

INSPECTION REPORT

ST LOUIS CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL

Bury St Edmunds

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124863

Headteacher: Mr M Cassidy

Reporting inspector: John Godwood
18242

Dates of inspection: 23 – 25 September 2002

Inspection number: 249252

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
School category:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	9 - 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Andrew's Street South Bury St Edmunds Suffolk
Postcode:	IP33 3PH
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs F Mahoney
Date of previous inspection:	June 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
18242	John Godwood	Registered inspector	Educational inclusion, including race equality	What sort of school is it? How high are standards: the school's results and pupils' achievements? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9756	Ken Parsons	Lay inspector		How high are standards: 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?
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	History	
			Geography	
31135	Rachel Hobson	Team inspector	English	
7428	Ray Jardine	Team inspector	Science	
8139	Barbara Johnstone	Team inspector	Music	
19169	Tim Lawes	Team inspector	Physical education	
			Special educational needs	
18967	Brenda Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
13054	Michael Pennington	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Design and technology	
			Information and communication technology	
10053	Janet Simms	Team inspector	Art and design	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St Louis Catholic Middle School is a voluntary-aided middle school. It is larger than average, with 551 pupils aged 9 to 13. There are more girls than boys, particularly in Years 7 and 8. The school is over-subscribed and pupils come from a wide area in and around Bury St Edmunds. Many pupils have long bus journeys to school. Five per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is below average. Most pupils come from white British backgrounds. Five per cent come from other white backgrounds and three per cent from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. Seven pupils have English as an additional language. Twelve per cent of pupils have special educational needs and eight pupils have statements, which is below average. Of 31 pupils with more significant special needs, 23 have learning difficulties, 4 have emotional and behavioural difficulties, 1 is visually impaired, 1 physically disabled and 2 are autistic. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St Louis is a good school with a strong Catholic ethos that is very successful in promoting pupils' personal development. Pupils' attitudes are excellent and they behave very well. They grow in confidence through being valued as individuals and having a wide range of educational opportunities. Standards are above average by the end of Year 6 and well above average by the end of Year 8. Pupils achieve well by the time they leave school, though there is potential for them to make greater progress in some subjects. Teachers know and care for pupils well and the quality of teaching is good, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Leadership and management are good, with very effective leadership in spiritual values and personal development, but improvements needed in the school's strategy for raising standards. The school is effective but as it receives above average funding it gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school leadership has established a very strong ethos, based on Catholic values, which leads pupils to respect each other and grow in self-confidence.
- Very good provision for personal development leads to excellent moral and social development.
- Pupils reach well above average standards in mathematics, science, history and geography.
- Teachers explain clearly and use questions skilfully to develop pupils' understanding and thinking skills.
- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities, including very good extra-curricular activities.
- There is a very good partnership with the wider community and with parents, who provide very good support for the school.

What could be improved

- Pupils could achieve more through careful identification of their prior attainment, setting them challenging targets and monitoring their progress.
- There is not enough teaching of information and communication technology (ICT), and the use of computers in subjects is poorly co-ordinated.
- Test and assessment results are not used well enough to monitor the school's standards and diagnose areas that need to be improved.
- Strategic planning needs a clearer focus on academic achievement within the development of the whole child.

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 June 1997 and, since then, its improvement has been satisfactory. The quality of teaching has improved, leading to higher standards at the end of Year 6. In particular, more pupils now reach higher levels in the national tests, which was one of the issues in the last inspection. On the other issues, the school has made satisfactory progress. There has been improvement in the assessment of pupils' work and in the monitoring that subject leaders do of classroom work, though both require greater whole-school co-ordination. There is a better balance in the time allocated to subjects, though some subjects continue to be short of time. Statutory requirements are now met in recording attendance, but pupils' reports still do not adequately report progress in ICT.

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				Key
	All schools			Similar schools	
	2000	2001	2002	2002	
English	A	B	B	C	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	B	B	C	D	
Science	B	B	A	C	

Results in the 2002 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 were above average and in line with similar schools. Standards improved significantly between 1997 and 2000, but since then there has been no overall improvement. English results have declined slightly since 2000, and while standards in mathematics have remained fairly steady, there was a small decline in 2002. Results in science, however, improved considerably in 2002 and were better than those of other subjects.

The school exceeded its targets for the Year 6 tests in 2001. The targets for 2002 were significantly higher. They were not met in English or mathematics, but were exceeded in science. The targets set for 2003 are realistic but not especially challenging.

For current pupils, standards are above average by the end of Year 6 and well above average by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 8. Pupils' achievements in relation to their attainment on entry to the school are satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. Standards at the end of Year 8 are higher in science and mathematics than in English. Pupils' achievements in ICT are limited by inadequate provision.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils are proud to be part of the school and are keen to uphold its values.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Behaviour in the classroom and around the school is always orderly. Pupils are self-disciplined, polite and considerate.

Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils' own views are valued and therefore they respect those of others. Relationships are based on co-operation and friendship.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils want to come to school.

Pupils' attitudes have a very positive effect on their learning and conduct. They are enthusiastic about activities and willing to work hard. Pupils have absorbed the school's ethos of fairness and care for one another. Their behaviour allows teachers to teach effectively and other pupils to learn and achieve well. Relationships between pupils and staff are characterised by mutual respect. Pupils work collaboratively and help each other. They show maturity and responsibility.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science and in most other subjects. It is very good in art and music. All lessons seen were satisfactory or better and seven out of every ten were good or better. ICT skills are taught satisfactorily, but not enough use is made of ICT in learning other subjects. The quality of teaching is generally better in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6.

Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They give clear explanations and use questions effectively to develop pupils' skills in thinking and discussing. In a minority of lessons, pupils do too much listening and are not sufficiently involved. There are good arrangements for teaching literacy within all subjects, especially the learning of technical vocabulary. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory, but needs more co-ordination across the subjects.

The school is successful in meeting the needs of all pupils, through its ethos of caring for individuals and the arrangements for grouping pupils by ability in some subjects. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as do gifted and talented pupils. Pupils are keen learners and co-operate very well. They work together productively and gain from discussion and feedback.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. It is broad and well supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The time allocation is below the recommended minimum and this affects standards in ICT and French.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Their needs are clearly identified and they receive good support from teachers and pupils, in addition to very good teaching in small groups. They are fully involved in all aspects of school life.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Their needs are carefully assessed and they are supported in class. They also receive good support from other pupils.

Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision is excellent for moral and social development and very good for spiritual development. Cultural development is satisfactory. There are many cultural opportunities, but the study of non-western cultures is at an early stage of development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Teachers know pupils well and successfully meet their individual needs. There are good procedures to manage behaviour.

The curriculum is enriched by French in Year 6, and drama and study skills in all years. However, statutory requirements are not met in ICT, where some elements are either weak or not covered. There are good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment, except in ICT. However, there is no systematic policy for using assessments to set pupils targets and monitor their progress, or to guide improvements in what the school provides.

The school places a strong emphasis on spiritual, moral and social issues within its overall Catholic ethos and pupils respond positively to this. Pupils are set targets for effort and attitude and these are monitored regularly. There is a very successful partnership with parents, who in turn provide very good support.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher gives a very strong lead in creating an ethos that supports the school's spiritual values and pupils' personal development. He receives good support from the staff, though there are gaps in the arrangements for monitoring subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors provide good spiritual and moral support, as well as practical support in managing finance, personnel and premises. They do not question the school enough over standards or the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Test results are analysed and classroom work is monitored, but these are not well co-ordinated into a strategy to improve standards.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Finances are carefully planned to meet priorities and the school has made significant improvements to its facilities.

The qualifications and experience of the staff are well matched to the subjects they teach. Learning resources and the accommodation are satisfactory, because the school has been creative in extending and making best use of its restricted premises.

Leadership and management have been successful in creating a school community in which all feel valued, relationships are excellent and pupils enjoy learning. The school's aim is to develop the whole child, but school planning is not clear enough about its aims for academic achievement and how it intends to achieve these. The school makes satisfactory use of best value principles.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The school is well led and managed.• The school has high expectations.• Parents find the school approachable.• Children become mature and responsible.• There is a good range of activities.• Behaviour is very good.• Teaching is good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework varies and is sometimes too much.• Some parents have too little information about how their child is getting on.• A few are dissatisfied with the school's links with parents.

Parents are very supportive of the school and the areas for improvement were identified only by a small minority. The inspection agreed with parents' positive views. In relation to parents' concerns, the inspection found that homework is satisfactory and supports learning, but pupils are sometimes overloaded. Parents receive adequate information about progress through reports and parents evenings, and teachers are very accessible, but annual reports are not clear enough about the progress pupils have made in subjects and how to improve.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is above average overall. The standards reached by the end of Year 6, both in National Curriculum tests and in work seen, are also above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. By the time pupils leave at the end of Year 8, standards are well above average and their achievement is good.
2. Standards have risen since the last inspection. Results in Year 6 National Curriculum tests improved each year from 1997 to 2000. Following the last inspection, the school introduced specialist teachers of literacy and numeracy into Years 5 and 6 and focused on raising the achievement of higher-attaining pupils. This has been successful and in the 2001 tests higher-attaining pupils achieved better results than similar pupils nationally. Since 2000, Year 6 test results have remained steady overall. English results have declined slightly and while mathematics results have been fairly steady, they declined slightly in 2002 and did not keep pace with the national improvement. Science results, however, improved considerably in 2002 and were higher than those of English or mathematics. The improvements in science results are due to good teaching and leadership of the subject.
3. By the end of Year 8, standards in mathematics and science are well above average. Standards in English are less high because, while the teaching is generally good, the techniques of the National Literacy Strategy are not used sufficiently to engage pupils in active learning.
4. Pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 8 in design and technology and French. In history and geography, standards are above average at the end of Year 6 and well above average by the end of Year 8. In art, music and physical education, pupils' attainment when they first join the school is average. Pupils achieve well in these subjects because of consistently good teaching and, by the end of Year 8, they reach above average standards.
5. The school's strong ethos, which values all pupils as individuals and provides very good support for their personal development, is a positive factor in pupils' achievement. The school has very good support from parents and the great majority of pupils are conscientious and co-operative learners.
6. Pupils' achievement is good in most subjects. This is due to good teaching and pupils' very positive attitudes. Achievement is at least satisfactory in all subjects, but in French, English and ICT it is less strong than in other subjects. In French, this is because, although the teaching is good, there is not enough time for pupils to practise speaking and listening sufficiently. A shortage of teaching time also affects standards in ICT.
7. In all year groups, standards in ICT are lower than they should be because insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of ICT skills, there are unsatisfactory arrangements for assessing pupils' progress and the use of ICT in learning other subjects is not well co-ordinated. Many pupils compensate for these shortcomings through their experience of using ICT at home.
8. Pupils' achievement in Years 5 and 6 is not as good as in Years 7 and 8. In mathematics, history and geography, for example, achievement is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. This is partly because teaching in Year 5 is not sufficiently well informed by a detailed knowledge of pupils' attainment on entry to the school. As a result, the pace of learning in Year 5 is slower than it might be and some pupils repeat what they have already learned.
9. Throughout all years, pupils would make faster progress if national assessment data were used more effectively to set pupils targets in relation to what they are capable of achieving and their progress was carefully monitored. The use of assessments to guide teaching is developing in the school and there is some good practice in mathematics, but in general subject leaders need more training in this.

10. There is a commitment within school planning to raise standards. Current focuses for development include improvements in teaching skills and in monitoring pupils' effort and attainment. Subject teams evaluate their own work in order to improve practice. However, school planning is not sufficiently well informed by a careful analysis of standards or guided by a set of clear, consistent targets. As a result, the school's targets for the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2003 are relatively unchallenging. With good teaching and the school's very positive ethos, pupils are capable of achieving more.
11. In general, the standards reached by boys and girls are very similar. Girls do better in National Curriculum English tests, by a similar margin to that found nationally, but in reading tests, boys and girls do equally well. In mathematics, boys do better than girls, whereas nationally they do equally well. In science, there is no difference between boys' and girls' performance.
12. The school's inclusive attitude to all pupils benefits those who have special educational needs. They are fully involved in all aspects of the school and are effectively supported by adults and other pupils alike. They grow in confidence because they feel valued and as a result they make good progress throughout the school. They make significant progress in their literacy skills, including their spelling, organisation of writing and ability to write for different audiences.
13. Pupils who are gifted and talented make good progress through the extra challenges that arise because the school groups pupils by ability in some subjects and through a wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in music and mathematics. In mathematics lessons, however, some individual higher-attaining pupils need to be given more challenge.
14. From the evidence of the inspection, pupils from ethnic minorities progress as well as other pupils. The school does not specifically monitor the standards reached by pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, though it has plans to do so within its race equality policy. There are very few pupils whose first language is not English, but they are well supported and make good progress.
15. Pupils' literacy skills are above average. By the end of Year 6, most pupils write using punctuation to mark sentences and spell basic words correctly. Higher-attaining pupils write interesting, quite well developed accounts and explore their ideas in some depth. Progress in writing continues, so that by the end of Year 8 most can write reasonably sustained pieces using largely accurate spelling, paragraphing, punctuation and grammar and showing an awareness of the reader. By the end of Year 6 most pupils read a range of straightforward texts with enjoyment, both fiction and non-fiction. Higher-attaining pupils read fluently and with confidence. By the end of Year 8 most pupils read a range of texts with understanding, identifying key features and themes. The great majority can express their views confidently, using appropriate vocabulary, and by the end of Year 8 many can put across their views convincingly in discussion. Listening skills are good throughout the school.
16. Number skills are taught well and most pupils effectively devise their own methods of doing mental calculations. The increased use of mental, oral and practical activities have helped to improve standards in mathematics. Standards in number and algebra are higher than other aspects of mathematics, such as data handling or the investigation of extended mathematical problems. Pupils also use their number skills in science, design and technology and geography. As yet, however, there is no systematic programme to promote numeracy skills in subjects other than mathematics.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. The school has maintained and built on the exceptionally high standards seen at the time of the last inspection and pupils' attitudes and behaviour remain a major strength of the school.
18. Pupils' attitudes are excellent. They are proud to be part of the St. Louis community and they embrace the experiences the school provides. They show enthusiasm for what the school stands for and are keen to uphold its values. Pupils of all year groups and attainment levels enjoy their

lessons. They come to class prepared to work hard. They listen to instructions with care and concentrate well. They are interested in the subject matter and, because they are taught well, they are enthusiastic about the prospect of gaining new knowledge and skills. They also show commitment to extra-curricular activities. They enthuse about school visits, especially the residential trip to Cromer. They demonstrate considerable maturity and confidence when expressing their thoughts and feelings, assisted by their well-developed speaking skills. In all age groups, their attitudes have a very positive effect on their learning, attainment and conduct.

19. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. This is consistent with the views of parents and members of the local community. The pupils are delightful young people whom it is a pleasure to meet. They display a justified self-confidence. They talk naturally to adults and represent their school exceptionally well. Pupils clearly understand the school's expectations regarding behaviour and meet them very well. For example, at a whole school assembly, they sat without any misbehaviour whatsoever despite the length of time it occupied and the somewhat crowded conditions. Pupils behave well because they have accepted and absorbed the school's ethos of fairness and care for one another. This results in their being self-disciplined and exceptionally polite and considerate. They observe common courtesies such as holding open doors for those following. Very few pupils have been excluded from school – there were two temporary exclusions in the past year. Behaviour is always orderly. For example, in a Year 8 history lesson that involved pupils moving around the room to view evidence, this was achieved sensibly and without fuss. Pupils' behaviour allows teachers to teach effectively and pupils to learn without disruption. At breaktimes, the playgrounds are unthreatening environments. Incidents of bullying, sexism or racism are uncommon. There is some unacceptable behaviour on occasion on the buses, which the school makes every effort to resolve.
20. Behaviour is consistently very good among all groups of pupils. There is a little more restlessness and noise in some classes of younger pupils. As pupils become used to the ethos of the school their attitudes and behaviour quickly become more mature and responsible. Pupils with special educational needs respond as well as other pupils. They are keen to learn and willing to overcome difficulties by trying.
21. Relationships are excellent. Those between pupils and staff are characterised by mutual respect, which is emphasised in the school's mission statement and which is evident in lessons and pastoral care. Relations between pupils are based on co-operation and friendship. In lessons, pupils work together without close supervision, share resources and take turns to use equipment. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, they played a mathematical game with enthusiasm and helped each other when they got stuck, resulting in productive discussions about the nature of equivalence. In a special needs literacy lesson, pupils were supportive of each other and maintained good levels of concentration, with productive competition injecting urgency into the lesson. They are able to work independently on individual and group tasks. They socialise well out of class and play together harmoniously in the playground. There is genuine applause when they hear of others' successes in assembly. They demonstrate care for each other in practical ways, such as the girl who helped her classmate to the sickbay or the child who took charge of a dropped tie and tried to find the owner.
22. Pupils' personal development is excellent. The school's strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development has had considerable impact. The school has a satisfactory programme of personal, social and health education that helps to prepare pupils for life outside school and encourages them to express and reflect on their feelings. In the various opportunities for prayer during the school day, all pupils take part with great respect. Pupils feel that their own views are valued and as a result have respect for those of others. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning, for example by working collaboratively in lessons and by helping to set their own targets for improvement. In class, duties and jobs are given to pupils on a regular basis and they respond to their tasks sensibly. They also respond well to the opportunities to participate in decision-making through the school council and feel that it ensures that their collective voice is heard. They show maturity and responsibility, particularly through the Year 8 monitor system, which enables those involved to make a real contribution to the smooth running of the school and to help younger pupils.

23. Pupils want to come to school and as a result their attendance is very good, which has a positive effect on their progress. Attendance is well above the national average. This is particularly creditable given the long journeys that some pupils make to come to school. Most pupils arrive punctually in the morning, unless there is a problem with buses. Unauthorised absence, at 0.1 per cent for the latest year, is well below the national average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Teaching is good throughout the school. All the teaching seen was at least satisfactory and seven out of every ten lessons were good or better. One lesson in three was very good or, very occasionally, excellent, with the very good lessons occurring more frequently in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6.
25. Teaching is good in all year groups in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, French and physical education. In Years 7 and 8 it is very good in music and art. In history and geography, teaching is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. It is satisfactory in the ICT skills lessons.
26. The quality of teaching is higher overall in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6, and results in better achievement in Years 7 and 8. One reason for this is that teachers do not make enough use of assessment information from primary schools on what pupils already know and can do. As a result, some work in the early years is not well matched to pupils' abilities. A second reason is that in a minority of lessons in Years 5 and 6 there is a lack of structure and too little is demanded of pupils.
27. Teachers in almost all lessons have a good knowledge of their subjects and use this to interest and inspire pupils. As a result, French and geography lessons, for example, are conducted at a good pace. Lessons are carefully planned and usually have clear objectives. In physical education, for example, teachers know what they want pupils to learn and what activities they need to include in order to achieve this. Art lessons contain a well-paced variety of activities. Science lessons are also well planned, except that few of them contain opportunities for pupils to summarise and consolidate what they have learned.
28. A particular strength, in almost all subjects, is that teachers usually give clear, interesting explanations and then develop pupils' thinking ability through good use of questions. This helps to develop their understanding. In English, for example, pupils think about quite abstract concepts of grammar and use these to improve their writing. Mathematics teachers encourage pupils to devise their own methods to do calculations mentally. In physical education, pupils have regular opportunities to evaluate their own and others' performance. Pupils in French analyse their own use of language to see links and patterns.
29. In a minority of weaker lessons, pupils are not stimulated because they spend too much time listening to the teacher and following directions and have too little chance to use their initiative. This occurs on occasion in English and science.
30. Many lessons encourage the development of pupils' skills. Scientific skills are developed well and pupils learn to predict and investigate, though this does not lead on sufficiently to higher level enquiry skills in Years 7 and 8. The humanities subjects develop strongly pupils' skills as geographers and historians. In music, pupils make very good progress in performing and composing. In French, however, a lack of teaching time means that speaking and listening skills are not developed well enough. Pupils' investigation skills are not developed sufficiently in mathematics.
31. Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour support their learning well. They co-operate very well with their teachers and work together very well. They discuss sensibly with each other and in English, as in other subjects, they listen well and speak confidently. The good teaching and the opportunities pupils have to work together supports their very good personal development.

32. Teachers manage pupils very well and establish very good relationships that encourage good learning and develop pupils' confidence. Just occasionally, in humanities in Years 5 and 6 for example, too much noise is tolerated when pupils are working in groups and not enough is demanded of pupils. In most lessons, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. Work is well matched to pupils' abilities and appropriately challenging. ICT is an exception to this, where the tasks set are not open-ended enough to challenge pupils. Occasionally in mathematics the higher-attaining pupils are not challenged sufficiently.
33. Pupils' literacy is supported well in most subjects. Within English, there are some aspects of the National Literacy Strategy that are being used effectively, although more could be done to break lessons down into three or four parts and to use short, lively activities to enliven lessons more and engage pupils. Literacy is also reinforced in science, history, geography, music and technology. In French, however, pupils only practise a narrow range of writing, without enough sense of the audience they are writing for.
34. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well by mathematics teachers. The learning objectives from the Strategy are incorporated in lesson plans, in assessment of pupils' attainment and in setting targets for individual pupils. The three-part lesson structure and increased use of mental, oral and practical activities have helped to improve standards in mathematics. Number skills are taught well. Numeracy is supported well in geography and design and technology, but is not promoted systematically in science or other subjects.
35. ICT is not used sufficiently to aid pupils' learning in most subjects. In music, it is used well to aid composing and its use is developing in English. There are sound plans in mathematics, but a lack of ready access to computers limits what happens in practice. In science, French, history, geography and art, not enough use is made of ICT.
36. There is some good practice in marking and assessment, but the standard is not consistent and this is an area for further development. In English and science, marking is thorough and pupils are given helpful comments on how to improve their work. In most other subjects, however, the quality of marking varies and some is not sufficiently detailed or helpful. Pupils' attainment is assessed regularly in mathematics, science, French, history and geography. Only in mathematics, however, is this information used to set pupils targets and to monitor their progress towards these. Assessment needs further development in design and technology and is unsatisfactory in ICT.
37. Homework is generally set appropriately, though it is not always well spread out and pupils sometimes find they have too much to do. In art and history, pupils are given the opportunity to do research and in science they are generally set interesting tasks. Homework is set regularly in mathematics, but is not always well matched to pupils' abilities.
38. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs, especially when in small groups, is very good. The specialist teachers have very good expertise and subject knowledge. The programmes to support pupils are carefully considered and implemented and have a significant impact on the progress that pupils make. Teachers have high expectations and give pupils good feedback. As a result, pupils take pride in what they do. Teaching assistants also provide effective support to pupils in lessons and in small groups away from the classroom. In subject lessons, teachers support pupils with special needs well and because they are fully accepted and supported by other pupils, their confidence is enhanced.

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

39. The curriculum is broad. The National Curriculum is augmented by lessons in French in Year 6, and drama and study skills in all year groups, and is very well supported by a wide range of popular extra-curricular activities. Many pupils enter national mathematics challenges and are successful. The grouping of pupils by ability in some subjects makes an important contribution to pupils' good achievement in Years 7 and 8. The curriculum overall, however, is not better than satisfactory because the amount of time available for teaching is below the recommended minimum in each year group. This limits the depth of study of some topics and affects standards in French and ICT.
40. A substantial number of pupils travel to school by bus and the start and end of the school day are fixed by the timings of the buses. Since the last inspection the school has improved timetabling arrangements in order to give a better balance between subjects within the time available. However, there is still not enough time for teaching some subjects. Achievement in French is restricted by a lack of time to practise speaking and listening. Standards in ICT are affected because significant elements of the curriculum are either weak or not covered. In some other subjects, a shortage of time limits the depth in which some topics are covered. This is the case in design and technology and in music in Years 5 and 6. In addition, the time spent in class during assembly at the end of the day is sometimes not used efficiently. The school is aware of what needs to be done and intends to conduct a major curriculum audit this year.
41. The provision for ICT does not meet statutory requirements in any year. There is not enough time in the ICT skills lesson to cover the full National Curriculum and the use of ICT in learning subjects has not been developed to a sufficient level. The first stage of teacher training has now been completed and the number of computers has been improved but the school has still to plan and co-ordinate the use of ICT in each subject.
42. The school is successful in its aim to include all pupils and provide equal opportunities. This aim is founded on the school's fundamental belief that all are of equal value in the sight of God. The pupils actively support this aim in the practical way that they establish good relationships and care for each other. This benefits pupils with special educational needs, whose abilities are celebrated. The school has put much effort into providing access for pupils with physical disabilities and there are plans to improve this further. There are arrangements for pupils from families of limited means to take part in extra-curricular activities without being charged. The school has recently agreed a race equality policy, though it has yet to implement its plans to monitor the progress of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and to ensure that all subjects help to prepare pupils for a multi-ethnic society.
43. There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs. They receive good support in class from teachers and classroom assistants, as well as a programme of small group teaching. Each pupil has an individual education plan and these provide very good guidance as to what pupils need to do in order to make progress. Pupils' targets are well defined and enable their progress to be clearly measured. Physically disabled pupils are fully supported and included in all lessons.
44. There are good procedures in place to develop pupils' literacy skills. Teachers consistently reinforce spelling and grammar and stress the importance of using technical terms correctly. Literacy is supported well in the teaching of all subjects. Teaching plans have been revised to incorporate the National Literacy Strategy and teachers have received appropriate training. The development of writing is being given special priority and is being encouraged throughout the school.
45. The National Numeracy Strategy is well embedded in the work of the mathematics department but numeracy in other subjects has not yet been developed sufficiently. A draft policy has been produced, but this needs extension to define the skills to be taught by all teachers and the

methods to be used. Staff have undergone only a half-day training, with minimal impact in most subjects apart from geography. Further training is planned for this year, and should be a priority.

46. Extra-curricular activities are strong and support the formal curriculum very well. A large proportion of pupils are involved regularly. There is a wide variety of clubs which change each term, the opportunity to experience outdoor pursuits such as caving, sailing, skiing and climbing on residential visits, a school council, a public speaking club and a literary society, in addition to a full range of sporting and musical activities.
47. The school places great emphasis on spiritual, moral and social development. The headteacher sets a clear example for the whole community and all policies are based on Catholic values. The pupils' positive response is a key factor in their excellent attitudes and very good behaviour. Parents view pupils' personal development very highly and recognise that the school is effective in helping their children become mature and responsible. The school has successfully built on the very high standards seen at the last inspection.
48. There is very good provision for pupils' spiritual development that permeates the life of the school. Pupils are given opportunities to develop their religious consciousness and the way it relates to their lives. Religious observance, including the celebration of Mass, is an important part of what the school provides. Acts of collective worship are held daily and include religious and moral themes as well as prayer and reflection. For example, an assembly brought the whole school community together to reflect and worship on a theme of not judging solely on appearances. The saying of prayers is integral to the life of the school, for example, in class at the end of the afternoon session or at the start of a meeting of the school council. Such occasions provide short periods of reflection amidst the bustle of school life. Staff are adept at taking opportunities in lessons to address spiritual themes, when pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own achievements and those of others. Most classrooms have religious pictures and crosses as a focus for such thoughts.
49. The school makes excellent provision for moral development, based on clear values of respect and care for each individual. Teachers provide pupils with very good examples of hard work and consideration for others, often taking great pains to help pupils when they need support with their work. The school has clear expectations and systems for promoting good behaviour. Pupils understand right from wrong, and are aware of the consequences of their actions. Assemblies make a positive contribution to pupils' moral awareness. Pupils are given opportunities to explore moral issues in personal, social and health education and in religious education. They care for others through fund raising for a range of charities. Moral themes are also interwoven into the teaching of subjects. For example, fair play is emphasised in physical education, whilst history and English provide contexts for the discussion of moral issues.
50. There is excellent provision for social development, which is reflected in harmonious relationships among pupils, and between them and their teachers. Pupils form strong relationships in lessons, and have many opportunities to develop their social skills as they work together in pairs or small groups. Teachers are aware of pupils' social development as well as their academic achievements. There are opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in lessons, and they carry out tasks such as tidying away sensibly and willingly. The school council provides a useful forum for pupils of all ages to explore their own and others' views, whilst the extensive programme of appointing monitors from Year 8 is an excellent way of enabling older pupils to take responsibility. Pupils are given opportunities to support each other; for example, when prospective pupils in Year 4 visit the school, it is Year 7 pupils who show them round and answer their questions. School visits also develop pupils' social skills, and these are much appreciated by pupils themselves.
51. The school's cultural provision is satisfactory. Pupils have many cultural opportunities, though these are drawn largely from pupils' own culture and there are fewer opportunities to learn about other cultures. In English, for example, pupils study such powerful works as 'The Tyger' (William Blake), 'Dulce et decorum est' (Wilfred Owen) and parts of 'The Canterbury Tales'. Shakespeare is well represented in Years 7 and 8. Work in history includes study of ancient Egypt, whilst geography includes life in Brazil and Baffin Island. Work in French, including the weekly club

'Chez Nous', includes aspects of French culture. Provision for music is strong, with concerts, residential visits, a composer in residence and wide participation in instrumental tuition. In art, pupils study famous painters and local artists. Pupils' experiences are enhanced by visits, such as the pilgrimage to Walsingham. The study of other cultures is satisfactory but, as was noted in the last inspection report, there is scope to develop this further. Each subject leader has been tasked with finding ways to bring in aspects of other cultures into the curriculum, but this work has yet to be completed. There are some good individual examples, such as work on Inuit myths in geography and a project on Jewish culture within religious education. Pupils study non-western traditions in music and look at the lives of Bolivian street children as part of charitable work.

52. The school's provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. The curriculum plans cover a wide range of relevant topics, but the experiences that pupils receive depend on individual teachers and the effort they put into each lesson. Some PSHE lessons are taught less well than other subjects because teachers are not as well prepared – in some cases, the purpose of the lesson is unclear and subject knowledge is only just adequate. As a result, some pupils report finding the subject boring. More detailed planning of the subject would result in greater consistency in the delivery of lessons. Included within the PSHE curriculum are several strands to encourage pupils to think about their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the world of work and their future employment. This provides an appropriate basis for the more detailed work they will encounter when they move to the next phase of their education.
53. Citizenship education is at an early stage of development. It is planned as an element of the PSHE programme throughout the school, but currently is taught in Years 7 and 8. Relevant topics have also been identified in history, geography and religious education, as well as aspects of school daily life that support pupils' understanding of citizenship. Teaching is guided satisfactorily by a policy statement, teaching plans and worksheets, but staff have not received specific training. Assessment of progress will be based on a record of work kept by pupils. Monitoring of provision is planned but is not yet established.
54. The wider community makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Some physical education lessons take place in the local upper school and sports centre, which provide high quality facilities, even though time is lost in travelling. Work with visiting artists and authors is promoted through links with a local art gallery and a bookshop. The locality is used extensively in the humanities for theme days on, for example, the Tudors or the Egyptians, and for environmental studies in science. Concerts are held in the town centre, other schools and a local hospice.
55. Links with partner schools within the local Catholic and local education authority 'pyramids' are very good. There are useful curriculum meetings with teachers from the primary schools and good arrangements to ensure that there is continuity in pupils' learning when they move on to the upper school. There are very good pupil records to keep teachers informed when pupils transfer between schools, though some primary schools do not provide all the relevant data.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

56. The headteacher and all members of staff make good provision for pupils' care and welfare. The school has good child protection procedures and liaises as necessary with social services departments. The deputy headteacher responsible is appropriately trained and all staff have been briefed on their responsibilities. Appropriate records are kept. The governors and headteacher ensure that health and safety procedures are followed. Risk assessments are completed prior to school trips. Routine health and safety procedures and testing are in place. No unsafe practice was seen in lessons during the inspection. Appropriate safeguards are in place when pupils access the Internet.
57. The school provides a caring and supportive environment. Teachers know their pupils well and make considerable efforts to address their welfare, which is appreciated by pupils and parents. Pupils feel safe and valued and are thus able to concentrate on their learning. The school encourages pupils to take responsibility for themselves and their learning, for example in maintaining their homework diaries. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is very good. It

is based around target setting, enabling teachers to discuss pupils' personal and social progress with them and to provide advice in a positive context. When pupils need support, the school tries hard to provide it. At one extreme is the Rainbow Club to support pupils who have experienced bereavement or other trauma, whilst more informally teachers are unstinting with their time advising and helping pupils. One teacher, for example, gave up part of her lunchbreak to help a pupil who had fallen out with her group of friends. The bus rides to and from school loom quite large in pupils' lives; they occupy considerable amounts of time, involve pupils from other schools and can be quite stressful. St Louis works well beyond its legal responsibilities in this area, with a designated member of staff putting in considerable effort to try to resolve problems in this difficult area and to help pupils.

58. The school has satisfactory procedures to monitor attendance and encourage pupils to come to school regularly. There are systems in place to identify problems with attendance as they emerge, although the strong support for the school from parents and pupils means that these are not often needed. The educational welfare officer visits the school regularly and follows up any problem cases.
59. Pupils' behaviour is very good. The key factors in maintaining this are the school's clear values and emphasis on mutual respect. Staff are consistent in upholding the school's expectations. The result is that most pupils understand and conform to the standards required. This understanding is supported by good procedures to monitor and promote behaviour. There is a code of behaviour, which is augmented by individual year teams as necessary. For instance, an inter-class points system in Year 6 with a prize for the best-behaved class is proving very motivational. Staff have clear guidance on rewards and sanctions. The procedures to prevent bullying are good, with pupils aware of how to prevent bullying and what to do should there be an incident.
60. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment are good, though not enough use is made of the results to identify whether pupils are achieving as much as they can. In most subjects, pupils are assessed regularly and consistently and the results used to judge the standard they have reached in the National Curriculum. Assessment procedures are very good in history and geography and are good in most other subjects, though they are unsatisfactory in ICT. Subject assessments are collated in a central school database at regular intervals.
61. Procedures for the identification, assessment and review of pupils with special educational needs are systematic, thorough and well organised. Each pupil has an individual education plan, with targets that are clear and specific to the needs of that pupil. These provide a good guide to their teaching programme. Pupils' progress is recorded carefully and monitored rigorously in relation to their targets.
62. The use of assessment to guide improvements in pupils' performance is developing but there is not yet a coherent and systematic policy across the school. Subject teams, particularly for English, mathematics and science, are expected to set targets for individual pupils' attainment, based on their prior attainment at their primary schools and on the results of National Curriculum tests. However, the practice is not yet consistent between subjects. It is at an early stage in science, for example, but has developed much further in mathematics, where pupils are also given short-term learning goals that help teachers and pupils to review their progress regularly. In those subjects where targets for pupils' attainment have not been set, there is no clear benchmark against which their progress can be judged. The school does not retain central records of pupils' targets alongside assessments of their attainment. As a result, the school is not making the most effective use of assessment information and there is no well-defined process of identifying underachievement of individual pupils or groups of pupils. The school is aware of this and is working to improve its practice and to link reviews of pupils' academic achievements more closely to their interim and annual reports.
63. The school is also developing subject leaders' skills in analysing patterns in pupils' attainment as a guide to establishing priorities for development. For example, the school has highlighted the need to improve pupils' writing skills and boys' achievements in English. However, most subject leaders do not make enough use of this kind of analysis to guide teaching or to shape

developments in their subjects. This is partly because systems for monitoring linked to targets for achievement are still developing and partly because many subject leaders require further training in the use of national data as a benchmark against which to measure progress.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

64. The school's mission statement emphasises that the school can only meet its Christian objectives with the support of parents and it is very successful in developing a strong relationship with them. This is particularly creditable given that many parents live a long way from the school. Parents have very positive opinions about the school. In particular, parents believe the leadership of the headteacher to be the crucial factor in the creation of a successful school based firmly on Catholic values. They also praise the senior management team and the staff in general. They believe that the teaching is good and that their children work hard and make good progress. They are very pleased with the standards of behaviour and think the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. The vast majority of parents would feel comfortable approaching the school with a question or a problem. Inspection findings endorse the parents' positive views of the school. A minority of parents expressed reservations about homework, where the major issue is a perceived inconsistency of the amount set in Years 5 and 6 compared with Years 7 and 8. Parents also saw bunching, with pupils apparently having to do a lot on certain nights. Inspection findings support this view, with different teachers sometimes setting different amounts, and a need for more overall control of the amounts of homework set.
65. The overall quality of information for parents is good. The prospectus is an attractive document that clearly communicates the school's values and fulfils virtually all statutory requirements. The annual governors' report contains useful information, but has too little on the special educational needs policy and arrangements for disabled pupils. Parents receive quite a lot of information on their child's progress but the written reports could be improved. They receive two interim reports a year, which include effort in each subject and areas for improvement. This helps pupils to set targets for effort and organisation, but tells parents nothing about attainment or progress. The full annual report also focuses mainly on effort and there is too much inconsistency in the information included about different subjects. In some subjects a National Curriculum level is included, but without any guidance on what it means. The school is currently reviewing the reports. This provides an opportunity to make them more personal to the child and to include detail on what the individual has learnt, their particular strengths and areas for improvement and how they are performing in relation to national standards and their own potential. Parents' evenings are held termly, and most parents attend. The school provides regular detailed newsletters, which give a good picture of the life of the school. A particular strength is the way the school shares its expectations and plans with parents.
66. Parents make a very good contribution to the school and to their children's learning. This is encouraged by the efforts the school makes to involve them. Most parents provide support for their children's homework. Attendance at school concerts is high and many parents enable sporting events to take place by providing transport. A few parents help in school, for example, running the bookshop, whilst others help with school trips. Parents support school policies and most have signed the home-school agreement, which on occasion has provided a useful basis for discussions when pupils are experiencing problems with behaviour. Most parents have made a conscious decision and commitment to send their child to the school and this is reflected in the support they provide. The Parents and Teachers Association is active in organising social and fundraising events, whilst there is a good turnout for occasional do-it-yourself working parties in the school. The school has organised a parent support group covering six sessions that help parents develop strategies for relating with and supporting their children.
67. The school fulfils the recommendations of the special educational needs Code of Practice. Every effort is made to include the parents of children who have special educational needs in the assessment and review of their progress. Parents are invited to attend the regular reviews of pupils' individual educational plans and they contribute towards Statements of Special Educational Needs where appropriate.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

68. The headteacher provides very strong leadership in promoting the school's mission of developing the whole child in an environment that is guided by Christian principles. He leads by example and knows pupils and parents well. Pupils are encouraged by his personal interest and by the commendation letters he sends to their parents in recognition of their achievements.
69. In establishing the school's very strong ethos, the headteacher is well supported by the senior management team and other staff. The school's aims are reflected in all its work and, as a result, pupils learn to respect and care for others and in turn they feel valued by the care and respect they receive. The outcomes are the commendable behaviour and growth in personal confidence that are significant characteristics of the school.
70. The equal value of all pupils is one of the school's basic Christian principles. This provides a very strong foundation for ensuring equal opportunities and ensuring that all pupils are included. It has manifested recently in much practical work to make the school accessible to disabled pupils. Teachers and pupils recognise that everyone has strengths and the school explicitly aims to develop the whole child. As result of this pupils grow in confidence because their individual abilities are fostered.
71. While the school is concerned to maintain high academic standards and that pupils should achieve well, the school's strategic planning does not have a clear focus on academic achievement within the development of the whole child. The various statements of the school's aims, for example, are not consistent in the stress they put on academic achievement. There is an adequate development plan that identifies the school's priorities, but these are not well grounded in challenging but realistic targets for pupils' performance.
72. The governing body provides good support for the school. They are very supportive of the spiritual aims of the school. Many governors have close links with the school, and provide guidance and oversight of practical matters such as finance, personnel and the development of the premises. In addition one governor is linked with each subject, and using these links governors become familiar with the school and show that they value teachers' work, through visiting lessons and helping with extra-curricular activities. Governors take part in training and fulfil almost all their statutory duties.
73. In recent years, governors' time has been dominated by the problems caused by the school's popularity and over-subscription. They have supported the school well in planning to extend the premises to cater for additional pupils and have reviewed their admissions policy in an effort to reach a satisfactory balance between pupil numbers, income and staff numbers. Governors also spend considerable time discussing their response to papers from the local education authority. The issues of planning for new buildings and increased admissions have also been very demanding of the headteacher's time.
74. Governors have in the past had some involvement in discussing the school's strategic direction, but this does not take place regularly. They are well informed through very full reports from the headteacher, but have few opportunities to discuss curriculum issues in any depth. In addition, while they receive reports on pupils' academic achievement, these are not in a form that encourages governors to ask challenging questions or discuss strategies for improvement. The Chair of Governors has a very good understanding of the governing body's strengths and areas for development and has drawn up a very effective scheme of delegation for the working of committees. At present, the committees concerned with finance and staffing meet regularly and work effectively, but the committees for the curriculum and strategic planning rarely meet.
75. Most subjects are well led and managed. The leadership of art, music and the humanities are very good. Leadership of design and technology and French are satisfactory. The management of ICT is unsatisfactory as the arrangements for using ICT in subjects and assessing pupils' progress are not sufficiently well planned or co-ordinated. Provision for special educational needs is well managed, with good systems of communication between staff to identify and support pupils' needs.

76. There are satisfactory systems for monitoring and evaluating school performance. Each subject leader is responsible for checking on classroom work in their subject. These activities give rise to some useful development of teachers' skills, but in some subjects, particularly French, design and technology and the humanities, there are not systematic arrangements for monitoring teaching. In addition, there is not sufficient monitoring of classroom work by the senior management team to ensure that school policy is being implemented and to identify areas for development. Test and assessment results are analysed and there is a programme to train subject leaders in the use of this data. The school is aware of some of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance and takes action where weaknesses are identified. However, there is not a well-defined system for using national data to monitor pupils' performance in relation to what can be expected of them. In summary, the school's planning and monitoring needs more co-ordination and to be firmly based on an analysis of performance, in order to meet the school's aim of raising achievement.
77. There are good arrangements for the induction of new staff. They are well supported by experienced staff and given a good range of opportunities to widen their experience. There are sound arrangements for managing staff performance, which include observation of teaching and setting of professional targets. Staff are encouraged to include targets that link to school improvement, but not all lesson observations are of equal rigour. The performance management policy was introduced after considerable consultation with staff and governors and makes a satisfactory contribution to school improvement. Staff training is carefully planned, with opportunities for training made available to meet school objectives and individual career development. The school seeks to get value for money and make training as effective as possible by using in-school expertise where possible. It is an accredited Investor in People.
78. The headteacher and governors' finance committee plan expenditure carefully in order to meet school priorities. The planning and monitoring of finances are well supported by excellent procedures for financial control. Through good planning, creative fund-raising and parental support, the school has made improvements to the premises and facilities and maintained class sizes at an optimum level. It maintains a long-term reserve for unforeseen eventualities and has planned for equipment renewals over the next four years. Taking into account committed expenditure, it has an appropriate carry-forward of four per cent of its budget. Specific grants received by the school are carefully planned and used appropriately. Funds allocated to special educational needs are used well.
79. The school makes satisfactory use of best value principles. It compares its performance with other Suffolk schools, but not sufficiently with similar schools nationally. It regularly consults parents and pupils and takes their views seriously. It seeks to make best use of its available funding, but does not challenge itself on its performance as much as it might. The school's standards are above average and teaching is good, but the funding the school receives per pupil is above the national average and it therefore gives satisfactory value for money.
80. There is in general a good match between teachers' qualifications and experience and the subjects they teach. Where teachers are teaching outside their specialist subject, they receive good support from colleagues. The staff who support pupils with special educational needs are effective – most of them have or are working towards a qualification for their role. The school is efficiently administered by the office staff. Science and technology teachers are well supported by technicians, though there is insufficient technical support for ICT. The school makes satisfactory use of computer technology for finance, pupil records and analysis of assessment data.
81. Accommodation overall is satisfactory. The school's site was originally a convent and as a result the site and the buildings are owned by different authorities. This has led to difficulties in extending the accommodation as the numbers of pupils on roll has grown. Permanent building has not taken place since 1971, bids have been refused and only temporary structures have been possible. The headteacher, other senior staff, and governors have over many years spent much time and effort in improving the accommodation. The many temporary buildings are in no way sub-standard and have increased provision. The most recent of these are the library and science laboratory attached to previous classrooms, and the 'hut' which is now the art studio. Most subjects have insufficient

teaching space, few dedicated rooms, and very little storage space. Corridors are narrow and become crowded at changeover of lessons, although pupils' very good behaviour prevents this becoming a problem. Good use is made of every available space, with innovative bag storage systems, coat hooks and lockers for all pupils – all kept in immaculate condition. Classrooms and corridors have excellent displays of pupils' work and are maintained well. Outdoor spaces are also developed with imagination and initiative, the latest being a large pergola and seating provided by a governor. The whole site has colourful bushes, flower tubs and greenery, well maintained to provide an attractive setting.

82. Learning resources are largely adequate, except for the ICT facilities. The library is small, but well managed. The computer cataloguing and lending control is efficient. There is a surfeit of fiction books, and old books are being renewed with more up-to date non-fiction titles. The ratio of books to pupils is just below the national average, but lending rates are good, especially in Year 5, and the library is used well throughout the day. Books are stored and maintained in good condition, and all resources are looked after well by pupils. There are two computers in the library, and though each has Internet access, this is too few for the size of the school.
83. The school has an appropriate number of computers for the size of the school, but the deployment of machines makes access difficult. No room has sufficient machines for a complete class. Recent upgrading of networked machines in art and design and technology, with office software and Internet provision, is aiding curriculum development. However, most subjects need additional software to support their teaching. There is a lack of equipment for electronic data collection in science and for controlling electronic devices in design and technology. The school does not have a web site or e-mail facilities that pupils can use.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

84. In order to raise standards further, the governors and senior management team should:

- (1) Raise pupils' achievement through:
 - careful identification of their prior attainment;
 - setting them challenging targets;
 - monitoring their progress in relation to their targets and providing clear guidance on areas for improvement;
 - ensuring that all teaching involves and challenges pupils.

(Paragraphs 8, 9, 26, 29, 36, 62)
- (2) Improve standards and provision in ICT, by:
 - teaching the full National Curriculum in ICT;
 - planning and co-ordinating the use of computers in subjects;
 - assessing pupils' attainment and reporting this to parents.

(Paragraphs 7, 35, 41, 60, 75, 83)
- (3) Improve the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance by:
 - comparing standards of attainment and pupils' progress with national data;
 - identifying strengths and priorities for development;
 - focusing school and subject planning on identified priorities;
 - providing leadership and direction in monitoring classroom work and progress towards the school's targets.

(Paragraphs 63, 71, 76)
- (4) Clarify the school's strategic focus on academic achievement by:
 - reviewing the school's aims with respect to the place of academic achievement in the development of the whole child;
 - setting targets that are consistent with the school's aims;
 - ensuring governors have oversight of the curriculum and pupils' academic performance.

(Paragraphs 10, 71, 74)

In addition to the above issues for action the school should give consideration to:

- ensuring that all National Curriculum subjects are given enough teaching time to cover the programme of study in sufficient depth;*
- (Paragraphs 6, 39, 40)*
- improving the planning for supporting numeracy in all subjects;*
- (Paragraphs 16, 34, 45)*
- giving parents more information in reports on what pupils attainment and progress in subjects.
- (Paragraph 65)*

**This issue is already included in the school's planning.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	87
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	27	32	26	0	0	0
Percentage	2	31	37	30	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	566
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	30

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	8
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	68

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	7

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	30
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0
National comparative data	6.3

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.1
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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2001	66	77	143

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	58	54	59
	Girls	69	58	71
	Total	127	112	130
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	89 (89)	78 (84)	91 (93)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	54	56	57
	Girls	69	67	71
	Total	123	123	128
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	86 (83)	86 (76)	90 (88)
	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	493	3	
White – Irish			
White – any other White background	31		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2		
Mixed – White and Black African	4		
Mixed – White and Asian	3		
Mixed – any other mixed background	7		
Asian or Asian British - Indian			
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	1		
No ethnic group recorded	22		

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)	30.0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.9

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	231.5

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.4
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	24.9
Key Stage 3	26.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001 – 2
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	£
Total income	1,506,541
Total expenditure	1,438,594
Expenditure per pupil	2,472
Balance brought forward from previous year	51,769
Balance carried forward to next year	119,716

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.65
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7.65

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1.54
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	566
Number of questionnaires returned	222

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	44	6	2	1
My child is making good progress in school.	43	52	3	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	41	1	1	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	55	16	2	1
The teaching is good.	52	44	1	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	46	9	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	29	1	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	28	1	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	53	37	7	2	1
The school is well led and managed.	78	20	1	1	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	32	1	1	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	63	32	3	1	1

Other issues raised by parents

Most parents are very pleased with the school. They believe standards are high and they are particularly pleased with the wide range of opportunities the school provides which support pupils' personal development as a whole person. They believe behaviour and attendance are excellent. Parents feel well informed and included by the school and feel that the school responds very well to their concerns. Opinions are more varied over the quality and amount of homework, particularly for the older children.

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 **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Teaching is consistently good, with teachers having good subject knowledge and appropriately high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes that contribute to good learning in lessons.
- Good planning ensures that pupils are introduced to the skills of literary analysis well.

Areas for improvement

- Some lessons use a narrow range of teaching methods and resources.
- Pupils do not experience enough literature from other cultures.
- The use of computers needs further development.

85. In the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2001, results were above average and in line with those of similar schools. The results in 2002 maintained this standard. Pupils did slightly better in English than in mathematics, but not as well as in science. Test results have declined a little since 2000, before which they rose steadily over three years. The attainment gap between boys and girls was similar to the national picture, with girls outperforming boys.
86. Standards in the work seen at the end of Year 6 are in line with the test results. Most pupils come into the school with above average attainment in reading and writing, speaking and listening and achieve satisfactorily during their first two years. In Year 5, most listen well, speak confidently, read simple texts with understanding and can write straightforward sentences generally accurately. Higher-attaining pupils can read a wider range of texts fluently, and also write imaginatively, beginning to adapt their writing for different readers. Pupils learn the basic skills of literary analysis and understand different methods of doing research. In Year 6, for example, pupils wrote insightfully on William Blake's poem 'The Tyger', and in a research project on Dickens they used an encyclopaedia, a CD-ROM and the Internet. Pupils with special educational needs also make satisfactory progress, and pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as other pupils.
87. When pupils leave at the end of Year 8, their attainment is above average. Pupils' reading and writing skills develop satisfactorily during Years 7 and 8 and they cover a challenging range of literary texts. These include 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Animal Farm' and 'The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales', and pupils develop their powers of literary analysis well. The vast majority of pupils listen well and speak confidently. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8.
88. Drama is covered in Years 5 and 6 through a block of work in the summer term, and it is a timetabled subject in Years 7 and 8. Work done in drama makes a good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills. They enjoy doing it, and they are encouraged to work together co-operatively and to give one another constructive feedback. In Year 8, pupils learn some dramatic and theatrical techniques. There are good opportunities for pupils to be involved in drama outside of lessons, both in the flourishing drama clubs and in school productions.
89. Teaching and learning are good in all year groups. All the teaching seen was at least satisfactory and two thirds of lessons were good. Teachers have a good command of the subject and they use their knowledge to challenge pupils to think and to apply what they know to improving their own writing. Literacy is taught effectively. In the best lessons, teachers challenge pupils to think hard about often quite abstract concepts. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, where pupils were learning about roots of words, prefixes and suffixes, the teacher explained her points in a lively and interesting fashion. Pupils enjoyed using mini-whiteboards to show their ideas, the lesson progressed at a brisk pace, and pupils made good progress. In another lesson, on independent

reading, the teacher talked to pupils individually about a recent writing task and gave them helpful pointers for improvement. As a consequence, learning in that lesson, too, was good.

90. In some lessons, effective use is made of the teaching methods recommended in the National Literacy Strategy. However, pupils' achievement would be greater if more use were made of these methods to involve pupils more actively in their learning. More could be done to break lessons down into three or four parts and to use short, lively activities to enliven lessons more and engage pupils.
91. Where lessons are less successful, whilst still satisfactory, teachers dominate the talk for most of the time, and use few stimulating resources or active learning methods. In one lesson on using metaphors in poetry, for example, Year 5 pupils were asked to think about metaphors in the abstract. Whilst they learnt something about analysing the effectiveness of a poem, their learning was slowed by a lack of stimulating examples or images.
92. Computers are sometimes used to support pupils' learning. Pupils use the Internet to find information and learn to use word-processing to present their work. In one interesting project done in Year 6 on ballads, pupils acted out stories that were photographed with a digital camera, and the images were later imported into their newspaper articles. There are plans to extend this kind of learning further.
93. Literacy skills are reinforced in other subjects. Most subjects make a point of emphasising key subject vocabulary and stress correct spelling. In geography the importance of clear explanatory writing is stressed, whilst in history pupils write in a range of styles, including from the point of view of other people.
94. Pupils make good use of the school library, and regular visits take place in English lessons for pupils to change books. Teachers and classroom assistants talk to pupils about their choice of books and encourage them to read widely. Pupils experience a good range of literature, though this contains few examples from non-European traditions.
95. Teachers mark and assess pupils' work thoroughly and helpfully. They write enthusiastic and appreciative comments and also set improvement targets (like concentrating on the correct use of capital letters or extending writing by including more descriptions). Mistakes are judiciously corrected. Not all teachers are equally effective in using National Curriculum attainment levels or learning objectives from the National Literacy Strategy to assess how well pupils are doing and to help them move on. This is currently an area of development for the department.
96. The subject leader and the literacy co-ordinator manage the department well. They have identified the need to focus on improving writing skills in all subjects and are developing ideas to help with this, such as a weekly session in Years 5 and 6 on extended writing. English and literacy lessons are observed regularly and there is a positive climate that encourages teachers to learn from one another. The large number of people who teach English and literacy makes it difficult for them to meet frequently as a team.
97. The subject area has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There is no longer any unsatisfactory teaching. Systems for assessing pupils' work and tracking progress are developing, and higher-attaining pupils are generally appropriately challenged. The use of ICT in teaching and learning is improving. The National Literacy Strategy has been adopted, although there are aspects of this that could be developed further.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- Standards in Year 8 are well above average and pupils achieve well in Years 7 and 8.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Pupils are keen to learn, respond well verbally, and are very well behaved.
- Standards have improved through good leadership and teamwork.
- There are good assessment procedures.

Areas for improvement

- The development of numeracy skills is not well co-ordinated in other subjects.
- There is too much variation in the standard of marking pupils' work.
- Pupils' skills in mathematical investigation are insufficiently developed.
- Individual higher-attaining pupils in each class are not challenged enough.

98. Results in Year 6 National Curriculum tests were above average in 2001 and have improved steadily since the last inspection, at a faster rate than nationally. In 2002, the results were average. There was only a small decline from the previous two years, but the results did not keep up with the national improvement. For current pupils, standards are above average at the end of Year 6 and pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. Standards at the end of Year 8 are well above average and pupils achieve well in Years 7 and 8. The standards reached by higher-attaining pupils in all year groups have risen in recent years.
99. Pupils' achievement in Years 5 and 6 has improved since the last inspection because of the quality of teaching and the introduction of grouping pupils by mathematical attainment. This has led to greater challenge for higher-attaining classes and more individual attention from teachers and learning support assistants in lower-attaining classes. Pupils achieve well in Years 7 and 8 because their interest and enthusiasm is stimulated and there is systematic planning to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills in most aspects of mathematics. They achieve less well in using and applying mathematics because less attention is given to this aspect. Boys and girls achieve equally well.
100. In all year groups there is an emphasis on the development of number skills, with effective use made of the teaching methods recommended in the National Numeracy Strategy. In Year 5, for example, pupils were able to understand the concept of equivalent fractions through using rulers on a fraction line. In a Year 8 class, pupils built different sized cubes from unit cubes to explore sequences of numbers. In both of these lessons, pupils' understanding was enhanced through practical experiences, and the use of mini-whiteboards allowed the teacher to assess instantly pupils' grasp of the concept. At the start of a Year 6 lesson, pupils developed their ability to multiply decimals by powers of ten through physically representing numbers shifting along a row of chairs, with a fixed decimal point. This lesson successfully continued with pupils competing in groups of four or five to match equivalent fractions in a 'dominoes' game. This led to much excitement and discussion between pupils. In a Year 8 lower-attaining set, pupils improved their recall of square numbers and square roots through a card game in which they had to recognise whether the number on their own card fulfilled the description read out by another pupil.
101. Teaching is good overall, though there is more very good teaching in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6. Teachers plan well, using methods from the Numeracy Strategy, but with flexibility to adapt pace and depth according to pupils' responses. In a Year 7 lesson, for example, where pupils' understanding of square numbers was insecure, the teacher appropriately spent additional time on number patterns in order to resolve misconceptions. Lesson plans include an element of challenge, but not enough for some individual higher-attaining pupils, who need the stimulus of greater depth, faster pace or extension work. Homework is set regularly. It is tackled conscientiously by pupils, marked and recorded by teachers, but does not always challenge

pupils or match their abilities. The standard of marking varies – at best it includes constructive comments that help pupils know how to improve, but at other times errors go uncorrected.

102. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teachers demonstrate patient persistence, with a calm pleasant manner, and pupils respond well with respect and enthusiasm. Most pupils are keen to learn, show interest and work at a good pace, although they prefer mental work and discussion to written work. They respond well verbally to teachers' skilled questioning, and are encouraged to use mathematical vocabulary correctly. Teachers value pupils' developing their own successful methods for mental and written calculation, and develop pupils' literacy skills through encouraging them to describe their understanding in their own words.
103. Assessment procedures are good. Regular tests are used to inform teachers and their pupils of their progress and targets for improvement. Detailed assessment data is available to all teachers, but is not always used effectively to plan tasks that match the ability of all pupils. Pupils' achievement is best in number and algebra, and not enough emphasis is given to shape, space and data-handling. The developing of pupils' investigational skills is not given enough emphasis. Where pupils do investigations, these tend to be directed too much by the teacher, with little scope for pupils to take initiative or responsibility for their own learning.
104. There are good plans for the use of computers to support the learning of mathematics. Teachers have been trained and software purchased. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, a computer assisted learning package was used well to reinforce pupils' understanding of decimals and fractions. Lower-attaining pupils in Year 8 used a graph drawing package to understand and describe how straight line graphs relate to their equations. The use of ICT in mathematics is limited, however, by a lack of access to computers.
105. Leadership of the mathematics department is good. The subject leader and the numeracy co-ordinator have developed committed teams of well-qualified teachers who have helped raise standards. Management is also good and funding for training and resources has been wisely used. Storage for resources however is limited, and accommodation for mathematics is barely satisfactory. The National Numeracy Strategy has been managed well, and there has been good improvement in mathematics since the previous inspection. The teaching and use of numeracy skills in other subjects, however, is at an early stage and further development is needed.

SCIENCE

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well in their knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and principles, especially in biology.
- Pupils' enjoy science, work very well in groups and their practical skills are good.
- Teachers challenge pupils and develop their understanding very well through skilful questioning and clear explanations of scientific ideas.
- Relationships are very good and pupils managed very well. As a result, pupils sustain concentration and work at a good pace.

Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used effectively to support pupils' learning of science.
- Pupils' enquiry skills are good by Year 6 but are not developed as well in later years.

106. Standards in science are well above average by the end of Year 6 and Year 8, particularly pupils' knowledge and understanding of science facts and concepts. Pupils achieve well, including the higher attainers and those with special educational needs. Pupils' achievements in biology are a particular strength, reflecting the specialist expertise amongst most of their teachers. Pupils' enquiry and practical skills are also well above average by the end of Year 6. While pupils' practical skills continue to develop well in Years 7 and 8, their skills in making decisions about

their experiments, for example, in evaluating the quality of evidence and in suggesting improvements are not developed sufficiently.

107. These inspection findings confirm a pattern of improvement in pupils' standards in recent years. In the Year 6 National Curriculum tests in 2001, pupils achieved standards above those nationally. In relation to similar schools their standards were below, although evidence of their prior attainment at the age of seven shows that these pupils made satisfactory progress. In 2002, however, standards in the National Curriculum tests improved considerably and pupils achieved well. These improvements have been sustained this year.
108. There are several reasons why pupils achieve well. Teachers plan and structure lessons carefully around clear objectives and their good knowledge of science underpins their very clear explanations of science principles. They use very good questioning and discussion to develop pupils' thinking. For example, in a Year 8 lesson about characteristics of types of rock, pupils related properties such as grain size to their findings on rock porosity and crystal size to understand how these rocks were formed. The teacher drew on the evidence of their experiments and used well-chosen questions to develop pupils' reasoning and their understanding of the processes involved.
109. Teachers enjoy very good relations with their pupils. They know and manage them very well and use time very efficiently in lessons. Resources are also used effectively, as when Year 7 pupils were challenged to separate a number of mixtures of materials. Pupils decided on the equipment to use and the sequence of separating techniques, so that they consolidated their learning about dissolving and separating techniques in a lively and challenging way. Pupils' practical skills are developed well by these methods. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 also have access to specialist laboratory accommodation, which supports the very good development of their practical skills.
110. By Year 6, almost all pupils can draw on their knowledge to make predictions, decide on the variables to control and devise a strategy for their investigations. The more able are beginning by this age to evaluate their work and try to explain anomalies. However, pupils' enquiry skills do not develop as well as they might in Years 7 and 8. This is because teachers sometimes miss opportunities to develop such skills further, such as comparing the experimental results of different groups to consider how repeatable and reliable they are. Occasionally, older pupils are not involved sufficiently in discussing the organisation of experiments that involve a new technique, and where this happens, they are constrained in their ability to solve any practical problems for themselves as they arise.
111. Pupils enjoy science, especially practical work, and they work safely and productively in group tasks. They share and discuss their ideas freely and teachers develop pupils' technical vocabulary very well. The best practice encourages pupils to write imaginatively about their learning, such as when Year 5 pupils described 'The day friction disappeared'. Pupils estimate, measure and display the results of experiments appropriately but their numeracy skills are not yet promoted systematically in science. ICT is not used sufficiently to help raise standards in science. Pupils use CD-ROMs and the Internet to research information and they use spreadsheets to process and display data. However, they rarely use electronic sensors to collect experimental data and then analyse and display the results on computer. Such opportunities are planned but remain limited by a lack of resources.
112. Teaching and learning are good in all year groups. There is some teaching that is very good and none that is unsatisfactory. Lessons are planned well and new technical vocabulary highlighted throughout. Pupils learn at a good pace because they are interested and challenged by their teachers. Learning support assistants are also effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs. In the weaker lessons, teaching is over directed and pupils less involved. Few lessons end with a plenary that summarises the key points of learning. Teachers set appropriate and interesting homework, such as visiting a science web-site to research features of sedimentary and igneous rocks. Marking is good and provides pupils with useful commentary that helps them improve.

113. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards have improved considerably, as has the teaching and accommodation, but the use of ICT remains a weakness. The subject leader is new to the school and provides good leadership. She has already provided clear direction for development in appropriate areas as a result of monitoring teaching and pupils' work. Pupils are assessed systematically and their progress recorded. However, targets for pupils' achievement are not yet set and used as a benchmark against which to measure their progress. Neither are patterns of achievement analysed systematically to guide the focus of developments in the subject. Technician support is very good, contributing to pupils' good standards of practical work throughout.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6 and very well in Years 7 and 8.
- There is a rich curriculum that enables pupils to experience a good range of media.
- Assessment is accurate because teachers have a good knowledge of National Curriculum levels.

Areas for improvement

- Marking is not sufficiently focused on how pupils can achieve higher standards.
- National Curriculum levels are not used to set pupils 'next-step' targets for achievement.
- The teaching of drawing is not equally rigorous in all classes.

114. Pupils enter Year 5 with an average range of skills and understanding in art. Attainment remains in line with national expectations at the end of Year 6 in most aspects of their work. In core painting and drawing skills, for instance, attainment is average. The skills of ceramics and printing are above average by Year 6, because pupils have access to specialist staff and resources. By the end of Year 8, attainment is above average overall.
115. Throughout the school, pupils experience a rich and varied art curriculum. This has particularly advantageous effects on achievement in Year 5 and 6, where specialist facilities to explore areas such as ceramics, textiles and printing lead to good achievement. Such opportunities are usually much more restricted in pupils' experience of art in the primary phase. Some classes also have the benefit of teaching by a subject specialist. Here, basic painting and drawing skills also progress well. In Year 5 lessons, for example, pupils reached average standards in making pencil drawings of shoes placed in difficult compositions. In two Year 6 lessons, pupils' skills in printing also showed the average range of attainment, as did their work in sketchbooks. These books provide a good mechanism for pupils and teachers to check progress. They move through the school with pupils, forming a record of their developing skills and achievement.
116. With the added maturity pupils bring to their work in Year 7 and 8, standards are above average by Year 8. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 receive very good teaching from the specialist art teacher and, because of this, their achievement is very good. In both years, they do good quality written and visual research, supported by their good literacy skills. The Year 7 ceramics project is based on research into medieval patterns found in a local church – just one example of the good use made of external resources to inform pupils' studies. The art curriculum is effective in extending pupils' social and cultural development. In a Year 8 lesson, for example, pupils were developing their own black, white and grey prints by overlaying ink marks on top of classical images. Michelangelo's work was used as a model from which pupils could take several prints of their own. The teacher's very good questioning showed that they understood aspects of this type of religious art well. Pupils grasped the new technique swiftly and reached above average standards. Pupils' painting and drawing skills are also good in these years. Very few go into Year 9 with standards below those expected and many are above that level. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve equally well, with less difference between the work of boys and girls than is usually found.

117. Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8. Pupils' attitudes to their art lessons are also mostly very good and they rapidly conform to the school's expected standards of behaviour. When they enter in Year 5, several pupils, particularly boys, tend to be restless and easily distracted, but most teaching is lively enough to engage them in their work effectively. Class management is generally very good. In the best lessons, very interesting explanations and demonstrations, accompanied by well-focused questions, ensure that pupils are learning and that they understand what is being taught. Most teaching is vigorous and energetic, with brisk starts to lessons followed by good one-to-one interaction as pupils work. A well-paced variety of activities ensures that pupils are not doing one type of work for too long. Faster workers can also move ahead to the next stage. The quality of pupils' learning about drawing varies in different classes and needs to be prioritised as the key skill for development in pupils' early experience in the school. Marking of pupils' work needs to be improved so that the good knowledge of pupils' levels of attainment is used better to give them targets for improvement. The non-specialist teachers are effectively supported by the subject leader, through good planning and training. This good teaching creates confidence in pupils of all ages, generating a 'can-do' attitude towards art which enhances their personal development. Homework is used appropriately, often for pupils to research ideas for use in their practical lessons. However, not enough use is made of ICT in the art curriculum.
118. The art department has improved well since the last inspection. Standards are now higher by the end of Year 8. The range of non-graphical media has improved greatly and includes textiles for example. The quality of teaching has improved and all pupils get equal opportunities in art. The accommodation has been improved, with an additional, new, purpose-designed studio. The professional development of non-specialist staff is good and improves the teaching of younger pupils. ICT is still not used well enough but is a priority in the subject leader's development plan.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well and attain above average standards.
- Teaching and learning are good, with projects that are well planned and clearly presented.
- The accommodation and resources are well organised and provide a stimulating learning environment.
- Pupils work hard and show great interest in all aspects of the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The coverage of parts of the National Curriculum is very limited.
- Assessment procedures do not make enough use of National Curriculum levels of attainment to give pupils targets for improvement.
- Pupils' creativity and understanding of aesthetics could be further developed through design.

119. Pupils design and make products using wood, metal, plastic, textiles and food. Their design work includes written and drawn tasks. By the end of Year 6, standards are above average and pupils' achievement in relation to their attainment on entry to the school is good. Year 5 pupils use tools carefully to design and make a tangram' puzzle, learning about geometrical shapes and the importance of accurate measuring and cutting. Year 6 pupils know about healthy eating and design and make apple crumble to their own recipe using locally grown apples. They work hygienically, with a high standard of food preparation.
120. Pupils also achieve well in Years 7 and 8 and, by the end of Year 8, their understanding of the subject and their making skills are above average. Year 7 pupils understand the value of vegetarian food. They design and make their own 'veggie-burgers' and tomato sauce, working well in teams to discuss and plan their recipes. They use percentages to balance the ingredients and make informed comparisons with similar commercial products. Year 8 pupils design CD storage units and spice racks. They evaluate different styles and construction methods, showing a clear understanding of the properties of wood, metal and plastic. Pupils use their literacy and numeracy

skills well in written work, especially in their evaluations. Their design briefs and specifications are well presented, although their freehand drawing skills are weak. Their knowledge of design movements of the past, and the place of technology in society is insufficiently developed. There is little difference between the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils with special needs also make good progress because they enjoy the visual and practical nature of the tasks.

121. Teaching is good and there is some very good teaching in all year groups. The very good teaching is characterised by clear presentations and good use of questions to promote pupils' understanding. Teachers use varied methods that hold pupils' attention and they emphasise links with other subjects. In Year 8, for example, pupils do research on the Internet in their design of storage racks. Work is well planned to make best use of the limited time available. Learning resources are always ready to hand in lessons, and teachers' expertise guarantees the accurate presentation of information. Literacy and numeracy are promoted well. For example, Year 6 pupils calculate increases and decreases in speed when using different sizes of gear wheels. However, marking does not give pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work and assessment does not make enough use of National Curriculum levels of attainment to set pupils targets and monitor their progress.
122. Pupils are eager to learn about the subject and to extend their designing and making skills. They have very positive attitudes and their conduct in the work areas is exemplary. All pupils have good awareness of health and safety issues, and use tools and resources with great care.
123. The subject is satisfactorily managed, within some constraints. The time allocated to the subject is low and, as a consequence, coverage of parts of the National Curriculum – structures, systems and control – is very limited. On the timetable, the subject rotates with ICT and study skills, and this disrupts pupils' continuity of learning. There is a sound plan for developing the subject, but not enough monitoring of teachers' and pupils' work.
124. There have been satisfactory improvements since the last inspection. Much of the work is now more demanding and standards have improved. Health and safety are properly addressed in all areas. Teaching has improved, and pupils concentrate well in lessons. Improvements are still needed in the curriculum, assessment and in monitoring teaching.

FRENCH

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

Strengths

- Standards of writing and reading comprehension are above average in Year 8.
- Teachers are proficient linguists and make learning challenging and enjoyable.
- Pupils work hard and learn to think for themselves.

Areas for improvement

- Achievement is limited because not enough time is available in the timetable for pupils to practise their listening and speaking skills effectively.
- The use of ICT is undeveloped.

125. The school provides French in the Year 6, a year before it is required by the National Curriculum. This provision is a sound base for future learning and, because pupils are taught well, their standards at this very early stage are similar to those expected of learners one year older. Pupils know and recognise simple numbers and can answer questions about their name and age, some starting to form these questions themselves. Pupils with special educational needs keep pace because teachers help them suitably with their questioning.
126. Achievement by the end of Year 6 is satisfactory, but not better. The pupils are interested and learn how to listen to the teacher and to each other, and enjoy trying out their pronunciation. However, to judge both from the limited number of structures that current Year 7 pupils have

retained and can use in their speaking, and from the sample of their earlier written work, they do not make as much progress over the year as beginners usually make. The 40-minute weekly lesson is too short and too infrequent for most pupils to consolidate the early gains in learning that form one of the reasons for teaching a foreign language at this age. Too much of each lesson is spent reminding pupils of what they have forgotten since their last lesson a week earlier.

127. By the end of Year 8, however, overall standards are above average for the pupils' age. Some higher-attaining pupils, both boys and girls, are well above average, one year in advance in writing and comprehension. Across the attainment range, reading comprehension and writing are the best developed of the skills. The typical pupil understands and uses a wide range of vocabulary within the topics studied, has an above-average grasp of verb forms and agreements, and can write short paragraphs on holidays in the perfect tense.
128. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory but is limited by a lack of teaching time. Three lessons a week are provided in both Year 7 and 8, but the overall time allocation is insufficient for pupils to practise their listening and speaking skills effectively. Typically, when pupils speak they are too reliant on what they have written or can read in the textbook. Much pronunciation is poor, and hardly any French is spoken spontaneously. For example, few pupils, even the highest attainers, observe basic rules governing un-sounded final consonants, and intonation is affected by reading text. The lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs and those in the early stages of learning English, achieve well. They take part in dialogues and write brief paragraphs with support.
129. Teaching and learning are good. Most lessons seen were good or better, and none was unsatisfactory. Teachers are proficient linguists with the confidence to conduct lessons at pace, mostly in French. Their attention to detail in written work supports pupils' literacy well. They encourage pupils to analyse for themselves and for each other how they use the language, and as a result pupils learn to use glossaries independently and see links and patterns. Teachers convey high expectations, and, with frequent use of praise and reward, create an atmosphere of shared purpose, in which pupils are enthusiastic and conscientious, listen well and sustain concentration in paired dialogues. Homework helps develop this very positive work ethic and pupils' personal sense of responsibility, and is given due prominence, often set at the beginning of the lesson. The teachers support pupils with special needs well and are sensitive to the problems they may have in understanding questions and following text. When all these features are present, as in a Year 7 lesson on personal descriptions, teaching is very good. Here, pupils reproduced feminine adjective endings clearly, and, by listening to each other's efforts, could produce the different structure needed to describe hair and eye colour.
130. There are some respects in which teaching needs to be more effective. Data from assessments is not used enough in planning for the individual needs of pupils, both higher and lower attainers. Teaching methods do not focus sufficiently on regular and sustained oral practice, or on encouraging and rewarding spontaneous spoken French, especially by the more gifted and talented pupils. Teachers are understandably conscious of the limited time available, but are too concerned with covering the content of the programme of study and not enough with ensuring that all pupils can reproduce from memory what they have learnt. The range of writing expected of all pupils is rather narrow and there is not enough writing for different audiences. ICT skills are not applied systematically, so pupils do not yet have an e-mail link with their Belgian correspondents or word-process their work for display. Some marking is not detailed or helpful, and teachers need to be firmer with the few pupils, generally boys in the middle range in Year 8, who leave tasks incomplete or write very untidily.
131. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen because all teachers are now specialists and their teaching is more consistently good. Curricular planning and policies provide clear guidance and assessments of National Curriculum levels are accurate. Speaking is assessed frequently, and the regularly updated pupil profile sheet plays an important part in developing pupils' self-awareness and helping them to improve.

132. The head of subject has a clear understanding of areas for continued improvement. There is still not enough monitoring of colleagues' teaching or marking. The application of ICT to the learning of French is being planned. The school is also in the process of reviewing the overall allocation of time to the subject, which is the most important priority.

HUMANITIES

133. The humanities subjects comprise geography and history, which are led and managed by the same subject leader, and taught as separate subjects by the same teachers. Teaching arrangements for the subjects meant that it was not possible during the inspection to observe any geography lessons in Years 6 to 8 or history lessons in Year 5.

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above average at the end of Year 8.
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 and 8.
- Teaching is good in Years 7 and 8.
- There is a very good emphasis on the development of historical and geographical skills.
- Assessment procedures are very good and assessment is used well in planning lessons.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' achievement is not as high as it could be in Years 5 and 6.
- The quality of teaching is too variable in Years 5 and 6.
- Assessment is not used sufficiently to track pupils' progress and set targets for improvement.
- There is not enough systematic observation of teaching.

Geography

134. Standards are above average at the end of Year 6 and well above average at the end of Year 8. This is shown in the most recent results of the National Curriculum teachers' assessments and in the work seen during the inspection. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. Those with special educational needs make good progress, the highest-attaining pupils achieve well, especially in Years 7 and 8, and there is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls.
135. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics studied is good, and that of higher-attaining pupils is often very good. Pupils develop a good range of geographical skills, with particular strengths in map work. They work accurately from Year 5 onwards, interpreting and producing map symbols and keys. Map work is usually neat and accurately labelled. Pupils develop a good understanding of environmental issues such as pollution, and understand the impact of the environment on the lives of people. Their comparison of different localities shows a good understanding of climate, economy, land use, population, transport and landscape. Written work is usually well presented. In the best work, pupils make good use of ICT to enhance their presentation. Their work is usually detailed, with good descriptions, for example, of plate movement in work on earthquakes. Pupils' accounts usually lead to clear, plausible conclusions, but in some instances they lack sufficient explanation, especially in the work of average and lower-attaining pupils. Literacy and numeracy skills are used well in investigation and the presentation of findings.
136. Pupils' achievement is very well supported by their interest in their learning. Their very good behaviour and support for each other's work in lessons creates a good learning atmosphere. They respond very well to the teachers' high expectations for their work and behaviour.

137. Teaching is good. This was shown in the lessons seen during the inspection, and also in the scrutiny of pupils' work and displays of work. This evidence indicates a pattern of consistently good teaching overall but with greater strengths in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6.
138. Where teaching is most successful pupils make very good progress in response to brisk introductions and challenging questions that helps them to think deeply, contribute to the lesson and develop their ideas. In a Year 5 lesson on map work for instance, pupils responded very well to high expectations that they should work accurately as geographers. They worked confidently and with enthusiasm on the interpretation of map symbols. Such high expectations result in very good development of geographical skills and in work of high quality. This is particularly reflected in the written work of pupils in Year 8. The teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject often inspires pupils to engage closely with their work. High levels of concentration and rapid learning are sustained by well-planned and paced activities.
139. When teaching is less successful, it is because insufficient demand is made of pupils. Examples of this are when not all pupils are fully involved in question and answer sessions, too long is allowed for the completion of tasks, and tasks and group work are not sufficiently well structured. This occurs more often in Years 5 and 6 and results in a slower pace and less progress. Not enough use is made of ICT, which restricts pupils' learning and their research skills especially. There is too much variation in the extent that marking provides clear guidance for improvement.

History

140. Standards are above average at the end of Year 6 and well above average at the end of Year 8. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6, and good in Years 7 and 8. This is shown in the most recent results of the National Curriculum teachers' assessments and in the work seen during the inspection. Those with special educational needs make good progress, the highest-attaining pupils achieve very well, especially in Years 7 and 8, and there is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
141. Pupils gain a good knowledge and understanding of historical topics. Many higher-attaining pupils, especially in Years 7 and 8, have a mature grasp of events and understanding of personalities. Pupils' historical skills develop very well, with particular strengths in investigative work. They make critical use of historical evidence, comparing different sources and making links between them. They learn to place events in chronological sequence and develop a sense of empathy for historical personalities. Pupils' very good literacy skills enable them to discuss cogently and write well-structured accounts. They use their numeracy skills to do calculations during their investigations and in presenting their findings. ICT is used well in presenting work, but not enough in doing research. Progress in Years 5 and 6 is slower than in Years 7 and 8 and, while knowledge and understanding is usually sound, and good in the case of higher-attaining pupils, written work is not always sufficiently detailed, especially in terms of explanation. The understanding of average and lower-attaining pupils varies, and their selection and use of information and evidence is not always secure.
142. Pupils enjoy history and their learning in most lessons is enhanced by their hard work and very good classroom relationships. Only in a minority of lessons in Year 6 was learning slowed by too much noise during group work.
143. Pupils respond very well to teachers' high expectations. Teaching is good overall. It is very good in Years 7 and 8, and satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. Strengths in the teaching include brisk, purposeful introductions to lessons that immediately attract pupils' attention, clear explanations and probing questioning that deepen their understanding and the setting of homework to promote investigative skills. Most lessons are characterised by an on-going challenge that pupils should work accurately as historians in the selection and interpretation of evidence, especially in Years 7 and 8. This strongly supports the development of historical skills and results in pupils working at full stretch intellectually. In a Year 8 lesson for instance, pupils made excellent progress in the interpretation of historical documents to produce an account of a person who lived at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Learning was of a very high order in this lesson, as it was in others

where pupils were engaged in demanding investigative tasks, and required to think deeply in linking factors and drawing conclusions. The very strong emphasis on the development of literacy skills and good support for numeracy skills are other significant strengths in supporting pupils' learning, as are the effective use of group work, and the constant guidance and monitoring of pupils' learning by teachers and learning support assistants. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported in lessons.

144. Where teaching is less strong, usually in Years 5 and 6, pupils' learning is sometimes slowed because lessons lack structure and pace and in some cases the planned tasks are not completed. On occasion, too much noise is accepted while pupils work and this distracts from learning. In a few lessons, pupils' learning is limited because they have too little opportunity to take initiative in, for instance, the interpretation of texts and discussion of their findings. In all years, marking varies in the extent to which it provides helpful guidance for improvement and insufficient use is made of ICT to support learning.
145. In both geography and history the curriculum is very well planned and appropriately meets the needs of pupils of all abilities. Pupils' ability to learn through investigation is enhanced through well-planned visits and theme days. Geography and history provide strong support for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are very good procedures for assessment, especially in Years 7 and 8. Pupils' progress is checked systematically against National Curriculum levels. Assessment results are used well in planning lessons, but are not used enough to track pupils' progress and set targets for improvement.
146. The high standards reached in geography and history are strongly supported by very good leadership and management. The subject leader provides an exceptionally strong direction for teaching and learning. The subjects are taught by a large number of teachers, many of whom are non-specialists. They are very well supported through training, modelling of practice and detailed plans. However, while there are good arrangements to monitor the quality of pupils' work, there is not enough systematic observation of teaching to ensure that it is all of a consistently high standard. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection in raising the achievement of higher-attaining pupils through more challenging teaching, better assessment and increased support for teachers. The need to improve monitoring of teaching and make better use of ICT were mentioned in the last report and still need addressing.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils have very good attitudes and are interested in the subject.
- Attainment is at the national average, with some pupils attaining higher levels.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress in individual lessons and show initiative when given the opportunity.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils' achievement is limited by the time allocated to ICT, a lack of access to computers and, in some cases, a lack of trained staff.
- Pupils are not taught the whole of the National Curriculum in ICT.
- The use of ICT in other subjects is not properly co-ordinated.
- The arrangements for assessing pupils' progress in relation to the National Curriculum are unsatisfactory.

147. Pupils have lessons in ICT skills in each year group, and some opportunities to use computers in other subjects, although these are very limited.
148. Standards at the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 8 are average overall, with some pupils attaining higher levels. Pupils make good progress in individual lessons, but their achievement is constrained by a lack of teaching time and a lack of opportunity to apply their ICT skills in other subjects. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils enter the school with a variety of past experiences in the subject, but quickly develop their capability in Year 5, when they learn effectively through exploring commands and menus. When using graphics software to construct a plan of the school, Year 5 pupils understood that there is more than one way to approach the task and used the software creatively. In Year 6, word-processing tasks are narrowly based on textbook examples, and opportunities are lost to apply the skills to the work pupils are doing in other subjects. This limits the progress that pupils could make. However, in Year 7, pupils use their initiative in creating presentations about their own family. Some pupils make good use of the presentation software and reach high standards. Year 8 pupils are able to use the standard office software applications and the Internet to assemble project work, using a wide variety of formats. Attainment in the use of computers to take measurements and control electronic devices is lower, as work in these areas is severely limited due to lack of time and appropriate resources.
149. Teaching is satisfactory and is sometimes good. The best teaching is characterised by clear objectives, careful planning of assignments that challenge and inspire, and presentations that make the best use of the short time available. Where teaching is satisfactory, not enough care is taken to cater for the full ability range. The tasks cover appropriate topics but are often not sufficiently open-ended to allow for individual initiative or extension work. The development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is well integrated, though there is further scope for developing their layout and design skills. The arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. Improvements are needed in the information given to pupils on what they have achieved, the tracking of their attainment in relation to the National Curriculum and the reporting of this to parents.
150. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject. They are keen to learn and develop their computer skills. They work quietly in lessons, are courteous to each other and to adults when asking for help, and treat the school equipment with respect.
151. The use of ICT in learning other subjects is unsatisfactory overall. Good use is made in music to aid composing and the use of ICT is developing in English. However, it is not used sufficiently in science, French, geography, history or art. In mathematics it is planned well but there is a lack of access to computers. In general, the limitations are access to computers, a lack of co-ordination of what each subject will contribute and, in some cases, a need for further staff training. There is a teachers' working group on ICT, but not all subject areas have a representative. The school has purchased an integrated learning package to support the literacy and numeracy development of pupils with special educational needs, but this has not yet been installed.
152. The management of the subject is unsatisfactory. There are gaps in the coverage of the National Curriculum in ICT and the contribution that other subjects make to the teaching of ICT is not properly co-ordinated. The time allocated to the subject is significantly low and there is a shortage of appropriate staff to teach the subject. Accommodation restrictions mean that the ICT rooms are not large enough to house sufficient computers for a whole class. The subject development plan does not focus sufficiently on these major issues and more detailed planning is needed. The

subject leader is also in charge of design and technology and has other whole school responsibilities, which constrain the time available to monitor the use of ICT in other subjects, develop assessment arrangements and co-ordinate staff training.

153. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory, as overall standards of attainment have slipped slightly, and many of the issues identified in the last inspection have not been tackled. Pupils' attainment and progress is still restricted by lack of full access to the National Curriculum; control technology is still underused; the low time allocation still constrains advanced work; and assessment and reporting still fail to meet statutory requirements. However, on the positive side pupils make good progress in individual assignments and show initiative where opportunities arise.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- The standard of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection.
- Teaching is very good.
- There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities and instrumental lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The time allocation for lessons in Years 5 and 6 is rather short.
- The school is aware of the need to review assessment procedures for Year 6 pupils.

154. Standards are average by the end of Year 6 and above average by the end of Year 8. In performing and composing attainment is above average. No lessons were observed in Year 6 due to timetable arrangements. However, a study of pupils' written work, discussions with pupils and attendance at extra-curricular activities confirm this judgement. Pupils' attainment has improved since the last inspection when there were found to be some weaknesses.
155. Pupils achieve well throughout the school. In performing and composing, they achieve very well. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons. Musically talented pupils make very good progress in all aspects of the subject.
156. Pupils in Year 6 have a good understanding of the different musical elements. They describe the way a song can be structured and know about a verse and chorus. They compose short pieces for gamelan and begin to use ICT to create a fanfare. Year 8 pupils use a simple chord sequence to accompany a twelve bar blues. Most pupils play the chords accurately on keyboards and understand how syncopation can be used to enhance the rhythm. They are able to improvise well and show skill in ensemble playing when performing an Indian raga. Pupils in all years show a satisfactory knowledge of basic musical vocabulary.
157. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 and 8, with one excellent lesson seen. No lessons were seen in Year 6, but in two Year 5 lessons, teaching was good and very good. The school has been successful in maintaining the standard of teaching found in the last inspection. Teachers use their own musical skills well to enhance pupils' learning. This was evident in a Year 7 lesson when pupils identified some of the key features of mediaeval vocal music. Pupils' understanding of plainchant was increased by the teacher's effective demonstration. An improvement since the last inspection is that ICT is used well to aid composing tasks. Good attention is given in lessons to the development of pupils' literacy skills. The time allocation for lessons in Years 5 and 6 is rather short. This results in teachers finding it difficult to cover all aspects of the National Curriculum in sufficient depth.
158. There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including a choir, a string group and a boys' choir, which enable pupils to develop confidence as performers. Pupils take part in concerts both in and out of school. These have included performances at The Snape Maltings, at the town's Christmas festivities and in the Chapel at West Suffolk Hospital. Some older pupils take part in a

residential course, which is an excellent means of fostering musical ability. Over 90 pupils receive instrumental lessons from visiting staff. These teachers make an excellent contribution to the development of pupils' musical skills.

159. Pupils have a very good attitude towards the subject. They work well in lessons and respond enthusiastically to extra-curricular activities. They are always well behaved. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
160. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader is enthusiastic and conveys this to both staff and pupils. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory, though assessments of pupils' attainment in Years 5 and 6 are not always accurate and a review is planned. The accommodation is adequate, except that there is only one practice room, which has to be used for instrumental lessons.
161. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Pupils' attainment has improved, there is increased provision for extra-curricular activities and good use is now made of ICT.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- Teaching is consistently good and frequently very good.
- Pupils work well together and evaluate their own and others' performance.

Areas for improvement

- The school's facilities for physical education are very limited and teaching time is lost in travelling to venues outside the school.

162. Standards are average by the end of Year 6 and above average by the end of Year 8. Pupils achieve well throughout the school because teaching is consistently good and frequently very good.
163. In Year 6, pupils control a football, pass and move in order to beat a defender. The more able pupils accurately control a ball on their chest or thigh before passing. In hockey, Year 5 pupils pass to each other accurately and control the ball effectively over a short distance when working with a partner. They show less control when moving and passing. In dance, they march together and in sequence to a 4/4 rhythm. Pupils in Year 5 demonstrate good body tension when controlling balances in gymnastics, but they lack precision when moving in sequence with a partner.
164. By Year 8, pupils have a good knowledge of the effects of exercise on their bodies. They use the correct language to describe what happens during exercise, referring to increases in cardiovascular efficiency and improvements in stamina over time. They lead warm-up activities and have a good appreciation of safety when doing so. In basketball, pupils dribble using both hands and they pass and move quickly, maintaining good control of the ball at all times. In gymnastics, they perform balances in threes, demonstrating very good control and posture. In hockey, pupils in Year 7 maintain good control of the ball when turning in a tight circle.
165. Pupils make good progress and develop skills quickly. This is because teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan activities that become progressively more challenging during lessons. For example, in a Year 8 gymnastics lesson, pupils were challenged to use illustrations and their own imagination to devise lifts and balances in groups of three, having first practised the skills on their own. Regular opportunities are given to pupils to question their own and others' performance. This helps to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the skills they are practising and improves their performance. For example, in a Year 7 hockey lesson, pupils were

asked to analyse how and why two players could successfully beat a defender, before practising on their own.

166. In the best lessons teachers use a wide range of methods to help pupils evaluate their performance. They make clear to pupils what they are expected to achieve; demonstrate personally or use pupils to illustrate technique; question pupils about what they have observed and acknowledge their success when it is achieved. All teachers pay particular attention to the safety aspects of activities, with the result that pupils are knowledgeable about potential dangers. For example when engaged in warm-up activities, pupils in Year 8 knew why they should not over-stretch and could explain why it could be harmful. There is a very good balance between teachers' talk and pupils' activity, with the result that lessons are always characterised by plenty of purposeful activity. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.
167. Pupils respond very well during lessons. They are extremely well behaved and work enthusiastically, with obvious enjoyment. A particular strength is their ability to work effectively together in pairs, small groups or as a whole class. They show commendable respect for each other and for their teachers. This makes a very positive contribution to their overall personal development.
168. Planning is very good. Teachers are well prepared for lessons. They have clear aims. Teachers know what they want pupils to learn and what activities they need to include in order to achieve this. The development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of physical activity is fully incorporated into teachers' plans, which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The school continues to offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are well supported by staff, pupils and parents. These make a very positive contribution to the success achieved in local competitions.
169. The physical education facilities at the school are very limited and games lessons have to be taught at the nearby upper school and sports centre. The journey limits the amount of teaching time available over the year. However, the quality of the venues outside the school is very high.