

INSPECTION REPORT

EDWARD PEAKE C of E VC MIDDLE SCHOOL

Potton Road, Biggleswade

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 10964

Headteacher: Mr P Harpin

Reporting inspector: Terence Parish
15465

Dates of inspection: 9 – 11 June 2003

Inspection number: 252463

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary school

School category: Voluntary controlled

Age range of pupils: 9 – 13 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Potton Road
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Postcode: SG 18 0EJ

Telephone number: 01767 314562

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr John Price

Date of previous inspection: 19 June 2000

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
15465	Terence Parish	Registered inspector		<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and pupils' achievements</p> <p>How well are pupils taught?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
9865	Sue Howley	Lay inspector	Education inclusion	<p>Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development</p> <p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
12003	Andrew Marfleet	Team inspector	English as an additional language English	
2643	Derek Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics	
32213	Chris Lloyd-Staples	Team inspector	Science	
20533	David Rogers	Team inspector	Art	
11939	Andrew Marshall	Team inspector	Geography	
18447	Ronald Cohen	Team inspector	History Religious education	
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
31549	Helen Moulton	Team inspector	Music	
20192	Terry McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?

2652	Robin Lomas	Team inspector	Special educational needs Citizenship	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Edward Peake is a voluntary controlled Church of England middle deemed secondary school for boys and girls. Pupils start school in Year 5 and leave in Year 8. With 429 pupils, it is of average size for a middle school. Pupils are almost all white English and live relatively close to the school. Overall, pupils' social circumstances are a little below average and their attainment on entry is typically below average; this fluctuates from year to year and is better overall in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 7 and 8. Currently the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to that found in most schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is broadly average, as is the proportion with statements of special educational need. However, the range of needs is wide and includes pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties and pupils with sensory impairment. As in many schools, recruitment and retention of staff is an ongoing problem; almost a third of staff changed in 2001, but the current position is much better.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is satisfactory with many good features. Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well by the time they leave school. End of Year 6 test results in English, mathematics and science are generally below average, but these results are not reflected in the standards of work seen, which are broadly average across all subjects and sometimes above average, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and they have good attendance. Management of subjects is good and helping standards to improve. Leadership and management of the school have good features, but are satisfactory overall. The school has improved well since the last inspection, but more has to be done to raise standards and to plan for continuity of education when staff change. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well by the time they leave school.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good and reflected in the very good relationships between themselves and between pupils and teachers.
- The social and moral developments of pupils are very good.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is very good.
- The provision for art and design, design and technology, drama, and physical education is very good; provision for English, mathematics, science, geography, history and music is good.

What could be improved

- The use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning in many subjects.
- School development planning needs to be sharper in respect to targets for raising standards, especially those of the more able pupils, and methods by which success can be measured.
- School planning, in the long and short term, needs to ensure that the adverse effects of frequent staff changes on pupils' learning are minimised.
- Staffing levels and deployment of staff need to be further reviewed to enhance efficiency.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 2000. Since then improvement has been good. The number of pupils reaching the expected Level 4¹ has risen in mathematics and science. All issues for improvement raised then have been addressed. There is still work to do in some areas. Pupils' attainments in information and communication technology are much better. The subject now need to be used in all subjects and so raise standards.. Teaching and learning are much better, partly through the school's procedures for monitoring and development, and partly through staff changes. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is much better than at the time of the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			*similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	D	D	E	D
mathematics	D	D	E	D
science	D	D	E	D

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

* schools with similar numbers of children eligible for free school meals.

The table above shows the school's results for last year when pupils were only half way through their education at Edward Peake. However, all the evidence shows that standards are now much better and average by the time pupils leave school at the end of Year 8.

The 2002 Year 6 test results were affected by frequent changes of staff and a lower attaining group of pupils, two thirds of whom were boys. Teacher assessments for that year group were very close to the test results, showing that these results were not unexpected. Inspection evidence and a first look at the 2003 test results show that standards are now much better. These significant improvements are due to better, more consistent teaching over the last year, a better ability group of pupils in the current Year 6 and pupils' positive attitudes to learning. Over the last five years test results have increased at a similar rate to all schools nationally, although they remain below average. In lessons, standards of work in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 are average. Standards are above average in science. Standards of work in all other subjects are average or better. Standards in design and technology, art and design, geography, music and physical education are above average. Overall, pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6.

There are no national comparisons for standards at the end of Year 8. Inspection judgements, results of optional tests taken in Year 8, and pupils' later performance at the end of Year 9 at the high school, all show the overall standard of pupils' attainment to be average when they leave the school. Standards in English, mathematics and science are average. In art and design they are well above average and in design and technology, geography, and music above average. Pupils continue to achieve well as work is more specialised than in Years 5 and 6, and knowledge, skills and understanding are consolidated as well as taken forward. Standards in French are average when it might be expected they would be better, as pupils have been studying the language for four

¹ Level 4 is the expected level of attainment for pupils aged 11.

years, rather than the customary two. Work done in Years 5 and 6 is not built on rapidly enough due to the short time provided in Years 7 and 8 so pupils do not achieve well enough: this is due to staffing difficulties.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress whether within classes or withdrawn for individual tuition. More able pupils are known to teachers and often achieve well in the special activities provided with the upper school and the 'Maths Challenge' in Year 8. However, in lessons, more able pupils do not always receive the challenging work they need and so do not make the progress they should.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are confident, polite and helpful. They want to do their best and most take good advantage of the opportunities and activities offered.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. In almost all lessons behaviour is exemplary. The dining hall is a civilised place and pupils play very well together outside. There are a minority of pupils who cause difficulties and annoy pupils as well as teachers.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between pupils and pupils and adults are very good. Personal development is good though more could be done to foster study skills and independent thinking amongst older, more able pupils.
Attendance	Attendance is good and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils are punctual to registration and lessons.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching is good in English, mathematics and in science in all years. Across all subjects there are many strengths in teaching. Pupils' learning is good overall. Teachers' planning, different methods of ensuring learning takes place and managing pupils, so all can get on, are strengths. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught satisfactorily overall within subjects, but this depends upon the teacher and the lesson. More attention needs to be given to the development of writing skills, including accuracy in spelling and sentence structure. Information and communication technology is not used well enough across subjects because there is a need for more equipment and staff training. The assessment of pupils' work is also variable and more able pupils are not always challenged enough. However, mathematics teachers are good at challenging pupils and in some other subjects opportunities are made available for able pupils to work at the high school for a day or so, for example to do an electronics project. Pupils with special educational needs learn as well as their peers due to small classes and good support from teachers. Pupils with statements of special educational need learn very well because they have effective support from learning assistants. Teaching is good in many subjects, very good in art and design and in physical education. It is satisfactory in religious education and French, as there are few subject specialists. It is satisfactory in citizenship, although there is work to do to develop the subject.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. French is provided from Year 5. All years have specialist science teachers and use the laboratories. Drama is very good in Years 7 and 8. Information and communication technology lessons are good, but the use of computers to help teaching and learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall and very good for pupils with statements of special educational need.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Moral and social development are very good and reflected in the very positive attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory but more could be done to raise pupils' awareness of cultural diversity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school continues to provide a high standard of care and supervision. Pupils' personal development is well monitored and good behaviour is well promoted. Assessment procedures are now good and the use of assessment to plan the curriculum overall is satisfactory with some very good practice, especially in English, mathematics and science. Links with parents are satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff.	Satisfactory. The school has improved since the last inspection and the headteacher has recently strengthened senior and middle management. Development planning gives insufficient attention to raising standards. Staffing requires review to ensure the impact of recruitment difficulties are minimised.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities.	Good. The governing body has reorganised into an effective and critical friend of the school. Individual governors are involved significantly in supporting the improvements the school is making. The school works within its budget, but there is a lack of clarity about precise financial allocations.
The school's evaluation of its own performance.	Good. The school is generating detailed information on pupil performance. Middle managers have a keen focus on improvements in subject areas. The governors have an improving knowledge of strengths and weaknesses.
The strategic use of resources.	Satisfactory. Current staffing supports good progress in lessons. Class sizes are generally smaller than average so more teachers are needed, and it is difficult to recruit them. Specific grants are used satisfactorily. Best value judgements are made for significant purchases but not applied to staffing or the use of information and communication technology for teaching and teachers' administration.

Accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory although more computer peripherals, for example, printers and digital cameras are needed. Staffing is more stable than in recent years.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school and are expected to work hard. • Behaviour is good and the school is helping their children become mature. • Teaching is good and their children are making good progress. • They feel comfortable approaching the school. • There is an interesting range of activities outside of lessons. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They wish to be better informed about how their children are getting on. • They would like the school to work more closely with them. • They would like to be better informed about homework and see it more evenly set and valued.

Inspectors agree with the positive comments made by parents. Reports have been further modified this year and provide parents and pupils with good information about progress although more could be done to clarify targets for improvement of pupils' work across all subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, pupils achieve well at Edward Peake Middle School. Year 5 pupils start school with mostly below average attainment, but by the time they leave at the end of Year 8 reach standards that are broadly average.
2. Standards were well below average in the 2002 national tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 6 and below average when compared with schools that have similar characteristics. These pupils are now in Year 7. Pupils' Year 6 tests results show that pupils have achieved well since taking the Year 2 tests. More importantly, the evidence from lessons and pupils' work shows that standards at the end of Year 6 and at the end of Year 8 have improved and are now average. This improvement in standards is partly the result of good teaching. Overall, pupils achieve well and best when teaching is consistently good or very good. Teachers leaving and joining the school over short periods of time disrupt the progress of some pupils. This was commented on by parents and pupils and partly explains the dip in national test results in 2002. However, the dip is also explained by pupils' previous attainment: the group of Year 6 pupils who took their national tests in 2002 started school with particularly low attainment.
3. In literacy, pupils make good progress, so that standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6 and also by the end of Year 8. Writing skills are the weakest area, with much poor spelling across many subjects. Pupils read quite well, and have relatively good speaking and listening skills. Although the results of the 2002 national tests show that English standards were well below those in other schools, the findings of the inspection confirm that there has been a significant improvement in 2003. There a number of reasons for the improvement. Standards were depressed in 2002 partly because there had been difficulties in recruiting teachers in 2002 and partly because of pupils' low prior attainment. However, teaching is now good and pupils' have positive attitudes to learning. This means that pupils make good progress from the start of Year 5 to the end of Year 8 and achieve well in English.
4. Standards in numeracy, overall, are average. This is particularly true in mathematics where standards match those found nationally. Teachers are good at using mathematics to extend pupils' understanding of numerical ideas effectively in other subjects, such as art and design. Numeracy standards in geography are good when pupils use and handle data. In information and communication technology, design and technology, and in physical education, numeracy standards are uniformly good. In science, pupils' standards of graph work are average but their use of number and understanding of shape are less than expected. Overall, pupils' performance when making mental calculations is average. As with English, the national test results in 2002 show that mathematics standards were well below average. Again, however, this is not reflected in the current Year 6 and Year 8: better teaching and a more stable staff are raising standards successfully.
5. The inspection findings show that standards in the other subjects at the end of Year 8 are broadly average and that some are above average. In science, standards are average: like English and mathematics science standards have improved since last year because of better teaching. As a result pupils achieve well. In art and design, teaching is very good and pupils achieve particularly well, to reach high standards. In music, design and technology, geography and physical education standards are above average and pupils achieve well, making good progress with their learning largely because the teaching is good. In French, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory overall. This is because there is not enough time allocated to French each week. In history, religious education, information and communication technology and citizenship standards are broadly average and most pupils achieve appropriately by the time they leave school.

6. The support given to pupils with special educational needs enables many of them to achieve at least in line with expectations. Pupils with statements of educational need, and those with learning needs make good progress towards the targets set for them in their individual education plans. This is because of the usefulness of the way individual education plans are written, the practical nature of the targets themselves and the extremely positive attitude of pupils to achieving them. Pupils with special educational needs make particularly good progress in work, as in some history and religious education lessons, where there has been joint planning between the subject teacher and learning support assistants. When taken out of lessons for individual work, pupils with special educational needs make good progress in developing their basic skills of reading, writing and number work because of the skilled teaching they receive from learning support assistants.

7. There is no significant difference between the attainments and achievements of boys and girls. More able pupils are known to teachers. They enter the 'Maths Challenge' in Year 8 and take part in special activities, for example, in design and technology, science, and art and design, at the high school. They can achieve well in these activities. However, in lessons, expectations of more able pupils are not always high enough, particularly in writing. In science in Year 8, they do not have demanding enough tasks and consequently do not achieve as well as they might.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes to the school continue to be very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and move promptly to classrooms for registration and lessons. They are friendly, helpful and polite and talk enthusiastically and confidently about school life. Many take advantage of the wide range of opportunities and activities on offer to enrich their personal development. The majority of pupils respond positively in lessons, particularly in drama, physical education, art and design and aspects of design and technology. They work hard and want to do their best and succeed. Most pupils are really keen to answer questions and get involved in discussions. However, some girls are very shy and lack confidence and a small minority of boys, especially in Years 7 and 8, have poor motivation. They find it difficult to concentrate and stay on task and demonstrate unsatisfactory attitudes.

9. Behaviour is very good. Parents and visitors comment favourably about standards of behaviour in school and on trips. Pupils clearly understand what is expected and respond positively to the high expectations set by staff. Pupils value the credits certificates awarded for good work and behaviour, but feel that the system unfairly rewards the "naughty ones". In lessons there is very little disruption to learning and at breaks and lunchtimes pupils interact very well and behaviour is extremely good. The dining room, whilst very busy, is very orderly. Pupils queue sensibly and request permission to leave the table. Movement around the school is good and pupils show respect for their surroundings. There is very little harassment or bullying. However, there are some boys in Years 7 and 8 whose behaviour is unsatisfactory at times. The school makes appropriate use of exclusion for more serious misbehaviour. There have been no permanent exclusions this year but a slight rise in fixed term exclusions with six pupils excluded for a few days on more than one occasion.

10. Personal development is good and positive relationships are a strength of the school. Year 5 pupils cope confidently and most Year 8 pupils are mature and responsible. Many older pupils willingly and capably take on additional responsibilities around the school, for example, as library, reception and break time monitors, and sensibly organise themselves for sporting activities like the social cricket. Pupils are very mutually supportive and listen well to one another. Their applause for a trumpet duet in assembly, which they listened to with rapt attention, was warm and spontaneous. They work well in pairs and groups, although some are reluctant to work in mixed gender groups. There is a very good rapport between pupils and adults working in the school. Relationships between pupils are very good and they interact well at work and play.

11. Attendance is good. It is better than last year and has improved since the last inspection. Pupils attend regularly and punctually and lessons start promptly. An increasing proportion of the absence is due to term time holidays.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. Teaching and learning are good overall. This is based on both lesson observations and scrutiny of work in pupils' books. Seventy-eight lessons were inspected. All were satisfactory or better, three-quarters good or better, and a third very good or better, including three excellent lessons.

13. Teachers usually have good, and sometimes very good, subject knowledge. This helps pupils to acquire, successfully, the appropriate skills and improve their understanding. The relatively small size of the school, particularly in Years 7 and 8, means that some subjects are taught by non-specialists, for example in religious education: this limits pupils' achievements. However, some teachers are able to use their skills in teaching a particular subject to enhance their teaching of another. Teachers use their skills in art and in music to make lessons more interesting. For example, they use them to benefit pupils' learning in French lessons: pupils' interest is lifted and as a result they work harder. Lesson planning, teaching methods and the management of pupils are all good. As a result pupils work at a brisk pace and sustain their concentration. Pupils and parents reported that this was not always the case: they felt there were a few pupils who were not managed well by teachers and as a result distracted others from learning. This has been the case in Year 7. However, inspection evidence indicates that this situation has been managed well by teachers and is being resolved.

14. There is some lack of challenge for more able pupils. They understand how well they are doing and are keen to achieve more. There are some opportunities for them to pursue a harder project, for example some work in electronics at the high school. However, there are times when they have to mark time whilst others catch up, for example if they have completed work in information and communication technology they cannot move on until the rest of the class is ready. Homework is a mixed picture in Years 7 and 8. Some tasks are simple, others take a long time. Homework is not always set when it should be. This lack of consistency and compliance limits the impact of homework on the pace of pupils' learning. There have been a number of staff changes in recent years that have had an adverse effect on pupils' progress, particularly in English. Pupils, too, were concerned and felt that different teachers had different ways of working which led to some confusion. However, inspection evidence shows that this is no longer the case: teachers are doing a good job.

15. Teachers use many of the features of the National Key Stage 3 strategy in their lessons, including starter activities and working with the whole class at the end of the lesson. Marking is usually thorough although spelling and grammatical errors are sometimes only corrected randomly. Writing guides are used to good effect, and subject specific words are displayed on classroom walls. One or two of these, sadly, are misspelt, and some are in capital letters, which makes it harder for them to be learnt. Attention is drawn to word 'banks' in several subjects. In geography, for example, teachers point out terms such as *condensation* and *evaporation* in Year 5, and terms such as *producers*, *consumers* and *sustainability* in Year 8. The words are usually displayed prominently in context so that they can be better understood. Science teachers emphasise correct spelling and assist with word recognition. Mathematics teachers focus on key words regularly, provide writing guides, and also provide opportunities for reading aloud. English teachers use particularly helpful guides for writing, that are appropriate for the level at which pupils are working.

16. The teaching of numeracy is good throughout the school. This is due to successful training of teachers and the introduction of recent national initiatives into the school. It is a main focus of mathematics teaching in Years 5 and 6 and continues on a broader front in Years 7 and 8. The information and communication and design and technology departments make full use of opportunities in pupils' work to enhance their learning through weighing, measuring, calculating and through the use of simple spreadsheets. Teachers provide regular opportunities to promote numeracy skills in geography and in physical education.

17. Teachers and pupils are confident using computers in music, science, mathematics and English lessons. In mathematics lessons, graphic calculators are used effectively. In science pupils use a digital microscope to record images and combine these with text as part of their experiments. There were few instances of computers being used in other subjects. However, computers are used to good effect to support pupils with special educational needs, for example, to prepare materials for word-processed assignments for visually impaired pupils.

18. The teaching provided to individual or small groups of pupils withdrawn from lessons is good. Learning support assistants have high expectations and take great care to form positive relationships with pupils. They demonstrate good understanding of the teaching of basic skills, of the need to promote independent learning and of the fear of failure that underlies many learning difficulties. Understanding about special educational needs among subject teachers is increasing because of the support given by the special educational needs department. The result is that teachers are increasingly confident in taking appropriate responsibility for providing for pupils. Teachers have a good grasp of pupils' academic and behavioural targets. These targets are included in pupils' individual education plans and teachers use them effectively to plan lessons. As a result, pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

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

19. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced but there is no systematic planning for including information and communication technology in most subject areas. It is now taught successfully as a separate subject; this is an improvement since the last inspection. All pupils have a personal and social education lesson each week and citizenship forms part of this. Staffing difficulties are reflected in the short time provided for French in Years 7 and 8; pupils' achievements are held back and standards are only satisfactory because of the work done in Years 5 and 6.

20. Most schemes of work are detailed and cross-referenced to the National Curriculum, or where appropriate, to the agreed syllabus for religious education. They are used effectively to develop good lesson plans that usually indicate the learning objectives for the lesson. This is an improvement since the last inspection. However, although some subjects have effective planning links with the first school this is not consistent across the school. Not all schemes of work build upon what pupils have done in Year 4. However, liaison with the high school is very good and supports continuity and progression in pupils' work.

21. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good throughout the school. The setting arrangements in some subjects and the provision for smaller classes in others ensure that pupils with specific educational needs have those needs met in smaller teaching groups and this is working effectively. More able pupils are not often sufficiently catered for in lessons, but there are opportunities for older pupils to take on activities at the high school, for example, in art and design, history and in design and technology. These opportunities raise pupils' achievements in these subjects.

22. The school makes good provision for literacy work, with up to six literacy hours a week in Years 5 and 6, which incorporates English teaching. There are three hours of English, including literacy work, in Years 7 and 8, with an extra hour for drama, which contributes well to the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. The school has a policy for literacy; staff have been thoroughly inducted into the requirements of national strategies for each age group. Reading is encouraged, and all pupils are expected to have at least one book on loan from the school library. Although small, the library benefits from belonging to the local library service so that it provides a wide range of books over the year. Time is given for silent reading in some English lessons and in tutorial periods. There is a reading club and plans are in hand for a 'Readathon'. Some of the more recent developments in the national literacy strategy are applied, especially with pupils with special educational needs.

23. The teaching of numeracy is clearly supported through policies in geography, information and communication technology, design and technology, mathematics and physical education. Numeracy also forms an integral part of other schemes of work such as those for art and design, where the understanding and appreciation of two- and three-dimensional concepts develop well through good planning and good use of technical vocabulary.

24. There is very good provision for extra-curricular activities. There are visits to outdoor activity centres, visits abroad and field trips. All enjoy the Year 8 residential trip to France, which helps raise standards in French as well as being a social occasion. Extra-curricular provision in music promotes very high standards in the subject. There are opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their achievement in collective worship and in concerts. Pupils have a wide range of sporting activities to choose from including innovative street hockey. School visits relating to the curriculum ensure that no pupil is excluded on the grounds of cost. Parents do pay for additional music tuition.

25. The provision for personal, social and health education is good overall. Though it was possible to observe little in the days available for inspection, there is sufficient documentation available to show what is taught in the planned personal, social and health education lessons. There are schemes of work for each year group, which include current requirements for citizenship. The school's policies on sex and drugs education are relevant and up to date.

26. There are good links with the community but few links of significance with the local church. The school is involved with community music events. It takes an active part in the partnership of schools that includes the first schools and the high school. Meetings are attended regularly. The school has taken part in the national Junior Mathematics Challenge with a good number achieving awards.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

27. The overall provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is good. It is clear from pupils' behaviour and attitudes that the school is successful in promoting a caring, considerate and respectful ethos, centred on Christian values and beliefs.

28. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. Pupils show a good sense of right and wrong. Moral development is encouraged within the year group structure, for example, with "Why Me?" bullying forms on year group notice boards, helping to discourage bullying and encouraging pupils to report any incidences. Subject areas raise moral issues. During the inspection, examples were seen within English, information and communication technology, design and technology, history and religious education. In drama, a particularly good example was seen where pupils reflected on issues surrounding the Stephen Lawrence case, using evidence from witness speeches and media items.

29. Provision for pupils' social development is very good. Pupils work well together, showing respect for each other's ideas and opinions. The school works hard to promote consideration and respect for all through its personal, social and health education programme. Significant opportunities for social development are planned into the curriculum, such as persuasive writing activities in English, where pupils consider whether to build a bypass around historical sites. Pupils are given the opportunity to contribute to assemblies and to participate in the school council. Achievements are celebrated, with notice boards around the school including congratulations sections, merit, progress and "My Achievements" sections.

30. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Schemes of work promote cultural understanding, such as in history where the achievements of past societies are recognised; a Year 5 display looked at the old and new architecture of Biggleswade in a settlement survey. Whilst there is reference to multiculturalism within schemes of work, in displays around the school opportunities are missed to draw in children, or challenge them with questions about the work they

see on display. A school survey of multicultural aspects in schemes of work, conducted in 1998, has not been used to see how practice or provision has improved.

31. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. A spiritual policy defines aspects of spirituality to be considered in each curriculum area, so that all subjects now make a specific contribution. Good whole-school assemblies promote spiritual development, with pupils asked to pray or reflect on a particular issue and consider how it is mirrored in their own life.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school continues to provide a high standard of care for its pupils. The premises are very clean, well maintained and cared for, and health and safety and risk assessment arrangements are very thorough. Pupils are supervised well.

33. Procedures for monitoring and supporting personal development are good. Pupils are well known to staff and their needs understood and responded to well. Transfer into the school, and induction arrangements when pupils start, are very good and particular care is taken with those pupils who have a specific learning or physical need. Form tutors and heads of year maintain a caring overview of individual pupils. Recent staff turnover has had a negative effect on the continuity and consistency of the form tutor role, however, the core of longer serving staff and other key adults working in the school provide a significant network of support. Concerns are quickly identified and addressed effectively.

34. Child protection procedures are very good and staff training is thorough. The personal, social and health education programme effectively promotes safe and healthy living and a good feature is the 'Network Hand' session for Year 5 pupils to enable them to consider protective behaviour patterns and identify those people they should go to for help.

35. Attendance is satisfactorily recorded and monitored and the school works effectively with the education welfare service to support those few pupils with attendance problems. Good attendance and punctuality is effectively promoted and parents are made aware of their responsibilities.

36. Staff have high expectations of good behaviour and there is an effective behaviour management policy which is clearly understood by pupils. Rewards and sanctions are effectively used, but there are some inconsistencies, for example, teachers do not always use the warning process in lessons, and pupils feel that the credit system is being devalued by overuse for those pupils who are more inclined to misbehave. Good monitoring and early intervention is effective for most pupils and the effective use of pastoral support plans is providing good support for the very small number who are at risk of exclusion.

37. The school has good procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour and a confidential reporting system. Pupils are satisfied that bullying is taken seriously and the small number of incidents are dealt with quickly. The "Buddy" system, which pairs all Year 8 pupils with a Year 5 pupil, is very effective in promoting good relationships.

Assessment

38. Monitoring of pupils' academic performance is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. The policy has been rewritten and now provides clear guidance for all aspects of assessment and reporting.

The revised whole-school system for recording information on pupils as they join in Year 5 and tracking their progress and achievement as they move through the school is good and is being used effectively to provide information for reports to parents. However, ready access to information

is restricted due to the lack of available computer facilities. This comprehensive data, which includes predicted grades, is made available to all staff and is used with varying effectiveness by subject areas. Heads of Year and form tutors have the data but there are no formal procedures in place to provide an overview of the achievement of individual pupils. Currently, underachievement is usually highlighted as a result of other concerns being raised. Effective academic mentoring is in place this year for a small cohort of Year 8 pupils.

39. Procedures for monitoring and supporting academic progress within subject areas are satisfactory overall with good practice in English and mathematics where clear marking schemes are helping pupils understand how to improve. Individual education plans provide good clear targets, but target setting in the school is still at an early stage of development and is being used in English and mathematics with the setting of broad literacy and numeracy targets.

40. Procedures for assessing attainment and progress are good overall, although in French and music they are unsatisfactory. Some departments have made much greater use of assessment to guide curricular planning and whilst it is satisfactory overall, it is extremely good in science, which provides a model of good practice.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. The school has good links with parents and in the questionnaire most stated that they are comfortable approaching the school. Nearly half of the parents completed the questionnaire and they are supportive and satisfied with most aspects of the school.

42. The school provides good written information and the pack provided to all parents this year contained particularly helpful hints on supporting their children in addition to relevant policies. Reports are good and provide sound information about progress, attainment and effort as well as comparative data, presented in an accessible format. They have been refined since the last inspection and arrangements for consultations have been improved, although a minority of parents does not feel well informed.

43. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are particularly pleased with what the school provides and are effectively involved in the individual education plan and pupil support plan processes.

44. Some parents help out in school. They are supportive of activities and most parents regularly sign the homework diaries. The school works effectively to involve parents where there are concerns and responds quickly to enquiries and queries. The contribution of parents to children's learning is satisfactory although many would welcome more information and clarity about homework.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher has succeeded, during recent difficult times, both in maintaining the morale of staff, and in making some good appointments. He has also taken on significant other roles, for example, special educational needs co-ordinator for a time, and continues to teach, very well, for a significant proportion of time in the week. The school is gradually moving forward, pupils are making good progress in lessons, and there is a good working atmosphere in and around the building. However, appropriate developments in areas of the school's work such as the curriculum, assessment, and governance, have tended to follow criticism rather than brought about by forward planning. The headteacher operates an 'open door' policy, and is very accessible to pupils, staff and parents, although this results in his spending too much time undertaking tasks which take him away from the core purpose of his role of sustaining and developing the quality of education provided by the school. An appropriate senior management team has been recently established.

46. Leadership and management of subjects are now good overall. However, management and co-ordination of information and communication technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. There is little tracking of the contribution of information and communication technology to raising standards in other subjects. Computers are not used effectively enough to support teaching and learning in all subjects. Pupils' achievements in information and communication technology across the curriculum are not assessed so that too few teachers are using information and communication technology to support learning. Training has been provided for staff so that they can use applications and access the computer network.

47. Governors work hard and are very committed to their tasks. The governing body is beginning to fulfil its purpose of critical friend to the school, and is developing aspects of its monitoring roles. They have developed an appropriate committee structure and now maintain clear records of their meetings, which enable them to monitor well the progress of the school in curriculum, pastoral, and health and safety terms. The focus of maintaining a balanced budget, whilst both necessary and laudable, pays insufficient attention to overall efficiency. For example, how teachers and support staff are deployed, and which aspect of the budget pays for the special educational needs coordinator. Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are now challenging the school on its performance. They have not ensured that statutory requirements for collective worship are met. However, provision in information and communication technology has been very substantially improved and the quality of acts of collective worship is good.

48. The school's evaluation of its performance is good. Delegation of responsibilities to an active and competent group of middle managers is good, and this is leading directly to an increasingly sophisticated system for the monitoring of teaching and learning. This is contributing to the raising of standards within the classroom, where the headteacher himself sets an excellent example as both observer and teacher. The school now collects, collates and uses data about the performance of pupils well, both looking at their prior attainment and at how well they do at the end of Year 9 – this school contributes two years of Key Stage 3 before pupils sit national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9.

49. The school is taking satisfactory action to meet the targets it sets itself. Since the last inspection the school has developed a good assessment system to measure pupils' attainment at fixed points in the year. However, the school's priorities for development are unsatisfactory. The school improvement plan does not focus primarily and explicitly on raising standards, and it lacks clear success criteria that would demonstrate how standards change. The plan for 2003/4 is consistent in its format, and the school has made good progress in ensuring that all subject departments make appropriate contributions. However, the plan does not detail how the monitoring process will be carried out, or what actions will follow afterwards. Departmental development targets are self contained and do not relate directly to whole-school initiatives, nor do they contain enough detail to show how they will be implemented and what would be necessary for them to be successfully achieved. The school strategic plan 2000-2005 has been held in abeyance whilst waiting for local planning decisions on proposed very large-scale housing developments in the near vicinity of the school. This has caused an unnecessary hiatus in the development planning of the school, which should be rectified as soon as possible.

50. The school has a commitment to be an improving school, and, at this moment, has the necessary capacity to be so. However, there is no overall vision of precisely how this will be carried through. The school is aware of the need to use techniques of assessment and the interpretation of data to raise standards even more than has been achieved already, but there remains insufficient curriculum development in some areas, because, for example, there is no joint moderation of pupils' work. There is no clear-cut whole-school mechanism for evaluation to occur, so there is uneven practice across subjects, and there is little or no opportunity to share best practice. There is regular monitoring of teaching, by an increasing number of senior and middle managers, and this is paying dividends in terms of the overall quality of teaching and learning in subject areas.

51. Financial resources are soundly managed, and are closely tied to the school's priorities for development, outlined in the school development plan. The school passed a recent local authority audit with no significant issues to address. Specific grants are used in the spirit of their intended purpose, though the historical use of part of the special educational needs grant to part pay for the special educational needs coordinator is contrary to best practice. Some best value considerations are applied to purchases in an approved manner. However, the school does not yet fully apply best value principles in respect of how to go about most effectively improving the school further.

52. The school has largely recovered from a precarious staffing situation. There was a high turnover of teachers due to promotion or moving to another part of the country. Staff changes continue but at a much lower level this summer. There are presently 11 part-time and three unqualified teachers on the school's staff. Their teaching is satisfactory, but training and planning place additional demands on the school. When specialist teachers, teach their own subjects there is often very good learning. Although satisfactory, results are sometimes less positive when teachers work beyond their areas of expertise. Planning for staff changes caused by teachers leaving and joining the school, or deployment of staff to other subjects, is not rigorous enough and continuity of learning can suffer as a result.

53. Staff training is well planned, and has a focus that relates to the priorities identified in the school development plan. Performance management is well developed and is delegated to senior and middle managers. It is now into its second cycle and has led to improvement where teachers have remained; frequent staff changes means performance management has not often been followed through. Support staff are well qualified and experienced. They are highly committed to the pupils and to the school.

54. The resources available to support teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The library is small and carries an average range of both fiction and reference books, but it is linked to the county library service and this ensures that stock is regularly rotated, and kept up to date. There are fewer computers per pupil throughout the school than is the case in an 11-16 school, but not significantly so, and the number of computers is very much higher than at the time of the last inspection. Funding available for departments to spend on educational initiatives is limited and consequently the school does not make sufficiently effective use of new technologies. The significant investment in computers has greatly improved pupils' learning of how to use them but has not yet developed into significant use by all subjects. The school is slow to adopt 'interactive whiteboards' or similar technology to help teaching and learning. Peripherals such as digital cameras are in short supply. The use of teachers to enter and re-enter data wastes too much valuable time and is not a good use of resources.

55. Accommodation is good overall. It is good in most subjects, particularly in science and the outdoor spaces for physical education. It is unsatisfactory in music, where pupils have insufficient space for small-group activities, and the indoor space for physical education is inappropriate for older pupils. The school is a safe and secure environment. There is no wheel-chair access to the first floor, though this is not currently needed. Provision has been made to ease access for partially sighted pupils. Displays of pupils' work celebrate achievements and enhance learning. The building is kept scrupulously clean and in a very good state of repair.

56. The school receives about the average amount of money for this size of middle deemed secondary school and gives satisfactory value for money. Compared to local middle school provision staffing costs are about average. Small class sizes benefit learning but are financially inefficient. The budget is just about kept balanced but suffers from very high temporary staff costs

57. Staff have every desire to see the school improve and presented this very well during the inspection; no lessons were unsatisfactory and teachers' contributions to the inspection process were very good. Future improvement requires continuity in staffing. This has been commented on above.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

58. To improve the school and raise standards further the governors ,headteacher and staff should :

- (1) Increase the resources for information and communication technology and use them to support pupils' learning across all subjects;

Paragraphs 4, 12, 16, 24, 44, 52, 61, 74, 83, 99, 108, 118, 119, 124, 144.

- (2) Improve school development planning further so it is clear about the targets for raising standards, especially those of the more able, in each subject at the end of Year 6 and Year 8 and how these standards will be fairly and accurately measured;

Paragraphs 36, 47

- (3) Ensure that the adverse effects of frequent staff changes on pupils' learning are minimized;
- (4) Review the current staffing levels and staff deployment, plus costs to enhance efficiency.

Paragraph 54

In addition to the main areas for improvement above the headteacher and governors should consider including the following in their action plan.

- i. Improve the provision for citizenship. Paragraph 93
- ii. Ways to secure rewards and credits for pupils who consistently do well. Paragraph 11
- iii. Give greater attention to provision for pupils' cultural development. Paragraph 27

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

69

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

20

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	23	32	20	0	0	0
Percentage	4	29	41	26	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

Y5 – Y8

Number of pupils on the school's roll	397
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	48

Special educational needs

Y5– Y8

Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	13
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	50

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4
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Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	14
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	15

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	6.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.3

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	62	36	98

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	36	39	50
	Girls	23	18	29
	Total	60	57	80
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	61 (75)	58 (65)	81(83)
	National	75 (75)	73(71)	86(87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	37	36	46
	Girls	23	17	29
	Total	61	53	77
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (71)	54 (67)	78(76)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	370	7	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0

No ethnic group recorded	9	0	0
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The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	21.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.37

Education support staff: Y5 – Y7

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	185

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y7

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	82.6
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Average teaching group size: Y5– Y7

Key Stage 2	22.1
Key Stage 3	23.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	01/02
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	£
Total income	968,421
Total expenditure	968,821
Expenditure per pupil	2,134
Balance brought forward from previous year	-400
Balance carried forward to next year	1,000

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	14.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	14.5

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	397
Number of questionnaires returned	174

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	23	66	9	1	2
My child is making good progress in school.	25	64	4	2	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	21	64	3	3	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	10	56	24	7	3
The teaching is good.	21	61	6	2	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	18	55	18	8	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	40	51	5	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	34	60	2	2	2
The school works closely with parents.	13	57	18	6	6
The school is well led and managed.	23	60	6	3	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	19	67	9	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	48	12	0	10

Other issues raised by parents

Twenty parents attended the parents' evening. General concern was expressed about staff turnover in recent years and the negative effects on continuity of education. The credit system, to reward pupils' efforts, was seen by some to apply more to those pupils who show some improvement rather than ever to those pupils who are consistently good. Homework was said to be inconsistent in quality and quantity. Parents, who described their children as able, question whether work provided for them is hard enough. Parents of pupils with special educational needs are more than satisfied with provision made for them.

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

ENGLISH

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards are improving. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject. Good subject leadership and management are now in place. <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning for staff changes A better balance to the curriculum in Years 7 and 8. The organisation of teaching groups.
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Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	Average	Average
Year 6 test results (2002)	Well below average	N/a
End of Year 6 teacher assessments (2002)	Well below average	N/a
Achievement by the end of	Good	Good
Teaching	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good
Leadership and management	Good	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	Good

60. National test results at the end of Year 6 have been improving slowly, but were well below average in 2002. These results do not agree with the standard of work seen now because of abnormal factors last year, including staffing difficulties and a lower attaining cohort of pupils of whom nearly two thirds were boys. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 6 were almost identical to the test results, showing that the test results were not unexpected.

61. By the end of Year 6 pupils reach nationally expected levels of attainment, although their writing skills are not as strong as their skills in reading, or in speaking and listening. The fact that their overall standard of work is average represents good achievement, as pupils enter the school with below average standards in English. By the end of Year 8, when pupils leave the school, they also reach an average standard overall, showing good achievement since they started. However, they are still weaker in writing skills than in the other areas of language use. The good achievement made in all year groups is a result of the good teaching they now receive and the positive attitude that pupils have to their learning.

62. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because of good support in lessons; most are in small teaching groups where they get more individual attention. The most able pupils also make good progress, even though they are in larger teaching groups, because teachers set challenging work that helps them to progress appropriately. However, raising standards further, particularly with regard to pupils' written work is still necessary.

63. There were no unsatisfactory lessons: almost all were good and some were very good. In Year 6, a very good lesson was seen where the teacher used group work most effectively to enable pupils in a top set to explore the relationships between characters in a text. The pace of the lesson and the excellent use of resources led to very good learning. An equally good lesson by another teacher, with a lower set, helped pupils to find information in a short story: the teacher's management skills enabled pupils to identify the attitude of a character in the story from what he said and did. In Year 8, a very good drama lesson was seen, based on the Stephen Lawrence case. Pupils were challenged by a fast-moving lesson which contributed to the development of their personal and social skills and understanding as well as to their acting skills. Speaking and listening skills are enhanced in many of the lessons, although the reluctance of pupils to join in discussion in another Year 8 lesson limited the effectiveness of what had been planned. Opportunities for lengthy pieces of writing are provided, but not enough use of information and communication technology was observed.

64. The subject co-ordinator only joined the school this term, but has identified the main priorities for English, including reviewing the setting arrangements and refreshing the learning resources. Staffing is a major concern. Underachievement in the recent past has been partly due to several changes of leadership and extended periods when temporary or inexperienced teachers have been used. The present staffing is good, but some of the team are leaving at the end of the summer term and the good arrangements for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning will be wasted without suitable replacements. There are good assessment procedures in place, which help pupils know exactly what standards they have reached, and there is good liaison with the special needs co-ordinator. The curriculum meets the needs of the National Curriculum admirably up to Year 6, but in Years 7 and 8 has a bias towards literary texts – the coordinator is rightly concerned to create a better balance. Drama is currently taught as a separate subject in Years 7 and 8, which enhances the curriculum.

65. The previous inspection report identified weaknesses in English, including the quality of teaching and learning and the resulting low attainment. There has been good improvement since then, notwithstanding the 2002 test results. Under the new subject leadership, there is capacity for further improvement if staffing needs are fully met.

MATHEMATICS

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

Strengths

- The very good leadership and support for teachers.
- Very good attitudes of pupils who consequently achieve well.
- The teaching is good so pupils learn well.
- The monitoring of pupils' work is good and teacher assessments are accurate.

Areas for improvement

- Standards at the end of Year 6.
- The rate of learning by pupils in some lessons.

Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	Close to the national average	Average
Year 6 test results, 2002	Well below average	
End of Year teacher assessments, 2003	Close to the national average	Average
Achievement by the end of	Good	Good

Teaching	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good
Attitudes and behaviour	Very good	Very good
Leadership and management	Good	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	Good

67. In 2002, standards at the end of Year 6 were below average when compared to similar schools. National tests results at the end of Year 6 this year are set to improve after the dip in results in 2002 and a period of time below average before that. This is because staffing difficulties have eased this year and support for teachers has been successful in raising the quality of teaching.

68. Standards seen in Year 6 are close to the national average, showing good achievement compared to pupils' below average standards on entry to the school. Higher attaining pupils have reached a level above that expected for their age and can solve number problems, explaining their reasoning well. Their knowledge of decimals is secure. Average attaining pupils have reached the level expected for their age. They convert kilometres to miles through neat graphs and have good techniques for finding percentages. The conversion of remainders in division sums to decimal answers, without remainders, is not yet fully understood. Extra support for pupils who are attaining below average is having a positive effect on their standard of work. Regular, timed mental work over the year has improved pupils' number knowledge. Pupils know how to test whether a number is divisible by three, for example. They still make mistakes, not always thinking before they answer questions. Standards in numeracy are average.

69. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress through the school because the provision for them is good. Teaching arrangements are effective, ensuring that the work is at the right level; teachers know their individual needs and react accordingly. There is no significant difference between boys' and girls' achievements. The most able pupils also make good progress. In Year 8 they have already reached a level above that expected of pupils by the end of Year 9. They solve problems in trigonometry for example. Pupils generally have very good attitudes to school. This enhances their learning because pupils ask and answer questions, and work hard.

70. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Numeracy teaching is good because training has been effective. Teachers support pupils' literacy well, through the good use of key words, oral contributions in class and support for writing in investigations. The department uses graphical calculators and has access to the computer suite. The curriculum satisfies National Curriculum requirements.

71. There was one excellent lesson and some very good teaching seen in the inspection. In a Year 7 lesson for those pupils below average at the end of Year 6, very good teaching is responsible for their good progress this year. Very good management of pupils in this lesson kept all pupils' attention throughout the lesson. All pupils contributed to the lesson, answering questions and explaining their ideas. In contrast, a satisfactory lesson was not planned as well, lacking a variety of pupil activity in its development. This resulted in a pace of learning that eased from good at the start, to satisfactory towards the end and there was no effective summary. Learning in the lesson was satisfactory when it could have been so much better. The contrast between two Year 5 lessons was similar. In the very good lesson it was again the planning and the management of pupils that led to the very good learning through a wide variety of pupil activities in the lesson. In the satisfactory lesson the use of triangles was not well thought out in advance. This reduced the rate of learning in the lesson because pupils' concept of length was not a focus in the lesson.

72. The quality of leadership and management are good, no better as the department lacks an overall target to improve standards, particularly at the end of Year 6. It is good because the subject's performance is monitored well by the subject co-ordinator who provides very good

leadership for the department, by personal example in the classroom and by taking appropriate action as required. Numeracy training and support for new staff is extensive and successful in raising standards. Marking of pupils' work, regularly checked, is one example of good practice. Regular assessments and review of pupils' academic targets is another. Improvement since the last inspection is good because teaching and subject monitoring, with appropriate action, have improved.

SCIENCE

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The subject is well led and well managed • Science is taught by experienced teachers who know their subject well • Resources, including specialist accommodation, enhance the quality of teaching • Standards are improving <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is insufficient provision for the most able pupils • There is Insufficient use of information and communication technology in teaching • Some work already covered in feeder schools is repeated in Year 5

Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	Above average	Average
Year 6 test results	Well below	N/a
End of Year 6 teacher assessments	Well below	N/a
Achievement by the end of	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good
Leadership and management	Good	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good	Very good

74. National test results at the end of Year 6 have improved recently in line with improving national results, but remain well below the national average. The results for Year 6 in 2002 were in line with those of schools having pupils of similar ability when they start in Year 5. These results conflict with the standard of work seen because pupils are currently working well and are at a higher standard than might be expected. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 6 agree with the standard of work seen now. New and rigorous assessment methods have been introduced, and the tracking of pupil performance provides evidence of this recent improvement.

75. By the end of Year 6 pupils can sort invertebrate animals into groups based on their external appearance, and pupils can use appropriate scientific words to describe these groups. Pupils are encouraged to show respect for living things, and care for them. The standard of work on pupils' entry to the school in Year 5 was below average, but current work is above average, demonstrating good progress. Some pupils find it difficult to spell scientific terms, but vocabulary lists and posters support them. By the end of Year 8, pupils can confidently explore the reactivity of a series of metals, beginning to use chemical symbols to explain displacement reactions. Pupils can make predictions and understand why some metals react while others do not. Pupils are able to make good progress because the quality of teaching is good. There are strong interactions between teachers and pupils, and attitudes to science are very positive. Pupils ask to repeat and extend activities that they find useful, and behaviour is always calm and purposeful.

76. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers are aware of the individual needs of pupils, and provide suitable support. Teaching support staff are able to assist in some lessons. The most able pupils make satisfactory progress but there is scope to extend their thinking further with more demanding tasks.

77. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Half of all teaching seen was very good, and no lessons were unsatisfactory. High expectations for pupil responsibility, coupled with an emphasis on practical work, generated enthusiastic responses in all lessons. All pupils could produce a record of their work, and demonstrate an understanding of the topic being studied.

78. In a good Year 5 lesson, pupils worked to find ways to produce different sounds from everyday objects such as bottles. They worked quickly to establish the link between vibrations and sounds, and they recorded their results in charts. In Year 6, a very good lesson allowed pupils to explore leaf litter to find a variety of small animals. The levels of concentration and careful activity were remarkable, and pupils were able to study commonplace creatures in detail. They made drawings of the animals, recognised their key features, and related these to the main groups of invertebrates. In a Year 7 lesson, the class made satisfactory progress in working out the relative strength of an acid and an alkali. The lesson began with a very effective starter activity to recap descriptions of acidity. There were opportunities in the lesson to develop simple mathematical calculations, but a number of pupils became confused by parts of the main experiment. The teacher clarified the key points. In a very good Year 8 lesson the pupils observed and recorded chemical reactions. They were introduced to new words, which were emphasised during the lesson. One group had an opportunity to use information and communication technology for recording their data. The teacher encouraged the class to marvel at the way that chemical elements related to each other.

79. Compared with provision at the time of the last report, there are now good procedures for assessing the progress of pupils and providing them with appropriate targets. Marking of work is thorough and frequent, with comments giving pupils detailed guidance on how to improve. Pupils are now fully aware of their own level of progress. They can evaluate their own work and set their own targets related to the National Curriculum.

80. Leadership of science has improved significantly since the last inspection, and is now good. The subject is well managed, with monitoring of teaching quality and the development of detailed schemes of work. The science laboratories are modern and well equipped. There are attractive displays of pupils' work, and important scientific words are prominently posted to support current learning. A nearby environmental area is a considerable asset, greatly enhancing the study of organisms and their habitats. Science teaching is fully supported by an experienced technician. Teachers form an experienced team and they know their subject well. They have taken advantage of some recent training opportunities, and further training is planned. The quality of teaching and learning has improved greatly since the last inspection, largely as a result of firmer management and more precise monitoring of pupil performance.

ART AND DESIGN

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

Strengths

- High standards are attained in a range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional media in Years 7 and 8.
- Very good teaching overall develops pupils' imagination and visual responses very well, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
- The work of famous artists and of other cultures is effectively used to develop pupils' understanding.
- Pupils' attitudes to work and standards of behaviour are very good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology as part of the taught courses and as a method of research.
- Additional strategies for extending the learning of gifted and talented pupils.
- Additional opportunities for pupils to participate more in reflecting on what they have done.

Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	Above average	Well above average
Achievement by the end of	Very good	Very good
Teaching	Very good	Very good
Learning	Very good	Very good
Attitudes and behaviour	Very good	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	Good

82. Standards of pupils' work in Years 5 and 6 exceed national expectations. Pupils demonstrate good technical and expressive skills in a wide range of media that includes printmaking, clay work and construction. There is a strong emphasis on the development of good drawing skills. Pupils acquire an increasing range of artistic skills, knowledge and understanding as they move through the school. Many pupils have knowledge of famous artists and their work and use technical vocabulary with understanding and confidence. Good drawing and making skills are well developed through creative effort and concentration.

83. In Year 5, inspired by the portraiture of Da Vinci and Van Gogh, pupils are working enthusiastically and very well at developing their observation and recording skills in pencil and chalk. Having explored animal patterning, pupils in Year 6 are appropriately challenged with a design and construction problem requiring imagination, individuality and modification. Pupils in both years demonstrate hard work and perseverance in response to high teacher expectations.

84. In Years 7 and 8, standards are high, particularly in work that seeks to develop pupils' imagination and personal expression. This progress is particularly evident when an artist or culture is used as a starting point. Responses to their exploration of African masks has resulted in some highly imaginative and skilfully drawn chalk and charcoal work by pupils in Year 8 which was then extended into clay work inspired by the study of gargoyles. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated, well supported and make good progress across Years 5 to 8. Pupils who are gifted also make good progress but could be given more scope to further develop their talent.

85. Teachers' start lessons well and the very effective use of demonstrations quickly engage pupils' interest and help to sharpen the focus for the lesson. Pupils are encouraged and expected to discuss and offer opinions on the work of famous artists. On occasions, the teacher leads these

meaningful exchanges effectively into an exploration of feelings and appreciation. These opportunities for pupil participation should be further explored at the end of the lesson when what pupils have done can be compared to what they intended to do. Lessons are very well planned, with sequenced events and increasing challenge. Lessons are very well managed and lesson aims and objectives are always clearly set and learning progresses at a good pace. There is a high level of interaction between teacher and pupils. There is frequent feedback so that pupils know what improvements can be made. Helpful comments support the marking in many of the sketchbooks where, in many cases in Years 7 and 8, the amount of work is impressive. Academic target setting is working effectively as part of the assessment process in the classroom. Homework is set regularly and is recognised as a valuable aid to the improvement of research skills and the further development of ideas. Whilst there is some evidence of the use of information and communication technology, work using it needs to be developed.

86. Pupils work generally with enthusiasm. In all year groups, they are very well behaved, attentive to teaching and quick to settle. Many demonstrate concentration and perseverance in a small but very well maintained art room that has been developed into an attractive and fertile work environment. These, together with very good teaching, are factors that enable pupils in Years 7 and 8 to work with increasing levels of independence and sense of achievement. In these ways, art is making a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.

87. The department is very well led and managed by an experienced and enthusiastic specialist who sets and maintains very high standards. The department is fortunate to have another subject specialist of similar calibre. The work of the technician makes a very positive contribution to the work of the department. Planning and the organisation of resources are very well ordered. There are very good opportunities for pupils to extend further their knowledge and understanding in art through extra-curricular activities. Improvement since the last report has been good and very high standards have been maintained. The department makes a very good contribution to the cultural life of the school and its annual art parade is a very good example. The department celebrates pupil achievement through its good displays of work in the art room and public areas of the school.

CITIZENSHIP

88. Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good leadership and management.
- Very good teaching and learning in Year 8.
- The very good attitudes of pupils in Year 8.

Areas for improvement

- There is no assessment of work.
- Teaching is not evaluated to identify good practice.

87. Citizenship has been a statutory National Curriculum subject since September 2002. In Years 5 and 6 elements of citizenship education are taught alongside and within personal, social and health education. In Years 7 and 8, citizenship is taught as a separate topic during the time allocated to personal, social and health education.

88. During the inspection no Year 5 or Year 6 lessons were observed in which citizenship was a main focus, and no Year 7 citizenship lessons were seen. No samples of pupil work were available for analysis. Judgements are on the basis of very limited evidence.

89. Year 8 pupils, including those with special educational needs, demonstrate standards broadly similar to those expected at the end of Year 9. Boys and girls do equally well. They show good understanding of the rights and responsibilities of people living in a diverse society such as the

United Kingdom. They articulate reasons for the differing perceptions held, such as intolerance of individual differences through historical ignorance or learned prejudice. They make suggestions how these can be changed through increased understanding and better communication. They acknowledge their own responsibility in effecting positive change.

90. The attitudes of Year 8 pupils to the subject and their behaviour are very good. They find the subject helpful to them in terms of their personal development. They work purposefully and constructively throughout lessons. Tolerance and respect between boys and girls is a noteworthy feature in lessons, and contributes to the good progress of each.

91. The very good teaching in Year 8 is based on the teacher’s good subject understanding, excellent relationships with and between pupils, and use of strategies which engage and hold the interest and involvement of all pupils. A climate of respect pervades lessons. Activities are often based on the Circle Time model. This has the effect of promoting trust between pupils, as a result of which pupils act as highly successful learning resources to each other. The lesson structure is very carefully planned so that pupils come to an understanding through a process of personal reflection and reasoning. As a result, all pupils make very good progress and understand when they have achieved the aim of the lesson. The key concepts of the work are well understood by pupils and thus have a much greater chance of effecting change in their personal attitudes and actions.

92. A look at Year 7 and Year 8 schemes of work clearly shows the contribution made by other subjects to citizenship. The scheme of work for citizenship fully covers the three required areas of study. Both measures ensure that all pupils are exposed to a balanced and planned treatment of citizenship.

93. Good leadership, in particular the commitment of the subject leader, has ensured the successful development of the citizenship curriculum at the school up to this point. The underlying aims of the subject are shared amongst teachers. This leads to effective teaching of the subject. Measures to assess the attainment and progress of pupils, and to monitor the teaching of the subject across the school, are under active consideration but are not yet in place.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good quality of teaching and learning. • Very good achievement leading to above average standards. • The use of assessment is good. 	
Areas for improvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computers are not used well enough to enhance teaching and learning. 	

Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement by the end of	Very good	Very good
Teaching	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good
Attitudes and behaviour	Very good	Very good
Leadership and management	Good	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	High standards maintained	High standards maintained

95. By the end of Year 6, pupils understand the properties of common materials and can make choices when designing and making products. Pupils understand the importance of planning, which includes deciding what tools they are going to use. Pupils can measure, cut and join a variety of materials accurately, for example, when making a wooden puzzle. They assemble carefully the ingredients when making biscuits. They are familiar with different methods of joining fabrics; their methods of fabric printing developed when making a money holder. All pupils appreciate the importance of evaluating the quality of their work when it is finished.

96. By the end of Year 8, pupils are accustomed to working from designs, which specify the tools and materials that will be needed for their models. Most pupils have a good knowledge of a variety of methods to fasten materials together, which includes pins, simple joints, glue and thread. Pupils work confidently with tools, such as saws and drills, and are fully aware of the need to work safely. When making food products they can follow a recipe to make cakes, biscuit or pizza, have ideas for adapting the basic recipes, know and practise rules of basic food hygiene, work safely, evaluate what they have made and draw conclusions about the effects of added ingredients. They also evaluate well different finishes and shapes of their finished products. When evaluating, they use appropriate vocabulary to describe products including their sensory characteristics. They can compare products in terms of appearance, flavour, texture and cost, and understand that people have different preferences and that designers need to consider this when designing. All pupils can apply finishing techniques, such as painting, carefully. An example of products finished to a high standard are the place mats designed and made using different fabrics.

97. Pupils have opportunities to disassemble products in order to identify their components, and to use simple mechanisms. Pupils' literacy is developed well through teachers using appropriate vocabulary when naming tools and describing what has to be done. Pupils apply their numeracy skills through the use of calculations when weighing ingredients and measuring and marking out of materials. Pupils with special educational needs are as equally successful in making things as other pupils and this raises their self-esteem. When relatively more able pupils finish ahead of other pupils, opportunities are often taken to encourage them to improve their work further.

98. All pupils take a pride in their work, and enjoy taking part in design and technology lessons. Pupils share tools sensibly and help one another willingly; for example, by holding materials that need to be joined. There are missed opportunities for pupils to use computers to help them design their product.

99. A good scheme of work and curriculum plan usefully guides teachers. Planning is detailed and thorough but does not indicate how computers can be used to support teaching and learning. At present the department is not teaching any computer aided design or the use of control systems, although it may be that these are left to the high school. Middle schools elsewhere successfully take these on from Year 5.

100. Teachers emphasise the need to work accurately and neatly and this results in good quality work. Time is given for questions and discussion during lessons to ensure that pupils are familiar and confident with the skills needed to complete projects. Teachers make good use of practical demonstrations to ensure that pupils know how to proceed to the next stage. Teachers assess work using National Curriculum level descriptors and this helps pupils understand what they need to do to improve.

101. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear view of how design and technology should be developed. There is a good system for monitoring the attainment and progress of pupils. The department has specific aims and values, including a commitment to good relationships and equality of opportunity for all, which is reflected in the work of the department. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

GEOGRAPHY

102. Overall, the quality the provision in geography is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are good in all years.
- Attainment is above national expectations at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Leadership and management are good.

Areas for improvement

- All pupils should be encouraged to do longer pieces of writing.
- Pupils' presentation of work is inconsistent.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teachers is not systematic enough.

Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement by the end of	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good
Leadership and management	Good	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	Good

103. By the end of Year 6 pupils can demonstrate knowledge, understanding and proficiency in the study of places such as St Lucia and they can understand the importance of location, and describe geographical patterns and human and physical processes such as the water cycle. Geographical skills such as recording, drawing graphs and interpreting climate data are well understood. By the end of Year 8 pupils can explain human and physical processes such as coastal erosion and can see connections and relationships between the various human and physical processes within places such as the tropical rain forest. Pupils at the end of Year 8 can employ an extensive geographical vocabulary and use evidence of many kinds to support their reasoning.

104. In a good Year 5 lesson on the water supply the teacher gave pupils clear learning objectives followed by a motivating activity about the correct technical words to use. Authoritative teacher exposition and questioning motivated pupils. Pupils rapidly moved on to investigate the water supply of the school, making astute observations as they progressed. In a good Year 8 lesson on the tropical rain forest, pupils examined the teacher's own tropical house plant, showing their understanding of its environmental adaptation before co-operatively designing their own rainforest plants, presenting their findings to other peer groups and then the whole class. In all lessons pupils of all abilities respond enthusiastically, collaboratively and with perseverance to their work. Support staff and pertinent teaching strategies enable pupils with special educational needs to make good progress.

105. Leadership and management are good. Despite other commitments, the subject leader is able to monitor and support colleagues. The handbook gives good guidance to the non-specialists and new members of the department. The development plan correctly identifies the key issues for further progress. Resources are used well to motivate pupils and accommodation is enhanced by attractive, up-to-date displays that highlight key geographical terminology. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department has improved its assessment of pupils' progress and now regularly measures attainment against National Curriculum levels, feeding the information

back to pupils. Information technology has been introduced into lessons and is experienced by all pupils. Marking is of a consistently high standard and teachers' comments show pupils how to improve their work.

HISTORY

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

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been good progress since the last inspection • Good teaching by committed staff has led to good learning • Standards are in line with national expectations • The subject is well managed and co-ordinated <p>Areas for improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of access to information and communications technology • There are insufficient subject specialists • Pupils change subjects every so often and this 'carousel' hinders continuity of study • There is insufficient time for the subject co-ordinator to develop work
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Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement by the end of	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good
Leadership and management	Good	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	Good

107. By the end of Year 6, pupils have factual knowledge about and understanding of aspects of past societies and know how they have been represented. They select and combine information from different sources. However, only the highest attaining pupils make reasonable inferences from the sources. For example, in their studies of Henry VIII, all pupils recognise the importance of the contemporary portraits of the monarch for understanding more about the period, but only the higher attaining pupils infer that, since the painters lived by virtue of the patronage of the king, the likenesses might be more flattering than accurate. Similarly, by the end of Year 8, nearly all pupils understand the links between cause and consequence. However, only the highest attaining pupils can use sources critically. For example, in their studies of the history of black Americans, the lower attaining pupils recognise the link between slavery and the arrival of African peoples in the Americas, but only the higher attaining pupils can link these events to the much later attitudes in America which led to the civil rights movements of the 1960's.

108. Given their attainment at entry to the school, which was below average, good progress is made by all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers know them well, prepare and use appropriate materials, and where it is available, use in-class support effectively. Pupils' overall progress is, however, hampered by weak literacy and oracy skills. Nor do they have sufficient access to information and communication technology, either within or outside the classroom, to support their understanding of the subject and to ensure a high level of presentation of work. In Years 7 and 8, these problems are increased by the lack of textbooks for

pupils to take home to read and use to review their work. All these have adverse consequences on pupils' progress in a department determined to increase pupils' literacy.

109. Teaching in history is good overall and never less than satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers know their subject well and this provides a good base for learning. There is appropriate emphasis on ensuring all pupils are involved and literacy though higher demands could be set for reading and for the use of correct technical language. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a range of available methods to support learning. Teaching is not always carried out by subject specialists and, although teachers do well and teach effectively to the prepared lesson plans, their lack of subject expertise prevents some pupils, especially the gifted and talented pupils, attaining their full potential.

110. Learning is good overall. Pupils respond well and behave well in lessons. They settle to task and sustain concentration. In several lessons, pupils learn effectively because the teachers put them in mixed pairs or groups, a method of organisation thoughtfully, if not sufficiently, employed by a department mindful of supporting the attainment of both girls and boys.

111. The curriculum is good. All the five key elements are taught well and the subject is firmly based in the wider school curriculum. History makes a contribution to the moral and cultural development of pupils by study of such topics as the history of the black people of the American continent. However, artefacts are poor and there are insufficient visits to places of interest to stimulate the love of history. The 'carousel' method of alternating pupils' studies of history with geography weakens continuity of study, which is an essential ingredient of learning at this stage of pupils' development.

112. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator has produced documents, from departmental overview to individual lesson plans for non-specialist teachers, which are informed and informative and which underpin much of the good work of the department. There are, however, areas where there is need for further managerial action, particularly in the matter of updating schemes of work and establishing uniformity in the practical application of assessment. The subject co-ordinator recognises this. She is a good role model and is committed to improve standards. She combines leading history with that of head of humanities. She does not have the time to carry out her full managerial duties to the level which she demands of herself. Nevertheless, her hard work means that the provision of history is satisfactory and there has been good improvement since the time of the last report.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Strengths

- Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are consistently good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT in other subjects.
- The use of ICT for measurement and control.
- The management of ICT across the school.

Aspect	YEAR 6	YEAR 8
Standard of work seen in ICT lessons	Average	Average
Achievement in ICT lessons	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching in ICT lessons	Good	Good
Learning in ICT lessons	Good	Good
Attitudes and behaviour	Very good	Very good

Leadership and management	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	Good

114. In Years 5 and 6, pupils demonstrate skills in word processing, helping to improve their spelling and presentation of work. They are familiar with the use of powerpoint to organise and present information and make satisfactory use of it. They use desktop publishing with a good level of competence. Their use of computers is in line with that expected for pupils of a similar age but they have insufficient opportunities to develop these aspects in other subjects. Pupils have access to the Internet and use this to gather images and information.

115. By the end of Year 8 pupils are confident in using computers to communicate their ideas, for example, they are able to gather information to create a spreadsheet. Pupils are good at entering, amending, saving and retrieving information without help from the teacher. Pupils are able to use a word processing program well to create a newspaper page. They present their writing carefully and can alter font styles, colour and text size with confidence. In Year 8 they are beginning to develop skills and techniques of combining text and images. At present pupils do not have sufficient experiences of controlling devices; they do not have opportunities to recognise that a computer can control devices or write a program sequence to make a computer produce some kind of event, like sending an alarm message. There are also missed opportunities to use computers to create drawings and designs. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall in Year 8, particularly in their skills in using computers and communicating ideas and information. However, pupils achieve unsatisfactorily in developing their understanding and knowledge of measurement and control.

116. Pupils have very good attitudes. They are well motivated, able to concentrate for suitable lengths of time and respond with enthusiasm. Consequently, pupils are able to get to appropriate software and files on computers without help from teachers and work independently. Pupils work in pairs, when necessary, well. They show particularly good respect for equipment and, indeed, for each other. Behaviour is always good and this contributes very effectively to the standards pupils attain.

117. ICT teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of ICT and plan lessons well, identifying clearly what pupils have to learn. Teachers' expectations are high and work is suitably demanding. Computers are being used well to give pupils a good experience of ICT. Effective class management fosters positive attitudes and pupils' willingness to use ICT constructively. Teachers make good use of demonstrations to ensure that pupils know how to proceed to the next stage. Time is given for questions and discussion during lessons to ensure that pupils are familiar and confident with the skills needed to complete each task. Assessment is good and used throughout lessons to monitor pupils' progress to ensure that they use appropriate skills and techniques.

118. There is a new head of department who has been in post for a short time. Leadership and management of the subject of ICT are good. A weakness is the management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum. The role of the co-ordinator is not yet fully developed and the management and co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum is an area for improvement. There is a lack of new technologies such as interactive white boards and data projectors to support teaching of, and learning about, ICT.

119. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. There are better resources and the subject is taught to all pupils in each year group. However, more peripheral resources, like digital cameras, printers and control equipment are needed. A policy for developing the use of computers across the curriculum has yet to be put in place.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Strengths

- Positive attitudes to learning in lessons support the work in hand.
- An annual trip to France and good links with other subjects broaden language experiences.
- There is good teamwork amongst teachers of French despite the staffing turnover.

Areas for development

- Establish an ambitious vision for language teaching within the school.
- Increase the time available for the study of French in Years 7 and 8.
- Enable pupils to use information and communication technology for language learning.
- Develop assessment procedures so that pupils understand their attainment levels.

Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	No national standard	Average
Achievement by the end of	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching	Satisfactory	Good
Learning	Satisfactory	Good
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Good
Leadership and management	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

121. Standards in Years 5 and 6 have been maintained since the last inspection. Pupils learn basic vocabulary and structures, mainly covering the skills of listening and speaking, and reach Level 2 on average by the end of the two-year course. A small number of pupils reach higher standards and the work they are given to do in lessons reflects these and includes reading and writing. No national comparison of standards can be made as few pupils learn French before Year 7.

122. Standards reached by the end of Year 8 are mostly in line with national expectations and higher attaining pupils are stretched, reaching levels that correspond with their ability. Several are able to write independently on familiar topics, communicating clearly without too many errors. They can use a broad range of structures, including the future tense and, at the end of Year 8, the perfect tense.

123. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 6 is satisfactory. They can listen with understanding, as most teachers conduct over half of each lesson in French. Reading and writing are not strongly emphasised in the curriculum at this stage, but most pupils can cope with basic written structures and texts, especially when reading. Pupils say single words in French when responding to direct questions, but rarely initiate conversation themselves.

124. Progress in Years 7 and 8 is good in lessons, but achievement by the end of Year 8 is satisfactory overall as so little time for lessons is available. At this stage pupils are expected to advance rapidly, but only the ground already covered in Years 5 and 6 ensures that standards at the end of Year 8 are broadly average. Pupils have opportunities in lessons to write independently and higher attaining pupils, in particular, benefit from this and make good progress. Throughout all years pupils' attitudes are good and enable appropriate work to be done. Pupils do not learn to use information and communication technology in language lessons and teachers rarely use it to prepare teaching materials. These deficiencies hinder standards from rising further.

125. In Years 5 and 6 the strongest features of teaching are teachers' high expectations and positive relationships with pupils. In a good Year 5 lesson the teacher spoke French a lot and pupils had the opportunity to move around the room at the end of the lesson, carrying out a survey. In a lesson where teaching was not so strong, pupils did not learn to respond quickly as too much time was spent explaining grammatical structures, leaving too little time to practise speaking. Learning is satisfactory overall at this stage. In good lessons, pupils respond with enthusiasm, learning good accents by singing and are kept on their toes through rapid, quick-fire questioning. Assessment procedures are at an early stage of development and pupils receive only occasional feedback on their performance. In some cases, pupils do not learn to think for themselves as a result of too much direction from the teacher. When asked which level they were on, most pupils in Years 5 and 6 found it difficult to give an accurate answer, and when asked what they should do in order to improve, they could not describe any realistic strategies. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teachers are aware of their needs and provide additional support.

126. In Years 7 and 8, teachers' planning is good, lessons are generally introduced in French (though more could be spoken), objectives are clear and teachers provide plenty of variety and pace. In a good lesson, where pupils learned how to speak about what they would do next weekend, the teacher provided various opportunities for pupils to develop social skills as well as French, by engaging in conversation with each other. Pupils found the work interesting and demanding because it was pitched at a level appropriate to their ability. They engaged in speaking tasks cued by colour-coded slips of paper and pupils of all levels learned to exchange information with a variety of partners. The annual one-week trip to France for pupils in Year 8 has a positive effect on standards, as do the links with other areas of the curriculum. Some teachers are skilled in areas such as art and music, so pupils benefit from high quality display and the use of song. Teachers have useful data on pupils identified with special educational needs, and are starting to measure the progress made by individuals in order to spot underachievement. Some higher attaining pupils are aware of the attainment level they have reached, but do not have a clear idea of how to move up to the next.

127. Teachers meet regularly to discuss important issues and there is good teamwork, despite recent staff changes. Staff review schemes of work and ensure that they and learning materials are always up to date. Displays are good and pupils' work is marked conscientiously and usually accurately, with teachers providing advice, guidance and suggestions on how to improve. There is a lack of specialist teachers of French, but the subject co-ordinator has provided appropriate training. Staff teaching languages have observed the co-ordinator teach, but no records are kept of observations of their own teaching, so their improvement cannot be measured. Priorities for development are appropriate. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

MUSIC

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

Strengths

- Pupils' achievement in music is above average because they receive good quality, specialist music teaching.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular provision.
- The department is well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Develop singing in Key Stage 3, especially part-singing.
- Extend classroom provision beyond keyboards, so that children have access to a broad range of class percussion instruments.

Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	Above average	Above average
Achievement by the end of	Good	Good
Teaching	Good	Good
Learning	Good	Good
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership and management	Good	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

129. By the end of Year 6 pupils have a good understanding of basic musical ideas. They have well-developed rhythmic skills and they can perform rhythms with offbeat syncopation. They perform simple notated melodies with confidence. They understand some instrumental techniques and they begin to express their musical preferences using musical vocabulary. They sing enthusiastically.

130. By the end of Year 8 pupils have strong rhythmic skills and they can perform syncopated rhythm patterns and cross rhythms, such as in their Calypso pieces. Pupils in Year 8 can use information and communication technology to record, retrieve, edit and copy information such as in their Gamelan pieces. They understand basic chords and they can identify chord changes and recognise and play chord sequences. The most able pupils are beginning to understand complex musical conventions such as major, dominant and diminished 7ths. Pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 show confidence in performing in front of each other. Singing skills however, are under-developed and too often pupils cannot hold a tune. When singing in parts, they struggle to maintain their own line because they do not practise part-singing regularly enough.

131. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress because work is well prepared and appropriate to their need. Learning assistants make a big contribution in helping pupils to participate fully. However, many pupils with special educational needs struggle with keyboards and they need a wider range of instruments to perform and compose with. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress because they are expected to use their instrumental skills and play more advanced parts within class lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

132. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. In Year 5, a very good lesson was seen when pupils were learning to perform a Chinese piece, Hokkien Bay. Pupils were asked a series of demanding questions, which tested them on what they remembered from previous lessons; this ensured that all pupils were fully engaged in their learning. After a period of practising, they played back to each other, saying how they needed to improve their work and identifying the part they found difficult. Pupils were eager to volunteer and they were supportive and sensitive when suggesting ways of improving to each other. Where teaching was good, work was well differentiated. Occasionally, earlier intervention would have helped to keep pupils on task more fully. This was particularly noticeable in Year 7, where the poor behaviour of a small number of boys prevented them from achieving their full capability.

133. The department is well managed. Progressive schemes of work ensure pupils achieve well at the end of Year 6 and the end of Year 8. Pupils' progress is well monitored, though the assessment scheme demands a large amount of teacher time to keep up to date. There is a sound departmental development plan, which focuses on raising pupil achievement, and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Links with the high school ensure good transfer arrangements when pupils leave this school in Year 8. Keyboards dominate resources and there is not enough of a range of class percussion instruments. Accommodation limits opportunities for small-group activities.

134. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Teaching and learning is good. The department now needs to improve levels of attainment in singing, and to broaden classroom provision by introducing a good range of class percussion instruments.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Strengths

- The very good quality of specialist teaching ensures very good learning.
- Pupils' very good attitudes to learning and their very good behaviour, ensures progress in lessons.
- Pupils' good achievement over time.
- Very good leadership and management of the department.

Areas for improvement

- Involve pupils more in measuring their own learning.
- Recognise the precarious staffing situation and ensure the ongoing quality of teaching.

Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	Above average	Average
Achievement by the end of	Good	Good
Teaching	Very good	Very good
Learning	Very good	Very good
Attitudes and behaviour	Very good	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good	Very good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	Good

136. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 6 indicate that standards for this year group are above average. Inspection observations support this view. The records of regular assessments for all pupils in the school in physical education are detailed and reliable. Observations and teacher assessments of the work of Year 7 pupils show an agreed average standard. Though no Year 8 lessons were timetabled or seen during the period of the inspection, there is good evidence to suggest that standards at the end of Year 8 are average. Based on the measurements of prior attainment of pupils when they arrive in the school, this indicates good achievement overall.

137. In a very good Year 6 lesson, pupils quickly learned a very effective sprint start. They positioned their hands and feet correctly, they grasped the reasons for maintaining a low body position when driving hard with arms and legs from the start position, they maintained straight ahead focus, and drove through the finishing line. They made good progress from a firm foundation. In a good Year 7 lesson, pupils learned to execute consistently a forehand volley in tennis during practice. They gripped the racket correctly, and they punched in front of their bodies through the ball. They made rapid and clear progress in a single lesson. However, they were unable to replicate this success during open court play. This is due to a combination of low prior attainment, and a shortage of specialist teaching in their earlier years in the school, which would have underpinned the development of their tennis skills. The contrast between these two examples underlines the critical effect on learning of consistent, high quality, specialist teaching.

138. In all lessons, there is no noticeable difference in the progress of girls and boys. The same is true of all different groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are unobtrusively included in lesson activities and work is fully matched to their different needs. Higher attaining pupils are extended appropriately. In the lessons seen, all pupils are able to modify their ideas and their performances in response to changing circumstances. They know how and why to

warm up before strenuous activity. They are confident to express their views when asked. Pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities presented to them to evaluate their own and others' work against specific criteria, and they can readily and accurately suggest ways to improve performance. Pupils are clearly benefiting from specialist teaching.

139. All lessons seen were good or better, three fifths of lessons being very good. This is a consistent picture across all year groups. The specialist teachers have very good knowledge of the subject, and effectively use a wide range of teaching methodologies and all pupils learn well. Teachers plan their lessons carefully, and have high expectations of their pupils. They give clear and precise explanations and demonstrations, and pupils know exactly what they are expected to learn. Brisk pace and appropriate levels of challenge ensure that class management is very good. This gives pupils the maximum opportunity to engage fully in learning. Good use is made of technical vocabulary, and this contributes to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Teachers work very hard to develop numeracy skills by persistently challenging pupils to convert fractional measurements of time and distance into percentages and decimals. The use of information and communication technology as a tool for learning is insufficiently exploited. There is a positive atmosphere of successful participation for all, based on mutual respect and inter-personal confidence. Pupils are often encouraged to work independently and co-operatively, and they take this responsibility very seriously.

140. Leadership and management are very good. The teachers form a well-balanced and experienced team. Their enthusiasm and their skills are complementary and they support each other well, ensuring equal opportunity for all pupils. However, these experienced and effective teachers have many additional responsibilities and this makes the continued high quality provision vulnerable to dilution or undermining. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities including fixtures with other schools. This provides many opportunities for pupils of all abilities and interests to take part in activities at levels best suited to their individual needs. Teachers clearly place high value on personal standards of behaviour, fair play, and commitment. This underpins pupils' spiritual, social and moral development. Schemes of work are up to date and detailed, and assessments of pupils' progress are made at the end of each term. The information derived is used effectively to inform curriculum development and the planning of teaching. However, pupils are not sufficiently involved in their own assessments so find it harder to determine practical improvements they can make to their own performances.

141. Resources for learning are good, as is accommodation overall. There are extensive and well looked after outdoor grassed and hard surface areas. However, indoor space is too small, particularly for older pupils. Staffing meets the demands of the curriculum, but precariously, given the additional responsibilities the teachers hold. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Pupils are given many opportunities to plan, perform and evaluate, and the curriculum is appropriately balanced and provides continuity of learning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

142. Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- Good improvement through meeting many of the issues outlined in the previous report.
- Good leadership and management of the subject.
- Attainment is now in line with national expectations.

Areas for improvement

- There are insufficient subject specialists.
- The attitudes towards the subject of some pupils in Years 7 and 8 leads to challenging behaviour.
- There is insufficient access to information and communication technology to offset the literacy weaknesses which hinder pupils' progress and attainment.

- The subject co-ordinator lacks the time to further develop the subject.

Aspect	Year 6	Year 8
Standard of work seen	Average	Average
Achievement by the end of	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Attitudes and behaviour	Good	Satisfactory
Leadership and management	Good	Good
Improvement since the last inspection	Good	Good

143. By the end of Year 6 pupils know the artefacts, signs and symbols of the main religions, but do not always understand the significant symbolism attached to each sign. For example, in a lesson on the symbols of Sikhism, the lower and middle attaining pupils could name the five “K” symbols but only the higher attaining pupils could correctly explain the symbolism of artefacts such as the kirpan (sword) and the kara (bracelet). By the end of Year 8, pupils can make simple links between religious beliefs and behaviour. However, only the higher attaining pupils can evaluate and show understanding of the moral issues presented. For example, in a lesson on the Christian view of money, the lower attaining pupils interpreted the story of Jesus and the moneylenders in the temple, as a condemnation of wealth, whereas the higher attaining pupils recognised that money has no inherent evil but can be used both for good and evil.

144. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in line with other pupils, because their teachers know them well, use good, appropriate materials, and provide effective guidance in lessons. However, their weak speaking and literacy skills hamper progress of all pupils. Nor do they have sufficient access to information and communication technology to support their understanding of the subject and ensuring a high level of presentation of work. In Years 7 and 8 similar problems are increased by the lack of textbooks to take home to read and use to review work.

145. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. In the best lessons, teachers know their subject well and have an obvious love for it. This commitment is obvious to pupils and provides a firm basis for learning. There is appropriate emphasis on ensuring all pupils are involved in lessons and on literacy, though pupils could be challenged more through reading and for the use of correct technical language. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a range of available methods that support learning well. In the relatively weaker lessons, there is sometimes too little challenge and consequently pupils' interest wanes and this leads to lower levels of learning and behaviour. This is often due to the fact that non-specialists teach the subject and are not able to take pupils' enquiries beyond the narrow realms of their lesson plans.

146. Good relationships underpin learning because pupils listen intently to each other and work well together in all years. In several lessons, pupils worked effectively in mixed pairs, a method of organisation thoughtfully employed by the department, mindful of supporting the attainment of both girls and boys. Pupils mostly behave well, with high concentration and focus, although there is a small but not insignificant minority, mainly of lower-attaining pupils, in the upper part of the school whose attitudes towards the subject encourage challenging behaviour.

147. Accommodation is satisfactory. There are good displays of pupils' work that create an atmosphere conducive to learning. Resources are just satisfactory. Artefacts are lacking, and not enough is made of the proximity of multi-cultural cities such as Bedford and Luton, to promote visits to places of worship of all the religions studied in the school.

148. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The school responded to a key issue of the last report and recently appointed a subject co-ordinator. She has successfully addressed many of the other key issues raised in the last report. She has improved teaching and learning of religious education throughout the school, and particularly in Years 7 and 8, by producing supporting documents for non-specialist teachers of the subject. Curriculum provision is good and meets the requirements of the Locally Agreed syllabus. Marking and assessment procedures are also improving under her guidance. The subject co-ordinator is committed to raising and improving standards. Improvement since the last report is good. The co-ordinator does not have sufficient 'free' time to further develop the subject's place in the curriculum of the school.