

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MIDDLEHURST SCHOOL**

Chell, Stoke-on-Trent

LEA area: Stoke-on-Trent

Unique reference number: 124501

Headteacher: Jonathon May

Reporting inspector: Adrian Simm  
21138

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> January 2003

Inspection number: 249409

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	4 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Turnhurst Road Chell Stoke-on-Trent
Postcode:	ST6 6NQ
Telephone number:	01782 234612
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr Janine Bridges
Date of previous inspection:	9 <sup>th</sup> - 12 <sup>th</sup> June 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21138	Adrian Simm	Registered inspector	Citizenship Geography History	What sort of school is it?  How high are the standards?  How well is the school led and managed?  What should the school do to improve further?
12536	Sylvia Bullerwell	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.  How well does the school care for its pupils?  How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
27409	Sue Hunt	Team inspector	English  Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
10782	Henry Moreton	Team inspector	Science  Music	
10781	Bob Thompson	Team inspector	Art and design Information and communication technology  Modern foreign languages  Educational inclusion  English as an additional language  Special educational needs	How well are pupils taught?

7994	Pam Weston	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Religious education Foundation stage	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Middlehurst School is a community special school for pupils aged between four and 16 years. Only four foundation stage children are on roll. They are taught in a class with Year 1 pupils. The school educates 62 boys and 29 girls from the north of Stoke-on-Trent, which includes areas of severe disadvantage. Most pupils have moderate learning difficulties. A small number of pupils have more severe learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties or autism. Sixty-eight per cent of the pupils on roll claim free school meals. This is slightly less than at the time of the last inspection. Overall, pupils' attainment on entry is low in comparison to their chronological age. Around fourteen per cent of pupils come from ethnic minority backgrounds but no pupils have English as an additional language. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school is involved in a number of local and national initiatives including the local Educational Action Zone, College in the Community work with parents and training for staff in information and communication technology funded by the New Opportunity Fund. Nearly half of teachers are new to the school in the last two years. The school's deputy headteacher led the school as acting headteacher between September and December 2002. He was appointed head teacher on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003.

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

This is an effective school where most pupils achieve well. This is because pupils' attitudes to learning are good and most pupils behave well in lessons. Good leadership and management of the school have ensured good teaching and learning in all age groups. In addition, the school provides a good variety of interesting and effective learning opportunities. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Pupils of all ages achieve well overall because of good teaching and learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a strength of the school where achievement and teaching and learning are very good.
- The school has very good links with parents and with partner schools and colleges. This provides pupils and parents with a high quality partnership between home and school and offers pupils teaching that matches their learning needs to the most appropriate school setting;
- The school provides very well for pupils' moral and social development. This results in good relationships and personal responsibility with most pupils. This improves even more with Year 10 and 11 pupils in the two years before they leave the school. Here, relationships are very good.
- Staff have improved assessment very well. This gives them good ways of finding out what the pupils know or are unsure of and what else needs to be taught;
- The new headteacher has set out very clearly important priorities for immediate development. This means that everyone in the school is working well towards the same goals for improving pupils' achievement.

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

- Ways of checking in the long term how well the school is succeeding;
- Teaching and learning for pupils with more complex learning and behavioural needs;
- The regularity of staff's training in child protection issues.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.*

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

The school has made good improvement since it was last inspected in June 1997. The quality of teaching and learning has improved. Where changes in staffing or illness have not unduly affected subject leadership, improvements have flourished such as in ICT, design and technology, art and design, mathematics and history. Where subjects have been affected by staffing changes, pupils' achievement has been maintained either at a satisfactory level such as in English, science and music or has fallen only slightly and is still satisfactory, such as in French. The role of the governing body has come on

apace recently. This has coincided with the appointment of a headteacher who has already ensured that school improvement planning and the timetable for all staff to benefit from performance management are now fully in place. The school has yet to catch up on its child protection training for staff. Opportunities for pupils to be included in lessons and activities at other schools where this is of benefit to them is working very well and is a strength of the school.

## STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year R	by Year 6	by Year 11	Key
Speaking and listening	C	C	C	Very good A
Reading	C	C	C	Good B
Writing	C	C	C	Satisfactory C
Mathematics	B	B	B	Unsatisfactory D
Personal, social and health education	B	B	B	Poor E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	

In addition to those subjects covered in the above table, pupils' achievement is very good in ICT. It is good in religious education, art and design, design and technology, history, physical education and geography with Years 1 to 6. It is satisfactory in science, music and French. There was insufficient information to make judgements about pupils' achievement in geography and music for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Citizenship is an important priority for development in the school. It is only partially introduced in a formal way. Elements already included in other subjects such as history and English, and in other day-to-day ways such as the appointment of head boy and girl mean that achievement is satisfactory and gathering pace. Pupils have improving opportunities at Year 11 for their achievement to be recognised in examinations in English, mathematics, science, ICT and vocational qualifications. For those pupils entered for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations in mathematics, achievement is very good. Overall, all pupils achieve as well as each other although, on occasions, the behaviour of some pupils with more complex learning needs, particularly in Years 7 and 8, interferes with their own and other pupils' learning. All pupils have individual targets for improvement in aspects of literacy, numeracy and personal development against which good progress is made.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are good. The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and get themselves involved in a range of activities including those outside of lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good in the classrooms. Pupils move around the school in a sensible and polite manner. The school uses fixed period exclusions as one way of dealing with poor behaviour. Twelve instances were recorded in the last school year, which is not excessive given the challenging behaviour of some pupils on roll.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' relationships with staff and each other are good. Pupils' initiative and personal responsibility are developing well. By the time pupils reach Years 10 and 11, they get on very well together and show personal development that well exceeds what might be expected.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Whilst pupils arrive on time at the start of the school



	day, some pupils in Years 7 to 9 are sometimes late at the start of lessons. When this happens, the time for learning is reduced by up to ten minutes.
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Pupils take great pride in their achievements, such as working with others to create their Millennium Mural, which reflects their cultural heritage of the 'Staffordshire Potteries'

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	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 and learning are good in English, mathematics, PSHE, religious education, art and design, design and technology, history, physical education and geography in Years 1 to 6. Teaching and learning in ICT are very good. Elsewhere, they are satisfactory apart from Years 7 to 11 in music where there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement. An experienced teacher who knew the pupils very well was employed to teach science during the week of the inspection. This led to teaching and learning that was very good. Evidence of pupils' work in science points to this not consistently being the case. Where teaching and learning are good or very good, these subjects have benefited from staff development and stability in planning and organisation. Where, teaching and learning are satisfactory, subjects have in the main been taught by staff who are not experienced in the subject or not on the permanent staffing of the school. Here, the school has managed to maintain learning at an acceptable level. Staff have worked hard on how to best match teaching to the preferred learning styles of different pupils. In the main, they are successful in this. On rare occasions, unsatisfactory lessons occur both with supply staff and permanent teaching staff when they are unsuccessful in dealing with the behaviour of pupils with more complex needs. On occasions a very small minority of pupils sets out to severely disrupt lessons. Skills in communication, literacy and numeracy are taught well. As a result, pupils generally concentrate and work hard to complete their tasks. Pupils are at ease with each other's company and work well individually, in small groups or in full classes. Good homework packages are available for younger children to extend their learning. Older pupils carry out research at home from time to time, which adds to the positive contribution they make to lessons.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum provided is good. Lesson planning ensures pupils' new learning builds on what they know already. The school offers pupils a broad range of practical opportunities for learning which are invariably linked with other schools or colleges. These include sports activities, vocational learning or more specific lessons such as circus skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Within provision that is good overall, support for moral and social development is very good. Through their study of other faiths they learn about cultural differences in religion. Pupils' wider understanding of the cultural diversity of British society today is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is good overall. The school is a secure and safe environment in which to work. The teachers know the pupils very well and they are given good encouragement in their activities. The school has suitable systems to safeguard pupils' access to the Internet.

The school has very good links with parents. This provides a learning package for pupils, which involves both the home and school. The school's 'College in the Community' work is very successful in encouraging parents to sign up for courses that allow them to spend the day in school; some of the time

for their own learning and the rest supporting their child's learning needs. The school has suffered from long-term illness of one or two staff. As a result, staff expertise is short in subjects such as music and French. To overcome this, the school has designed a curriculum which, whilst meeting statutory requirements, is in the short term less effective than would usually be the case. The school has improved very well how it checks and measures pupils' success in their work. However, this approach is not yet checked on either in school or with staff in similar schools to see if teachers agree about pupils' standards.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are good overall. The new headteacher is very clear about how the school needs to develop. An extremely full and detailed school improvement plan has been put into place very recently, which has helped the school to prioritise its areas for development for the current school year. A very strong team spirit is obvious within the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	This is satisfactory overall. The governing body is now well aware of many of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are becoming more active in the day-to-day life of the school. Their annual report to parents is currently short of information about how successful the school is in meeting the differing needs of the pupils on roll.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This has become good recently for the school's normal day-to-day needs. The school sets out to check on pupils' standards and how well staff's lesson planning turns out in practice. Whilst this works in many ways, it has not been fully effective in all subjects. Performance management has been slow in implementation and is not yet having the impact it should. The effects that regular changes in timetable have upon pupil's individual timetables are not yet fully checked.
The strategic use of resources	This is good. The school's day-to-day financial strategies are effective. Governors' involvement in longer-term financial planning is developing well. They ensure best value is met well in financial terms. The budget carry-forward of £59,980 at the end of the year 2001/2002 was already 'earmarked' for major developments in the accommodation, which have been successful. No significant carry-forward is expected this year.

Staffing numbers and expertise are good overall but still suffering from the lack of permanent staff for science, geography, music and French. In many ways the accommodation has improved from the last inspection; for example, the ICT suite, food technology room, security fencing and enlarged classrooms for some pupils. Whilst it is good overall, the only indoor access to many of the classrooms is through a classroom or by crossing the school hall, which interferes with physical education lessons. The school does not yet have appropriate changing facilities for the small but growing number of pupils with toileting difficulties. Resources for subjects are good and help to provide interesting lessons when matched by good teaching and learning. The school meets the principles of best value well.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The information they receive about their children's progress;</li> <li>How well the school is led and managed;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A small number of parents would like more homework for their children.</li> </ul>

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like the school;</li> <li>• The good quality of teaching.</li> </ul> |  |
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Inspectors agree with what pleases parents about the school. A number of pupils at the school would benefit from homework. Some parents are unclear about the school's policy on this.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. All pupils in the school have learning difficulties; some are moderate and some more severe but the majority make good progress and achieve well. This is in relation to the learning outcomes planned for them in lessons and in the accredited courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. In some subjects this represents good improvement since the last inspection such as in mathematics, PSHE, art and design, design and technology and ICT. Good standards have been maintained in religious education and physical education. Satisfactory standards have been maintained in English and music. Only in science and French have standards fallen, but here, they are still satisfactory. The school has done well given that it has been affected by staff illness, reduced expertise in some subjects and changes in subject responsibilities for some staff. The subjects of English, science, geography, music and French have been affected in this way. The good quality of teaching and learning and recent subject co-ordination in English, point to improvements in pupils' achievement in English already being underway.

2. Those pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, more complex behavioural difficulties or severe learning difficulties achieve equally as well as other pupils. There is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls despite there being very few girls in some classes. Teachers are conscious that they have to ensure girls are fully included in lessons. This works well and is targeted for close monitoring.

3. Pupils in all year groups achieve well in PSHE. The subject is on the verge of being extended to incorporate citizenship education introduced nationally since the last inspection. The school has been slow in introducing this but planning is now good and gathering pace. Whilst not formally included and planned for in a broad range of subjects, features of citizenship are already covered in some subjects such as history, English, religious education as well as PSHE. Pupils' achievement reflects the extent of its current inclusion in these subjects and is currently satisfactory. The school places particular priority on provision for work-related learning and careers guidance and these are good in preparing pupils for life after school. Pupils achieve well in this particular work.

4. Opportunities for pupils to take accredited courses in subjects have expanded since the last inspection. In the last two years, some Year 11 pupils have gained a GCSE grade G in mathematics. In 2001, nearly a third of pupils gained this although this fell in 2002. However, the percentage pass rate is significantly affected by group sizes so trends in this should be treated very carefully. The school has set a target of just over a third of pupils to be successful in 2003. They are on line for this.

5. In addition to this, pupils are successful in other types of accreditation. Here, also, overall trends are affected by the extent of the learning difficulties of pupils in the Year 11 cohorts from year-to-year. In 2001, between eight and 12 pupils achieved Certificates of Achievement in Life Skills, science, English and mathematics. In 2002, apart from in

mathematics and the bronze award of the Youth Award Scheme, where pupils did well, successes in accreditation in English, science and life skills ranged between two and six pupils. However, good opportunities are in place, which are expanding for 2003 with pupils showing very good progress towards attaining accreditation in ICT. This is not yet offered in art and design or design and technology.

6. Pupils' achievement in subjects such as science and French have been slightly higher in the past. In other subjects such as geography and music, achievement has been sustained as satisfactory. The main differences between standards in these subjects and others where pupils are achieving better, is the lack of consistency of subject leadership, staff subject knowledge and the effectiveness of the curriculum able to be offered. However, high staff morale and willingness to pull-together for the benefit of the pupils, has seen the school successfully through a difficult time.

7. Staff have put in much work on supporting pupils' achievement through ensuring their preferred learning styles are accommodated in lessons. This has been successful in many ways. Correctly, the school is now looking at improvements in the management of some pupils' behaviour where this interferes with their achievement at times and with that of the rest of the class.

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

8. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good. With a changing pupil population that now includes pupils with more significant behaviour difficulties, staff have done well to maintain standards since the previous inspection. This is a direct response to the good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This aspect of pupils' learning contributes well to the standards they achieve in other areas.

9. Pupils of all ages show good attitudes to their work and their life in school. Most pupils are keen to answer questions and contribute to class discussions. In most lessons, pupils listen carefully to instructions, show a good level of interest in their work and try hard to complete the tasks they are given. For example, during a mathematics lesson, pupils in Years 5 and 6 concentrated well to use their instant recall of numbers to complete a game of bingo.

10. Pupils' behaviour is good, overall. Most pupils behave well in class and receive their merit marks at the end of each lesson. However, some pupils in Years 7 to 9, who have particular behavioural needs are not always managed or supported well enough to maintain the pace of learning. When changing classes pupils respond well to teachers' expectations and move around corridors and on stairs sensibly. Outside in the playground pupils' behaviour is also good. They generally play well together and the school deals with any bullying quickly and firmly. Last year, one incident of using racist language was recorded and dealt with appropriately. Three permanent exclusions were for criminal activity. Nine temporary exclusions were for violence, mainly towards staff, and uncooperative behaviour by a small number of pupils. The use of exclusion is successful in improving behaviour. This year only two instances have been recorded.

11. Pupils' personal development is good. At all ages, pupils respond appropriately to expectations that they should be responsible for themselves and the school community. As they progress through school their confidence and self-esteem improves through the good relationships they have with staff and other pupils. A Year 2 pupil confidently demonstrated the correct use of a Muslim prayer mat for his class. Pupils work well together in lessons, such as in a Year 10 religious education lessons when pupils worked well in pairs to sort

which religious laws were 'the Ten Commandments'. Pupils take a pride in their achievements, such as working with others to create the Millennium Mural in the school entrance, which reflects their cultural heritage of the 'Staffordshire Potteries'. They show respect for the school environment, such as the daily litter pick of the school grounds organised by the Year 11 'litter manager'. Pupils willingly help with daily routines such as putting away chairs after assembly. They think of others less fortunate than themselves when raising money for high-profile national projects or other charities. Year 11 pupils successfully planned and hosted a residential in the school's house in Anglesey for 24 pupils from local primary schools. By the time pupils leave school they are mature, confident and looking-forward to being members of society. Relationships with each other and with staff have are very good by this point.

12. Pupils' attendance for last year was 89.2%, which is average for schools of this type. Unauthorised absence has increased since the previous inspection to over four per cent. This is due to a change in the marking of registers to show pupil-absence as unauthorised for those who regularly miss school transport by getting up late. Strategies to raise attendance, including supplying some families with alarm clocks, still need the continuing support of parents to succeed. The majority of pupils regularly achieve full attendance. Registration is quickly taken at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions, but the reason for pupils being absent is not always recorded quickly enough. The school is addressing this. Pupils are generally on time at the start of the school day. Also, pupils in Years 7 to 11 frequently move classes at the end of lessons and they too are mostly on time for the beginning of the next lesson. However, on those occasions when some pupils are late at the start of lessons, the time for learning is reduced by up to ten minutes, as was the case in a history lesson with Year 9 pupils during the inspection.

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

13. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. There are no significant differences across the school between classes, age groups, pupils of different attainment or background and boys and girls. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement. Nearly all lessons are satisfactory or better. Seven out of every ten lessons are good or better with around one in four lessons very good or excellent. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching and learning has reduced substantially since the last inspection. The population of the school is changing from predominately pupils with moderate learning difficulties to pupils with more specific learning difficulties, more challenging behaviours and those with individual developmental needs. The school is coming to terms with this well. Much work has been put in on how to use different styles of teaching to match pupils' particular styles of learning. However, more needs to be done in managing the behaviour of some pupils who set out to disrupt lessons at times. This not only affects their own learning but that of others. Unsatisfactory teaching during the inspection was in one Year 8 history lesson where the challenging behaviour of several of the pupils dominated the lesson, preventing sufficient learning taking place. Also, in a Year 9 class taught by a visitor where the preparation, organisation and pace of the lesson was not conducive to learning. However, other lessons, whilst satisfactory or good, were reduced in effectiveness because of the behaviours of a few obstructing the learning of the class as a whole. This happened in a small number of lessons in mathematics, art and design, design and technology and geography during the inspection.

14. The range of pupils' learning difficulties in any lesson is wide. Consequently teachers are challenged to select tasks that meet the needs of the pupils. Good planning and high expectations of work and behaviour generally help to achieve this aim. As a result, pupils frequently behave well in lessons, sustain concentration and persevere to complete tasks even when lessons are hard. Teachers and support staff set good role models in class. As a result, most pupils ask for help politely when they need it. Higher attaining pupils freely

support and help less able pupils in their class. Pupils are quick to celebrate each other's successes. This works really well when teachers use pupils work to demonstrate learning points to the rest of the class, such as in physical education lessons. The National Literacy and Numeracy strategies are well established in English and mathematics lessons as well as being incorporated into other subjects across the curriculum.

15. Teaching of pupils with additional special needs across the school is consistently good. For example,

- In a mathematics lesson for Year 10 pupils, teaching was planned in small steps to help pupils' understanding.
- In a reading lesson for Year 6 pupils, the work was well matched to individual need and ability to ensure progress and success.
- In a reading session for Year 3 pupils, the teacher ensured that the learning support assistant was carefully positioned to give extra support and encouragement where necessary.
- In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, the teacher gave special attention to match the learning resources to the ability of the pupils, thus ensuring full participation by those children.
- In a Year 11 English lesson, support was provided in a mature and unobtrusive way so as not to embarrass or identify the pupils in any way.

16. Many pupils have individual education plans (IEPs) prepared from their annual reviews. Younger pupils have their IEPs broken down into smaller steps and targets and used as working documents on the wall of the classroom. Older pupils have these targets transferred into their school diaries and teachers check at the end of each lesson to see if targets have been achieved.

17. The way in which pupils are taught to use their ICT skills in other subjects is good. For example,

- In English, one Year 11 pupil successfully used a laptop computer to find out information about Charles Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'.
- In Year 8, pupils used ICT effectively for 'data logging' when experimenting to see if light travels in straight lines.
- In Year 11, pupils used ICT programmes to produce posters of the 'Holocaust'.
- In a Year 10 religious education lesson, pupils used word processing text to create their own 'ten commandments of the Christian religion'.
- In a Year 10 design and technology lesson, pupils were successfully using ICT in graphic design.

18. In the majority of subjects, the quality of teaching and learning has improved. However, there remains some small pockets where teaching and learning are less good, but still satisfactory. Science remains at satisfactory overall. This is because of the staffing difficulties the school has had in retaining a permanent science teacher. In geography at Key Stage 4, pupils have been taught recently mainly by a supply teacher, which has had the effect, that, the quality of teaching and learning remains satisfactory. In modern foreign languages (MFL), the school has worked hard to ensure the subject has been taught although because the responsible teacher has been off school for a long period of time, teaching has not been by a specialist and is only satisfactory. Similarly in music, the school has had difficulty recruiting and retaining a permanent music teacher. A peripatetic teacher has taught music and whilst this is good, it is for a limited time each week and not over as broad a curriculum as would otherwise be the case.

19. There are also areas where teaching and learning are predominately very good. In ICT, teaching and learning are good in the primary classes but consistently very good across the rest of the school. The main reasons for these very good areas are the strength of the subject leader's knowledge and understanding of the subject and the management of pupils in lessons.

20. The school has a 'home learning' policy. Pupils and parents can request work on an individual basis. One good example seen during the inspection was where two pupils who were attending a local high school for mathematics brought back extra work sheets which they could do in school with support, and take home as extra homework if they wished. Also, good quality literacy home-packs are available for younger pupils to take home, generally at the weekend. Extra help and support is given to parents who wish to help their children. Numeracy home packs are being prepared.

21. Since the last inspection, the significantly improved quality of teaching and learning has enhanced pupils' achievements in many subjects, including that of pupils with additional special needs.

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

22. The curriculum for lessons is satisfactory overall and meets statutory requirements. Some subjects are planned for very well, such as design and technology. Some subjects, whilst satisfactory planned for in the absence of a subject specialist, are not as strong, such as science, French and music. There has been good improvement since the last inspection with an increase in taught time for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Add to the subject curriculum a good variety of interesting and effective learning opportunities both on and off school site and curriculum provision for the pupils overall, is good. Staff ensure that pupils' numeracy skills are planned for well in many subjects including measuring and weighing in design and technology, angles and shape work in art and design and graphs, tally charts and other ways of recording data in science and ICT. Literacy skills are now being developed well such as the use of key words in ICT and plans for the teaching of English and history to be more closely linked for pupils in Years 7 to 11.

23. Class timetables show a full range of subjects taught to all pupils. However, timetables change regularly to accommodate extra activities such as 'circus skills' or 'sports skills'. During the week of the inspection, for example, history for pupils in Years 3 and 4 was replaced by sports and a Year 11 English lesson was lost as pupils went to play football against another school. This type of change is a regular occurrence and, in addition, some staff are not always fully aware of the changes to the timetable. Also, at times, there is an imbalance in the amount of physical education provided for pupils. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a swimming session for most of one morning followed by a physical education lesson in the afternoon. In the main, all pupils have a similar opportunity to take part in the good curriculum offered by the school. However, minor issues arise with some timetable changes. For example, when the majority of boys in Years 10 and 11 go to represent the school at football for a complete afternoon, the few pupils remaining, including all of the girls of the same age, work on accreditation modules for their projects, rather than have physical education. Also, one afternoon per week, some pupils attend the Parent Literacy project with their parents, which results in them missing their art lesson for the 15-week duration of the course. These alterations are not monitored by the school to ensure that over a period of time, pupils receive the balance of lessons to which they are entitled.

24. There is a good range of externally accredited courses including General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) for mathematics, vocational qualifications, the Certificate of

Achievement for mathematics, English, science and life skills and the bronze award of the Youth Award Scheme. The school has recently introduced accreditation for ICT although not yet for art and design and design and technology. These would make accreditation for the pupils even stronger. All of the external courses have a very positive impact on the pupils' opportunities to have their achievement recognised and is a good improvement on provision since the last inspection.

25. There is a recently prepared draft Special Education Needs (SEN) policy, which has yet to be presented to the governing body for its approval. In practice, there are good learning opportunities planned for all pupils, including those with additional learning difficulties. Provision, as set out in pupils' statements of special educational need is well met.

26. The provision for Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) is good, it is taught as a subject throughout the school on a weekly basis and covers health education, sex education and attention to drug misuse. Whilst citizenship is included in PHSE lessons, it is not fully built into other subjects such as geography and history. Plans are in place to develop this and include it in subject planning shortly. The school is late in introducing this.

27. There are very good and constructive relationships with other schools and colleges.

- Eight pupils in the Year 7 to Year 11 age range link with two local high schools. Arrangements vary to suit the needs of the pupils and subjects include mathematics, art, physical education and social opportunities.
- One Year 10 pupil attends a local college for two days per week where he has access to a decorating course.
- All Year 11 pupils work for three half days per week at college studying for their Edexcel Entry Level Certificate in Skills for Working Life, which includes pottery, life skills and careers.

28. Inclusion opportunities are not restricted to older pupils.

- Two younger pupils are included in two different local primary schools, one for daily mathematics and one for the full range of subjects covered during the weekly two day placement. This includes literacy and numeracy sessions.
- Two pupils from a local special school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties join in with all lessons at Middlehurst for one day per week including the choir.
- Pupils at both schools integrate regularly for educational projects. Also, this has worked well in the past with pupils from high schools.

These are opportunities for pupils to enhance their social and personal skills, behaviour and attitudes as well as their academic skills. It is a very strong area of school life.

29. Careers provision is good. It is well led and managed by a teacher and classroom assistant and includes work experience for pupils in their last full year at school and with weekly careers education for pupils in Years 7 to 11. There is a very comprehensive policy and scheme of work in place, which ensures pupils receive a broad spread of relevant activities. The careers provision in the school is well supported by Connexions, whose adviser visits the school regularly. In addition, the school makes very good use of additional funding to provide support for Year 11 pupils and their parents for one year after they leave school. It is reported that the majority of pupils gain in confidence because of this.

30. There are good links with the community. The school performs a Christmas play for the local hospital, Old Peoples' Home, local nursery, and a nearby pottery works each year. A



Youth Club for children with additional learning needs is held independently once a week in the school and some Year 11 pupils and past pupils attend. The Police Liaison Officer is presently coming into school every week to see pupils and work on drug abuse, anger management and self-esteem. The school nurse comes into school to teach pupils about sex education. Further afield, the school makes good use of supervised residential opportunities for pupils to extend their social and life skills by looking after themselves in a cottage on Anglesey.

31. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, overall. This provision is at the heart of what the school stands for and achieves. It provides a wide range of experiences to promote pupils' self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities. The care and commitment of staff in providing for pupils' personal development, has a positive impact on pupils' learning and the standards they achieve. However, planning opportunities to further develop this area of pupils' learning is not yet systematic in all subjects.

32. Provision for spiritual development is good. Assemblies always have a theme and include a time for reflection. Whilst this allows pupils to think of their own inner values and develop appreciation of the world around them, assemblies sometimes miss out opportunities for worship and praise. Pupils are given the opportunity to discuss their own feelings and to develop empathy with others during personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons. They are taught to respect each other and themselves. There is a high focus on the school's agreed set of values that is promoted and supported by the 'Golden Book', which recognises pupils' achievements and gives them aspirations to succeed. This creates a positive ethos throughout school where pupils feel valued by their friends and teachers and try hard to support each other. However the school does not have any visiting religious leaders or close links with any churches.

33. Provision for moral development is very good. This is because staff provide clear guidelines and very good models for individual behaviour, relationships and co-operative working. Through discussions during lessons, the programme for PSHE, opportunities for class discussion and assemblies, pupils of all ages have the opportunity to learn right from wrong. They are encouraged to become self-disciplined by the marking of their individual merit cards at the end of each lesson, which are entered into a weekly draw. The use of individual targets and daily monitoring sheets, for some pupils, is successful in helping them understand their own problems.

34. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to work and learn together in lessons, such as in physical education when they are expected to work as a team. Lunchtime seating is in mixed ages, which allows older pupils to set a good example of social skills for younger ones. The school provides a good range of activities outside of lessons where pupils socialise and build relationships with others within school and as part of the wider community. For example, the Junior Sports Leader programme, the weekly visit to the activity centre for the foundation stage pupils, college visits, work experience and residential trips. The school has recently appointed a Head and Deputy Head Girl and Boy from Year 11, to respond to decisions that affect pupils. This works similarly to a school council but is reliant on pupils canvassing all year groups for their opinions. This is working well.

35. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. Pupils investigate other countries in subjects such as history, geography and art and design. A visit to Amsterdam linked to Remembrance Day gave some pupils the opportunity to experience life in another country. Through their study of other faiths they learn about cultural differences in religion. Pupils are learning about life in a school in Gambia through the visits of the headteacher. This has resulted in pupils organising a junk sale, which enables them to provide the annual stationery

used by the African school.

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

36. The school takes good care of its pupils with a strong emphasis on pupils' personal and emotional well-being. Pastoral care is effective; it is linked to the strong provision for pupils' personal development and reflected in the good standards pupils achieve in their attitudes and behaviour and the good relationships that exist between everyone in the school.

37. Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are good, overall. The health and safety issues noted during the previous inspection have been improved as reported in the accommodation section of this report. The school has outside specialists to support pupils' medical needs, such as the physiotherapist and school nurse. This works well. Medication is dispensed appropriately. The head teacher is the designated person for child protection matters and is aware of his responsibilities. Having taken up this post only last term, he has not yet received the relevant training. Also, staff have not been trained sufficiently in line with the locally agreed procedures. Three members of staff hold full certificates for first aid. A member of staff and a governor work well to monitor health and safety in school and risk assessment training is organised. Health and safety procedures during lessons are good with teachers ensuring pupils are aware of the need to work safely and sensibly with equipment.

38. The school gives good support and guidance to pupils through the monitoring of their behaviour, attendance and personal development. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are very good. The reward systems, such as the weekly £5 draw for merit marks and the 'Golden Book' achievements for house points are very effective for most pupils. Overall, attendance procedures are satisfactory although not all teachers completed the registers properly during the inspection week. The school works closely with the Education Welfare Officer who tries very hard to improve the attendance of those who are the poorest attendees. Staff know pupils very well and support their personal development alongside the programme of personal, social and health education. A learning mentor funded through the education action zone (EAZ), has just started working with pupils on an individual basis to support their particular emotional needs.

39. The school has good arrangements for assessment. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection. There is now a whole school approach to assessment, which is based on a nationally recognised measurement of pre-national curriculum attainment. The school also makes national curriculum assessments of all subjects, as well as evaluations of their personal and social education. When pupils enter the school they are usually assessed carefully to determine their individual levels of attainment. The implementation of assessment procedures is carefully monitored by the head teacher, with the support of the school's data manager, who ensures that staff plan and match targets to the individual needs of the pupils.

40. Teachers collect information about pupils' standard of work in English, mathematics, science and personal and social education. Detailed assessment information is also routinely collected concerning pupils' work in the other subjects. However, for all of this data to be more meaningful, more work is needed to ensure that individual teacher's assessments are checked to make sure they are as accurate as possible. This information is pulled together reasonably consistently, so that information for pupils' annual reviews is as up-to-date as possible. Teachers and learning support assistants use assessment opportunities in lessons, with teachers regularly recording their evaluations in their planning, assessment and

recording logs.

41. The school has a good amount of data available in all subjects to show trends and changes over time. The school analyses the information it has in order to track progress and make judgements on the attainment of individuals, and for different groups of pupils in the school in comparison to the national picture. More recently, the school has begun to monitor achievement for different ethnic groups, and for boys and girls. The school also assesses pupils' individual 'learning styles', which includes an element of self-assessment. It uses this information to target different ways of teaching and to highlight needs, for example, extra reading for the older pupils.

42. Information obtained from the pupils' statements of special educational needs, including the short term and long term objectives, is used well to formulate targets on individual education and behaviour plans for those pupils who are in need of them. The pupils' individual targets are addressed consistently by the teachers and support staff, and are effective in supporting pupils' achievement and in helping to overcome any pupils' behavioural difficulties that there may be.

43. Each pupil has his or her statement reviewed on an annual basis, which also acts as an annual report for pupils. All parents are invited. From this comprehensive review, covering all national curriculum subjects, religious education and PSHE, an individual education plan (IEP) is drawn up if the pupil would benefit from such a plan. If parents attend this meeting, they are consulted about the contents of an IEP, with the intention that it will be reviewed at the next annual review. This fits in well with the new code of practice on Special Educational Needs drawn up by the Department for Education and Skills (DFES). For those pupils in Years 1 to 6 who need an IEP, the targets are broken down well into smaller steps and a working document is placed on the wall in the classroom. Targets are ticked off when achieved and amended when necessary. For pupils in Years 7 to 11, their targets are put into their personal school diary, and staff check on a regular basis to see if targets are being met. When targets are met, they may then be amended and new targets set, or it may be considered there is no longer a need for the pupils to have an IEP. This works well and shows good progress for pupils against the targets set. However, the copies of some pupils' statements held in school have not been fully completed.

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

44. The partnership with parents has improved significantly since the previous inspection and is now very good. All parents, who expressed an opinion, think that teaching is good and the school is well led and managed. They are pleased that the school promotes the right values, increases their children's confidence and supports their knowledge of life skills for when they are out of school. They consider the school is doing a good job and improving their children's lives particularly with the range of opportunities and experiences available to them. Inspectors agree with this. A small number of parents expressed concern about homework. Inspection findings show that pupils need a lot of support to complete work. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 regularly take home good quality learning packs. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 are frequently asked to find out information for a subsequent lesson that helps with their learning. Formal written homework is not regularly given but can be requested by parents. The school has not made this option sufficiently clear to some parents.

45. The school provides a broad range of information to keep parents well informed on the school's aims, organisation and events, including a regular newsletter. Pupils' individual reports, which form part of their annual review of special educational needs, provide very good information on progress. They are very detailed telling parents what pupils can and

cannot do in each subject and setting targets for improvement in English and mathematics. Parents have a meeting to discuss these with staff. In the past staff have held an additional open evening or meeting with parents, but these were very poorly attended and discontinued. However, parents know they are welcome in school at any time to talk to staff and do not appear to want more than one meeting a year.

46. Through the College in the Community initiative, parents attend courses in school for literacy, numeracy, computers, first aid and making story sacks for use at school. Parents feel their own learning is supported well by the school and enables them to better help their children. During the inspection, five more parents started a fifteen-week course for Family Literacy giving them the opportunity to work with tutors, staff and their children for a full day each week. The help they are given travelling to and from the school made it possible for them to attend and is much appreciated.

47. Parents make a good contribution to the work of the school, overall. Family circumstances and the distance some pupils travel to school limits the amount of support parents can give in school. Three parents regularly help in classrooms as a result of attending the parent volunteer course. The school has all of its parent-governor places filled. A small number of parents are on the fundraising committee and have successfully helped to raise £2,500 since September 2002. This reflects the value parents and the wider community place on the school and its achievements.

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

48. Since the previous full inspection in June 1997, three head teachers have led the school. Between them, they have ensured that the school has made good improvement. The most obvious improvements are in:

- The quality of teaching and learning, which includes teachers and classroom assistants working more closely together;
- Extending the role of school governors in the day-to-day life of the school;
- Improving how staff find out just how well pupils' are doing in their work by measuring their progress; and
- Developing very strong links with other special schools, mainstream schools and colleges. This results in some pupils receiving teaching, which is at times organised so that they have most of their learning in one school but are taught some lessons in another school where this is of benefit to them either academically or socially.

49. A lot of these improvements have come together since September 2002. The current headteacher was officially appointed only one week before the inspection although he had been leading the school in an acting capacity since September 2002. Prior to that he had been the school's deputy headteacher. Overall, leadership and management of the school is good. They have been gathering pace and increasing in effectiveness since September 2002 in a number of areas such as:

- The clarity and precision of school improvement planning;
- The governing body's role in financial planning;
- Checking on how well pupils are being taught in their lessons;
- Providing more help, advice and training to staff in areas, which are the focus for development.

50. The headteacher and his senior staff are leading this process well and are very clear what the school needs to do immediately to improve further. This is clearly known in school

and is prioritised and costed in the school improvement plan, which has appropriate measures of success. The plan covers 12 months from September 2002. As such, the management of the process is good and is improving at a pace. Particular areas for development include:

- Providing further opportunities for all staff to take part in training for managing the difficult behaviour of some pupils;
- Improving governors' understanding of their role;
- Completing the New Opportunities Fund training in ICT, which has already been very successful to date;
- Ensuring performance management, that should have been fully in place previously, is now effective for all teachers;
- Ensuring Citizenship education is more fully planned for in all of the subjects.
- Tracking pupils' progress, their curriculum and the teaching offered to them to see if it is the best it can be. For example, during the week of the inspection, some pupils lost time in reading, handwriting, history, ICT and art to take part in 'circus skills and additional sports skills. The school does not yet check on pupils affected by this to see if these changes are having a positive or negative effect on their learning.

51. All other staff with management responsibilities play their part in this improvement. For example, some staff have taken the opportunity to check on how effectively teachers are helping pupils to progress. They have checked that agreed ways of working are actually happening. This has been successful for many staff and has led to advice for development in subjects being taken 'on board' and improvements being made. Improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement in ICT are just one example of this. As a result, ICT is now a strength of the school.

52. There are sufficient teaching and support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Overall, staff expertise is good. However, some staff absence and resignations have led to some subjects not being led as well as others. Whilst other permanent staff and supply staff have tried hard to maintain effective learning opportunities for the pupils, including a very effective science teacher employed for the week of the inspection, the subjects of science, geography, French and music have not been developed as well as other subjects. This has hindered pupils' progress.

53. The building has seen a number of improvements to overcome concerns raised in the last inspection report. New security fencing has been erected around the whole school and suitable fencing erected for the under-fives pupils' playground. Several classrooms have been enlarged to give more space to meet the needs of pupils. There is a new music room, computer suite and a food technology room. Dust extractors have been fitted in the technology areas. Whilst the accommodation is good overall, the school does not have ease of access or toilets for the disabled. There is no medical room or area suitable for changing pupils who have difficulties with toileting needs. Current practices do not maintain pupils' dignity. Also, the lack of soap in pupils' toilet areas and a missing toilet door impinge on pupils' privacy and welfare needs. The school has identified the need for external ventilation in the girls' toilets and a safety surface for the Class 1 playground. Resources for teaching and learning are good in most subjects with the exception of physical education and French where they are satisfactory.

54. The school has benefited from the support of an interested governing body since the last inspection. However, it is only recently that governors have begun to gain more first-hand evidence of how the school is doing. Previously, governors used detailed reports from the

headteacher as the major source of information to form an opinion about the school's success. They are now taking on individual responsibilities such as for literacy and numeracy, which requires them to find out more directly and monitor just how well things are going. In September 2002, governors realised that performance management had only been partially implemented. Whilst the process has now been set up fully, it will take time to have the impact on staff development and pupils' achievement. Whilst their role is currently satisfactory, governors are becoming increasingly involved in the day-to-day running of the school. Their school development plan sets out very clearly recognised areas for improvement. Their contribution is showing clear signs of getting stronger. However, they have yet to ensure that their annual report to parents contains details of the success of their Special Educational Needs policy.

55. The school had a full audit of its budget in 2000. Whilst most points for improvement have been carried out, three points remained outstanding:

- The school does not renew annually the governors' and staff's register of pecuniary interests
- The school's private funds are not yet audited annually by a person independent to the school and
- A balance sheet of these funds should be provided for the governors to be signed by the Chair of the Governing Body.

56. Governors' involvement in longer-term financial planning is developing well. They ensure best value is met well in financial terms. They keenly pursue the best quotation for major spending commitments such as the new fencing around the school. Having committed funding to this, awaiting the best quotation overlapped the end of the financial year. Also, their concerns about supply costs for covering staff absence led to a carry forward in the school budget of £59,980 at the end of the year 2001/2002. Planned spending in the current year has all but used this money. The school uses the data it has to compare how well it is doing against similar schools. Whilst this works well it does not yet include moderating the school's principle method of teacher assessment with a similar school so that comparisons can be even more meaningful. Under the leadership and management of the new headteacher, governors are generally clear what is working well and what they need to do to ensure even greater success. The school is developing a 'can do' atmosphere where they are keen to challenge themselves to improve further. Staff morale is very high. This is not just in areas where development is clearly needed such as French, music or science but in driving on areas that are already doing very well such as ICT or inclusion links with other schools and colleges. The school is addressing the principles of best value well and shows every sign of pushing on further with this. Excellence is on the school's agenda.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

To build on the good improvement since the last inspection;

- (1) Ensure the school's self-evaluation procedures take fully into account;
  - Full implementation of performance management; (\*)
  - More structured monitoring of teaching and learning;(\*)
  - Monitoring the effects of regularly changing subject timetables on pupils' individual learning needs and their entitlement to a full curriculum;
  - Checking between teachers in school and comparisons with similar schools that all teachers' understandings of levels on nationally recognised assessments are accurate;
  - Increased accreditation opportunities, particularly in art and design.

*( Paragraphs 23, 50, 73, 80 and 91 )*

- (2) Train staff in the skills needed to manage the difficult behaviour of some pupils; (\*)

*( Paragraphs 13, 50, 78, 87, 94, 100, 103 )*

- (3) Provide up-to-date training for staff in line with locally agreed child protection procedures.

*( Paragraph 37 )*

In addition to the development points above, the following less important issue should be considered for inclusion in the school action plan:

- Ensure the changing facilities for all pupils with toileting needs maintains their privacy and dignity;

*( Paragraphs 53 and 58 )*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	81
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	18	37	22	2		
Percentage	2	22	46	28	2		

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	91
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	62

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	22
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.5

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	5.4

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete 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	78	5	2
White – Irish			
White – any other White background			
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean			
Mixed – White and Black African			
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background			
Asian or Asian British - Indian			
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	10		
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi			
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background			
Black or Black British – Caribbean			
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background			
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group	3		
No ethnic group recorded			

*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: YR – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	11.2
Average class size	10

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	328

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	661926
Total expenditure	669256
Expenditure per pupil	7196
Balance brought forward from previous year	67310
Balance carried forward to next year	59980

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **KEY STAGE 4 ACCREDITATION.**

GCSE mathematics	2 pupils at Grade G
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**Course results in 2001/2002 showing the number of pupils at each level accredited in the Certificate of Educational Achievement.**

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
ENGLISH	3	2	1
MATHEMATICS	2	9	2
SCIENCE	2	0	0
LIFE SKILLS	1	2	0

Junior Sports Leaders Award	2 pupils
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## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	91
Number of questionnaires returned	28

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	79	21			
My child is making good progress in school.	79	14			7
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	43	7		7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	29	21		11
The teaching is good.	79	21			
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	89	11			
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	18			7
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	25			
The school works closely with parents.	79	21			
The school is well led and managed.	86	14			
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	75	21			4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	68	14	4		14

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

57. At the time of the inspection there were three children of reception age on the school's roll. Prior to joining the school pupils have usually attended the Child Development Unit or Special Nursery provision available in the area. The children have a range of physical difficulties and associated learning difficulties. Reception age children are taught alongside Year 1 pupils who follow a curriculum modified for their needs taking into account the Early Learning Goals of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Parents visit the school with their child before the children start school and meet the class teacher. This establishes good contact and gives opportunities for parents to ask questions and for staff to explain the routines of school life. There is also a useful and welcoming parents' booklet that sets out school procedures.

58. On entry to school, children are carefully assessed and each child's needs are catered for. Individual education targets are set. There is great care taken that children are fully included in all learning activities and although some pupils are still at a very early developmental stage, all are included equally in the learning process. In English and mathematics the curriculum is planned in line with the modified national literacy and numeracy strategy's framework, with great emphasis placed on language development and the needs of the individual child. All other subjects are very well integrated into the school day and often linked carefully to the theme of the current class reading book. The classroom is well resourced and there are satisfactory play areas both indoors and outdoors. However changing facilities for children with toileting needs is unacceptable. They are currently changed on a small plastic mattress on the floor of the toilet area.

59. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Children's achievements are valued and praised and encouragement is used effectively to build confidence. Good teamwork between the teacher and support staff makes best use of everyone's skills to promote the children's progress. The teacher uses her knowledge and understanding of the children's needs to provide a range of interesting first hand experiences, which are designed to encourage the children to learn. They are gradually responding to symbols such as happy and sad faces, which are helping pupils to socialise more but in the interim some group sessions can appear to be a little non-communicative.

60. Overall, all pupils show good progress across most areas of development. Language skills are poor on entry and despite additional support and specific language development programmes progress is only satisfactory at this early stage in the children's school life. The provision for the children in the early years is good. Work is well planned and good attention is given to checking just how well the children are learning and progressing. Early Learning Goals are highlighted as they are achieved in the class assessment and recording book. This is good practice.

### **Personal, social and emotional development**

61. Teaching is good and reflects the emphasis given to this area of learning. Staff are very aware of the children's needs and promote personal, social and emotional development well through all aspects of school life. Daily routines are established consistently so that the children come to learn what is expected of them. Children are treated with care and respect and their contributions are valued. Although their concentration span is often extremely short,

the children are interested and try hard to learn. They are encouraged to try different activities, make choices, and communicate their thoughts. For example, talking about their feelings with an adult when they together to make an invitation to tea. Pupils' behaviour is well managed throughout the day partly because of the appropriate and interesting work they are given to do. Positive praise given in a range of ways including 'happy face' cards is very successful in ensuring that children know when they have done well. Regular opportunities for children to work together to take part in for example singing and play, ensures that the children learn to work and play alongside each other well.

### **Communication, language and literacy**

62. Children achieve as well as expected in language and literacy and this is due to good teaching. Most start the reception class with very poorly developed language and literacy skills. Some children are reluctant to speak at all whilst others speak indistinctly in single words and short phrases. Because the teacher plans very small steps in learning towards the Early Learning Goals, the children improve over time. During the inspection children used single words and gestures to respond to simple instructions and pictures. One pupil said 'miaow' in response to a picture of a cat. There is good support from the speech and language teacher. The teacher uses large text and picture books well, which results in children who listen to, look at and are interested in the stories. They have a better recall of characters and events than their language allows them to express. The children have an understanding of how books work for example turning pages correctly, holding the book the right way up and knowing that print carries meaning. Children are given opportunities to make marks on paper. They are in the early stages of learning to hold and use pencils and crayons correctly for writing. They understand that marks and symbols convey meaning.

### **Mathematical development**

63. Teaching is good and children make good progress in mathematical skills and understanding. They respond to and join in with familiar number rhymes, stories and games. A good example of this is when children join in with the song 'Peter hammers with one hammer'. They have an awareness of the similarities of shapes and name a circle, square and triangle. They match shapes during matching game. When working in a group the children are beginning to show some understanding of number order to five and enjoy using the magnetic numbers. ICT is used well to support learning; for example, there was great excitement from one child who, with support from the classroom assistant to guide his hand, was able to complete a shape picture on the computer.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

64. Teaching and learning are good. Much of the work is practical with a good range of materials to reinforce learning. The school and surrounding area are used very well to make learning exciting. The children walk to the local park to feed the ducks. They learn why this is a good thing to do, which contributes much to their spiritual development. They learn about the materials that their homes and furniture are made of and think about which furniture and equipment is used in each room. As a follow up to this they use 'junk' materials to make a model house and build their own model houses using construction materials. They look carefully at the various building projects near to the school and visit a large 'do it yourself' store to look more closely at the materials that 'Bob the Builder' might need to complete his building.

### **Physical development**

65. It is not possible to make a judgement on teaching and learning because of the limited

opportunities to observe this during the inspection. However the brief observations made and scrutiny of lesson plans and photographs points to it being at least satisfactory. There are good opportunities for the development of fine motor control as children squeeze, roll and cut play dough. With adult help, they trace pictures and shapes of houses. The last inspection judged provision for physical development to be unsatisfactory because there were few opportunities for pupils to join in with activities such as climbing, balancing or riding and steering tricycles or toy vehicles. There are now satisfactory opportunities for the children to experience most of these activities either within school or on the playground. The outside play area although well stocked with wheeled toys, still offers limited activities. There is no large apparatus such as climbing equipment or slides and no covered play area. The surface of part of the playground is rough and unsuitable. However, plans are in place to rectify this and every effort has been made in the short term to offer a very good alternative. Children visit regularly 'The Adventure Playground' in Newcastle. This is excellent indoor and outdoor provision for children, which greatly enhances all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum, in particular their spiritual, moral social and cultural development.

### **Creative development**

66. Teaching and learning are good. Good opportunities are provided for both informal and formal role-play. Play areas are well organised to stimulate the children's imagination, with opportunities for them to dress up, for example, in 'Bob the Builder's' clothes and work in the 'builders yard'. Good opportunities are provided for the children to explore colour, texture and shapes in their work. Using water paints, they are beginning to identify and differentiate between colours when making marks and movement on paper. They explore textures when painting with their hands. Children learn routines by joining in with simple songs such as the 'Hello' song. Because they are eager to have a turn they sit up straight. When the teacher uses a puppet they listen carefully to and begin to understand the words of for example 'Five little monkeys'.

### **ENGLISH**

67. Pupils' achievement and progress in English is satisfactory in each of the areas of speaking and listening, reading and writing. This maintains standards from the last inspection. For pupils to achieve at a better rate than this, teaching has to improve pupils' listening skills, their reluctance to read books and their lack of confidence in their own skills, particularly in putting down their thoughts in writing. This has started to happen with the new co-ordinator in place. The quality of teaching and learning in the past was affected by the inadequacy of use of ICT within the subject and inconsistencies in teaching because of staff absence and illness. New systems are now in place for targeting reading and writing and tracking pupils' progress. The introduction of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy over the past term is beginning to have an impact on standards and the staff development in ICT funded by New Opportunity Funding is beginning to improve teachers' expertise. The need for improvement in pupils' overall achievement in English has already been recognised by the school and is a priority for development. All Year 11 pupils are entered for the Certificate of Achievement. In 2002, all pupils achieved passes at grades one to three.

68. The majority of pupils now entering the school start with poor communication skills. To support this, the school has organised speech and language therapy, which involves specialist advice and specific programmes for staff to use with the pupils. During a numeracy session with a Year 1 group, higher attaining pupils recalled verbally simple words from their book such as clock, whisk and fridge. Lower attaining pupils succeeded using a recognised hand-signing system to show their understanding. By the end of Year 2 pupils still continue to receive language support, although signing by staff was not evident in lessons during the inspection. Whilst higher attaining pupils are progressing, for example, in

recognising rhyming words, at times, other pupils only receive partial encouragement to communicate either verbally or with signing. Year 3 and 4 pupils are currently making very good progress with their speaking and listening. After joining in with reading a story about 'The Flying Turtle', pupils recalled impressively parts of the story such as the 'turtle had promised to sing more sweetly if he was allowed to go on the grass.' Pupils with speech and language needs are given time and encouragement by staff and pupils so that they can join in fully. By Year 6, achievement has slowed a little. Although some pupils progress well, others lose interest whilst listening to stories and are inclined to shout out and become distracted very easily.

69. By the end of Year 9, achievement remains satisfactory. The introduction of the literacy strategy is beginning to have some effect; differentiated tasks are assisting lower attaining pupils. However, pupils have a reluctance to listen and express opinions. By the end of Year 11 pupils are prepared to record a role-play activity about 'A Christmas Carol'. Higher attaining pupils recall the plot of stories such as how one of the main characters in the story 'The Silver Sword' stripped his clothes off and put the guard's clothes on to disguise himself. Also, they describe the character of Scrooge with words like horrible, twisted, stupid and nasty. They have good recall of the story plot. However, lower attaining pupils still find it difficult to express themselves verbally and at times, are short of encouragement to do so.

70. In writing, Year 1 pupils arrive in school with little or no writing skills. They begin to develop pencil control. Higher attaining pupils trace over shapes whilst other pupils make shapes with play dough. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils develop their writing satisfactorily. Pupils shape letters clearly and leave spaces between words. They sometimes use full stops and commas. By the end of Year 6, pupils test their own spelling skills using a computer program. Whilst some pupils progress well and improve their hand control such as for writing or cutting with scissors, achievement for the majority is satisfactory. By the end of Year 9 pupils remain reluctant writers and although higher attaining pupils produce neat joined up writing, it lacks substance. There is an over use of work sheets, which restrict creativity in writing. The new subject co-ordinator has recognised this and a different approach is being introduced. Also, ICT is not as fully in use as it could be to help pupils become more confident with their writing skills. The school has over the past term identified the need for improvement in handwriting and presentation and this is being targeted.

71. Pupils' achievement and progress in reading is satisfactory throughout the school. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils read simple text whilst others are beginning to show an interest in books and reading. Years 3 and 4 pupils move onto putting into sequence, main events of stories such as 'The Flying Turtle.' Achievement continues to be satisfactory so that by the end of Year 6, although some pupils progress well, achievement by the majority is what would be expected. They discuss the relevant aspects of pictures in their storybooks and with this in mind read words at times with adult help and gain an understanding of what is happening. By the end of Year 9 pupils are read and follow instructions with assistance, for example, in constructing a model of the Globe Theatre. Higher attaining pupils access the Internet to find out about the life of William Shakespeare. Since last September the school has introduced reading sessions for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to improve their skills. This is working well and is having some impact on standards. However the variety of reading materials available for the older pupils has been narrow. The new co-ordinator is tackling this and additional resources are being sought. The library is in need of improvement and books and reading materials made more readily available to pupils. Broadening pupils' experiences such as visits to the local library, visiting poets or travelling theatre companies do not yet enrich pupils' literacy experience.

72. Whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, some good and very good examples were observed during the inspection. In good lessons with Years 9 to 11 and a very

good lesson with Years 3 and 4, teachers' planning for lessons were linked very clearly with pupils' current knowledge so that regardless of age or ability, pupils learning was exactly at the right level for them. This helps to motivate pupils. They responded by working hard and really enjoyed the work. In the best lessons, teachers and support assistants manage pupils' behaviour very well, partly because of the very good relationship built with pupils.

73. Checking how the subject is developing in the school does take place by the co-ordinator although this has not been carried out consistently in the past. The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the contents of its lessons. Links with history through 'War Poems' is just one example of this. Assessment is now good, pupils' progress is being tracked and learning targets are now clear and are reviewed regularly. This good practice has not been in place long enough for improvement in pupils' achievement to have taken hold. However, this bodes well for the future.

## **MATHEMATICS**

74. Overall standards of achievement in mathematics are good and this is an improvement since the last inspection when it was judged to be satisfactory. Whatever their gender, age, ethnic background or prior ability, pupils make good progress throughout the school. The main strengths of the subject are its leadership, the very effective implementation of a well-modified National Numeracy Strategy, the quality of teaching, the knowledge that teachers have of the pupils' learning difficulties and the pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships.

75. By the end of Year 2, higher attaining pupils recognise numbers one to 20, write numbers 1 to ten and complete simple addition sums. They order objects by size and height, using language such as 'long', 'short', and 'straight' accurately. Lower attaining pupils and those with additional special educational needs complete much of their work verbally. With much adult support, they draw comparisons between objects' length and label pictures either shorter or longer. They count to ten accurately, fill in missing numbers on a number line and are gradually improving their understanding of counting. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils complete addition sums to 20 and have a good understanding of the 'hundred number square'. They count to 100, in twos, fives and tens. They are beginning to become familiar with counting in twos'. They distinguish between tens and units, add coins to 20 pence and know the meaning of 'more' and 'less'. Pupils name most simple two and three-dimensional shapes and recognise and recreate simple patterns. Lower attaining pupils build their understanding of numbers to 20 and have a good understanding of numbers that add up to ten. They draw and describe two-dimensional shapes. This learning is very successfully reinforced by their teacher through the use of 'shape bingo' and computer work. They sort three-dimensional objects by one criterion, such as colour, and begin to understand the passing of time, such as morning, dinner and home time.

76. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils add money up to £1. They add and subtract two digit numbers and understand the relationship between multiplication and division. They use calculators to check their answers. They recognise simple fractions and are beginning to work with decimals, especially to do with money. When working on data problems, they record their results well using tally charts, frequency tables and set out their answers as a bar chart on the computer. Lower attaining pupils complete similar tasks using centimetre squares to measure area and perimeters. At times, they are so involved that they are reluctant to stop at the end of the lesson. They need much support to achieve well. By Year 11, higher attaining pupils work towards the General Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (GCSE). Other pupils take the Certificate of Educational Achievement and Youth Award Scheme Bronze. Higher attaining pupils understand doubling and halving, and



complete mental calculations quickly and accurately. They recognise how simple fractions that are written differently can mean the same amount. They convert fractions to decimals and vice versa. They have a firm understanding of acute, obtuse and reflex angles. Lower achieving pupils calculate the perimeter of simple shapes through the use of squared paper. They name angles such as acute, obtuse or right angle. They record data in a range of ways such as tally lists, pictograms or bar charts.

77. Mathematics is not restricted to mathematics lessons. Pupils use length and angle measurements in design and technology and shapes to form abstract art in the style of artists like Kandinsky. Pupils have the opportunity to build on their skills in computer work but this approach is underdeveloped with all age ranges, particularly in 'data handling'. The school has begun to build this into the curriculum. Following the completion of staff training in computer skills, the school intends this area is further developed.

78. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good with some very good examples during the inspection in Years 9 and 10. This is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was judged only to be satisfactory with Years 7 to 11. The main strengths of the mathematics teaching are the high expectations that teachers have that the pupils will succeed in the tasks set, backed up by knowledge of pupils' different learning styles and how best to build on learning so that pupils succeed. Good behaviour management and consistent application of these routines provide pupils with a secure way of working to which they respond well. In the best lessons, teachers show much enthusiasm, lessons run at a brisk pace but are very suitably matched to each pupil's level of ability. As a result, pupils make good progress because they are confident in themselves to get the answers right or to be able to ask for help when they are unsure. They show obvious enjoyment in the activities. Generally, there is a very good working atmosphere and relationships are very good. On occasions some pupils with additional needs cause disruption within a class, despite valiant efforts by staff to maintain learning for all pupils, it is affected detrimentally.

79. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully launched in Years 7 to 9. This has given a good framework for staff to follow when teaching. Lessons start with a short mental warm up and learning is reinforced at the end of the lesson by a plenary session, where pupils are praised and rewarded for their efforts. Work is matched to individual needs and within the secondary classes pupils are grouped according to their ability, rather than age. Support staff make a very positive contribution. They know the pupils very well and often pre-empt situations arising, thus avoiding confrontations or problems. Resources are adeptly used and changes of activity are skilfully timed, resulting usually in motivated pupils participating fully in their work. Studying for nationally accredited examinations motivates older pupils very well. Through the good role models of staff, activities which demand taking turns, working together, co-operating, collaborating and thinking about the needs of others, mathematics contributes well to the moral and social development of pupils.

80. The subject shows a good improvement since the last inspection and is well managed by the co-ordinator. Teachers keep detailed records of pupils' attainment assessed in the main, against nationally recognised levels. This information is used well when planning future work. It helps to judge pupils' progress over time. However, this will only become really meaningful when the teachers check between themselves, and with staff in other schools, that they have a shared understanding of what a pupil has to know, understand or do to be successful at each level being assessed. Until then, staff cannot be sure just how well pupils are progressing.

## SCIENCE

81. Achievement in science is satisfactory for pupils of all ages. Pupils make sound progress in their scientific knowledge and understanding and in building-up their investigative skills. This is the same as was reported at the time of the last inspection for pupils in Years 1 and 2. It is not as good for other pupils. The subject has been a relatively strongly performing one, but has suffered because of staffing illness and absences in the past year. This is likely to continue until a specialist science teacher and subject manager is appointed.

82. By Year 2, pupils learn to observe objects and living things. When sorting objects, pupils responded positively to the resources provided; for example, when sorting a range of man made objects composed of different materials, in comparison with natural fibres. They measure the growth of plants and explore simple features of living things, and know which appliances in the home use electricity. By Year 6 pupils understand the effect of exercise on the pulse rate and know that the earth moves, rather than the sun. They understand that light travels from a source and that micro-organisms cause illness and decay. By Year 9 pupils understand the effects of forces and of friction. They are aware of the importance of healthy eating, and the difference between protein and carbohydrates. By Year 11 pupils know the structure and functions of the ear, how sounds are made and how sound travels. Most wire an electrical plug and know what is, and what is not, a chemical change. For example, heating water as opposed to boiling an egg.

83. Teaching and learning are satisfactory usually with all classes. This is the case currently for pupils in Years 1 to 6. However, during the inspection, teaching and learning were very good with pupils in Years 7 to 11 because the school employed for that week only, a science specialist who knows the pupils well, has an excellent grasp of the subject and has very high expectations for pupils of all abilities. The quality of specialist accommodation is good, as are equipment and resources, and these were used very effectively during the inspection. The older pupils responded very well to the very high expectations of them in terms of both their work and behaviour. These lessons were all characterised by purposeful and brisk practical activities, which ensured that every pupil participated. Because they were so interested in what they were doing, pupils of all ability sustained their concentration throughout the double lessons, so that time was well spent. The teacher had very clear objectives, which built carefully on pupils' previous learning. The quality of the discussion, through effective questioning, was very good. Although the quality of teaching and learning of the younger pupils was not at such a high standard, the teacher provided a range of resources and materials to gain pupils' attention and, for example, the higher attaining were stretched sufficiently to sort and identify waste materials successfully. Homework and marking of pupils' work are not used consistently to challenge those pupils who would benefit from it, to achieve more.

84. Numeracy skills are well promoted in science. For example, Year 6 pupils measure their own weight and understand that the earth, sun and moon are roughly spherical in shape. Year 11 pupils work out the cost of running different domestic electrical appliances and the speed of moving vehicles by dividing distance traveled by time. Literacy is less well developed because too many undemanding worksheets are used, especially in Years 1 to 6; and too much work is unfinished by the older pupils. During the inspection very good use was made of ICT. Pupils in Year 8 used a data logger to measure light, while in Year 11 pupils used it to measure speed. The higher attaining pupils use the personal computer to enter their data on spreadsheets and print their results of experiments as graphs.

85. Some of the higher-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 work towards external accreditation. This varies from year to year. For example, results were better in 2001 than in 2002 although the numbers of pupils in year groups has a bearing on this. There is scope for

more accreditation in Year 11 because, as was demonstrated during the inspection, where teachers challenge pupils to develop their scientific thinking, the pupils respond very positively to the subject.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

86. The achievement of boys and girls, including those with more complex special needs, are consistently good for pupils of all ages. This is good improvement since the last inspection when work was satisfactory for Years 1 to 6 and it was not possible to make a judgement about the work and progress of older pupils. The improvement is largely because of the emphasis placed by teachers on the basic skills of drawing and design with pupils in Years 1 to 6 and giving Year 7 to 11 pupils a wider range of experiences particularly in the work of famous artists. Also, the enthusiasm, skills and subject knowledge of the teacher who teaches the majority of the pupils and improved accommodation and learning resources which are now good have all contributed to the improvement in the standard of work, skills and knowledge of pupils.

87. The majority of teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Pupils make good progress as a result of lessons being well planned and work that is well prepared. Tasks are introduced enthusiastically and lessons are effectively organised. As a result, pupils of all abilities fully participate and achieve well. On occasions, pupils with more complex behaviours reduce the overall effectiveness of lessons because of the time used by staff to respond to their needs. However, teaching is never less than satisfactory.

88. By the end of Year 2, pupils have a good understanding of the basic skills of cutting, painting and sticking. Building on these skills helps pupils by the end of Year 6, to be successful in using a wide range of styles and materials. Pupils' work shows teaching of art that provides a rich cultural experience. Important examples of this included the work on shapes in Aboriginal art, the rich colours of African art and the draughtsmanship of Egyptian art.

89. Through Years 7 to 11, pupils build a clear understanding and appreciation of the work of a wide range of famous artists. The teaching enables pupils to reflect on and to practice the skills of artists as diverse as Gaudi, Lowry and Kandinsky and designers in other media such as Clarice Cliff, Ghanaian artwork, Kente paper weaving and Chinese potters. As a result of exposure to such a wide range of art in the company of an enthusiastic teacher, pupils respond by using their imagination and skills increasingly well. Year 11 pupils attend the local college for art. This allows them to extend their work into ceramics with good results. Also, three pupils have begun to integrate into art lessons at local high school.

90. The school is fortunate to have as one of their governors a lecturer in art who has done considerable work with the pupils. Pupils are most proud of their tiled millennium mural in the school foyer. Almost every child can describe how it was made and where their contribution is positioned on the wall.

91. The leadership and management of art are good. The co-ordinator works with other teachers, monitors their planning and checks on pupils' achievement. The quality of teaching has been checked and areas for development discussed. Whilst art plays a very important part in the life of the school, external accreditation of pupils' standards has yet to be decided upon and the use of ICT is only partially in place.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

92. The provision for design and technology has improved since the last inspection. The co-ordinator is working very effectively to raise standards and to ensure that pupils achieve well in the subject. Pupils whatever their gender, age, ethnic background and prior ability, make good progress throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were found to be satisfactory overall.

93. By the end of Year 2, pupils develop early design skills well by learning to make choices. For example, they choose from a good range of construction equipment and create a range of objects or, with adult support; they design and make a hand puppet of an underground animal. During this time pupils improve their listening and speaking skills and learn to use mathematical language. By Year 6, pupils design a wind chime using recycled materials and cat bells. Using card, coloured-paper, felt tips, split pins and sticks they make shadow puppets, for example, of an old man with a moving head. They look at a range of adverts and products in deciding why they have been designed in that particular way. They show good understanding of terminology such as 'mock up'. Pupils recognise and describe ingredients for a snack meal, and take great pleasure in preparing a healthy breakfast.

94. By Year 9, pupils work on making their own 'source of light'. They develop ideas on different designs and select some of the tools necessary to complete, for example, their own torch. They investigate the use of switches, motors, batteries and bulbs as they experiment and test out their ideas. With adult support, they solve their design problems. They work in exactly the same way and with the same level of success in making sandwiches as part of their preparation for a mini enterprise scheme to be achieved by Easter. The subject makes a good contribution to numeracy and literacy skills, when for example in a food technology lesson, the teacher takes the opportunity to talk about the 'doubling of germs' if cleanliness is ignored, the weighing of products and the reading of labels and product information.

95. By Year 11, pupils build well on previous knowledge and skills. When designing their own mobile phone they complete very good design plans using added texture, shading and suggestions for features, materials and the necessary tools. They measure and cut materials accurately and work sensibly when using the sanding machine. They follow health and safety rules closely. Some pupils work independently using the computer to produce their designs although the school does not yet have the computer controlled facilities to turn designs into a manufactured product. Despite this, finished products are of high quality. Boys and girls work well together and there is no difference in the quality of their work. Pupils with additional needs are well supported and they meet their targets for design and technology. All pupils are working to achieve their school health and safety certificate.

96. Teaching is good overall with very good teaching observed in one lesson for pupils in Year 10. Lessons are well-planned using ongoing projects, which contain processes that help pupils to develop their design and make skills well. Teachers use questioning skilfully and effectively to enable the pupils to recall what they know and make them think about what they will need for the project and how to organise their work. Pupils are given good opportunities to use literacy skills in lessons because teachers ensure they record their work carefully and identify key vocabulary to be used. Teachers insist on high standards of presentation and so each pupil's 'design-and-make' brief is neat and tidy. There is an emphasis on pupils using their measurements skills and vocabulary. Personal development is well promoted; for example, during practical tasks there is a good mix of direct instruction, questioning and adult support, that allows older pupils to work on their own for periods of time. Lower attaining pupils are well involved because of the sensitive support given by the teachers and support assistants. Teachers give clear explanations of the need for health and safety. Very good routines help pupils to feel secure and confident. As a result, most behave well. On occasions however, despite very good support and management techniques, one or two disruptive pupils potentially disrupt very good lessons and consequently the quality of

teaching and learning is affected.

97. Leadership of the subject is very good. Through direct observation and scrutiny of planning, the co-ordinator has worked hard to improve the quality and range of learning opportunities available to pupils. The curriculum is very good overall and gives pupils a range of designing and making tasks that cover everything expected of them. The planned use of information technology in the subject is improving, and recently provided resources and training are likely to have a further positive impact on provision and standards. Accommodation has improved; a new food technology room has been developed and the method of dust extraction in the workshop has improved. Assessment has greatly improved and is now very good. This allows teachers to monitor pupils' achievement very well. In addition, pupils are asked to assess themselves against targets set in lessons. This, together with teachers' comments gives pupils a good understanding of what they have learnt and achieved. However, there is no external accreditation in place yet to help celebrate the pupils' good achievement.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

98. Detailed and well-thought-out planning by teachers with pupils in Years 1 to 4 has been the basis for good teaching and learning and pupils in these year groups achieving well. Pupils build their knowledge so that by the end of Year 2, with adult help, they have developed an understanding of the differences in features between a village, a town and a city. They are coming to understand that, for example, the village has fewer houses and more countryside, the town has garages and shops and in the city, buildings are generally a lot taller, perhaps with enough people to support a good football team. Some of this work has been recorded pictorially using a computer program, which gives a clear impression of the differences discussed by the pupils. Different levels of staff support mean that pupils of different attainment achieve as well as each other. Historically, from evidence of pupils' work, achievement is good also by the end of Year 6. Pupils have built on their learning and are aware that homes come in different types and sizes such as flats, bungalows, semi-detached and detached houses. They have considered floor plans for some of these and arranged furnishings appropriately.

99. More recently, staffing changes with teachers for Years 5 to 9 and with the co-ordination of geography have brought complications to the teaching of the subject. For Years 5 and 6, the curriculum as designed was not followed but the individual knowledge of a short-term teacher was used well to give the pupils an understanding of 'Aboriginal Australia'. A different opportunity was used to cover the learning requirements of the subject for this age range: an opportunity too good to be missed. However, planning is not fully in place in ensuring that skills and knowledge are built on systematically as pupils move through Years 7 to 9. Teaching here is currently carried by short-term staff and is satisfactory. However, because of staff illness, insufficient work was offered by the school against which achievement could be judged for Years 7 to 9. Another effect of the staffing situation is that the elements of the new citizenship curriculum that could be built into geography have not yet been planned for.

100. Depending on the time of day, pupils have either 35 minute or 45 minute lessons. What is planned to be covered in this time is invariably not met because teachers run out of time. Summing-up the lesson at the end in an organised way for the teacher to check on what the pupils have learned is invariably what suffers. The school currently has no co-ordinator for the subject and little history of a clear way of assessing pupils' progress or of effectively checking how well subject planning has been turned into reality in the classroom. The subject has just maintained satisfactory development since the last inspection, partly because resources have been improved considerably and are good. This includes sufficient

ICT programs to allow exciting lessons to be prepared although the behaviour of some pupils in Years 8 and 9 is not yet managed successfully enough to allow pupils to benefit as they should.

## **HISTORY**

101. The curriculum for history is good. It is detailed, well thought out and is brought to life very well through visits relevant to the themes being taught to pupils of all ages. For example, when studying 'the Romans', pupils visit Chester Museum; the 'Slave Trade' visit is to the Albert Docks at Liverpool; steam and water power at the Quarry Bank Mill at Styal or the mock trenches at Whittington Barracks. Last year, some pupils visited Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam. All of this contributes very well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils and stems from teachers' understanding that, what makes exciting lessons, encourages pupils to learn. As a result, achievement in history for all ages of pupil is good. They progress well in their learning.

102. Good use of a relevant video with Year 2 pupils concentrated learning on the difficult topic of how fearful people were in the past when the country suffered from 'the plague'. Not only had the higher attaining pupils remembered from a previous lesson that the illness was called 'the plague' and that crosses were painted on people's doors, but very good questioning and useful hints by the teacher and support assistant really drew-out all pupils' feelings about living at that time. No lessons were seen with Years 3 and 4 because their lesson was before the inspection started and Years 5 and 6 pupils' timetable was changed to accommodate extra physical education. However, scrutiny of pupils' work and assessment records point to effective teaching and learning and good achievement by pupils by the end of Year 6. An overuse of worksheets is indicated at times in the past with Years 5 and 6, particularly when the pupils studied 'The Depression' and the 'Jarrow Crusade'. However, photographic evidence points to some really exciting work carried out on Ancient Egypt, linked well to mathematics and art and design through, for example, models of the Pyramids and masks of the ancient Pharaohs. Whilst written work is short of opportunities for pupils' free-writing, high expectations of well-presented work adds to pupils' handwriting skills. For the most recent work for Years 5 and 6, the curriculum as designed was not followed but a joint history/geography topic was planned well to give the pupils an understanding of 'Aboriginal Australia'. This was most effective.

103. By Year 9, pupils have continued to progress well. Achievement is good. Strengths of the subject here are the subject expertise of the current teachers and how well they interweave other subjects such as literacy, numeracy and geography in the history work. For example, whilst studying the 1914-1918 war, higher attaining pupils built up some understanding of alliances that were built between some countries and why. For this to be made clear and to help understand what happened, map work, sequences of events, numerical data about quantities of arms, soldiers and populations all added well to the pupils' considerations of events. Famous war poems added an extra dimension through literacy, which gave a very good spiritual and cultural dimension to the work. A similar approach is taken with pupils across Years 7 to 9, whether it is work on 'The Slave Ships' travelling to America from Africa or on how the poor lived in the 1500's. Not yet a strength of teaching is how the behaviour of some pupils is managed, especially when they set out to disrupt lessons. This means that teaching and learning does not cover the planned work. The school has plans for staff development to help with this. The effectiveness of a lesson is also affected detrimentally by the lateness on occasions, of some pupils turning up after the start. Summing-up the lesson at the end in an organised way for the teacher to check on what the pupils have learned is invariably what suffers. Regular monitoring of what is happening in the history lessons so that these issues can be overcome has yet to be put fully into place. Whilst strong elements of citizenship exist within the curriculum, these have not yet been

highlighted so that the co-ordinator of citizenship is clear exactly what is being covered within the history curriculum.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

104. Overall the provision for ICT in the school is very good. The progress that pupils make in developing their ICT skills is very good. Pupils enter the school with underdeveloped speech, language and ICT skills. By Years 10 and 11, pupils are working towards external accreditation in 'computer literacy in information technology'. The first successes will be achieved by June this year. This shows very good achievement.

105. There is very good improvement since the last inspection. The main reason for this is the very good subject knowledge of the co-ordinator, who is the main teacher of ICT; the co-ordinator has very good interpersonal and management skills when teaching the pupils. As a result, pupils really want to learn and achieve very well.

106. Pupils, including those with additional special needs, learn very well in computer lessons. They make a good start in their early years in the school, which are class based. By Year 6, pupils have achieved very well especially in such areas as finding their way round the computer keyboard, the menus, how to use the mouse and using text. As pupils get older and reach Year 7, specific ICT lessons are taught in the ICT suite. These are often aimed at using word processors, databases and spreadsheets. By Year 9, pupils competently produce very good pages of pictures and text, adding borders and graphics. Pupils connect with the Internet to research and gain knowledge for their topics. A particularly good example was in a Year 11 art lessons when the teacher and pupils were discussing the artist Gaudi and his work in Barcelona. In his own time, a pupil searched the Internet for the cheapest flight to Barcelona and once there, how to visit the 'art park'. He reported his findings back to the art teacher. Pupils are safe to use the Internet, because they have limited access, controlled by the local education authority's safeguard system. This is good practice.

107. Teaching and learning are consistently very good and occasionally excellent. Lessons are very well prepared and organised. The specialist teacher knows the subject and the pupils very well and has developed a very positive rapport with pupils. Because she is so approachable and enthusiastic, pupils are keen and eager. They enjoy lessons and learn willingly. The teacher has very high expectations of work and behaviour, consequently, pupils respond very positively, work hard, persevere, concentrate well and behave very well.

108. Literacy and numeracy are promoted very well in ICT. The teacher explains new terms carefully, and key words are displayed in the ICT suite. Also, pupils learn how to handle numerical information and present it graphically using ICT.

109. Accommodation and resources have been greatly improved since the last inspection and are now good. There is an ICT suite, which is well resourced. However, ventilation problems in the suite cause it to get very hot and stuffy on occasions. Staff are building their confidence in using the inter-active white boards recently acquired by the school. The portable board is beginning to be used, but at the moment there is a delay in the installation of the permanent board in the computer room. When this is done, pupils will be able to make further gains in their ICT skills and knowledge.

110. Pupils use ICT well in lessons across the curriculum. There are good examples in mathematics, English, science, design and technology, personal, social and health education, history, geography and religious education. New Opportunities Funding training for staff is underway, although not yet completed. It has already had positive results on staff confidence and competence particularly in the use of ICT in other subjects.

111. The subject is well co-ordinated and the co-ordinator is always available to offer advice to staff. Teachers' planning and pupils' work is checked but as yet, the co-ordinator has not had an opportunity to observe first hand the quality of other teachers' lessons using ICT. Good assessment procedures are in place and good use is made of the information to help plan the next step in pupils' learning. This is another reason why pupils' achieve so well. Their learning is built step by step so they understand what is happening.

112. ICT makes a positive contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Younger pupils show amazement when copying figures they have drawn. When they press the 'copy' key on the keyboard, the look of sheer astonishment on their faces is a delight to see. They help and support each other in lessons, share equipment and take turns. They take great pride in their work and are keen to show and explain their work to visitors. They have good opportunities to use the Internet to research into other cultures as well as their own culture. This they use effectively. ICT is a strength of the school.

### **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES ( French and German )**

113. Teaching and learning of French has been a problem since the last inspection. The co-ordinator and main teacher has been off school on long-term illness. However, the school has worked hard to continue to offer a modern foreign language (MFL) to pupils. The headteacher has temporarily taken over as co-ordinator and other teachers have made efforts to offer some expertise where they can. Whilst teaching and learning are satisfactory, the school has been unable to maintain the good provision noted at the last inspection. As a result, pupils' achievement and progress are now satisfactory.

114. Although not a statutory requirement, French is offered to pupils in Years 3 and 4 as a means of introducing the French language and culture. Pupils learn simple vocabulary, greet each other and count to six. French is used to complement pupils' speaking and listening skills as well as reading simple words in games activities. This works well and enhances pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The subject is not taught to Years 5 and 6.

115. As pupils move into Years 7 and 8, French lessons are based on national advice for modern foreign languages teaching with particular emphasis on cultural awareness, songs, rhymes and greetings. Pupils develop an awareness of similarities and differences in people, countries, communities and cultures. In Year 9, the emphasis changes to the German language, where pupils learn to greet each other count and compute simple sums, and learn simple vocabulary about schoolwork. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development.

116. Although MFL need not be taught in Years 10 and 11, the school uses this opportunity to extend pupils' knowledge of a foreign country by linking work to a module of International Awareness. Accreditation is offered through the ASDAN Bronze Award.

117. Lessons are well prepared and made as interesting as possible for pupils; well matched to their individual needs. As a result pupils are motivated, work hard and behave well. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are generally good. They respond well to the good relationships between teachers and pupils.

### **MUSIC**

118. The provision for pupils in music is satisfactory overall. Achievement is satisfactory for pupils in Years 1 to 6 as it was at the time of the last inspection. Insufficient evidence was



available either of pupils' past work or in timetabled lessons during the inspection, to make a judgement about achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The subject is not taught to pupils in Years 10 and 11, although some pupils benefit from individual tuition in both guitar and percussion. Overall, the subject has developed satisfactorily since the last inspection.

119. The teaching up to Year 6 plans effectively to incorporate music into a range of themes such as autumn, the senses, and the weather. This gives pupils a wide range of experiences to sing and perform on a range of instruments. The younger pupils perform simple songs and perform on instruments such as the triangle and the tambourine, with enthusiasm. A consequence of this is that, by Year 6, pupils have a basic understanding of rhythm in a range of forms.

120. Pupils' learning in music is added to well by a range of visits where many perform to wider audiences. This includes the choir and recorder group, as well as joining in with local festivals, singing workshops, choral days and the annual productions in school. Also, pupils of all ages benefit from the expertise of visiting teachers. As well as the guitar and percussion teacher, the younger pupils receive singing tuition by another visiting specialist.

121. Leadership in the subject is satisfactory. It is overseen by the headteacher and managed on a daily basis by a very well qualified and musically experienced learning support assistant. She works in with the visiting specialists. While the subject now benefits from specialist accommodation and a good range of instruments, insufficient use is made of ICT.

122. Although the school provides a wide range of musical experiences for pupils in Years 7 to 9, the lack of a full music timetable means that their skills are not developed consistently and progressively. Nor is their achievement regularly assessed. However, the school has tried hard to maintain teaching for pupils during a period of staffing uncertainty. The expertise of visiting staff has been effective in the time available.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

123. Since the last inspection, physical education has made satisfactory improvement. It has maintained its good standard overall. Pupils achieve well and make good progress across the school. Teaching and learning are good overall although this varies from very good to satisfactory. Differences depend mostly on how well pupils listen to instructions and join in actively in lessons. Unsuitable footwear and clothing by both pupils and support staff detract from the effectiveness of lessons and at times pose a safety hazard. Where lessons are very good pupils are enthusiastic, work hard and listen to staff who work together effectively as a team. A sports teacher employed by the local Education Action Zone teaches some groups of pupils. These lessons are very energetic and offer pupils great fun but also suffer from support staff not fully equipped to join in properly. Older pupils are working hard towards the Junior Sports Leaders Award.

124. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 identify and use various parts of their body to stretch and balance. They play games and show an understanding of simple rules. By the end of Year 6 pupils put to use their good throwing and early bat and skills in games such as rounders. This develops their throwing and catching skills as well as introducing them to the "team" element of games. As pupils get older, they experience a range of games depending on the season; for example, tennis, volleyball, cricket and hockey. During a Year 7 lesson pupils were introduced to the basics of hockey, how to hold the stick and control the ball. Pupils responded well and by the end of the lesson the majority of pupils could 'dribble' the ball across the playground. Pupils in Year 9 showed a good understanding of the rules in those games currently being practised. They improved their skills at skittles, hockey and in throwing and batting. Acquisition of throwing and batting skills is important as these skills are used as

they progress into Years 10 and 11.

125. During the week of the inspection it was not possible to observe Years 10 and 11. Those pupils taking part in a football match travelled to play against another school. However, for those not representing the school, non-sports activities were planned. From scrutiny of the scheme of work and pupils' annual progress reports, Year 11 pupils experience a wide range of games such as football, basketball, hockey, tennis, volleyball and cricket. These build well on their previous knowledge of throwing, batting and fielding. Some Year 10 and 11 pupils attend the local leisure centre as part of their Junior Sports Leader Award or at times, join in with pupils from a local high school for rugby practice. All this means that provision is good for many pupils but less so for those who do not join in frequently in sports activities as school team members.

126. This term pupils from Years 4, 5, 6 and 8 attend swimming sessions at a local leisure centre. For pupils in Years 7 to 9, this is on a rolling programme and not weekly throughout the year. This is very good provision and is very well staffed by both school staff and pool instructors. Pupils use buoyancy aids well to improve their strokes and build up their water confidence; many pupils achieve shallow water awards.

127. On the whole pupils respond well to all staff and to each other during lessons. Good use is made of praise and encouragement and this ensures that pupils try their best, perform well and increase their skills and knowledge. Lessons are well planned and the subject is led and managed satisfactorily. However as yet, the subject co-ordinator has not checked on how well teachers, including teachers not on the school's staff turn planning into practice. Firm guidelines about the wearing of suitable clothing and footwear are not yet in place and followed. Whilst detailed and effective lesson plans are used, these have not yet been pulled together to form a scheme of work against which pupils' progress is sufficiently checked.

128. Although there is a good-sized playing field and hard surfaced playground, accommodation indoors is only satisfactory for reception to Year 6 pupils. Whilst the hall is too small for pupils in Years 7 to 11, off-site activities overcome this to some extent. For all pupils, the hall is a right of way for staff and pupils accessing the majority of classes in the school. This is unsatisfactory.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

129. Achievement and progress in religious education overall are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when teaching and learning were judged to be good with Years 1 to 6 but satisfactory with Years 7 to 11. Pupils, whatever their gender, age, ethnic background and prior ability, make good progress throughout the school.

130. By Year 2, pupils know about some aspects of Christianity and other world religions. They learn through stories, pictures and videos. They tell the stories of some of the miracles of Jesus and consider how people worship at home. Because there are very good examples of some of the things that people use to enable them to think about and talk to God when worshipping at home, the pupils gain a firm understanding of how these objects are used. A particularly spiritual moment occurred when one pupil volunteered to demonstrate to the others how his Daddy used his Muslim prayer mat when worshipping at home. He very proudly knelt in prayer and then followed this by pretending to read from the Qur'an. By Year 6, pupils have made good progress in learning about three of the major world religions; Christianity, Judaism and Islam. They are aware of the major festivals of each religion and, for example, make comparisons between these such as Eid and Christmas. They think about abstract gifts that they can give such as peace, laughter and kindness. Following the viewing of a video preparing them for a visit to the synagogue, the pupils developed a good

understanding of some items used by Jews in their worship. They enhance their literacy skills by for example the use of information books to research more about the Jewish religion so that they will be able to ask sensible questions when they meet the Rabbi.

131. By Year 9, pupils build on the knowledge they have. They realise the importance of the crucifixion and resurrection to Christians. They discuss the story of Mohammed and the appearance of the angel and consider relationships through aspects of forgiveness and reconciliation and the need for self-respect. By Year 11, pupils know that 'AD' means after the death of Jesus, that Judas betrayed him and that the Old and New Testaments make up the Bible. They begin to read extracts from the gospels and consider in greater detail why Jesus chose Matthew to be a disciple and the qualities that Jesus was looking for when he chose Matthew. When reading 'the Ten Commandments' in the Christian Bible pupils give good reasons why some religious laws are rejected by non-Christians when these do not 'figure' in their own holy book. The pupils match laws to different religions. They remember work learnt in the past and come to realise that some 'rules' are the same but worded differently, according to religion or culture.

132. The use of ICT by staff and pupils is limited although in a Year 10 lesson it was used well. Here, pupils worked well on reducing a possible set of 22 'commandments' to their chosen ten. They chose a font style and aligned their work ready for the next lesson. Pupils were clear that they would then be expected to discuss in depth their reasons for the commandments they had chosen.

133. Five lessons were observed; of these one was very good, three were good and one was satisfactory. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. This is an improvement on the previous inspection with pupils in Years 7 to 11 where teaching was judged to be satisfactory. The best teaching and learning takes place when lessons are managed well and teachers use a good range of resources, which really interest pupils. Well-planned and clear objectives are shared with the pupils so that they know exactly what is expected of them in their work and behaviour. This results in pupils who are interested, prepared to concentrate and well able to work co-operatively in pairs. This means that the subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers give good opportunities for discussion, and pupils are prepared to listen to the opinions of others. Effective deployment of teaching assistants contributes to learning. Good quality learning resources support teaching, especially for lower-achieving pupils. Work sheets used in lessons meet the needs of most pupils, but in one older class during the inspection, the text was too difficult for many pupils to read and understand, which spoilt potentially good teaching and learning.

134. Overall management of the subject is good. The content of the curriculum is more diversified since the last inspection and the co-ordinator monitors lessons, giving written and verbal feedback to teachers and support when necessary. There have been several disruptions in the delivery of the teaching to pupils in Years 7 to 11 due to long-term supply teaching. However, since September 2002, a member of staff has been given responsibility for teaching the subject and as a result the curriculum is now taught well throughout the school. In anticipation of a new curriculum being introduced from September 2003, more money has been made available by the governors so that sufficient resources are available for this. Procedures for checking pupils' progress and achievement, and the use of this for planning are much improved.