

## INSPECTION REPORT

### **WESTLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Bury St Edmunds

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124807

Headteacher: Mrs J Bidwell

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald  
17932

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 249246

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 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Oliver Road  
Bury St Edmunds  
Suffolk

Postcode: IP33 3JB

Telephone number: 01284 755144

Fax number: 01284 703619

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Ms S Barker

Date of previous inspection: May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17932	John Bald	Registered inspector	English as an additional language Citizenship	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
19727	Eric Langford	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
6620	Barry Juxon	Team inspector	Mathematics	
12499	Marie Durkin	Team inspector	English	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30825	Keith Hayton	Team inspector	Science	
21806	Pat Swinnerton	Team inspector	Design and technology	
8682	Martin Trevor	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
4223	Garth Collard	Team inspector	History Geography	
16548	Don Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art and design Music	
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education	
27662	Elizabeth Schofield	Team inspector	Religious education	
4676	Mary Griffiths	Team inspector	Special educational needs Race equality and inclusion	
18113	Carrie Branigan	Team inspector		

The inspection contractor was:

SERCO QAA

Herrington Barn  
Herrington  
Dorchester  
Dorset DT2 9PU

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Westley Middle School is smaller than most schools of its type. It has 451 pupils, aged nine to 13, with slightly more boys than girls. Very nearly all pupils are white. A small number are learning English as an additional language, sometimes from scratch. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average, and includes several pupils with severe hearing impairment, who attend the school's specialist unit. A small number of pupils, often those joining after Year 5, have unsettled lives outside school, and have significant behavioural difficulties. Overall, pupils joining the school have reached average standards for their age, although some boys have below average writing skills. Few pupils are entitled to free school meals, and the overall social circumstances of the school are above average.

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

Westley Middle School provides good education and has some outstanding features. Good teaching enables pupils to make good long-term progress, and to reach above-average standards by Year 8. Pupils enjoy learning, in and out of the classroom, and become mature and considerate young people. Good leadership and management have created a climate of rising standards and achievement. Although the cost per pupil is high, the school provides good value for money.

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

- Teaching is good, and much is very good or excellent.
- Good management and leadership create a strong sense of teamwork and purpose.
- Overall standards are above-average by Year 8.
- Provision for personal development promotes very good relationships and citizenship.
- A very high proportion of pupils take part in learning activities outside lessons.
- Provision is very good for pupils with special educational needs and excellent for those with hearing impairment.
- Parents make an excellent contribution to the work of the school.

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

- The very recent recovery in standards in Year 6 needs to be sustained and developed further.
- A small, but significant, minority of pupils do not behave as they should.
- Higher-attaining pupils could achieve more, particularly in science and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Computers and the Internet could be used more systematically to promote learning.

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

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

The school was last inspected in May 1997. At that time, standards were above-average in Years 6 and 8, and the school had a very good climate for learning. Shortly after the inspection, the school experienced a high turnover of teachers and senior management, and standards in Year 6 fell sharply. This trend worsened in the most recent national tests. However, by the time of the inspection, the standard of pupils' work had recovered to average levels in English, mathematics and science by Year 6, although more improvement is needed in science. Standards in Year 8 have remained above average, and the school has improved other aspects of its work, including the points for action in the last report. There is more very good and excellent teaching, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. Provision for special educational needs has been extended, and standards have risen in history, geography and physical education. There have been significant improvements in design and technology and ICT, which had been weak. Provision for personal development has been improved, and learning activities outside lessons are now excellent. The school has developed effective approaches to involve all pupils in its work. By the time of the inspection, improvement since the last inspection was satisfactory. The school is very well placed to improve its work further.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

Results in national tests in Year 6 fell further in 2002, where the year group included a significant proportion of lower attaining boys. They were below average in English and science, and well below average in mathematics. However, the quality of work in Year 6 during the inspection had improved to a broadly average standard in all three tested subjects. Standards in other subjects in Year 6 during the inspection were almost all above average, and well above average in design and technology.

Standards in Year 8 are above average in English, and average in mathematics and science. They are above average or better in all other subjects except for religious education, where they are average, but rising. Standards are particularly high in history, geography, design and technology, art and design and citizenship. Overall standards in Year 8 are above-average, and the range of subjects with above average standards has expanded significantly since the last inspection.

Across the school, the achievements of pupils with special educational needs and of the small number with English as an additional language are very good. The learning and achievements of pupils with hearing impairment are excellent. Gifted and talented pupils achieve high standards in most subjects, but do not do as well as they should in science and ICT. The school has not met its targets in Year 6 national tests over the past two years. Action to tackle this was reflected in improved work during the inspection, particularly in English and mathematics, but has yet to be sustained over a whole year. Current targets are satisfactory overall, but need to be more demanding for higher attaining pupils. The above average standards across a broad range of subjects in Year 8 show good long-term achievement from the average standards reached by pupils joining the school.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are attentive, hard working and responsible.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave very well, but poor behaviour from a small minority sometimes interferes with learning. Playground behaviour is good.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils form a strong working partnership with their teachers and each other. Pupils in Year 8 show impressive maturity for their age.
Attendance	Well above average, with good punctuality.

Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about learning outside the classroom, and many are heavily involved in sport. All pupils give exceptional levels of support to those with special educational needs; for example, by learning sign language and taking part in the signing choir. The school has managed poor behaviour with minimal use of permanent exclusion.

## 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.*

Good teaching in English throughout the school, supported by pupils' keenness to work, leads to above average standards by Year 8. The teaching of literacy in other subjects is satisfactory. In some, such as history, it is very good, but written work elsewhere is sometimes given low priority and left unfinished. Teaching and learning in mathematics are satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. Teaching is good, and sometimes very good, in the best lessons, but some teaching lacks pace, particularly in the second half of the lesson. There is good teaching of mathematics in Years 7 and 8, and the best is excellent. There is good teaching of number skills in other subjects. The teaching of science is satisfactory, and has some good features, but work is not always pitched at a level that enables the most able pupils to reach high standards, particularly in Years 5 and 6.

In other subjects across the school, teaching and learning are often very good and rarely less than good. This consistency is at the heart of the long-term achievements of pupils. There is little variation from one subject to another, but teaching is particularly strong in design and technology, history, geography, physical education, modern foreign languages and citizenship. Specialist teaching of pupils with special educational needs is of very high quality, with good, and sometimes excellent, support from teaching assistants. Several parents paid tribute to the high quality of teaching outside lessons, particular in sport. The learning of a few pupils, mostly in Year 7, is held back to some extent by their behaviour. Over the course of their school career, teaching meets the needs of all pupils well.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. Learning opportunities are, overall, well matched to pupils' needs, and activities outside lessons are excellent. The school holds the Sportsmark and Artsmark awards.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good in specialist teaching and in lessons across the school. Excellent for pupils with hearing-impairment.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Pupils receive very effective specialist teaching when they need it, and very good support from other pupils. Cultural differences are respected. Pupils learn very well, and the best progress is excellent.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for personal development and citizenship is central to the work of the school, and involves all pupils. They have good opportunities for reflection and to learn about their own and other cultures, both in subjects and in work on current events.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good care. Satisfactory arrangements to assess progress, but these need to be used more consistently in planning lessons.

The school has a very good working relationship with parents, who make an excellent contribution to learning and activities outside lessons. Annual reports and information for parents are very good. The school works closely with parents whose children have behavioural difficulties. Assemblies are of good quality, but there is no daily act of collective worship. The standards reached by pupils joining the school need to be assessed more closely.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and other key staff are tackling the school's weaknesses and building well on its strengths. Provision in subjects is generally well managed. The school has a strong sense of direction.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. The governors have guided the school through its recent difficulties, and work closely with the headteacher to raise standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school has good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, and has very good priorities for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school uses funds and allocates staff wisely to support its educational goals. It has a good programme of improvement for the site.

The school has sufficient teachers and teaching assistants, and they are well qualified and experienced. Several staff have very high levels of specialised skills. Learning resources are good, and have been carefully built up by staff. Accommodation is adequate, but cramped for some subjects. Resources and accommodation are very well used.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior staff have created a strong sense of teamwork and commitment to success throughout the school. They, the governors and all teachers apply a constructively critical approach to all aspects of the school's work, and this lies at the heart of the pattern of improvement they have established. The school applies the principles of giving and obtaining best value effectively.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children enjoy school.</li> <li>• They are expected to work hard.</li> <li>• Children make good progress.</li> <li>• The school is approachable.</li> <li>• Activities outside lessons, especially in sport.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication with parents.</li> <li>• Information for parents.</li> <li>• The regularity and quality of homework.</li> </ul>

Many more parents expressed positive than negative views. Overall, inspectors agreed with these parents, although they found that higher attaining pupils could achieve more in some subjects. Many of the concerns about communication and information were from parents new to the school. Inspectors found that, in the longer term, the quality of communication and information for parents was very good. By the time of the inspection, homework was regularly set and of good quality.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Analysis of pupils' work and of records from their primary school show that the standards reached by pupils joining Year 5 are broadly average, but that there are weaknesses in writing, particularly among boys.
2. By the time they move on to upper school, standards are above average in English and broadly average in mathematics; standards in science have improved very recently, and are now broadly average. Pupils taking national tests in their upper schools in Year 9 reach well above average standards in mathematics and English, but are still reaching below average standards in science. Standards in other subjects in Year 8 are almost all above average, with a good range of strengths in physical education, history and geography, and well above average standards in design and technology, art and design and citizenship. Overall standards in Year 8 are, therefore, above average, and reflect good achievement from average and lower attaining pupils. The achievement of higher attaining pupils is satisfactory overall, but could be made more consistent across subjects.
3. At the time of the last inspection, standards were below average in Year 6. This is still the case in national tests. Results have fallen since Year 2000, and fell further in 2002 in English, mathematics and science. However, the decline has not been uniform. In 2002, average proportions of pupils reached above average standards in English and mathematics and results were also average in the writing section of the English test. The school has taken action to deal with this situation, giving priority to improving teaching and management in English and mathematics, and more recently addressing weaknesses in science. As a result, standards during the inspection were broadly average in all three subjects. However, this improvement has yet to be sustained into national tests, and higher-attaining pupils are only beginning to work at an appropriate standard in science. Standards in other subjects in Year 6 are above average overall, with strengths similar to those seen in Year 8. By the time of the inspection, overall achievement in Year 6 was satisfactory.
4. Standards in literacy are average in Year 6 and above average by Year 8; the quality of writing, including spelling, has improved significantly since the last inspection, and some higher attaining pupils write excellent poetry. Standards in numeracy are broadly average in Years 6 and 8, but have begun to rise. Pupils' skills in ICT have shown good improvement since the last inspection. They are above average, overall, at the end of Year 6 and in Year 8, although they could be improved further with more consistency in the use of computers across the school.
5. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language, most of whom have minority ethnic backgrounds, achieve very well overall, and there is excellent achievement on the part of pupils in the hearing impaired unit. Gifted and talented pupils reach very high standards in some subjects, including English, history, geography and physical education, but are still achieving much less than they should in science, and less than they should in ICT. By Year 8, there are no significant differences in the standards reached by boys and girls, but there are pockets of low standards in literacy among boys at different stages in the school, and particularly in Year 7.
6. The school's work to raise standards in Year 6 has been interrupted since the last inspection by changes in management and turnover among staff. It has not been meeting its main targets for improvement in test results, and targets for higher attaining pupils have been set at too low a level. Despite the broadly average standards seen during the inspection, the school has not done enough to raise standards in Year 6 over the whole period since the last inspection. However, the standards reached by Year 8 represent good overall achievement over pupils' time in the school. Recent decisive management action, with improvements in teaching, put the school in a good position to tackle its remaining weaknesses.

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

7. The school has sustained very good attitudes to learning among pupils since the last inspection. A warm and welcoming family atmosphere of care, consideration and tolerance towards others permeates the whole school and pupils feel safe.
8. Most pupils are keen to come to school and settle quickly to their work. The vast majority show high levels of commitment, and are motivated and enthusiastic learners. Relationships among pupils, including those with special educational needs, are very good, in and out of the classroom. Most pupils display high levels of self-assurance and a willingness to share and discuss their learning with others. Many sustain good levels of concentration during their lessons, and collaborate well with each other in both group and paired activities. Pupils enjoy being in school, as a group of Year 5 pupils reported, 'We really like the pupil planners, they make us feel grown up and responsible'. Year 8 pupils are particularly mature and responsible, and have a firm grasp of the values and benefits of good citizenship.
9. Overall, behaviour is good, and almost all pupils have maintained the very good behaviour recorded in the last inspection report. However, the school has recently had to deal with serious misbehaviour from some pupils who joined it at a late stage in their school career, and a minority, mainly Year 7 boys, still do not behave as they should in some lessons. Other pupils mostly ignore this, but it sometimes has a negative effect on the quality of learning in their class and causes distress to teachers. Parents are pleased with the overall standards of behaviour that are achieved. The high standards of behaviour to be seen in many lessons are very much the product of good teaching and have a positive impact on learning. Pupils understand and appreciate the school's behaviour policy, the system of rewards and sanctions and the fairness of the school rules.
10. The school does not tolerate bullying or other oppressive behaviour. It has successfully worked to eliminate bullying on the school site, and there are very good relationships among pupils from all ethnic backgrounds. Pupils and parents agree that incidents of inappropriate behaviour are swiftly and effectively dealt with by staff. The structured use of exclusion when misbehaviour is serious is fully supported by parents and pupils. There was one permanent exclusion in the year preceding the inspection, but the level of fixed-term exclusion was high for a school of this size. These exclusions reflected the levels of serious misbehaviour over the past year, and the exclusion rate is falling. There had been no fixed-term exclusions in the term of the inspection, but three in the same period during the previous year.
11. In the course of their school career, pupils become thoughtful and reflective, and understand the impact of their actions on others. They show that they know right from wrong through their actions and conversations among themselves and towards adults. Many display a natural sensitivity and awareness of the needs of others, including the inspection team. Pupils willingly share, and treat property and learning resources with care. They support those with special educational needs consistently and without fuss. Signing clubs throughout the school are strongly supported, and some pupils obtain accreditation for their skills. The signing choir is an outstanding strength.
12. Opportunities for pupils to accept responsibility for their own and others' work have improved significantly since the last inspection and are very good. Pupils are encouraged to express their views in class debates and willingly volunteer to take up the many responsibilities offered to them. Older pupils act as 'guardian angels' for new pupils ('mortals'). Other pupils serve as bus monitors, 'class book' monitors and litter pickers among other tasks, all of which help to develop the pupils' social and citizen skills. Monitors attached to classes provide valuable help to teachers. Class representatives on the school council keep in touch with other pupils' views and opinions on the life of the school and seek ideas and suggestions for improvements.

13. As at the time of the last inspection, attendance is well above average, with below average unauthorised absence. Punctuality is good, although occasionally pupils relying on buses are late in the morning. Lessons start on time.

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

14. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall throughout the school. It has improved significantly since the last inspection, when just over one half of the lessons were good or better, and teaching in over one sixth was unsatisfactory. Teaching in the present inspection was good or better in just over four-fifths of lessons, of which over one half were very good or excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed.
15. Across the school, lessons are well planned, with interesting activities and clear learning goals that are shared with the pupils. All teachers know their subjects well, and classes are almost always well managed, with good relationships and a good pace of work. As at the time of the last inspection, parents were concerned about the consistency of homework, Inspectors found that it was being used effectively, overall, by the time of the inspection. Pupils with English as an additional language receive very good teaching, both in specialist lessons and through sensitive support from teachers and pupils, which ensures that they take a full part in all lessons. Their contributions; for example, to French from a native speaker, are used effectively and valued. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very good across the school, and benefits from the work of highly skilled and effective teaching assistants. The teaching of pupils with hearing impairment is of exceptional quality, involving excellent specialist teaching, and high levels of sensitivity and care from all teachers and pupils. The use of signing is particularly effective in establishing communication between all pupils, and in acting as a bridge to literacy and understanding spoken English.
16. Where the teaching in lessons is very good, teachers create a strong learning partnership with their pupils, challenging them to think hard about difficult and sometimes sensitive issues. Teaching in these lessons is based on very high levels of subject knowledge, combined with skilful questioning, careful selection of resources and very good practical work. Where the teaching is excellent, these strengths are concentrated in a way that inspires maximum effort from all pupils, with good scope for imaginative and individual work. The amount of very good and excellent teaching is significantly higher than in most schools.
17. Across the school, teachers' match of work to pupils' learning needs has improved since the last inspection, and is consistently good for lower attaining and average pupils. Higher attaining pupils receive high levels of challenge where the teaching is very good or better, but not in all lessons. This leads to underachievement by these pupils in science and ICT, although the school is taking steps to deal with this, particularly in Years 7 and 8. In a minority of lessons, mostly in science, mathematics and ICT, good planning is let down by weaknesses in pace in the second half, so that learning that begins with very good features is in the end satisfactory overall. A very small minority of pupils, mostly boys in Year 7, take advantage of any lack of pace in the management of the class to misbehave. Most other pupils ignore this, but it sometimes interferes with learning. Teachers mark work regularly, although not all give guidance to pupils on points for improvement. This ensures that pupils keep up with their work, but does not ensure that all marking contributes to their understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses.
18. In most subjects, teachers plan and teach reading and writing activities well. This contributes to high standards of analysis in history and geography. However, more improvement is needed in science, where writing tasks sometimes hinder learning by taking up too much of the lesson and, occasionally, work is not finished in design and technology, leading pupils to underestimate the importance of writing and presentation in the subject. Overall, the teaching of literacy is satisfactory, with good features. There is good use of number work across the school. For example, in science, pupils calculate changes in temperature and the turning effects of forces, measure lengths and compare masses by weighing and represent data by graphs and bar charts. Some of the benefit of this work is, however, lost through lack of a consistent policy across the school that would; for example, ensure that it was always pitched at a challenging level. A policy has been prepared and is about to be introduced. Teachers' use of ICT is good in

English and design and technology. It is satisfactory in most subjects, but could contribute more if its use were better planned in each subject.

19. There is little variation in the quality of teaching between Years 5 and 6 and Years 7 and 8, although the teaching of mathematics is stronger in Years 7 and 8. The overall quality of teaching in science is satisfactory throughout the school. There is, however, evidence of recent improvements in teaching in both of these subjects. Teaching is very good in art and design, design and technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, citizenship and physical education. It is good, with some very good features, in all other subjects, and there is outstanding teaching in additional activities. This consistency in teaching helps pupils to develop a strong sense of involvement and responsibility in their own and others' learning, and prepares them very well for the work that they will be expected to do in upper school.

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

### **Learning opportunities**

20. When the school was last inspected, the curriculum provided a satisfactory range of learning opportunities, with very good opportunities for learning outside the classroom. There were, however, significant weaknesses in ICT, design and technology, religious education, science and the match of work to pupils' needs. The school has made good overall progress in dealing with these weaknesses, and has extended its strengths.
21. In most subjects, work is now much better matched to pupils' learning needs, but much more is needed in science, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Gifted and talented pupils are very well provided for in some subjects, but this is not consistent, and their skills are not brought out and developed well enough in science and ICT. In all other respects, however, there has been good improvement in ICT, and this has led to above average standards by Year 8. There is sufficient teaching time over the school week, and good time is allocated for work in practical subjects. However, 30-minute time slots for some other lessons are too short to promote effective learning, and unsettle pupils by having them move around the building more than is necessary.
22. There has been good improvement in religious education, which is very well placed to improve further. As at the time of the last inspection, there is no daily act of collective worship, but all other legal requirements are met. There has been good recent improvement in learning opportunities for mathematics, but this is not yet reflected in long-term progress. The range and quality of learning opportunities has been greatly extended in design and technology, leading to well above average standards by Year 8. Pupils with special educational needs are now very well integrated into all aspects of the school's life and work, and there has been excellent improvement in provision for music among hearing impaired pupils. At the time of the last inspection, they were not taking part in music. Now, there is an excellent signing choir, which involves the whole school and gives frequent concerts.
23. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development. Religious education is taught under the subject heading 'beliefs and values' and leads pupils to understand and respect the values of cultures other than their own. This has provided a very good basis for the successful introduction of citizenship, and underlines an effective commitment to equal opportunities. Provision for health education, including education against the misuse of drugs, is effective, and there is a very good introduction to careers education in Year 8, in which pupils are encouraged to consider a range of careers in relation to their own personalities and interests.
24. The small number of pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds, most of whom have English as an additional language, are given very good learning opportunities, with additional teaching when they need it and effective support from other pupils. The same principles inform provision for pupils with special educational needs. All learn very well in response to good support from teachers and teaching assistants, and to work that is well matched to their learning needs. The curriculum for pupils in the hearing impaired unit is exceptionally well thought out to ensure that they learn on the same basis as other pupils. Starting French in Year 5 gives pupils a good start,

and contributes to above average standards, although pupils do not have the opportunity to start a second foreign language.

25. The school has made excellent improvements in its programme of activities outside lessons. Teachers, with help from volunteers, organise over 50 clubs each week, and virtually all pupils take part. There are particular strengths in sports, music and the arts, and the school has both Artsmark and Sportsmark awards. Pupils also have very well organised visits to Wales and to France. The local community makes a very good contribution to this additional provision, and also helps with planning practical activities, such as a traffic survey in which pupils used modern equipment and worked to professional standards. The school has a good working relationship with primary and secondary schools, and there are some outstanding features. For example, it provides exercise books for pupils to work in the last half term of primary school, teachers read the work and send new pupils encouraging comments on it. This idea offers very good scope for further development. Some parents were concerned that homework provision was inconsistent across the school. At the time of the inspection, effective, consistent homework was being set across the school.

### **Personal development.**

26. Provision for personal development is very good overall. It is particularly strong in moral and social development, with good provision for spiritual and cultural development.
27. Throughout the school, teachers teach and show pupils the difference between right and wrong, and effectively encourage them to do what is right. The exceptionally broad range of activities outside lessons, involving nearly everyone in the school, gives pupils an insight into the value of co-operation, teamwork and sportsmanship, often between different generations. The school council is well run and effective, and keeps in good touch with all pupils through regular discussions in form time. Personal, social and health education lessons, which make an important contribution to citizenship provision, are very well planned and led, and help pupils to develop a sense of responsibility to each other. For example, agreements to keep sensitive matters confidential encourage pupils to speak freely, knowing that confidence will be respected. The headteacher takes a strong lead in promoting social and moral development throughout the school, with additional provision for pupils whose behaviour puts them at risk of exclusion. The knowledge, skills and understanding of higher attaining pupils in Year 8 were also a particular strength during the inspection. The school's provision for moral and social development builds very well on positive values pupils bring from home.
28. Planning in many lessons gives pupils opportunities for reflection on important issues that go beyond material considerations. They consider the nature of human relationships in history, and the impact of people on the environment in geography. Beliefs and values lessons help pupils to develop understanding and respect for beliefs other than their own, and this aspect of the work is continuing to develop well. The school makes extensive provision for cultural development. Pupils develop good understanding of the differences in cultural values, of the range of cultures in modern Britain and of what can happen when cultures clash. They understand the influence of media on culture; for example, through the presentation of family life in television serials, and through discussion of the values of teenage culture in magazines. Pupils have a very good introduction to European culture in art and design, music and visits, and to a range of cultures in food technology. The culture and values of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are brought out and treated with respect; for example, in provision for pupils with special educational needs, and there are further plans to develop pupils' understanding of the range of cultures in modern society through the programme of citizenship. Pupils have exceptional opportunities to consider the cultural issues surrounding hearing impairment.

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

29. Provision for the care and welfare of pupils has improved since the last inspection, and is now very good. Provision for assessing their progress and providing academic guidance has shown some improvement, but information from assessment needs to be used more effectively.

30. Child protection procedures are well understood and used by staff in the best interests of the pupils. All staff understand the need for vigilance in the regular monitoring of the well-being and welfare of the pupils in their care. Good and effective procedures are in place to support pupils in public care, and those having special educational needs. The school takes effective measures to safeguard pupils from inappropriate material on the Internet. There are very good arrangements for reporting any use of physical restraint and ensuring that the best interests of pupils and staff are maintained at all times. Pupils feel safe and happy in school and have the confidence and independence to ask questions and raise concerns with staff.
31. Health and safety procedures are good. There is a designated health and safety co-ordinator, governors are suitably involved and several staff are trained in first aid. There are good procedures for dealing with accidents and medicines. However, some minor health and safety issues were brought to the school's attention during the inspection, and procedures for risk assessment could usefully be made more formal.
32. There are good procedures for monitoring and improving attendance, including effective telephone checks on the first morning of absence. The school has recently reviewed its behaviour policy in consultation with pupils. It has very good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and for eliminating bullying, and the pupils told inspectors that the quality of behaviour was improving. Exclusion is used positively to protect the quality learning of the majority. There is swift access to a well-structured support plan for excluded pupils, and they are given effective support on their return to school. The governors receive termly reports on exclusion and annual reports on patterns in attendance.
33. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are satisfactory. Teachers make effective use of the 'class book' system, pupils' planners, meetings with parents and weekly staff briefings to identify pupils' needs and monitor their progress. Assessment procedures for citizenship are to be introduced in the course of the year.
34. The school has adequate provision for assessing and tracking pupils' work, and recent improvements have led to good assessment in mathematics. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is very good, with excellent individual education plans, and the quality and use of assessment for hearing impaired pupils is exceptional. However, the school does not use its very good relationships with primary schools to establish a clear enough idea of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding when they join in Year 5. In addition, teachers do not use the results of their own assessments consistently enough to match work to the learning needs of all pupils, most often, although not always, the highest attaining. As a result, pupils are not yet consistently reaching the highest standards of which they are capable across the school, and it is not deriving full benefit from the strengths in its teaching.

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

35. The school has strengthened its very effective working partnership with parents since the last inspection. Parents strongly support the school, hold the staff in high regard and believe their children receive good education. Home-school agreements are respected. Parents consider it to be an open school, with staff willing to listen and talk to parents, and that the school is well managed. This confidence has led a significant number of parents from outside the school's catchment area to choose the school.
36. Parents' involvement in the work of the school makes an excellent contribution to their children's education and personal development. Parents are welcomed in school and encouraged to become involved in their children's learning. Regular volunteers help with learning in the school, sports teams and visits. Regular fund-raising social events, organised by the very active parent-teacher association, are well attended and provide valuable informal channels of communication. Attendance at the twice-yearly consultation meetings between teachers and parents is very good, and parents appreciate the system of 'quick check' termly progress reports. Inspectors did not agree with the minority of parents who considered that the school does not work closely with them. Some parents expressed concern at the consistency and quality of homework. Inspectors found that homework during the term of the inspection was properly set and effective.

37. The quality and range of information for parents is very good. Parents are kept well informed on a regular basis about all aspects of school life, organised events and pupil activities. Annual reports on pupils' progress are very good. They are written in clear, plain English, and provide parents with a very good insight into the effort and achievements of their child, with guidance on further improvement. Pupils' planners provide regular information on homework, and a quick and effective channel of communication with parents. Half-termly newsletters and other regular correspondence ensure that parents are kept well informed about school life. The school prospectus is attractive, colourful and a helpful reference document. The governors' report to parents is informative, well designed and easy to read.

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

38. When the school was last inspected, it was well led and managed, and provided good value for money. There were, however, some weaknesses in its development planning. Shortly after the inspection, a high turnover of teachers and changes in senior management, led to a fall in standards in Year 6, although not in Year 8, and a large financial surplus accrued. The school has now re-established good management and leadership. By the time of the inspection, changes in the management of mathematics and English had improved standards in Year 6 to broadly average levels in both subjects, and the quality of work in science had begun to improve. Effective management by the headteacher and subject leaders has led to very good improvements in ICT, design and technology, history, geography and citizenship. Other staff with management responsibilities carry them out well, with excellent management of provision for special educational needs. The school has also built very well on its established strengths. The range of sporting and other activities outside lessons has been extended, and provision for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities has been developed. This contributes to the personal development of all pupils in the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have built up a climate of mutual respect and teamwork among the staff and parents, and the school is very well placed to make further progress.
39. The governors have guided the school well through its recent difficulties, and make an effective contribution to its climate for learning. They are in good touch with standards and achievement in the school and understand its strengths. They are fully aware of standards in Year 6, and are involved with the headteacher's work in raising them. The headteacher and governors are committed to involving all pupils in the life and work of the school. There are good policies for race equality and special educational needs, backed up wholeheartedly by all teachers and teaching assistants. This ensures that pupils from all backgrounds make good progress over their school career. Governors monitor behaviour, and have worked with the headteacher to take action to limit the effect of the poor behaviour of a small minority of pupils on the learning of others and on health and safety. The school's financial management is now good. Funds have been used to develop facilities for science and ICT, and the school has agreed with the local education authority a prudent programme to reduce the remaining surplus. Grants and special funding are used very well for their intended purposes. The principles of obtaining and providing best value are understood and applied effectively. For example, the headteacher has closely monitored the quality of advice received on mathematics, requiring changes in provision that did not fully meet the school's needs.
40. Some areas of management require further improvement. Monitoring of teaching and learning identifies key strengths and weaknesses, and is supported by suitable arrangements for professional development and training. However, not all teachers have yet been included, and this has limited the benefit of performance management to successful departments. Development planning has a clearer focus on work in subjects than at the time of the last inspection, but most targets for improvement are still not worded clearly enough to ensure that they fully address weaknesses, and do not take enough account of the needs of different groups of pupils. The school makes satisfactory use of ICT to analyse data, and has good arrangements to see the work of pupils before they join the school. However, it does not use information from these systems to ensure that all departments plan work to meet the needs of all pupils joining the school in Year 5. This limits progress in Years 5 and 6.

41. The school has sufficient teachers and teaching assistants, and all are well qualified and experienced. All staff use signing well to communicate with hearing impaired pupils, and the signing and communication skills of some teaching assistants are exceptional. Teachers have built up good resources for learning, with very good collections in English, history, geography, citizenship and art and design. The library is used well, and has good resources for most subjects, although there are too few books for modern foreign languages. The school has developed its accommodation well since the last inspection, with new computer suites, refurbished laboratories and very good access for pupils with disabilities. Overall, accommodation is adequate to meet the needs of the pupils, although conditions for some subjects, such as music, are cramped.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

42. The headteacher and governors have good plans to include all teachers in the current round of performance management. In addition to the action they are currently taking to raise standards, they should pay particular attention to the following points:
1. raise standards in Year 6 further, and improve results in Year 6 national tests, by:
    - improving assessment procedures for pupils joining the school;
    - ensuring that work in Years 5 and 6 is matched to the learning needs of all pupils;
    - ensuring that the higher levels of the National Curriculum are fully addressed.  
(Paragraphs 3, 6, 34, 40, 49, 59-60, 101)
  2. extend arrangements to tackle unsatisfactory behaviour, by:
    - ensuring that all teachers deal consistently with minor misbehaviour;
    - providing further support inside and outside lessons for pupils whose behaviour is poor;
    - monitoring patterns in behaviour in greater detail.  
(Paragraphs 9, 17, 55,108)
  3. improve the achievement of higher attaining pupils, particularly in science and ICT, by:
    - identifying these pupils systematically throughout the school;
    - ensuring that they work to the highest levels of which they are capable;
    - setting demanding targets for the pupils and tracking progress towards them.  
(Paragraphs 2, 6, 17, 21, 34, 59-60)
  4. improve the use of ICT and the Internet, by:
    - identifying the contribution that ICT can make to teaching and learning in each subject;
    - including ICT in development planning for subjects;
    - monitoring the effectiveness of these measures in practice.  
(Paragraphs 4, 18, 21, 57, 62, 78, 84, 87, 94, 100, 109)

Additional points for action:

Some half-hour lessons are only just long enough to allow satisfactory learning. (*Paragraph 21*)

Improve formal arrangements for risk assessment. (*Paragraph 31*)

Provide a daily act of collective worship. (*Paragraph 22*)

## **UNIT FOR HEARING IMPAIRED PUPILS.**

43. The work of the unit is excellent. It has places for nine pupils, and currently has five, all with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Three well-qualified teaching assistants, with outstanding skills in using sign language, support pupils within the unit as well as in the mainstream school, and assist a relatively new unit manager. This support is of high quality and gives pupils access to all areas of the curriculum, as well as full participation in all aspects of school life. Pupils are taught to become independent learners. Excellent use of signing provides a bridge to literacy skills as well as promoting communication with teachers and other pupils.
44. Specialist teaching within the unit is very good and sometimes excellent. Because the unit contains all teachers' planning for each subject, pupils are well prepared for their lessons in classes. When particular difficulties are encountered, intensive individual support is given. Excellent specialist knowledge contributes to teachers' success in developing pupils' knowledge and understanding, and ICT is used very well to promote learning. Planning and assessment of pupils' progress are closely linked, and influence work on a daily basis. Planning in mainstream lessons and in the unit takes into account the specific needs of pupils. Very good relationships between the unit manager, support staff and pupils is an indication of why they achieve such a high level of success.
45. The integration of the unit with the school is excellent. The high regard of pupils for those in the unit has prompted many of them to learn signing, and they use this constantly for informal communication. Pupils from Years 5, 6, 7 and 8 with pupils from the unit, have formed a very successful signing choir, which performs in assemblies and at events outside school. The opportunity to support pupils with hearing impairment makes a major contribution to the personal development of other pupils throughout the school.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed

84

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

29

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	31	34	13	0	0	0
Percentage	7	37	40	15	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

### Information about the school's pupils

#### Pupils on the school's roll

Y5 – Y8

Number of pupils on the school's roll

451

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

41

#### Special educational needs

Y5 – Y8

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs

16

Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register

43

#### English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

6

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

28

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

7

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.8
National comparative data	6.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.4

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	49	54

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	36	31	44
	Girls	41	30	46
	Total	77	61	90
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	75 (85)	59 (71)	87 (86)
	National	75 (75)	74 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	36	36	31
	Girls	45	40	40
	Total	81	76	71
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	79 (74)	74 (77)	69 (59)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

*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	375	51	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	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	2	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	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes**

**Financial information**

**Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	23.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19

Financial year	2001-2
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**Education support staff: Y5 – Y8**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	232

	£
Total income	1,268,855
Total expenditure	1,220,889
Expenditure per pupil	2,744
Balance brought forward from previous year	111,904
Balance carried forward to next year	159870

**Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79
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**Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8**

Key Stage 2	27.4
Key Stage 3	28.9

FTE means full-time equivalent.

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	10.1
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.6
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	453
Number of questionnaires returned	115

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	41	3	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	42	47	4	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	22	62	6	4	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	63	11	3	4
The teaching is good.	35	54	6	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	19	63	14	3	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	32	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	42	4	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	20	55	20	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	36	50	8	4	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	49	8	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	58	39	1	1	2

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

**ENGLISH**

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

**Strengths**

- Standards are above average by Year 8 and pupils do well in secondary school.
- Very strong leadership of the department promotes high standards.
- Teaching is good; there is some very good and excellent teaching.
- Very good relationships between pupils and teachers encourage learning.

**Areas for improvement**

- Test results in Year 6 are below average in reading.
- Assessment does not include clear targets for pupils' improvement.
- Classroom management could be firmer in some lessons.

46. Standards in Year 8 are above average and represent good achievement over pupils' school career. Pupils go on to do well in Year 9 tests at secondary school. Results in the Year 6 national tests for 2002 were in line with average levels in writing, but not in reading, so that they were below average overall. In work seen during the inspection, however, standards were average overall in all aspects of English. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. They receive very good support from their class teacher and support assistants who work together in planning lessons and devising strategies for success. By Year 8, there are no significant differences in the standards reached by boys and girls, but there are some pockets of lower achievement among boys in other year groups. Pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress at all stages of learning English, and often reach above average standards quickly, even when they have started with little previous knowledge of the language.
47. Standards in writing in Year 6 have improved since the last inspection. Most pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of literacy skills. Their oral skills are good in classroom discussion and they are keen speakers. In a Year 6 lesson, a speaking and listening activity showed a high calibre of communication and use of persuasive language from well prepared pupils. Most pupils have grasped key skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and their work is generally well presented. Factual writing is made appealing because teachers use current events in their planning; in a Year 6 lesson; for example, pupils based their work on David Beckham's dress sense. The work of a minority of pupils is less well presented and indicates less pride in their work. Recent initiatives to improve reading standards include a sensitive choice of texts and rigorous teaching focused on test criteria. These are beginning to have a positive impact. The standards of all pupils are benefiting from a wide choice in the variety of reading and writing assignments, and increasing use of ICT to aid the presentation of work.
48. By Year 8, pupils write with understanding and appreciation of their texts and pre-20th-Century poetry. They read a wide variety of texts and the higher attaining pupils have very good understanding of meaning that is not explicitly stated. A key feature in the pupils' work is their ability to place texts in a historical context and then compare it with modern society. However, lower attaining pupils cannot evaluate character and theme at a sophisticated level or produce detailed writing assignments. Overall, presentation of work is careful and consistent. Pupils can analyse media texts and research references. Most pupils use standard and non-standard English appropriately and are respectful listeners. In a Year 7 language lesson, all lower attaining pupils explained the difference between 'tell' and 'show' with accuracy and enthusiasm. A minority of pupils rely too heavily on the teacher and their work is brief, lacking in detailed understanding and insight.
49. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and there are frequent examples of very good and outstanding teaching and learning. In the very good and excellent lessons, there is a brisk pace; pupils are clearly motivated and a large amount of work is completed. Pupils enjoy exchanging ideas with each other and their teacher in an atmosphere of achievement and respect. Pupils respond well to their teachers' care for their achievement and this helps to develop the very

good relationships evident in the department. In a Year 8 lesson on autobiographical writing the pupils thoroughly appreciated working to produce a structured, well-informed essay. They consciously shaped language for a purpose, paused to reflect and presented their findings confidently. This is because the teacher sensitively drew out their ideas and encouraged their thinking. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils worked furiously to draft and polish their creative writing and spoke meaningfully about their tasks in pairs. They produced a large amount of work and enjoyed it immensely; the teacher's enthusiasm infected the pupils, whose careful and sensitive analysis encouraged and developed their love of the subject. In a small minority of lessons, pupils learn less than they should because the pace is too slow and classroom management strategies are not applied crisply enough. There is also some inconsistency in the use of assessment, as individual pupils' targets are unclear. This is recognised and is part of the department's action plan.

50. A good relationship between the English department and the librarian means that lesson planning and use of resources are effective. The library is well used and encourages independent learning through research topics. Information and communication technology is well used to aid the presentation of work. Literacy teaching improves the spelling, punctuation and grammar of the pupils through clear lesson planning and targeted work. The department uses the National Literacy Strategy effectively to raise the standards in literacy and to provide structured lessons targeted at each pupil. Accommodation and resources are very good. Work in other subjects makes a satisfactory contribution to reading and writing skills. There are good features in history and geography, but written work is not given enough emphasis in science and design and technology. Pupils' work is artistically displayed and there are plants and flowers in each classroom. This emphasises the respect of the staff for their pupils and is part of the mutual respect.
51. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a clear educational vision that inspires both teachers and pupils. Teachers share the preparation of schemes of work and departmental responsibilities; as a result, they are regularly discussing what is best for the pupils. They share good practice and this is improving teaching styles, classroom management and pupils' learning. Work in English has made good progress since the last inspection. Achievement has improved, and lessons are planned to match individual pupil's needs. Homework is well planned and supports learning. The appointment of a relatively new head of department, who has a clear vision and has created a strong team ethos, gives the subject the capacity to improve further.

## MATHEMATICS

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is good overall and leads to effective learning, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their work and good relationships with their teachers.
- There is very good provision for pupils with special educational needs.
- Good leadership and management generates teamwork and commitment among staff.
- Former pupils do well in national tests in Year 9 at secondary school.

### Areas for improvement

- Test results at the end of Year 6 are below average.
- There is still a lack of pace in some lessons in Years 5 and 6.

52. The standard of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books is broadly average in Years 6 and 8. This is significant improvement from the well below average 2002 national test results in Year 6. Major changes in management and planning at the beginning of this term have led to significant improvements in teaching and learning. The school has also improved its use of the National Numeracy Strategy, in Years 5 and 6, and this is particularly helpful to the non-specialist teachers. There is no difference, over time, in the results for boys and those for girls. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language, and pupils with particular aptitude for mathematics, make good progress in lessons. By Year 8, the overall achievement of all pupils is good. Since the last inspection test results in Year 6 have declined, but those in Year 8 have been maintained, and pupils achieve well in secondary school, with

some outstanding results from gifted and talented pupils. By the time of the inspection, overall improvement since the last inspection was satisfactory.

53. Most pupils in Year 6 have developed sound numeracy skills, and apply these to solve problems. Mental arithmetic skills are well developed. For example, all pupils in a middle set joined in reciting their multiplication tables, then responded accurately to oral mental arithmetic questions involving multiplying small numbers. Data handling skills are sound. Pupils collect, organise and group data in appropriate tables. They draw and interpret line graphs in various contexts. Lower attaining pupils construct accurate bar charts. Most understand place value, but some have difficulty with decimals. A minority make errors when multiplying and dividing. Higher attaining pupils understand and evaluate equivalent fractions. They change decimals into fractions and back again. They have a clear understanding of place value and multiply and divide by ten and 100 accurately.
54. Pupils in Year 8 understand and use fractions and decimals. They have good data handling skills and calculate the probability of simple events. They find the areas and perimeters of circles and rectangles. Higher attainers solve associated problems. For example, they were required to design the largest circular stadium with a maximum area of 21,000 square metres. Many pupils used trial and error methods to find the approximate radius. Higher attaining pupils solved it quickly by rearranging the area formula. These pupils also have good algebraic skills. They understand indices and solve linear equations. Lower attaining pupils recognise the various types of triangle. They estimate and measure angles, although some confuse the inner and outer scales of the protractor. They use and apply their knowledge of mathematics well in other work, such as the traffic survey in geography. By Year 8, there are no significant weaknesses in pupils' skills in mathematics.
55. Teaching is good, and at best excellent, in Years 7 and 8. It is satisfactory, with good and some very good teaching in the best lessons, in Years 5 and 6. By starting lessons with oral and mental work, teachers quickly focus pupils' attention and sharpen and develop their mental skills. For example, in a Year 7 lesson for lower attaining pupils, the teacher asked pupils to write down four-digit numbers read out orally. Initially, many pupils put zeros in the wrong place. After several examples and further discussion, these pupils learnt the importance of the order of the digits and this helped them to understand place value. In this lesson and others, very good support was given to pupils with hearing impairment, and to others with special educational needs. This enabled these pupils to be fully included in the lesson and to make excellent progress. In this lesson and others Springboard 7 of the National Numeracy Strategy was used very effectively to promote learning and raise the standards of lower attaining pupils. In roughly one half of the lessons in Years 5 and 6, pace is not sustained well enough to the end of the lesson, and some pupils do not concentrate as they should when working in groups. In some cases, this led to learning that was only just adequate overall.
56. Almost all pupils have a very positive attitude to their work and enjoy good relationships with their teachers. This results in a good working atmosphere in lessons and assists learning and progress. In most lessons there is an appropriate balance of direct teaching and pupils working independently. This helps pupils to sustain interest and ensures that they use their time well. When this balance is not found, the pace slows and learning is reduced. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, some lower attaining pupils spent time colouring bar charts instead of progressing to new tasks.
57. The department is making satisfactory use of ICT, although this could be developed further. It has good resources for learning, including a satisfactory selection of books in the library. Teachers use homework effectively to extend work in classes, and work is generally marked well, with helpful and encouraging comments.
58. With very effective support from the headteacher, and good external advice, the acting mathematics co-ordinator has tackled his task well. He has produced a good action plan, and is leading the department effectively. Staffing difficulties have been resolved, and all staff are keen to raise standards. Regular meetings are held and curriculum and teaching plans discussed. The department is making very good use of the national strategy for Years 7 and 8, assessment procedures are good and appropriate records are kept. The monitoring of teaching is

satisfactory and developing, and the grouping of pupils according to their learning needs is promoting consistent learning.

## SCIENCE

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

### Strengths

- A significant amount of good teaching is helping standards to recover from very low levels.
- New work schemes are clear and helpful.
- Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.
- The department now has good accommodation and resources.

### Areas for improvement

- Results in national tests in Year 6 are too low.
- Higher attaining pupils achieve less than they should.
- Skills in practical work and investigation need further development.
- Assessment is not used well enough to set targets and plan work.

59. Results in the national tests in Year 6 have been below average for the past three years. The standards observed during the inspection were better, and were broadly average in Years 6 and 8. Boys and girls reach similar standards, and there is effective support for lower attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs. Pupils with English as an additional language quickly develop good understanding of their work in science and make good progress. Higher attaining pupils, however, need to work at higher levels more consistently, and to be required to think harder. Overall, the standard reached by Year 8 represents satisfactory achievement, but further improvement is needed in Year 6. The school has now established a pattern of improvement in science, but there has been too little improvement since the last inspection.
60. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils draw and interpret graphs accurately. Average attaining pupils were able to design experiments and explain their reasoning and lower attaining pupils had understood the principle of fair testing. In Years 5 and 6, practical skills are well developed through the use of new work schemes. By Year 8, higher attaining pupils have well developed research skills, use ICT to communicate their ideas and give mature answers to questions. Most pupils have good understanding of classification and variation, and lower attaining pupils have good practical skills and can interpret experimental results. However, throughout the school, higher attaining pupils are not given enough opportunities, in class and homework, to reach the higher levels of the National Curriculum.
61. Teaching during the inspection was never less than satisfactory, and sometimes good or better; this led to satisfactory learning. Teachers are secure in their knowledge and enthusiastic about the subject. When teaching is good, lessons are well paced and pupils are stimulated. In Year 5; for example, a practical planning lesson captured the interest of the class, proceeded at a brisk pace and produced lots of activity and ideas from the pupils. Lessons that are satisfactory rather than good are well planned, but pace is slower and higher attaining pupils are not fully extended. Pupils with special educational needs were taught well, and work is carefully adapted to meet their individual needs. Pupils with impaired hearing are fully integrated into classes by skilful teaching and effective support.
62. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in most lessons, and help to establish a learning environment in the classroom. Exercise books showed some good imaginative writing and some good use of ICT in research and presentation, but some writing in science does not contribute enough to the development of pupils' thinking. The use of ICT in other areas of science is underdeveloped.
63. Management and leadership have recently been given greater priority by the senior management team, and are now satisfactory. The Key Stage 3 strategy has been built into the new schemes of work, and is helping to improve the teaching of practical investigations for older pupils. There are regular assessment procedures, although these are not yet used well enough

to set targets and to plan demanding work for all pupils. The school has plans to address this issue. Resources have been improved, and are now good. Laboratories have been refurbished and are light and airy, with good displays of pupils' work and suitable posters. There is good equipment and a computer in each laboratory. A new preparation room is well stocked and the teachers are well supported by a laboratory technician.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Very good organisation results in high levels of motivation amongst teachers and pupils.
- Very good teaching engages the attention of all pupils and results in very rapid progress.
- The very high standard of work on display encourages pupils to try hard.
- Very good marking clearly tells pupils how to improve.
- Regular opportunities for extra-curricular work have a positive impact on standards.

### Areas for improvement

- No significant areas of weakness.

64. Standards are above average at the end of Year 6 and well above average by the time pupils leave in Year 8. Pupils reach these standards from a basis of broadly average standards when they join the school, and their overall achievement is very good. The school has improved the standards identified in the previous inspection report. There is a very good atmosphere for learning that involves and engages all pupils, and there is little difference between the standards reached by boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs, including hearing impaired pupils and gifted and talented pupils, achieve well. The school has achieved the Artsmark award from the Arts Council of Great Britain in recognition of provision for the arts in the school. To achieve this, the school has provided a wide range of arts experiences inside and outside lessons, developed teachers' understanding of the arts, and shared pupils' successes with parents and the local community.
65. Pupils in Year 6 during the inspection had produced eye-catching Victorian plates based on the work of William Morris. These successfully pick up the floral motives in Morris's work, and use some exquisite complementary colours to create harmonious and pleasing end products. To achieve this, pupils had made good use of their historical understanding and associated lessons in colour theory. Displays of high quality throughout the school show that pupils successfully develop a good range of skills using different media.
66. Pupils in Year 8 show good attention to detail in still life paintings of vegetables. In one lesson, they quickly understood the principles of balance, proportion and composition. These are difficult principles, but all pupils had a firm understanding of this as a result of the teachers' very clear explanations and imaginative use of resources. Work on display shows very good understanding of the stylistic characteristics of the work of a range of artists. In painting still life, they had used lessons on colour and tonal variation learnt from the work of Cezanne to create their own successful pieces. Pupils' work is helped by their positive attitudes; they enjoy what they are doing, listen attentively to teachers and sustain their concentration. There is good development of literacy skills as teachers promote the use of specialist language and require pupils to comment on their own work and that of others in their sketchbooks. They also promote the use of numeracy in several planned projects. Pupils' regular use ICT results in sound achievements. The Year 8 weekly art and pottery clubs provide excellent additional challenges.
67. The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers understand what fires pupils' imaginations, so that they become absorbed in what they are doing and enjoy learning. Teachers manage behaviour very well. Lessons are engaging and animated and teachers and pupils work together to create a busy, but calm, atmosphere. Teachers enable pupils to develop a strong command and understanding of technique, so that they learn how to improve their work. Marking of work is very good, with useful hints and tips on how pupils can improve. As a result, pupils have a good knowledge of their own learning and progress. Teachers regularly praise pupils, so that they feel positive about learning. Planning is excellent, with a wide variety of imaginative projects and schemes that keep pupils interested and on their toes.

68. The subject leader manages the subject very well. She works with enthusiasm, organises resources very well and plans most interesting lessons. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection; there is a much wider range of media in use, pupils make good use of sketchbooks and there is increasingly good use of computer art applications. There are now plenty of books, posters and other visual reference materials to support lessons. The new art room is an attractive and spacious area that has a positive impact on standards.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- Pupils of all abilities achieve well above average standards.
- Pupils design and make high quality products.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Pupils have a very good attitude to the subject because they enjoy the work.
- Classroom relationships are very good, and lead to very good learning.

### Areas for improvement

- Some written work is not completed.
- The range of modified support materials used in lessons should be increased.
- Schemes of work and assessment procedures could be improved further.

69. Standards are well above average in Year 6, and are much higher than in similar schools by the end of Year 8. There is no difference in the performance of girls and boys. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in lessons by teachers and other adults, and achieve very well. Gifted and talented pupils have not yet been identified as a group, but they achieve high standards. There is particularly good progress in designing and making, and overall achievement is very good. There has been a very big improvement in standards since the last inspection, particularly in work with resistant materials, where standards were weak.
70. By Year 6, pupils have good knowledge of tools and materials, and use them with skill and accuracy to design and make very good products. For example, they use a computer to design attractive pictures for small jigsaw puzzles. These are printed out onto laminated adhesive paper, stuck onto plywood and then cut into shapes and fitted into a frame. Pupils write detailed specifications for their products; for example, a woven mat in textiles. These are used as a guide to produce quality outcomes. Some mats incorporate complicated weaving techniques like 'plaid' to produce a special effect. Pupils in Year 5 work co-operatively in groups to produce a variety of vegetable soups. The food produced is of a high standard, but pupils are less successful when they try to explain in words the different appearance, tastes and textures of the soups.
71. By Year 8, pupils' work combines a broad range of skills, and is often sophisticated. For example, they show very good understanding of the design process when making electronic egg timers. As well as showing skill in electronics, by drawing and building circuits, pupils make detailed plans to manufacture the item, and work with more than one material with precision. Pupils design items for a purpose or to meet a user's need. In Year 8 textiles, pupils make individualised bags that are displayed in a catwalk show. Pupils in Year 7 model hats in newspaper before making their innovative designs in material. Making skills are much higher than average, and one pupil with learning difficulties made a reversible hat of outstanding quality. In a lesson on staple foods in Year 8, pupils made pancakes and showed considerable skill in frying. Pupils are generally less successful in written evaluations. Most describe what they have done rather than analysing the effectiveness of their actions. Not all pupils complete their written work or act on teachers' comments to improve a particular piece of work. Homework is not set in this subject.
72. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. Teachers plan interesting, challenging tasks that motivate boys and girls alike and make lessons enjoyable. For example,

in a lesson on motion, pupils use 'Lego' to make working models showing the various types of motion. Working in groups, they build battery-driven cars to understand how rotary motion can be changed to linear motion. The final task is to race the cars, making an exciting climax to the lesson. Teachers provide all the necessary resources so that lessons move at a good pace. Pupils are very well managed, and very good relationships lead to them developing good attitudes and behaving well. Teachers have high expectations and very good subject knowledge. They give clear practical demonstrations that focus on high standards and attention to health and safety. There are, however, not many modified materials used in lessons to cater for pupils of differing abilities. Pupils receive good verbal and written feedback on their progress. They apply themselves both physically and creatively to their work and are productive.

73. Pupils use existing ICT provision effectively for research and to enhance the quality of their work. There is good provision for number work through measuring, but the contribution of the subject to literacy work could be improved, particularly in older pupils' written work. Library provision is satisfactory.
74. The head of department, appointed since the last inspection, has brought about a very significant improvement in standards. He is a very effective leader and the department works well as a team. The current schemes of work need to be updated to give better coverage in some topics, such as structures and systems and control, and progress could be improved further if pupils' work was assessed in more detail. Resources are generally satisfactory, but there is a shortage of some ICT items, small tools and food technology books. The subject makes a sound contribution to pupils' spiritual moral social and cultural development, and work on 'world food' in Year 8 contributes to citizenship skills. There is very good provision for learning outside lessons.

## GEOGRAPHY

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to high levels of understanding and analysis.
- Teaching is matched well to individual needs, so that all pupils learn well.
- Relationships are very positive, both within the school and work in the community.
- Leadership and management are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT in lessons could be extended.
- Day-to-day assessment could be improved.

75. Standards are above average in Years 6 and 8. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Teachers match work well to individual needs, so that gifted and talented pupils, those with English as an additional language and pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Overall achievement is very good, and very good progress has been made since the last inspection.
76. By the end of Year 6 pupils' geographical skills are well developed and they can identify key similarities and differences between regions they have studied. These skills are carefully built up. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils comparing Westley with the local village of Horringer produced well-balanced accounts, drawing on their skills in map work, photographic interpretation and on-site knowledge acquired from their fieldwork visit. They understand how settlements develop and can clearly articulate their views. By the end of Year 8, pupils record and present their work with increasing sophistication. They analyse a variety of resources to make evaluations about the impact of human activity on the environment. In a Year 8 lesson studying sites for a new local science park, pupils drew on these skills to make well-argued decisions on suitable locations. This multi-skilled exercise enabled all the class to make real progress in their geography studies. The regular use of writing frames and an emphasis on the learning of key words is helping to promote higher standards of literacy.
77. The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout the school. Teachers know the subject very well, plan meticulously for individual needs, use lesson time well and set clear

learning aims. This enables pupils to increase the range and depth of their knowledge and understanding very consistently. Teachers choose a wide variety of stimulating resources, carefully linked to regular changes in teaching strategies. In a Year 7 lesson on migration; for example, pupils could analyse why families in Bangladesh left their villages for the overcrowded city of Dhaka. Drawing on their knowledge of flooding, the ravages of famine and the inequalities of land ownership, they could explain why desperate people took such a gamble. The teacher's selection of a wide range of accessible source material, including video clips, was a key factor in enabling the class to successfully complete this task. Pupils are stimulated to learn by lively and challenging teaching, and higher attaining pupils could link the Bangladeshi study to contemporary European migration issues. Pupils are keen to engage in discussion and writing activities that help to extend the range and depth of their geographical skills.

78. Pupils form a very effective working partnership with their teachers, which contributes much to personal development and citizenship. Literacy and numeracy are effectively taught, both in the classroom and in additional activities, such as a highly successful survey of traffic, carried out with advanced technology and co-operation with the police. There is good use of ICT, especially in the use of spreadsheets and recording statistical data, but this could be extended to increase the use of geographical resources on the Internet.
79. Management and leadership are very good. The subject co-ordinator has a clear view of the priorities for geography and is committed to the further improvement of standards. Links with the upper schools are very strong. A close working relationship with the librarian has enabled the department to extend independent learning and research. Teachers know their pupils well, but improvements in day-to-day assessment and monitoring would allow teachers to track individual progress more closely. The range of opportunities for learning outside the classroom is extensive and challenging, and includes well-planned residential visits.

## HISTORY

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

### Strengths

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Higher attaining pupils achieve penetrating historical insights.
- Relationships are very positive.
- Provision is very well led and managed.
- Work is matched to the needs of individual pupils.

### Areas for improvement

- Teachers could make greater use of computers in lessons.
- Pupils' progress could be assessed and monitored in more detail.

80. Standards are above average in Years 6 and 8. There is little overall difference between the performance of boys and girls, although a minority of boys have some problems with writing. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well and their learning needs are matched to work of the appropriate standard. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as a second language make good progress. Overall achievement and improvement since the last inspection are very good.
81. By the end of Year 6, pupils' knowledge and understanding of history are good, their listening skills are well developed and they are beginning to acquire real strengths in handling and interpreting sources. They have good understanding of how past societies functioned and are willing to express their views on issues of right and wrong in the context of the Victorian workplace. In a Year 6 lesson on printing, pupils could analyse video evidence about a Victorian printing shop to produce well-balanced accounts of the life of a young apprentice. The choice of printing, and the very good quality of the video, enabled the teacher to explore the differences in written language between Victorian and modern times and to make a significant contribution to literacy skills through analysis of the process of drafting and proofreading.
82. By the end of Year 8, pupils can organise and communicate research findings in a variety of ways, and have developed real strengths in the critical analysis and evaluation of historical

sources. In a Year 8 lesson on the relationships between settlers in Roanoke and the Algonquin Indians; for example, pupils compared written and visual evidence, then drew appropriate conclusions about the difficulties of interpreting it. This enabled them to reach above average standards for their age, and also to understand the effects of a clash of cultures on a large scale. Higher attaining pupils in this lesson were reaching higher standards than expected at the end of Year 9.

83. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject, plan meticulously, use lesson time well and set clear learning objectives. This enables pupils to increase the range and depth of their knowledge and understanding. Teachers choose a wide variety of stimulating resources, which are carefully linked to regular changes in teaching strategies. In a Year 7 lesson on the Roman Army; for example, pupils analysed the reasons for its success because the teacher presented them with informative evidence about its training methods and weaponry. Higher attaining pupils could link the defeat of Boudicca to the resources of the whole Empire, which local generals could draw on after their initial defeat. Pupils are stimulated to learn by lively teaching approaches that present them with an element of challenge. They are keen to engage in discussion and writing activities that help to extend the range and depth of their key historical skills. Teachers use carefully-chosen video clips and artefacts to extend pupils' appreciation of the period, places and personalities they are studying. They take care to match work to the needs of the individual. Pupils respond with hard work and intellectual engagement, forming a dynamic partnership with their teachers that leads to high standards for the pupils and professional satisfaction for the teachers.
84. The contribution of history to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is outstanding. Subject literacy and numeracy strategies are in place and writing frames are used effectively. Study of cultural factors in different societies and consideration of right and wrong, make a strong contribution to personal development and citizenship. Some progress has been made in the use of ICT, but there is a need to further develop Internet access to widen the range of historical resources. The regular use of writing frames and an emphasis on the learning of key words is helping to raise standards across the school.
85. Management and leadership are a major strength. The subject co-ordinator has a clear view of the priorities for history and is committed to the further improvement of standards. A close working relationship with the librarian has enabled the department to extend the use of historical books and other source materials. Teachers know their pupils well, but some aspects of their work could be improved further through better day-to-day assessment and monitoring. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities enriches the history curriculum.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Standards are above average at the end of Years 6 and 8.
- Teaching is good and enables pupils to develop skills across many subjects.
- The school had developed good facilities and resources.
- Management and strategic direction are good.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils need to be better informed of their progress and the standards they reach.
- ICT is underused in some subjects.
- Gifted and talented pupils need to be more consistently challenged.
- Standards could be still higher if more teaching took place in Year 6.

86. The skills of pupils joining the school vary very widely, but are average overall. They make good progress throughout the school, to reach above average standards both in Year 6 and by time they move on to secondary school. Effective teaching of basic skills and processes makes an important contribution to good standards, particularly in collecting, analysing and using information. Pupils work with range of media, including many graphic forms, so that, by Year 8, much of their best work involves manipulating media to present information in an interesting and

varied way. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, but gifted and talented pupils are not identified and stretched fully in all lessons, and need to be challenged more. There is no clear difference between the achievements of boys and girls in lessons, although they tend to work differently; boys are generally more dynamic in their approach, while girls tend to be more thoughtful and take greater care. At the time of the last inspection, standards and progress in ICT were unsatisfactory, and the current provision represents good improvement.

87. Pupils in Year 6 use word-processing well to improve their writing, and present it with good graphics. They process statistical information using spreadsheets. However, the bulk of this work takes place in Year 5, and an opportunity to enable pupils to reach still higher standards is lost because there is no specific teaching of ICT in Year 6. By Year 7, pupils use Powerpoint' well to make presentations to their class. The standard is clearly above average, and the best make very effective use of imported photographs, clip-art and sound. The school keeps good records of their work, and these show skills across a broad range of applications, including spreadsheets, word-processors and art programs. Pupils practise and extend these skills well into Year 8, applying them to analyse data, both in their outstanding traffic survey and in leisure pursuits. However, there is no consistent planning for the use of ICT in subjects across the school, and in some, such as history, computers could contribute more to the development of learning skills.
88. Teaching is good overall, with much very good teaching in Year 5. Significant features characterise very good lessons within the department. The best lessons have good pace, lively presentation, appropriate content and high expectancy by the teacher. In one Year 5 lesson where the teacher was using a projector linked to a computer, he wanted to link graphic images from clip art and merge text from a word-processing package through a 'speech bubble'. The pupils worked quickly and effectively, achieving high quality results from sophisticated software. Visible progress was made in this lesson. In a satisfactory lesson with Year 8, pupils were working on animation by taking a graphic image and creating animation by sequencing a number of frames where the image was modelled as if to move. In this aspect the lesson was good, but further extension tasks were required by the higher attaining pupils to challenge them further. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons, with good individual support from teachers and assistants. They also benefit from additional lessons with computers to improve their basic skills. Teachers manage classes effectively overall, and pupils often appreciate their kind and friendly manner. However, occasionally pupils take advantage of a lack of firm direction, and do not work properly to the end of the lesson. In some lessons, this undermined the effect of a very good start.
89. The department is managed well. Systems are very well organised and show a purposeful and considered approach. Staff meet regularly and share a common understanding of the tasks that lie in the future. All have the opportunity to contribute and they have also undertaken training to allow them to work with the facilities more effectively. Monitoring and evaluation of the department's work is good. The school has made great efforts over the past three years to improve facilities. There are two new rooms of networked computers, with good demonstration facilities, and computers and laptops around the school enable staff to complete their tasks more easily. The computer is particularly well used in the hearing impaired unit. Lunchtime clubs provide good opportunities for pupils to complete their work and develop their ideas.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to above average standards in Years 6 and 8.
- Work in Year 6 provides a solid foundation for achievement.
- Pupils' positive attitudes and very good behaviour support their learning.
- Work in French is well managed.

### Areas for improvement

- Assessment information is not used well to plan improvement.
- There is no observation of lessons.
- The use of computers is not systematic and has limited impact on learning.

90. Standards are above average, both in Years 6 and 8, and the introduction of French in Year 6 provides a good foundation for progress. Boys and girls attain similar standards in Year 6, but girls do slightly better than boys in Year 8. Higher attaining pupils, pupils with special needs and those from minority ethnic backgrounds all reach good standards. This represents good achievement over the three years of study. There has been a good overall improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching, which has led to a rise in standards.
91. In Year 6, pupils follow instructions in French. They pronounce well in choral and individual repetition. They copy accurately, although lower attaining pupils make some spelling mistakes. They are beginning to grasp key features in language rules, especially where these differ in French. Pupils with special educational needs benefit from good support, which improves their progress. Activities are enjoyable, so that pupils learn as they have fun.
92. By Year 8, higher attaining pupils are working regularly with past tenses. Many are already achieving high standards in using this knowledge in oral work, and to produce holiday postcards including past events. They speak confidently and with good pronunciation, well supported by a foreign language assistant. They can combine two or more ideas into sentences of increasing complexity. They recall vocabulary well, leading to good standards in listening and reading comprehension. Average and lower attaining pupils need more time or repetition, but can identify most key points in what they hear or read. They are also beginning to work with past tenses. Although their language production is briefer and more prone to error, they can convey information successfully. Independent reading helps all pupils to increase their knowledge of vocabulary.
93. The overall quality of teaching is very good. All teachers speak French well, and use it to conduct lessons. This promotes high standards in oral work and indicates high expectations. However, teachers do not always insist that pupils use French as part of classroom routine. Planning for lessons is very good. Most lessons are short, but teachers include revision and introduce new work, with opportunities for pupils to apply new knowledge and test this. The use of games and other energetic oral tasks helps pupils to learn well in an enjoyable atmosphere. Year 8 pupils; for example, combined day, place and weather to consolidate past tense knowledge in a game of 'battleships'. The pace of activities supports very good learning and reduces the possibility of poor attention. Behaviour is always good and sometimes excellent, as pupils are totally engaged. Teachers use resources well, especially visual stimuli, and the pupils themselves, particularly the native speakers. A Year 7 class listened to their own recordings, made with the foreign language assistant, as the basis for converting verbs to the third person. Learning was particularly good in this lesson. Good relationships support learning. Teachers are fair in their targeting of questions, so that all pupils feel well involved. Attitudes to learning are very positive. Marking is satisfactory. It is up to date, with some helpful comments added. Homework is set regularly and usually complements class work well.
94. French makes a good contribution to basic skills, especially literacy, through the regular practise of communication skills and improving awareness of how language works. Computers are used in some lessons, but problems of access reduce the impact of ICT on learning. Oral survey results are recorded in tally graphs and bar charts. Plans to integrate citizenship and to implement the national Key Stage 3 Strategy are not yet finalised.
95. Work in French is well managed. Policies and planning documents show very good knowledge of new national initiatives and requirements. However, teachers do not have opportunities to observe lessons, and this limits their ability to assess the department's effectiveness. Assessment procedures are good, but the information acquired is not yet used to improve the content of the curriculum. There are good resources for French, but poor storage facilities and the lack of a specific area for French makes resources less accessible. Library provision is poor, but there is good provision of books for pupils to read within the subject.

## MUSIC

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

### Strengths

- The subject leader's drive, enthusiasm and good organisation result in well-motivated pupils who thoroughly enjoy learning.
- The overall good quality of teaching results in lessons where pupils have an enthusiasm for learning and make rapid progress.
- The very good provision of extra-curricular activities and performance opportunities has a very positive impact on standards of music-making.
- The effective use of available resources helps to bring learning alive.

### Areas for improvement

- The slightly cramped accommodation restricts what can be achieved, particularly when two lessons are timetabled simultaneously.

96. Standards have risen since the last inspection, and are above average in Years 6 and 8. The department involves all pupils in music lessons, and there is no difference in the standards reached by boys and girls. Achievement among all pupils, including those with special educational needs and higher attaining pupils, is good. Hearing impaired pupils are fully integrated into lessons and make good progress. They and other pupils also reach high standards in the signing choir. Pupils who receive lessons from visiting instrumental teachers make excellent progress and contribute enthusiastically to the excellent range of extra-curricular performance opportunities. The school has achieved the Artsmark award from the Arts Council of Great Britain. To achieve this, it has provided a range of musical experiences inside and outside the curriculum, developed teachers' understanding of music and shared pupils' successes with parents and the local community.
97. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 sing enthusiastically, accurately pitching their notes and singing with clear diction. They compose their own music using simple musical devices. They perform with increasing confidence in small groups and often play independent parts with growing assurance. In one lesson, pupils knew what the orchestral sections were called and had a good understanding of individual instruments and the sounds they make. Higher attaining pupils use musical vocabulary with precision when describing instruments. By Year 8, pupils integrate performing and composing well. In one lesson; for instance, they performed intricate arrangements containing four individual parts. The higher attaining pupils took the more difficult parts, whilst others, including those with special educational needs, focused on slightly easier parts. This ensured that all pupils were suitably challenged. By the end of the lesson, each of the groups played their pieces with support from a very lively taped backing track. This brought the learning alive and was great fun; the class listened attentively to each other's efforts, making suggestions about how these could be further improved. In another very successful Year 7 lesson, pupils again played in groups, with one of the pupils improvising a made-up part. They did this with musical imagination and a sense of style.
98. Pupils make effective use of computer music applications to assist their composition work. Their literacy skills are reinforced successfully through regular opportunities to write evaluations of what they have done, and they make good use of musical vocabulary. The school choir, signing choir and instrumental groups contribute very successfully to community social and fund-raising events. These have included support for the church bazaar and carol singing in the town in aid of charitable causes. This helps the pupils to develop good social awareness and a sense of community.
99. The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school, and is often very good. The teachers' enthusiasm and effective management of pupils stimulates positive learning, so that pupils enjoy what they do and behave well. The teachers get all pupils actively involved in music-making, and also give them regular opportunities to discuss music they have heard and to write reflectively about it. This is good because pupils' learning is both practical and intellectual, helping them to develop a well-rounded appreciation of the subject. Teachers take pleasure in pupils' growing sense of musical confidence and communicate this to pupils through

their positive comments, promoting a learning atmosphere in which pupils thrive musically. The work of visiting instrumental teachers is crucial to this work. In one clarinet lesson, a very skilled teacher successfully coaxed two youngsters through their first clarinet lesson. The session was great fun and, by the end, both beginners were eager to go away and practise what they had learned.

100. The department is very well led and managed. There is a culture of high expectation, and this creates a strong sense of purpose and teamwork among teachers and pupils. Assessment has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are now well informed about how they are doing and so have a very good appreciation of their own progress. In one lesson, Year 7 pupils were very clear about what National Curriculum Level towards which they were working. Accommodation is cramped, although teachers make imaginative use of what space they have. In several lessons, pupils spilled out into the surrounding corridors and hall space; while this was effective, it is not possible when these spaces are used for other purposes. There is limited use of ICT in music lessons. The spirit of the staff in pupils is particularly clearly shown in the high quality of music-making outside lessons, which is a major strength of the school and makes an outstanding contribution to personal development.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Strengths

- Improved teaching quality has led to higher standards, especially in Years 5 and 6.
- The range of extra-curricular clubs is excellent, and many pupils take part.
- There is outstanding provision for pupils with physical disabilities.
- There is a very good contribution to the pupils' all-round personal development.

### Areas for development

- Planning for the teaching of literacy, numeracy, ICT and PSHE could be improved.
- Better assessment and monitoring of teaching could make the best work more consistent.

101. Standards in Years 6 and 8 are above average. Boys and girls reach equally high standards in all activities and achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs, both learning and physical, achieve very well. Gifted and talented pupils also achieve very well because they are extended in lessons and in the extra-curricular programme. There has been significant improvement in many aspects of the department's work since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching of younger pupils, which has led to a rise in standards in Year 6, and in the extension of extra-curricular activities, which were very good and are now excellent. However, further improvement is needed in the use of assessment to identify areas for development and to establish a baseline for pupils joining the school. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

102. Pupils in Year 6 have above average gymnastic skills, and can perform sequences in pairs with good control. The higher attaining link balances fluidly and use good timing to ensure that the sequence is well co-ordinated and includes all the movements they have been asked to use. The boys tend to be more dynamic whilst the girls pay greater attention to the finesse of their moves. They use their evaluations of each other's work to gain new ideas, improve and refine, but have a limited subject specific vocabulary. Most of the pupils know how to warm up effectively before exercise, but have limited knowledge of why exercise is important for a healthy lifestyle.

103. Pupils in Year 8 have above average ball and team skills in games such as netball, basketball and football. They are quick to anticipate, and very quick to change between attack and defence. They are agile in their movements and use a variety of passes to suit changing situations within the game. A minority of boys are less inclined to use teamwork in football, and lose the ball to the opposition when a pass would have been more successful. They have good levels of fitness. Problem-solving skills in outdoor adventure activities are not so well developed, because pupils do not have enough time to plan and discuss their approach.

104. The quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and personal development is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection, although there is still some variance in Years 7 and 8. Aims and objectives are clearly explained and pupils are now given constructive feedback. In the best lessons pupils have the opportunity to plan, perform and evaluate, making a positive difference to the rate of learning. There is a consistently high expectation to the pupils' behaviour and work rate resulting in a challenging and caring working environment. The pupils' positive attitudes to the subject also have a significant influence on the rate of learning in and out of lessons. Pupils with physical disabilities are totally involved in the lesson where possible or given tasks are designed to meet their particular needs. For example, in a Year 6 gymnastics lesson a boy using a wheelchair created a refined sequence with other pupils that involved counter balances using a bench and ropes. There is a particularly good working liaison with the learning support teachers, although the department could have greater input to physical aspects of individual education plans. Assessment within lessons is mostly effective, and tasks are extended for the higher attaining pupils.
105. The areas of the subject that could be developed further are far outweighed by its strengths. There is an inconsistent approach between teachers to literacy skills; for example, in question and answer sessions, where pupils are sometimes, but not always, required to think and use technical vocabulary to improve their work. Teachers also do not use all opportunities to develop awareness of health during the warm-up or after strenuous exercise. Schemes of work do not include ways to develop numeracy, although there are some good examples in some lessons. ICT is in the early stages of planning.
106. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a strong commitment to creating a challenging physical environment, resulting in high standards. The extra-curricular programme is excellent. The department often organises clubs before and after school and at lunchtime, and pupils reach high levels of performance in activities such as cross-country, athletics, netball and football. Effective links with clubs in the town give the pupils a broader outlook on sport in the community and provide extended learning opportunities for the gifted and talented pupils. The highly skilled additional work teachers put into clubs, visits and other activities outside lessons is warmly appreciated by pupils, parents and grandparents.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education (known in the school as 'beliefs and values') is **good**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good, and at best very good.
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils lead to effective learning.
- Very good leadership and management have led to a strong commitment to improvement among all teachers.
- The subject contributes significantly to personal development and citizenship.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards could be improved further throughout the school.
- There is no systematic assessment of standards and progress.
- Gifted and talented pupils are not fully challenged.
- There is too little use of ICT.

107. Standards for the majority of pupils at the end of Years 6 and 8 are broadly average and represent satisfactory achievement; the subject is in a transitional stage, and standards are improving. There is no noticeable difference in the quality of girls' and boys' work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as do pupils from different ethnic backgrounds and those with English as an additional language. Very effective signing support for hearing-impaired pupils enables them to make good progress. Although gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress, they need to be identified in every class and challenged further. There were significant weaknesses in provision at the time of the last inspection. The subject has now been brought into the centre of the school's provision for personal development and computer, and overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

108. Pupils in Year 6 know the symbols of the major religions and understand their meanings. They can design and explain, orally, a symbol to convey peace, equality and shared wealth. Higher attaining pupils incorporate all three ideas, and write an explanation for their design. Pupils show initiative and interest in their designs and explanations. Year 8 pupils can use, with confidence, some metaphors to express their own and other people's ideas about human experience; for example, good and evil expressed as light and darkness. Standards are hampered by pupils' limited skills in explaining their ideas precisely in writing. On the other hand, and particularly in the most successful lessons, they learn a great deal about the moral and social values inherent in the subject, including trust, confidence and honesty.
109. The quality of teaching and learning has shown marked improvement from the last inspection, and is now good. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject, prepare lessons well to involve all pupils, and sustain a good pace of work. Discussions at the end of each lesson to summarise what has been learned are used well to reinforce learning. An active learning teaching style, introduced at the beginning of the term of the inspection, has had a very good impact on learning, attitudes and behaviour. Pupils with special educational needs learn very well because teachers know their needs and give good support. Attitudes to beliefs and values are generally positive, and behaviour is usually good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and pupils work co-operatively together. They use initiative and take responsibility. Occasionally, however, a minority of boys do not behave as they should, and this affects other pupils' learning.
110. Pupils know that each one of them is valued and, consequently, they in turn value their achievement in the subject. Teachers help pupils to develop speaking and listening skills, and most invest much care and effort in presenting work. However, the contribution of writing to the subject is underdeveloped, and marking does not give pupils enough guidance on how to improve. Homework is not used, there is no provision to assess standards and progress and teachers do not use ICT in lessons. These factors hold back the rate of improvement.
111. Leadership and management of the department are good, and have been boosted by the arrival of a new head of department at the beginning of the term of the inspection. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good, and legal requirements are met. This is also a significant improvement since the last inspection. The action plan for beliefs and values has identified appropriate priorities for development in the subject, including assessment and monitoring. Good accommodation creates an inviting, purposeful learning environment. The well-stocked library is a valuable, well-used resource. Beliefs and values make an invaluable contribution to pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lessons often include the understanding and skills needed to become responsible members of society. Given the shared commitment to raising standards, the positive attitudes of most pupils and the energetic leadership of the new head of department, the capacity for further improvement is very good.

## Citizenship

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

### Strengths

- By Year 8, pupils have a broad and mature understanding of citizenship.
- There is a very good selection of relevant books and teaching materials.
- The school council is well organised and keeps in good touch with all pupils.
- Provision is very well planned and organised.

### Areas for improvement

- No significant weaknesses, but assessment procedures are not yet fully in place.

112. Pupils in Year 8 have reached very good standards for their age in relation to all aspects of the National Curriculum provisions for citizenship. They have a strong sense of responsibility, both within the school and in the broader community. This is carefully built up from the time they join the school. All pupils have opportunities to help others, and to contribute to decision-making. They learn that rules exist to protect learning and the community, honesty and trust are

essential to a successful community, and individual rights and responsibilities are important. In Year 6; for example, pupils had agreed with their teacher that confidentiality within 'beliefs and values' lessons should be respected, and this enabled pupils to discuss sensitive issues in an atmosphere of confidence and support. Members of the school council regularly discuss issues with their class, and learn the difference between responsibility and less mature behaviour through practical experience. This ensures that all pupils have a direct link to the council and feel involved in its work. The school acts on practical suggestions from the school council, such as the installation of recycling bins.

113. The school makes excellent use of the opportunities for service to others provided by its hearing impaired unit. Several signing clubs, eagerly attended by pupils, enable them to communicate with pupils from the unit, and their friendly and informal support makes an important contribution to the school's provision for equal opportunities. Teachers show a good example by attending the clubs and learning to sign. Pupils are helped to understand their own and others' character when considering issues such as possible career routes and the origins of road rage. They help to select causes for fund-raising and organise events.
114. Pupils in Year 8 have well above average understanding of issues surrounding current world events and media, including the view of life typically portrayed in soap operas and the issues surrounding 'September 11<sup>th</sup>'.
115. The introduction of citizenship as a subject is being managed very well to build on the school's strengths in care, personal, social and health education and religious education. The co-ordinator, in consultation with the headteacher and colleagues, is building up a very good range of books and resources, and there is a good collection in the library. The school is part of an effective partnership of local middle schools working on the subject. Pupils in conversation with inspectors were modest about their achievements, and clear about the reason for them. 'We've just been well taught,' they said