and hear what they are playing. This has restricted composing activities. Assessment criteria in schemes of work are too general to enable pupils to have a clear understanding of the expectations required for each assessment task. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.
139. Opportunities for pupils to learn to play instruments and participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities are very good. There is a strong tradition of music groups performing locally and at county festivals. This year, the choir performed at a Jubilee concert at the Royal Albert Hall.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision for physical education is good.

### Strengths:

- The good quality of teaching and learning ensures pupils make good progress.
- The high standards that pupils' achieve.
- The positive attitudes of the pupils ensures they learn well.
- Provision for extra-curricular and sporting activities.
- The outdoor facilities provide pupils with a good range of practical activities.

### Areas for improvement:

- The assessment arrangements to measure pupils' progress.
- Use of information and communication technology to develop pupils' knowledge.
- Regular and systematic arrangements for the review and monitoring of standards.

140. From a varying and limited range of experiences of physical education when they first come to the school, pupils learn well and make good progress. Both girls and boys attain average standards at the end of Year 6 and Year 8, when they leave the school. Their achievements across all areas of the taught curriculum are good. For example, girls in a Year 8 hockey lesson, supported by very good teaching, showed a very good control of the stick and the ball and were able to pass and receive the ball across a wide distance with a high level of accuracy. The more able pupils are successful in local and county competitions in a wide range of sports.
141. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They work with high levels of motivation and enthusiasm, behaving very well. Relationships between the pupils themselves and with staff are very good. They work together very well in pairs and in groups and support and praise others efforts in team games. Girls in a Year 6 class, developing their netball skills, showed excellent attitudes with very good levels of co-operation and competition. At the request of the teacher they quickly organised themselves into house teams. These same attitudes were seen after school in a practice netball game and in boys' soccer.
142. The quality of teaching is mostly good and sometimes very good. The pupils' learning of skills across the physical education curriculum is good. Strengths in teaching include the management of pupils and high expectations of what the pupils should do. Both of the full-time teachers in the department show a very high level of commitment to the development and organisation of after-school games and teams that compete successfully with other schools. The generous allocation of time to lessons, a double period, leads to some lessons not having enough content to fully stretch the pupils' competences. For example, in a gymnastic lesson in the hall and a soccer lesson for boys on the field, the range of activities for the pupils was too limited.
143. As lessons progress, the pupils are very well supported to develop their individual skills. The department has devised a five-point scale, grade A to E, to assess their standards, attitudes and effort. This does not sufficiently relate to the levels of attainment of the National Curriculum. Teachers do not record enough information from a lesson to be able to plan so that pupils continue to learn and develop in future lessons. They also do not have enough information to tell parents what targets pupils are working towards when they write the annual reports. Having recently been given the up-dated individual education plans of pupils with special education needs, the department is not sufficiently evaluating the progress of pupils with special educational needs according to these targets and the skills they need to develop in physical education.
144. Lessons are taught in mixed groups as well as separate groups for girls and boys. There is very good equality of opportunity - for example, girls play football - and a very good inclusion of all

pupils in lessons where pupils with special educational needs are given good levels of support to progress as well as the other pupils. There is open access to all after-school clubs, which are very well attended by the pupils. Pupils compete very successfully in local leagues and a significant numbers of girls and boys have been recently selected for county teams for athletics and girls for netball. There is a very good level of accommodation in the school grounds where there are extensive well-kept fields. The school hall doubles as a gymnasium. It is suitably equipped, but has storage problems as large apparatus has to be stored at the end of the hall, rather than being cleared away. Proposed future planned developments are addressing this need. The department makes little use of ICT. For example, it has no access to a digital camera and video camera to evaluate the success and accuracy of a series of movements. Overall, the department is led well and the subject has made good improvement since the last inspection. However, there are too few systems that ensure regular monitoring and review of the quality of teaching and learning and the standards being achieved.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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

### Strengths:

- Teaching is often very good or excellent and pupils are encouraged to take a full part in all lessons.
- Pupils demonstrate considerable respect for teachers and for each other.
- The department is managed very well.
- The quality of display work is excellent.
- The subject makes a very strong contribution to the personal development of all pupils.

### Areas for improvement:

- The written work of lower-attaining pupils.
- Insufficient time is allowed to monitor classroom practice and share good practice.
- ICT is under-developed as a learning resource.

145. The evidence from inspection is that standards of attainment are in line with those expected in the locally Agreed Syllabus in all years. On entry, many pupils have a limited knowledge and understanding of the subject. However, they soon acquire a good understanding of Christian beliefs and those of other major world religions, such as Hinduism and Islam. By the end of Year 6, pupils also develop an awareness of the distinctive features of Christianity and other faiths and can use religious terminology with confidence. This was seen to good effect in a Year 6 lesson, during which pupils discussed and reflected on the Christian story of the Creation with skill and confidence. During Years 7 and 8, they develop the capacity to reflect on spiritual issues affecting their own lives and can write about religious matters in depth. In this context, some excellent research projects on celebrations were seen from Year 8 pupils. Higher-attaining pupils show maturity of thought in classroom debates and the department has also addressed successfully the issue raised in the previous report about lack of opportunities for research and extended writing. Lower-attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are given good support, but the poor quality of some of their written work is an issue for the department to address.
146. The quality of teaching and learning is always good and often very good and, as a consequence, pupils achieve well. One excellent lesson was seen during the inspection. Teachers plan lessons very well so that pupils know precisely what to do and have ample opportunities to reflect on their progress at the end of each session. Care is taken to include all pupils in the learning process through well-targeted questions and a rich variety of techniques are used to promote pupils' progress. Above all, teachers are enthusiastic about their practice and pupils are encouraged to take part in all lessons. As a result, they learn well. This was shown to good effect in a Year 7 lesson, during which pupils showed commitment and purpose in discussing modern applications of the parable of the prodigal son. Pupils show a very positive attitude to their studies in religious education and demonstrate respect for the beliefs and values of others.

They show commitment and interest in lessons and make good progress in their speaking and listening development. This was demonstrated very well in a Year 8 lesson, during which pupils used artefacts, such as a ring, a flower, and a Bible, to reflect on metaphors about human life.

147. The subject is managed very effectively and good support is given to non-specialist teachers within the department. There is not enough time allocated to ensure effective monitoring of classrooms and to share good practice. Resources have improved since the previous inspection, but as before, ICT has yet to be fully developed within the subject curriculum. There is a strong programme of educational visits to support learning and a wide range of artefacts are used to enhance pupils' understanding of world religions. Teachers provide very effective support and guidance for pupils and, in particular, marking makes clear how pupils might improve their work. The subject makes a very significant contribution to the personal development of all pupils and the emphasis placed on multi-faith issues is to be commended. Excellent use is made of pupils' work on display to create a highly stimulating visual environment.
148. Overall, the department has made good progress since the previous report and the highly effective teaching team has the undoubted ability to develop the subject still further.