

INSPECTION REPORT

ALBAN VA CHURCH OF ENGLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Great Barford, Bedford

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109697

Headteacher: Mr G Bent

Lead inspector: Sid Freeman

Dates of inspection: 17th – 19th November 2003

Inspection number: 258545

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2003

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	9 to 13 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	457
School address:	Silver Street Great Barford Bedford Bedfordshire
Postcode:	MK44 3HZ
Telephone number:	01234 870735
Fax number:	01234 970736
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Wells
Date of previous inspection:	19 May 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Alban is a Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School for pupils aged 9 to 13 which serves several small villages and attracts 48 per cent of its pupils from outside its designated catchment area. There were 315 pupils during the last inspection. Numbers have risen every year since then, and the school now has 457 pupils on roll. There is a balance of boys and girls in all year groups except Year 7 which has a larger number of girls. Very few pupils are from minority ethnic communities; one pupil has a mother tongue other than English and is at an early stage of learning English.

Pupils who join Alban Middle School show a distribution of ability which is similar to that found nationally with the majority of average ability. There are 74 pupils (16 per cent) on the school's register of special educational needs (SEN); eight of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Thirty-two pupils (9 per cent) are eligible for free school meals; this is average. The school takes pupils from all socio-economic backgrounds, though most are from socially advantaged backgrounds.

The school achieved a Healthy School award in 2003. It is also involved in the Young Enterprise initiative.

The main aim of the school is written in its mission statement:
'Alban Church of England Middle School seeks to promote the growth in wisdom and learning of the children in our care based on Christian values.'

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2636	Sid Freeman	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Special educational needs
12682	Jim Griffin	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
31682	Val Girling	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art Design and technology
31673	John Gwyer-Roberts	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music
8756	Pat Hanage	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics
3624	Derek Jones	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science Information and communication technology
31649	Richard Marsden	<i>Team inspector</i>	Citizenship Modern foreign languages
12118	Allan Paver	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography History
19214	Geoffrey Price	<i>Team inspector</i>	English
18755	Roger Whittaker	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

VT Education
Old Garden House
The Lanterns
Bridge Lane
SW11 3AD

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	1
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	4
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	7
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	13
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	16
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	31

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. In most subjects good teaching promotes good learning and achievement and also standards that are above average. Pupils are proud of the school; most are eager to learn and rise to the high expectations of teachers and to challenging work. The school's ethos is good. Leadership and management are satisfactory; governance is unsatisfactory. The lack of systematic school self-evaluation and consistent improvement has hampered the achievement of staff and pupils. Costs per pupil are above average and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour are good.
- The new headteacher has the vision and understanding to move the school forward.
- Good partnerships with parents and with other schools.
- Excellence in science.
- Whole-school planning and self-evaluation are unsatisfactory.
- Senior leaders have not provided sufficient support and challenge to enable under performing departments to improve.
- Governance is unsatisfactory.
- Unsatisfactory teaching, learning, standards and provision in design and technology (resistant materials), and unsatisfactory teaching, learning and provision in music.
- The school does not provide collective worship for all pupils every day.

How the effectiveness of the school has changed since the last inspection:

Individual departmental initiatives have led to very good improvement in English, mathematics and science, also to good improvement in information and communication technology (ICT), art and physical education. The overall school improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The headteacher and senior staff have not provided the support and monitoring of other key staff with leadership and management responsibilities to ensure consistent improvement since the last inspection.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	C	B	B
mathematics	C	E	C	C
science	B	C	A	A

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 2.*

Overall, standards are above average and achievement is good in all years. Standards are above average in English, mathematics, ICT, geography and citizenship; they are well above average in science and art, but below average in design and technology. Pupils' achievement is good in English, mathematics, ICT and citizenship and very good in science and art. However, it is unsatisfactory in design and technology, history and music. National Curriculum test results rose against all schools in 2003, halting a three-year decline. The results also improved against similar schools, showing pupils' good progress in English and very good progress in science.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour are strong features of the school. Pupils' attendance is average, but their punctuality is good. Pupils' moral and social development is good. A lack of coherent planning for pupils' spiritual development leads to satisfactory but inconsistent development. Pupils' cultural development is also satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Overall, the quality of teaching is good for pupils of all ages and abilities. Very good teaching in science and art promotes very good learning. Teaching and learning are good in English, mathematics, ICT, design and technology (food technology and textiles), physical education and citizenship. In design and technology (resistant materials) and music, unsatisfactory teaching leads to unsatisfactory learning. Provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is good. Teachers' assessment of pupils' work is largely satisfactory; the use of assessment across the whole school is unsatisfactory.

The quality of the curriculum is good. The school cares well for its pupils. It gives them good support, advice and guidance. There are good measures to involve pupils in the school's work and development, through seeking and acting on their views. There is a good partnership with parents. Links with the community have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. Links with other schools and colleges are good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The governing body is committed to the school and wants to do well, but has not been enabled or required to fulfil its responsibilities effectively, so **governance is unsatisfactory.** All statutory requirements are met, except for collective worship. The previous headteacher had very good relationships with pupils, parents and staff. Parents were very positive about his care for their children. Individual heads of department have exercised strong leadership, but the headteacher and other senior leaders have not provided rigorous or systematic monitoring, evaluation and support to promote consistent improvement. The new headteacher has the vision and understanding to make the school even better and has begun this journey with the staff and governors.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most pupils are proud of their school and like attending. Pupils are positive about most of their teachers, whom they hold in high regard. Parents are positive about what the school provides and achieves. They particularly appreciate the quality of teaching, the approachability of staff and the school's part in their children's personal development. Parents and pupils raised concerns about the availability of drinking water; also about behaviour on some of the contract buses that bring pupils to school. Inspectors consider that these matters need further investigation by the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Promote consistent improvement through an effective cycle of school improvement planning and a systematic approach to school self-evaluation and review.
- Ensure that senior leaders support, manage and monitor effectively other key staff with leadership and management responsibilities.
- Enable governors to determine the direction of the school and hold the school to account.
- Ensure good quality provision in music and design and technology (resistant materials).

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide collective worship for all pupils every day.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses:

Overall, standards are above average and achievement is good in all years.

The Year 6 national curriculum test results in 2003 were well above average in science, above average in English and average in mathematics; this represented a considerable improvement on the previous year's results.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- National test results in Year 6 improved considerably in 2003, having declined against all schools nationally from 2000 to 2002.
- National test results are considerably better in science than in English and mathematics.
- During the inspection standards were well above average in science and art, with very good achievement.
- Standards were also above average in English, mathematics, ICT and citizenship, with good achievement.
- Pupils with SEN, and those whose mother tongue is not English, achieve well.
- Standards and achievement have not improved enough in design and technology since last inspection; they are lower now in music than at the last inspection.
- Achievement in history in Years 5 and 6 is unsatisfactory because pupils have too few history lessons.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.8 (27.4)	27.0 (26.6)
mathematics	27.1 (25.0)	27.0 (26.5)
science	30.5 (29.1)	28.8 (28.2)

There were 105 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. The results of the Year 6 national tests in 2003 were a considerable improvement on those of 2002, halting a three-year decline. The school's results were well above average in science, above average in English and average in mathematics, as compared with all schools and similar schools, that is schools which had pupils of similar prior attainment. The results rose against all schools nationally, and also against similar schools, showing that pupils had made good progress in English and very good progress in science since Year 2. The headlines included improved mathematics results, with an 11 per cent increase in the number of pupils gaining the average grade or better (Level 4 or above) and a trebling of the percentage of pupils gaining above average results (Level 5 or above) to 33 per cent. Teachers' high expectations and provision of challenging work in science were evident in a further rise in the already high percentage of pupils gaining Level 4 or above in science to 97 per cent (almost 30 per cent better than mathematics), also in an increase in pupils gaining Level 5 or above to 58 per cent - almost three times the percentage in English and mathematics. The school identified underachievement in the 2002 national test results. The results in 2003 show clearly that there is room for further improvement in the performance of pupils of both average and above average ability in English and mathematics.

2. Inspectors judged that, overall, standards are above average and achievement is good in all years. Standards are above average in English, mathematics, ICT, geography and citizenship; they are well above average in science and art, but below average in design and technology. Pupils' achievement is good in English, mathematics, ICT and citizenship and very good in science and art. However, it is unsatisfactory in design and technology, history and music. Inspectors did not identify any marked difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

3. The very small number of pupils whose mother tongue is not English achieve well in this school. Teachers and learning support assistants know them and their needs and provide support to enable them to make good progress. Pupils with SEN achieve very well in art and achieve well in English, mathematics, science and physical education. Factors which enhance their achievement in these subjects include careful monitoring and assessment of their progress; good quality teaching well planned to meet their needs, including the needs identified in individual education plans (IEPs); the setting system, where classes are arranged by ability in mathematics and science; grouping pupils sometimes by ability within classes; and the support given by learning assistants in English, mathematics and science. Provision for these pupils is unsatisfactory in design and technology, French and music; consequently their achievement is unsatisfactory. The achievement of less able pupils and those with SEN is hampered in these and other subjects by the lack of work which matches their ability and inadequate support for their learning.

4. The school has identified gifted and talented pupils and arranged additional activities for them, including summer school activities and the Children's University. Overall, the achievement of these pupils is good. Inspectors observed occasional opportunities for these pupils to explore issues in greater depth in the classroom, particularly orally, and also for homework. They benefited from the setting system and from group work where pupils were grouped by ability. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' performance in art and science and provide well targeted, challenging work; pupils of all abilities rise to such expectations; gifted and talented pupils achieve particularly well in these subjects.

5. In the previous inspection the school was required to raise attainment in:

- mathematics for pupils at all ages;
- English for pupils aged 9 to 11;
- design and technology and ICT for pupils aged 11 to 13.

This has been achieved in all aspects except design and technology.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities:

Pupils show very good attitudes towards school and good attitudes towards their work. They behave well, form very good relationships and their personal development is good. The good parental partnership makes a significant contribution to these positive attitudes and values. Pupils' punctuality is good and attendance is satisfactory. Overall, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils show very good attitudes towards school and good attitudes towards their work.
- Pupils form very good relationships and their behaviour is good.
- Pupils' personal qualities are well developed; their social development is a particularly strong feature.

Commentary

6. Most pupils are proud of their school and like attending. Success in sporting competitions and the school's good reputation in the community are key reasons for their pride. Pupils are positive about friendships with other pupils and most of their teachers, whom they hold in high regard. The additional opportunities provided by clubs and the growing variety of teaching styles are important

factors behind their very positive attitudes towards school. In lessons, pupils respond particularly well when expectations are high and they are able to engage in a variety of practical activities. This enthusiasm for practical activities is clearly evident in physical education, science, and in art and design lessons. Pupils are unusually positive about science lessons; the practical activities make a major contribution to both their very good attitudes and their achievement in this subject. Other key features that make lessons more interesting for pupils include discussions in small groups and role play. In contrast, pupils show the least interest and enthusiasm in lessons that are dominated by listening to the teacher and copying materials from the board.

7. Very harmonious relationships among pupils, irrespective of background or level of learning competency, are a positive feature. Most teachers value pupils' work and give praise for effort and good work. As a result the majority of pupils are comfortable expressing views and asking questions of their teachers in lessons, and this assists their learning. Behaviour in classrooms during lunchtime and playtimes is good. The good and reliable behaviour of nearly all students is an important element in the prevailing positive atmosphere for learning. A strikingly calm social atmosphere prevails in the dining hall. Parents and pupils confirm that rare incidents of bullying and other anti-social behaviour are fairly and effectively resolved.

Exclusions

8. In the previous school year, there was one permanent exclusion and the level of fixed term exclusions is below that typically found nationally. The school's carefully staged system of warnings and detention is well designed to prevent exclusions, as concerns are usually effectively addressed at an earlier stage.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – Any other white background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Any other ethnic group

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
419	13	1
1	0	0
1	1	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0

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

Attendance

9. Attendance is now satisfactory overall, having steadily declined in each of the past four years. The table below provides absence data for the latest complete reporting year, when the attendance was above the national average at 94.1 per cent. Unauthorised absence was in line with the national average.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.7
National data	6.1

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.3
National data	0.3

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year (2001/2).

10. The school's measures to combat absence are satisfactory. Whilst illness is the primary reason for absence, holidays during term time are an important secondary factor, which has contributed to the decline in attendance in recent years. Hence the decline in attendance is not a reflection on pupils' attitudes towards school. Pupils' punctuality is good. Nearly all pupils routinely arrive on time and go promptly to their lessons throughout the school day.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

11. Provision for moral and social development is good in the curriculum and life of the school. Pupils' development is good: pupils show a growing self-awareness and an understanding of what is taking place around them. They respond positively to a clear code of conduct and have a secure perception of what is right and wrong. This is particularly evident in the work of the Alban Pupils Forum where pupils' representatives consult with teachers about the work of the school. Most pupils listen well to the views of others. They are able to reflect on their own work and willing to accept evaluation by other pupils and teachers. They treat people with respect and take responsibility for themselves and others. Pupils work well together in pairs, small groups and team games. They demonstrate good awareness of moral and social issues and discuss them with confidence in lessons and tutorial periods; however, not all teachers give them opportunities and encouragement to do this.

12. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Provision for these aspects is not planned and developed coherently throughout the school; teachers take opportunities for them when they arise. The variable quality of planning means that there is inconsistency in pupils' development. They show appreciation of their own and other cultures, particularly in personal and social health education, art, design and technology, geography and music.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching is good. The quality of learning is good. Most teachers' assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory, but the whole-school use of assessment data to monitor and improve pupils' progress is unsatisfactory.

Teaching and learning:

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching and learning in the school are good.
- Very good teaching in art and science leads to very good learning and achievement by all pupils.
- The support which learning assistants give to pupils with SEN is good.
- The least successful aspect of teaching and learning is assessment, although it is excellent in science.
- Assessment data is not used effectively to monitor pupils' progress, teachers' performance or school improvement.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 66 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (1.5%)	7 (10.6%)	36 (54.6%)	15 (22.7%)	7 (10.6%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

13. The quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good learning in science and art. Teaching is good and promotes good learning in English, mathematics, ICT, physical education, citizenship and the food and textiles technology aspect of design and technology. The teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in design and technology overall and in music. The head of the art department began her maternity leave shortly before the inspection. Nevertheless, the very high quality of all aspects of her teaching was evident in the quality and standards of pupils' work and exhibitions around the school, assessment records, discussions with pupils and departmental planning, as a result of which the supply teacher was able to teach very well in her absence.

14. The proportion of good or better teaching has improved from 50 per cent during the last inspection to 67 per cent. Teaching was very good in art and science in 1997; it continues to be very good. The most dramatic improvement has been in the teaching of mathematics. In the previous inspection there were shortcomings in almost all mathematics lessons. In this inspection, teaching in 10 of the 13 lessons observed was good. An issue for improvement arising from the last inspection was 'increasing the proportion of very good teaching, by ensuring that:

- there are sufficient opportunities for more able pupils to make rapid progress;
- activities are provided which match the learning needs of pupils with IEPs.'

This has not been achieved: 14 per cent of lessons observed in the last inspection were very good; the proportion has dropped slightly to 12 per cent during this inspection. Most of these lessons were observed in Years 5 and 8; no teaching observed in Year 6 was very good or better. Only in science and art do more able pupils make consistently rapid progress. Very good teaching leads to very good learning and achievement by pupils with SEN in art. Good teaching and good use of IEPs promotes good learning and achievement in physical education. In English, good provision for pupils with SEN occurs through carefully focused teaching, well-selected resources and tasks, grouping by ability for some activities within lessons and the use of learning support assistants.

15. Overall, the support which learning assistants give to pupils with SEN is good; it builds pupils' confidence and skills, focuses pupils on the learning objectives, provides targeted support on aspects which create the most difficulty for pupils, and provides encouragement for them to succeed. Five factors limit support assistants' effectiveness:

- their classroom skills vary considerably;
- individual teachers do not always engage in joint planning, implementation and evaluation of learning with support assistants;
- their support is sometimes spread too widely among low attaining pupils and loses the focus on stated pupils;
- support assistants' records of pupils' progress frequently comment on attitudes and behaviour, but some do not provide an assessment of pupils' learning which could inform planning;
- there are no systems and procedures for the observation, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of their work in the classroom.

Individual education plans vary in their quality and use by teachers. Older plans were more general in nature and less useful to teachers or support assistants; the most recent plans, for the Autumn Term 2003, are more detailed, specific and helpful.

16. The least successful aspect of teaching and learning is assessment, which is no more than satisfactory overall. Inspectors were looking, in lessons, departments and across the whole school, for thorough and constructive assessment of pupils' work; for the use of assessment to inform teachers' planning and target-setting to meet the needs of individual pupils and groups; and for evidence that pupils understand how well they have achieved and how they can improve. Assessment is excellent overall in science and good in English, mathematics, ICT and art. It is unsatisfactory in design and technology, French, music and citizenship. With the exception of these four subjects assessment is generally thorough and constructive. The main areas for development in assessment are its use by teachers to guide them in planning the next stage of pupils' learning; the use of assessment information to set challenging targets with and for pupils; and the use of assessment data to monitor and improve pupils' progress. Departments have developed a range of different approaches to the handling of assessment information. The school has accumulated a considerable amount of assessment data which receives thorough analysis. However, this analysis is not drawn together, interpreted and used to monitor and improve pupils' progress, evaluate and

improve the performance of teachers, or to evaluate the effectiveness of departments, year groups or the whole school. This data holds vital performance information for pupils, parents, staff and governors. Its use for whole-school improvement is unsatisfactory. The new headteacher has valuable experience of effective assessment systems as part of school self-evaluation and is undertaking change in this area as a matter of urgency.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school provides all pupils with a balanced range of subjects that enables them to develop well.
- The provision of activities outside the classroom is rich and varied.
- Pupils make good use of the library to extend their learning.
- Allocation of time for geography and history is insufficient for good coverage of the National Curriculum.
- The use and value of tutorial time varies greatly in different classes.
- Provision for collective worship does not fulfil statutory requirements.

Commentary

17. The curriculum matches the needs and interests of pupils from all backgrounds and of all abilities. It provides them with well-ordered programmes for learning. All pupils have good opportunities to enrich their learning outside lessons. The school meets statutory requirements, apart from the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Sex and relationships education and alcohol and drugs misuse are covered well in the schemes of work. Access to the curriculum is good for all pupils, including those with SEN. Pupils whose mother tongue is not English are well supported so that they have full access to all subjects and activities.

18. The curriculum is broad and provides all pupils with a balanced programme for learning. All pupils take French from Year 5. The teaching time for geography and history in Years 7 and 8 is substantially below that required to cover the programmes of study of the National Curriculum in sufficient depth. The geography department manages this situation well: with good teaching pupils make good progress in geography and reach standards which are above average by Year 8. In history pupils' achievement in Years 5 and 6 is unsatisfactory and standards are below average, but due to specialist teaching, pupils' achievement is good and they reach average standards by the end of Year 8.

19. Outside the classroom pupils have good opportunities to enrich their learning through pursuit of individual sporting interests, mainly during lunchtimes. Take-up of activities is high because teachers encourage all pupils to participate whatever their levels of performance. Extra-curricular sessions build well on learning in lessons. A good range of inter-form and inter-school team activities take place, including netball, football for girls, boys' indoor athletics and cross-country running. Links with the local rugby club have encouraged participation by 70 pupils in coaching sessions. Around 50 Year 8 pupils participate in outdoor activities on a residential visit to Wales. Parents give good support to team events.

20. The school library provides a well-used base for lunchtime activities, including work on a pupils' magazine, reading clubs and book fairs. Elsewhere there are regular theatre trips and visits to places of cultural and historical interest. Pupils participate in many English and mathematical competitions. Enthusiastic involvement in lunchtime clubs helps develop pupils' skills and

knowledge in writing, drama, ICT, mathematics, design and technology and art and design. Musical activities include a choir, string ensembles and a clarinet trio. Pupils expressed concern about the cost of instrumental lessons and it is possible that this deters some pupils from learning a musical instrument.

21. Curricular links with first and upper schools are strong. Well-planned 'bridging' projects in English, mathematics and science involve close co-operation between subject staff from different schools. As a result pupils move schools more successfully, with good progression in their learning and confident attitudes.

22. An issue for improvement in the last inspection was the school's links with industry and commerce. Since then the school has strengthened links with industry to broaden pupils' awareness and knowledge of the work place. In recent years industry and initiative days have involved all pupils with challenges organised by local firms. A project started in 2002 to involve local employers through the local Education Business Partnership has over the last two years helped Year 8 pupils, working alongside young employees, to a clearer understanding of the world of work. The Young Enterprise programme for pupils in Year 5 has led to valuable sessions on 'Our World' funded and organised by local businesses. Year 7 pupils have had advice on the management of personal finance from a representative from the Education and Business Partnership. This represents very good improvement.

23. The use and value of tutorial time varied greatly in classes observed, depending on the significance given to it by individual teachers, their preparation and their expectations. Good opportunities were provided in some classes to explore personal and social themes and there was evidence of pupils' good moral and social development, and also of good linguistic skills. Provision and pupils' development were poor in others. The school indicated that these periods would be used for 'Thought for the Day' - collective worship. Pupils engaged in some very worthwhile activities, but were given no time for personal reflection or prayer in response to the activities. Collective worship is not provided for all pupils each day, so the school does not meet statutory requirements.

Staffing, accommodation and resources

24. There is a good match of staff to suit the demands of the curriculum, with most staff deployed within their subject specialist areas. Learning support assistants are experienced and deployed strategically in English, mathematics and science and in the support of pupils with statements of special educational needs elsewhere.

25. The quality of accommodation is good, with plenty of space to teach specialist subjects like food technology, textiles and art. The science laboratories and the design and technology workshop are newly refurbished. The workshop is now a large, pleasant area but still only has workstations for 20 pupils. As classes can be as many as 33, this has an adverse effect on pupils' progress. Music is taught in a pleasant studio suitable for teaching whole classes but has no other areas for small group work and instrumental lessons. This seriously affects the variety of work pupils can do. Overall, resources for learning are satisfactory. Some subject areas have large selections of video material and CD-ROMs in addition to other equipment and books. These are supplemented by good facilities in the school library, with computers linked to the Internet available for research. There is a small lending library of books held in the SEN base. Some pupils with SEN are encouraged, as part of their IEP, to borrow reading books from this collection of high interest/low reading level books. A more strategic approach may be to ensure that such books are stocked and identifiable in the main school library.

Care, guidance and support:

The school cares well for its pupils. It gives them good support, advice and guidance. There are good measures to involve pupils in the school's work and development, through seeking and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school cares well for its pupils.
- Support, advice and guidance are good.
- The school regards the views of pupils as important to its work.

Commentary

26. The formal policies and practices relating to child protection and looked after children are well considered and properly carried out. Pupil induction and transfer arrangements are well established and effective. Form tutors and other staff know pupils well and recognise their needs. They act quickly if a pupil is unhappy or under pressure and are careful to make sure new arrivals are helped to settle. The school makes good use of other professionals, such as the school nurse, to help pupils with personal problems that they do not want to discuss with their teachers. As a result, the returns from the pupils' survey show that most pupils feel fairly treated and have a good and trusting relationship with one or more adults. Although health and safety arrangements are satisfactory overall, the lack of soap and drinking water in some upstairs toilets is an important aspect for improvement which has been identified by pupils and parents.

27. Pupils' achievement is supported effectively through the sharing of monitoring information with pupils in English, mathematics, science, ICT and art, where this is underpinned by good assessment of pupils' achievements. Pupils are aware of their targets, which are usually written into the well-used homework planners. This process is less effective in other subjects. Where concerns are identified, pastoral and other staff act quickly to ensure pupils are aware that improvement is needed. However, the lack of a whole-school approach to the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress limits the support which pupils receive.

28. The school's involvement of pupils in its work is effective. It does not just gather pupils' views and concerns through the school council. Pupils were involved in the recent interviews for the new headteacher. Their views have been sought about what they like and find difficult in subjects. Pupils carry out responsibly a range of monitorial duties at lunchtime and break time. The school council, called the Alban Pupils' Forum, does important work on fundraising for charities and school projects.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community:

There is a good partnership with parents. Links with the community have improved since the previous inspection and are now satisfactory. Links with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The good partnership with parents.
- The good links with the other schools and colleges.

Commentary

29. The key contributions to the school's successful partnership with parents include the following: the frequency, range and quality of information to help support pupils' learning; two parents' evenings; interim and good annual reports; and leaflets on policies with a significant parental dimension, such as attendance and bullying, which provide parents with a very clear outline on school's expectations. The school makes good use of pupils' diaries, so parents and pupils are clear on homework which is

set. The diary is also used effectively to keep parents informed about merits, warnings and targets, as well as providing an effective medium for messages between home and school. The school takes quick and decisive action to address any concerns; it places real emphasis on responding promptly to parents. Parents are invited to attend progress reviews of pupils with statements of special need; most parents do so and have expressed their gratitude for the support their children receive.

30. The success of the partnership is reflected in the positive parental survey. Only a small minority of parents have any concerns on any of the survey questions. Parents are positive about what the school provides and achieves. They particularly appreciate the quality of teaching, the approachability of staff and the school's part in their children's personal development. Parents and pupils raised concerns about the availability of drinking water; also about behaviour on some of the contract buses that bring them to school. Inspectors consider that these matters need further investigation by the school. A significant minority of pupils are not represented at parents' evenings and the school experiences difficulties in recruiting and retaining parent governors. To date the school has not sought the views of parents to help address these issues.

31. The local church is an important community link. Pupils visit it for services. The vicar regularly takes assemblies and other church members are school governors. The school nurse, the police and other public services enrich the curriculum with contributions on personal safety and healthy living. Pupils take part in a range of collections and sponsored events for charity. Some subject departments have good community links. For example, the physical education department's links with Bedford Rugby Union Club lead to a key skills qualification, based on the *Playing for Excellence* scheme. Girls get coaching from Rushden and Diamonds Football Club. With the help of the local education business partnership, Year 8 pupils get a good appreciation of some local businesses and associated careers in airlines, motor manufacture, construction and the police. However, there is currently no use of the school's facilities by community groups or for adult education classes, for example.

32. There are very good links, including significant curriculum links, with the upper school to which most pupils transfer. Links with other middle schools in the cluster are effective. There are very good transition arrangements for SEN with the first schools and high schools. These ensure the transmission of documentation, knowledge of the pupils and, where possible, attendance of the special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) from both schools at the final formal review of statemented pupils' progress in each school. A joint approach to implementing the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been pivotal in fostering these links at departmental level. The pastoral links between the school and its main feeder first schools are well developed. Curricular links are less effective, resulting in some pupils repeating work in Year 5 that they had already covered in their first school. School teams play all the major sports against other local schools, thereby providing pupils with additional understanding of the local community, whilst developing their sense of fair play and competition. Student teachers from the Bedford based college of De Montfort University take part of their teaching practice at the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Leadership is satisfactory. Management is satisfactory. The work of the governing body is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The new headteacher has the vision and understanding to move the school forward.
- Some individual heads of department exercise strong leadership and management.
- Leadership and management are excellent in science and very good in art.
- The governing body has not been enabled or required to undertake its responsibilities effectively.
- Governance is unsatisfactory.
- Senior leaders have not supported, managed or monitored effectively other key staff with leadership and management responsibilities.
- The school improvement plan is not an effective management tool.
- Improvement has been inconsistent since the last inspection.

Commentary

33. The performance of the governing body is unsatisfactory. Governors are committed to the school and supportive. However, the governing body has been too dependent on the headteacher, has not set the overall direction of the school and has done little to hold the school to account. It has insufficient understanding of the performance of the school and a limited effect on its development. Governors have not ensured consistent improvement since the last inspection. All statutory requirements are met, except collective worship for all pupils every day.

34. The previous headteacher had very good relationships with pupils, parents and staff. Parents were very positive about his care for their children. He was the line manager for all departments and for SEN, so he undertook all the senior leadership departmental reviews and classroom observations. This limited the roles and professional development of the other senior leaders, that is the deputy headteacher and two senior teachers. The deputy headteacher organises and manages the school well, but he has not been sufficiently involved in managing staff, monitoring performance and leading school improvement, even in his role as the Key Stage 3 Strategy Manager. The headteacher and other senior staff have not provided the support and monitoring of other key staff with leadership and management responsibilities to ensure consistent improvement since the last inspection. Some individual heads of department have exercised strong leadership and management and promoted improvements in teaching, learning and standards. Leadership and management of the science department are excellent; they are very good in art and good in English, mathematics, physical education and citizenship. Both aspects are unsatisfactory in design and technology and music.

Here is a middle school science subject leader of the highest quality.

She has cultivated an excellent team of teachers through the excellence of her teaching and support, leadership and management. Monitoring of teaching, both formal and informal, ensures consistently good and very good teaching and learning. Her classroom skills are excellent: management of the pupils in the laboratory is impressive, a firm eye on health and safety, rigorous standards in the correct use of equipment and constant challenges to pupils' learning. Questions are posed and informed responses are required from pupils. Pupils thrive on the challenging work and enjoy the thrill of experimenting. Standards are consistently well above average and the highest in the school. The high quality scheme of work is under constant review and close co-operation with the upper school ensures maximum continuity for pupils' learning. Cross-curricular links with English, mathematics and ICT are used and promoted very well. Pupils' folders provide comprehensive records of their progress because the writing frames used focus precisely on learning – no copying of notes in this department!

When the inspector reported the excellence of her department, her only question was, 'How can we improve?' That's how excellence develops!

35. The school has clear performance management systems in place, and these are beginning to have some impact on school improvement. The school does not have a robust system for monitoring pupils' progress in order to judge the success of teachers' performance management objectives. Newly qualified teachers, and experienced teachers new to the school, are introduced well to the school's ethos and its methods of working. The training linked to national initiatives, for example the Key Stage 3 Strategy, has been effective in widening the range of strategies teachers use to help pupils learn. The performance of learning support assistants is not monitored or managed effectively. They have a thorough annual appraisal system but their classroom performance is not systematically observed, monitored or supported by the SENCO.

36. The SENCO ensures that all statutory responsibilities are well executed. However, her work is largely assessment and administration, which is a waste of her teaching, leadership and management skills and has inhibited the development of special educational needs support in the school. There is a good team of learning support assistants who are very well organised by the co-ordinator. The school has decided to deploy most of the support in English, mathematics and science, ensuring good special educational needs provision and good achievement by pupils in these key subjects, and also support for the development of literacy and mathematical skills which benefit pupils across the whole curriculum. There is insufficient dialogue between the SENCO and heads of department and subject teachers about the use and value of IEPs, the support that the departments provide for these pupils with SEN and the effectiveness of their learning.

37. Under the previous headteacher, the major decision-making of the school was undertaken by the policy group, consisting of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and finance manager. This group decided on the school priorities, and then ensured their funding and implementation through a strategic plan. The governing body has not been enabled or required to undertake its responsibilities effectively. There has not been an effective partnership between the headteacher and governing body which enabled the governing body to provide the strategic direction for the work and improvement of the school. The school improvement plan is not an effective management tool. It was described by staff and governors as a 'wish list'; it does not identify the school priorities or promote improvement, nor is it linked to the budget or evaluated by its effectiveness in improving the quality of teaching and learning or raising attainment and improving pupils' progress. The process by which it was constructed and operated was flawed and has undermined the work of the governing body. Effective development planning was a key issue in the previous inspection. The current school improvement plan does not represent an improvement on the position in 1997. In stark contrast to the school improvement plan, some departmental development plans are well constructed, budgeted, and monitored by the head of department and have promoted improvement.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,321,603.00
Total expenditure	1,265,485.00
Expenditure per pupil	2,883.00

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	95,389.00
Balance carried forward to the next	56,275.00

38. The school's expenditure per pupil is above average. The finance manager administers the budget very effectively and exercises very good financial control. However, this exceptionally demanding role is held by the senior teacher who also leads the science department. The new headteacher has recognised that this administrative role detracts from her professional role and contribution to the school. The school has wisely appointed an administration manager as part of the government initiative to remodel the workforce in schools, which aims to enable teachers to focus more effectively on teaching, learning and pupils' achievement. The school is concerned to ensure value for money. There is evidence of consultation and competition being used to inform financial decisions but the governing body have not been introduced to the principles of best value and best value is not central to the school's management.

39. Improvement has been inconsistent since the previous inspection in 1997. Following the inspection there was a burst of energy to address the improvement issues identified. There is no

record of this leading to sustained improvement beyond 1998, except in science and art. The three-year decline to 2002 in the National Curriculum test results compared with other schools, particularly in English and mathematics, jolted the school into self-evaluation and action. This action, combined with a new leadership appointment in mathematics, led to the improvement in national test results in 2003. However, this further surge of energy did not address the problems which had persisted in design and technology (resistant materials) and in the leadership of the department for six years. Nor did it halt the decline in music, which was a strength in 1997. Inspection evidence indicates that there has not been consistent school self-evaluation and improvement, planned and prioritised through the school improvement planning process, systematically driven and supported by the senior leaders and regularly reported to, and monitored by, the governing body. Individual departmental initiatives have led to very good improvement in English, mathematics and science, also to good improvement in ICT, art and physical education. The overall school improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Governors, leaders and managers at all levels should learn from the example set by the head of the science department, whose outstanding leadership and management has led to excellent teamwork, consistent improvement, very good quality teaching and the highest standards in the school.

40. The overall effectiveness of the school is good. In most subjects good teaching promotes good learning and achievement, and standards that are above average. Leadership, management and improvement since the last inspection are satisfactory. The school's ethos is good. Costs per pupil are above average and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

Aids and barriers to raising achievement

41. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very significant aids to improvement in this school. They are proud of the school, eager to learn and rise to the high expectations and challenging work set by teachers.

42. There has been a lack of systematic school self-evaluation and consistent improvement driven by governors and senior leaders in partnership. This has hampered the achievement of staff and pupils. There is a need for fresh negotiations concerning the roles and responsibilities of the headteacher and senior leaders, linked to performance management. The complementary roles of staff and governors should also be reaffirmed, re-established, implemented and monitored for their effectiveness. The new headteacher is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. He has the vision and understanding to make the school even better. He has already produced consultation papers on key areas and begun negotiations with staff, senior leaders, governors and the local authority about plans for improvement.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- There has been a big improvement in the performance of all pupils since the previous inspection.
- Teaching is good so that pupils enjoy lessons and learn effectively.
- Innovative leadership is helping to raise standards of teaching and learning.
- Boys achieve better compared with girls than they do nationally.
- Sharper focus on what pupils should learn in each lesson would increase the proportion of very good teaching.

Standards by Year 6 are above average	Standards by Year 8 are above average
Results in national tests were above average in 2003	
Achievement in Years 5-6 is good	Achievement in Years 7-8 is good
Quality of teaching is good	Quality of learning is good
Leadership of the subject is good	Management of the subject is good
Improvement since the previous inspection is very good	

Commentary

43. The 2003 test results for pupils in Year 6 were above the national average. They were also better than the average achieved by schools whose pupils had similar levels of attainment at the beginning of Year 5. Results have risen steadily in the last few years. Recent English results have usually been better than those in mathematics but less good than those in science. Boys have recently achieved better results than girls in contrast to the national pattern. Optional tests taken at the end of Year 8 also show that pupils' attainment remains above average.

44. Pupils join the school with average levels of attainment. By Year 6 they have made sufficient gains to be above the national average. This represents good achievement. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds are fully involved in all lessons and make equally good progress. Those whose mother tongue is not English achieve as well as others because they are well supported and because teachers watch their progress closely. Pupils with SEN also make good progress, particularly when they receive additional support in the classroom. In Years 7 and 8 pupils continue to work at above average levels and show good achievement.

45. Pupils work hard and often enthusiastically because they enjoy English. The quality of oral work is above expected levels. Pupils usually convey their ideas and opinions clearly when answering questions in class or working in small groups. This was very apparent in the impressive contributions of Year 6 pupils when they discussed the justifications for war. Pupils of all attainment levels read aloud well. They convey meaning clearly and often with good expression. Standards overall in reading are above average. Neat books and well-presented work show very positive attitudes towards English. Handwriting is only occasionally untidy and even that of the lowest attaining pupils is usually legible. Higher attaining pupils write accurately in well-organised paragraphs that show good control of language. Use of ICT is widely evident and by Year 8 most pupils show good use of re-drafting to improve the quality of their written work.

46. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan to involve all pupils directly in lesson activities. As a result they enjoy their learning and make rapid progress. Teaching is challenging because teachers have high expectations of their pupils. Relationships with pupils are strong. Pupils respect their teachers and seldom misbehave. Lessons build well upon what pupils have already learnt and homework is used well to extend pupils' learning. However, teaching is less effective when pupils are not completely clear what they are meant to be learning. High quality support from learning assistants helps lower attaining pupils and those with SEN to make good progress with their reading and writing. All teachers focus on aspects of language development in lessons so that pupils continually improve their spelling, grammar, and punctuation, as well as developing their range of vocabulary. Marking is conscientious but teachers do not always indicate how pupils might improve their work.

47. Leadership and management of the department are good. Teachers work very well together. Imaginative new lesson plans are helping to improve teaching across the department. Since the previous inspection better teaching and standards of work have led to very good overall improvement

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. Standards of literacy are above average. Pupils are effective speakers in whole class discussion and when working in small groups. They read aloud confidently in English, history, and geography but elsewhere have too few opportunities to develop this skill. Reading levels are generally above average so that pupils cope readily with the demands for reading in all subjects. In English and science pupils are encouraged to read widely. In most subjects pupils are helped to understand specialist words through good displays and explanations in lessons. Pupils make good use of the library for extending their reading outside lessons. Pupils write more accurately than most pupils of their age. Teachers correct spelling, grammar and punctuation well in English, science and French. In most subjects the range of opportunities for writing is narrow. In French and design and technology pupils are helped in structuring their writing. The school has made progress in its strategy for raising literacy levels but the quality of support provided by teachers and support assistants is uneven from subject to subject.

Modern foreign language (French)

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils begin to study French in Year 5, two years ahead of the statutory requirement to study a foreign language.
- Relationships are good and lessons are orderly.
- Boys and girls display equal involvement in their learning.
- Teachers' planning and objectives are not always clear.
- There is insufficient challenge to high ability pupils in Year 8.
- There is no rigorous and systematic monitoring of the work of teachers or pupils.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are above average	Standards by Year 8 in line with average
Achievement in Years 5-6 is good	Achievement in Years 7-8 is average
Quality of teaching is satisfactory	Quality of learning is satisfactory
Leadership of the subject is satisfactory	Management of the subject is satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory	

Commentary

49. Pupils begin French in Year 5, two years ahead of the statutory requirement to do so, and standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are above national expectations. However, momentum is not maintained in Years 7 and 8 so that at the end of Year 8 standards are only in line with the national average, and high ability pupils do not reach the standards they should. Boys' and girls' standards are similar. Pupils with SEN have very little support from learning assistants in lessons and, as a result, they do not reach the standards they should.

50. The mixed ability grouping of pupils in all years means that the extremes of ability in Year 8 classes are not adequately catered for, so that both the highest attaining and lowest attaining pupils do not achieve as well as they should after four years of French.

51. Teachers have a warm and encouraging manner which promotes confidence in pupils. Lessons are purposeful and orderly. Teachers have a more than adequate knowledge and understanding of French and can use it well in the classroom. However, they often mix French and English within the same sentence so that pupils are not challenged to hear French used for everyday communication. A good, modern textbook provides purposeful material for lessons. However, teachers' objectives are not always clear, so that pupils are not sure whether they are practising, for example, listening skills or writing skills: their difficulties in one area prevent them from achieving well in another. Teachers give helpful feedback on pupils' performance in class; pupils' work is marked regularly, but teachers do not provide sufficiently sharply focused comments to assist pupils to improve. In the books and folders of some pupils notes for revision are mixed with pupils' own work so that it is not clear which is which when pupils come to revise. Teachers make good use of games, competitions, songs, group work, and role-play to provide varied and lively lessons, but insufficient use is made of ICT. No instances of extended reading were observed during the inspection.

52. Schemes of work are clear and manageable and show clearly the contribution the department makes to pupils' literacy and numeracy. There is some observation of lessons by the subject leader but insufficient systematic and rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning. The use of assessment information from pupils' work also needs to be sharpened in order to challenge them and tailor teaching to pupils' needs and abilities. There are only a few foreign language books in the school library and there are no tapes, videos or ICT resources, which means that opportunities for independent work by pupils outside lessons are limited. A popular and long-established annual visit to Normandy brings French alive for many pupils, and contributes very well to their cultural development.

53. Since the last inspection boys' performance has improved and the disparity between girls' and boys' attainment has largely been addressed. Teachers continue to use French with confidence and clarity and the course book has been replaced by a much more effective one. However, teachers' expectations of high ability pupils are still not high enough and some pupils are still not progressing as rapidly as they should be.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good teaching and learning leads to good achievement in Years 6 and 8.
- Good leadership and management have resulted in very good progress since the previous inspection.
- The quality and enthusiasm of the current mathematics team are improving standards.
- Some pupils' written answers are not as good as their oral answers.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are average	Standards by Year 8 are above average
Results in national tests were average in 2003	
Achievement in Years 5-6 is good	Achievement in Years 7-8 is good
Quality of teaching is good	Quality of learning is good
Leadership of the subject is good	Management of the subject is good
Progress since the previous inspection is very good	

Commentary

54. Many aspects of mathematics provision were found to be unsatisfactory in the previous inspection and the 2002 national test results were well below average, showing considerable underachievement. A new head of department was appointed in September 2002. She identified key priorities for action, using analysis of data effectively to help her do so. Standards reached in the 2003 national tests rose, showing satisfactory achievement overall and good achievement for higher attainers. This improvement is continuing, leading to good achievement overall. Standards in Year 6 are still average but are rising.

55. Teachers' emphasis on pupils explaining the reasons behind their choice of methods is raising standards. Standards are similar across all aspects of mathematics. Pupils' strengths and weaknesses are analysed soon after their arrival in Year 5. Teaching groups are then formed on the basis of prior attainment. This is the first time it has been done in Year 5. This method of grouping is helping teachers to target their work more effectively. The groupings are reviewed regularly during systematic monitoring of pupils' progress.

56. There are a few differences in standards reached by boys and girls and these are due to the lower starting point of girls. Achievement is good for both boys and girls. Teachers' detailed knowledge of their pupils, combined with good use of learning support assistants, means that pupils with SEN have good provision and achieve well. The few pupils whose mother tongue is not English also achieve well as teachers unobtrusively monitor their progress in lessons, providing help where needed.

57. Teaching and learning observed during the inspection were good. Only one unsatisfactory lesson was seen, taught by a supply teacher. Good planning, based on national initiatives, provides a framework for lessons that usually move at a fast pace. This catches and keeps pupils' interest and increases learning. Resources are used well to provide practical activities and are especially effective in improving the learning of lower attaining pupils. Teachers adapt their methods well to the prior attainment of their pupils, using more abstract approaches successfully with higher attainers. In the small proportion of lessons where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, some activities went on too long and the pace of the lesson slowed. Pupils enjoy mathematics, as the 'buzz' in lessons shows. Some teachers are more effective than others in getting pupils to justify their reasoning to the same high standards in written as well as oral work. So some written answers are not as good as pupils' oral responses. Teachers use ICT well to help pupils understand new ideas, for example, by interpreting algebraic expressions graphically.

58. The mathematics team has two specialist teachers and a number of non-specialists. The insecurity of subject knowledge of some non-specialists was an issue raised in the previous inspection report. Considerable training, both internal and with Local Education Authority (LEA) support, for the current non-specialists has resulted in a knowledgeable team of enthusiastic teachers, who work well together.

59. Assessment is used well by teachers, and especially by the head of department, to monitor pupils' learning and to find out which areas need more attention. This is effective at the level of individual pupils and also for a whole year group.

Mathematics across the curriculum

60. Pupils' mathematical skills are good and a contributory factor to their progress in subjects such as science and geography. Pupils are able to interpret information and present it in a variety of ways. In geography fieldwork they collect data, for example, by using a tally chart to record data from traffic surveys and presenting this in a variety of ways. Similarly, in science, pupils use bar charts and pie charts to help them in the interpretation and presentation of data. They carry out calculations with accuracy. Pupils have the required measuring skills for work in design and technology.

SCIENCE

Overall, provision in science is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Excellent leadership, maintaining well above average standards since the last inspection.
- Teaching is very good, so pupils' achievement is very good.
- Excellent assessment procedures used very effectively in an effort to eliminate underachievement.
- A very good scheme of work designed to promote effective learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are well above average	Standards by Year 8 are well above average
Results in national tests were well above average in 2003	
Achievement in Years 5-6 is very good	Achievement in Years 7-8 is very good
Quality of teaching is very good	Quality of learning is very good
Leadership of the subject is excellent	Management of the subject is excellent
Improvement since the previous inspection is very good	

Commentary

61. Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were well above the national average of all schools and well above the average of similar schools. Performance was better than in English and mathematics. Results were an improvement on 2002, returning to the high standards of earlier years. Standards seen in the inspection reflect the results of 2003. There is no significant difference between boys and girls, although low attaining girls performed less well than low attaining boys in 2003. Achievement is very good through to Year 8, reflecting pupils' average levels of attainment on entry to the school and the very good teaching they receive. Pupils with SEN achieve as well as other pupils because of the good support they receive in lessons.

62. Teaching is very good throughout the school and occasionally excellent; it is never less than good. Where the teaching was excellent, pupils were engaged in their learning from the very beginning of lessons to the end. High standards were maintained and pupils were intrigued and amazed by some of the things they saw, for example a liquid changing colour the instant that one drop of liquid is added to it. In the very good teaching pupils' use of the Internet, for research into the properties of metals, for example, is very good. The use of questions to reinforce learning is effective, particularly when other pupils in the class question an individual pupil. The good teaching stems from the very good scheme of work and the application of focused summary sheets at the end of lessons; these promote very good learning. Teachers use their imagination very well in the preparation and presentation of lessons; for example, the use of a computerised slide presentation maintained pupils' interest and enjoyment.

63. Leadership and management are excellent, resulting in a very good improvement since the last inspection by maintaining well above average standards, and increasing the achievement of pupils. Teaching has improved. Independent learning strategies have improved, as has the use of ICT. Technician time is flexible and sufficient to satisfy teachers because of the excellent management of the scheme of work, also an improvement on the last inspection. The use of assessment is excellent, leading to two classes, one for boys and one for girls, in an attempt to eliminate the possible underachievement of low attaining girls. Pupils assess their own work regularly in consultation with their teachers on a regular basis. Attainment records are detailed and analysed excellently to assess the overall progress of the department in relation to national standards. The science teachers form an excellent team. The scheme of work is very good because it is under constant review, to ensure it meets the needs of all pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the provision for ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Leadership of the department is good; resources, teaching arrangements and the focus on learning have all improved since the last inspection.
- Teaching is good, and pupils achieve well.
- Standards are above average.
- The use of ICT in some subjects is unsatisfactory, for example in music and in resistant materials in design and technology.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are above average	Standards by Year 8 above average
Achievement in Years 5-6 is good	Achievement in Years 7-8 is good
Quality of teaching is good	Quality of learning is good
Leadership of the subject is good	Management of the subject is satisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection is good	

Commentary

64. Standards are above average. Pupils' progress is tracked well through the school. They have average levels of attainment on entry to the school and the good teaching they receive helps them to raise it. They handle computers confidently and well, developing good skills. They are encouraged by good teaching to use their initiative in the design aspects of their work. They produce attractive web pages. These above average standards are used very effectively in the teaching of English and science. Achievement is good for pupils of all ability levels.

65. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are well planned and characterised by an opening presentation on computer linked to a projector. Pupils look at this presentation and comment on it orally and in writing, usually in two sentences. Pupils then move to the computer suite to develop their own work, free to use their imagination. The lesson ends with a written summary by pupils, which supports pupils' literacy skills well, particularly in sentence construction. This lesson structure provides a good framework for pupils' learning. Learning is very good when pupils' concentration is focused on the set tasks. The quality of learning is reduced when this focus is not maintained well by the teaching, resulting in a lack of rigour in pupils' individual learning. Teachers' good subject expertise and good individual support for pupils result in good learning. Resources are used well in the teaching.

66. Leadership is good. The head of department has provided a good focus on learning, and has improved the teaching arrangements and the resources since the last inspection. This has had a significant impact on learning and has resulted in improved standards. Technician support has been improved. It is now good, providing good maintenance of the computers and good support for individual pupils in their work, a factor in the overall achievement of pupils. The computer club at lunchtimes is a good feature of the school.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

67. Overall, the use of ICT in the teaching of subjects across the curriculum is good. Teaching is good and standards are above average. Teaching is very good in English and science because it is included in the programmes of study, using the Internet for research, for example. Pupils make slide presentations as part of their English studies. Use is good in mathematics and geography, showing good levels of skill in the presentation and processing of data. Computers are often used for homework in geography. Use is generally satisfactory in other subjects, apart from modern foreign languages, music and design and technology (resistant materials), where use is unsatisfactory. The provision of laptop computers has improved access for pupils significantly since the last inspection. Teachers are becoming more secure in the use of computers and many have their own laptops. The use of computers across the curriculum is monitored, but the process will need to be more efficient if the unsatisfactory use in a minority of subjects is to be eliminated.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils make good progress in Years 6 to 8, and attainment is above the national average by the end of Year 8.
- A good programme of practical geography and field work enriches the curriculum.
- Assessment is very accurate but is not yet used well enough to raise standards further.
- There is insufficient time to teach the programmes of study of the National Curriculum in sufficient depth and sometimes pupils do not have enough time in class to write at length.
- Strategies to develop literacy are not as strong as those for numeracy or ICT.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are average	Standards by Year 8 above average
Achievement in Years 5-6 is satisfactory	Achievement in Years 7-8 is good
Quality of teaching is satisfactory	Quality of learning is satisfactory
Leadership of the subject is satisfactory	Management of the subject is satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory	

68. By the end of Year 6 attainment in work seen matches national standards. By the end of Year 8 attainment is above the national standard.

69. Progress and achievement in Years 5 and 6 are satisfactory in lessons and over time. Achievement and progress in Years 7 and 8 are good. Girls make better progress than boys.

70. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Non-specialist teaching in Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory. Specialist teaching in Years 7 and 8 is good and pupils make good progress. Some aspects of teaching seen were good. It was unsatisfactory when strategies for managing disruptive behaviour in Year 8 were ineffective. The three-part lesson is firmly in place in Years 7 and 8 and the subject

co-ordinator is developing well the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Where challenging tasks allow them to answer questions and solve problems, as for example in a lesson on opencast mining in Year 8, pupils achieve above average standards in evaluating geographical conflicts. Pupils with SEN make satisfactory progress towards their targets when well supported by a classroom assistant. There is no such support for some large classes with high numbers of pupils with SEN. Where whole class teaching takes all pupils along at the same pace, achievement is only satisfactory because that of the higher attainers is limited.

71. A good fieldwork programme enriches the curriculum. Teachers use pupils' number skills well in all years; for example, pupils in Year 6 have completed a traffic survey. Literacy is not promoted so well, partly because of lack of time in lessons where sometimes work is unfinished. The development of ICT skills is good, especially in homework, where pupils search a variety of Internet sources for information about volcanoes and present it well. Homework is also used successfully to promote extended writing, for example on river pollution. Vivid video clips about opencast mining, rivet the attention of pupils and stimulate learning strongly. A good, accurate system of continuous assessment of attainment and progress is being developed. Pupils know and understand their target grades. However, targets for improvement are sometimes too general; also good information is not yet used effectively to drive up standards.

72. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection. Though pupils make good progress in what they do learn in Years 7 and 8, there is insufficient time to cover the programmes of study of the National Curriculum in sufficient depth because the time allocated in these years is well below that provided in most schools.

History

Provision for history is **unsatisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Provision is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8 but unsatisfactory in Years 5 and 6.
- Standards in Years 5 and 6 are well below average and achievement is unsatisfactory because pupils do not learn enough history.
- Standards by the end of Year 8 are average and progress over time is good.
- There is insufficient time in Years 7 and 8 to teach the programmes of study of the National Curriculum in sufficient depth.
- A good programme of visits and activities enriches the curriculum in all years.
- An effective partnership with other schools makes a good impact on accurate assessment.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are well below average	Standards by Year 8 are average
Achievement in Years 5-6 is unsatisfactory	Achievement in Years 7- 8 is good
Quality of teaching is satisfactory	Quality of learning is satisfactory
Leadership of the subject is satisfactory	Management of the subject is satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory	

Commentary

73. Attainment is well below average by the end of Year 6, because pupils do not learn enough history. So, despite much of pupils' work being average and above, attainment for most pupils is one National Curriculum level below what is expected. By the end of Year 8 standards are rising quickly. Attainment is average overall and one third of pupils already attain the level expected for pupils a year older. Pupils experience a variety of historical sources and begin to evaluate their reliability.

74. Achievement is unsatisfactory in Years 5 and 6. Though pupils' achievement is often satisfactory, pupils with higher ability are not extended enough. In Year 6 all pupils achieved well in a fast learning conversation about exploration in Tudor times. By the end of Year 8 achievement in lessons is good and progress accelerates. Pupils of higher prior attainment are stretched in lessons. Those of average attainment work well at their own level and pace to above average standards. Those with SEN make good progress towards their targets when they are given good support by well-prepared assistants, but pupils receive too little support of this kind.

75. Teaching is satisfactory overall; it is better in Years 7 and 8. The quality of teaching is more variable in Years 5 and 6, but there is evidence of some good teaching at all stages. In years 7 and 8 pupils are taught by a subject specialist. Before that the subject is taught mostly by non-specialists. Where teachers challenge pupils they respond well. In a Year 8 lesson pupils were expected to co-operate in pairs, working out the causes of poverty in Tudor times. Pupils develop good social and thinking skills and write at length. Where the whole class moves along at the same pace, the progress of above average pupils is restricted by this teaching style and opportunities for writing are limited. Sometimes pupils do not do enough writing in class and some work seen is incomplete. Good use is made of ICT in homework to research and present extended writing, for example on hygiene in Tudor times. Teachers make good use of the school library for book loans. There is very good display here about the Egyptians which provides good learning opportunities as pupils study hieroglyphics (picture writing) and count using Egyptian numerals. The programme of activities and visits open to all pupils in all years enriches the curriculum. Assessment is good but is not yet used well enough to inform teachers' planning or to raise standards.

76. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Time allocated to history in Years 7 and 8 is well below the time allocated by most schools so that the programmes of study of the National Curriculum are covered, but only lightly, and there is often insufficient time in class to complete work. A strong partnership with other schools has enabled the school to improve its curriculum, to ensure good links with the high school and to produce well moderated, accurate assessment.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Very good teaching enables all pupils to achieve very well.
- Pupils work in a wide variety of two and three-dimensional materials.
- Drawing and three-dimensional work are particularly strong.
- Creative work using computers is not as developed as work in other media.
- The use of assessment to inform lesson planning and target setting.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are above average	Standards by Year 8 well above average
Achievement in Years 5-6 is very good	Achievement in Years 7-8 is very good
Quality of teaching is very good	Quality of learning is very good
Leadership of the subject is very good	Management of the subject is very good
Improvement since the previous inspection is good	

Commentary

77. Pupils have the opportunity to work in many different media including clay, plaster, printmaking and batik (textile dyeing technique). High attaining pupils show sensitive handling of drawing and watercolour in studies of animals. They develop these into striking sculptures constructed using plaster over wire frames, whilst others show their growing understanding of tone, texture and detail in self-portraits drawn skilfully using pencil.

78. Pupils achieve very well by Year 6 and by the end of Year 8. They are conscientious and work hard. They enjoy art lessons and talk about their work confidently, explaining the links between their own work and that of artists they study.

79. Their very good learning results from very good teaching, the strengths of which lie in clear aims for lessons and discussion at the end about what has been achieved. Pupils respond well to opportunities to share their successes and difficulties and many use specialist vocabulary appropriately. Pupils with SEN make the same very good progress as their classmates because they receive high quality individual attention from the teacher and learning support assistants. Day-to-day assessment is used well, with frequent feedback given verbally to pupils so that they are clear about how to improve their work. Information of how pupils have performed in standardised tests is not used to help set targets but a baseline drawing test is given every year to check pupils' progress.

80. Planning is clear and presented well. All the art lessons are taught by a teacher who is a specialist. Close links with other local schools provide a context for pupils' work. The art department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural aspects of the school with visits to galleries, visiting artists and striking displays of artwork around the school. High standards and very good achievement have been maintained and the use of computers has increased. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Below average standards in resistant materials.
- Unsatisfactory workshop accommodation for large groups.
- Lesson planning, teaching and learning are inadequate to ensure all pupils make at least satisfactory progress in resistant materials.
- Pupils achieve well in food technology and textiles because they are well taught.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are below average	Standards by Year 8 are below average
Achievement in Years 5-6 is unsatisfactory	Achievement in Years 7-8 is unsatisfactory
Quality of teaching is unsatisfactory	Quality of learning is unsatisfactory
Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory	Management of the subject is unsatisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory	

Commentary

Resistant materials

81. Pupils take care with written work and present it well. They write, draw and use colour well to develop designs and plan their work. Most pupils make insufficient progress in working with plastics and wood across the four years. A few high attaining pupils in Year 8 show improvement in their use of wood to make a pencil box when emphasis is placed in the project on developing technical rather

than design skills. Class size affects standards adversely; groups as large as 33 are taught in a workshop with only 20 workstations. There is not enough use of ICT and specialist software is not explored. There is no work using electronics or control technology.

82. Achievement is unsatisfactory as a result of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. The specialist teacher has good subject knowledge. He has tried to overcome the problem of large numbers of pupils and too few workstations and tools by running two or three activities at the same time. Whilst this has been successful in reducing the number of pupils waiting to use equipment, it has placed a great strain on the teacher to ensure all pupils receive a good level of help and supervision. Planning for individual lessons is inadequate. Learning objectives are not clearly identified and not used as a basis for judging progress within the lesson or evaluating learning at the end. Assessment is used adequately to record progress at the end of projects but not used to set targets, gauge achievement or inform planning. Examples of work are not used to show pupils what is expected of them. No record of practical work is kept in the department once pupils take it home.

Food technology and textiles

83. Pupils spend around two thirds of the year learning textiles. This is because pupils have often had experience of cooking in primary school but not of using specialist equipment in textiles. Presentation of written work is good. Pupils take care with it, writing, drawing and using colour well to develop designs and plan their work. ICT is used often to improve and vary the style of presentation and develop design work, for example, repeating designs in preparation for block printing fabric in Year 5. High attaining pupils in Year 8 produce dramatic examples of tie-dye effects. Pupils, including those with SEN, know how to improve the effects next time.

84. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a lesson of one hour in alternate weeks. Time is increased to one hour every week in Years 7 and 8. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. Pupils enjoy working with food and textiles, and many do extra work at lunchtime, becoming more proficient at using a sewing machine, particularly Year 8 boys.

85. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons in both food technology and textiles are planned very well, ensuring that aims are clear and the needs of all pupils are met. Sometimes long lesson introductions reduce time for practical work. Confident practical demonstrations and the use of examples of work ensure that all pupils understand what is expected of them. Formal recording of pupils' work with details and National Curriculum levels would assist this, especially with food technology, where pupils have taken (and eaten!) their work. Assessment is used well to record progress at the end of projects but not yet used to set targets related to pupil's prior attainment.

86. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. Planning lacks the clarity to identify issues to raise achievement and standards. An effective team has not been created linking resistant materials with food technology and textiles. The head of department has not monitored teaching in food and textiles. Support, monitoring and evaluation by the headteacher have not led to required improvements since the last inspection. Timetable issues and large group sizes still exist. Refurbishment of the resistant materials workshop created a clean and pleasant working environment, but there are still insufficient workstations. Good planning by the food technology and textiles specialist sets clear priorities and improvement has been good since the last inspection. However, too little has improved in resistant materials and in the department as a whole. So overall improvement is unsatisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Many pupils are encouraged to play instruments.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory largely because:
 - there is a lack of planning in the department;
 - assessment is not used to inform teaching and learning;
 - work is not adequately matched to pupils' abilities.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are above average	Standards by Year 8 are average
Achievement in Years 5-6 is satisfactory	Achievement in Years 7-8 is unsatisfactory
Quality of teaching is unsatisfactory	Quality of learning is unsatisfactory
Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory	Management of the subject is unsatisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory	

Commentary

87. Pupils' attainment on entry is above average when compared with pupils from similar schools. Pupils sing in tune with confidence and enjoyment and can recognise notated melodies when they are sung back to them. They have sound knowledge of terms such as semitone, phrase, syncopation, ostinato and octave. They sing in parts and can sustain their own parts in a three-part round. Standards in Years 5 and 6 are above average and pupils make satisfactory progress. In Year 7 pupils can perform and improvise both as soloists and as a class. They have good attitudes to their work and show clear understanding of music keywords. In Year 8 pupils successfully performed a 'Steel Calypso' using tuned and untuned percussion. Standards by the end of Year 8 are average. Progress in lessons is constrained by a lack of long term planning and progression of pupil tasks. The range of opportunities offered to pupils to work as groups and in pairs is inadequate, as is the matching of work to pupils of all abilities.

88. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory as planning lacks focus and does not take sufficient account of pupils' progress over time. Unsatisfactory teaching led to inappropriate behaviour in a Year 8 lesson. During the inspection no recorded examples of pupils' past work were available. Assessment, record keeping and the involvement of pupils in their own learning are all unsatisfactory. Opportunities are limited for pupils to work in groups and as individuals. Pupils' appraisal of their own performances and compositions is lacking. Teachers do not take into account the pupils' wide range of abilities when planning lessons; teaching should include modified tasks so that pupils of all abilities can access the music curriculum. Self-assessment by pupils and target setting are areas for development. Over 100 pupils in the school play a musical instrument and there are a number of extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to develop their musical talents.

89. Leadership lacks vision and does not give sufficient attention to pupils' achievement. Strategic planning and management do not identify how standards are to be raised. There is no up-to-date scheme of work and no strategies for assessment linked to the National Curriculum programmes of study. Record keeping and monitoring of pupils' work are not sufficiently rigorous. The present accommodation is inadequate to allow pupils to work as groups, pairs and individuals and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to work with ICT. Music was a strength in the last inspection; it is now unsatisfactory.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Good leadership and management, which is focused on raising standards.
- Good teaching, which is raising standards.
- Good extra-curricular provision and take-up.
- A lack of consistency in the use of strategies to develop pupils' literacy skills.
- The need to analyse assessment data to inform development planning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are average	Standards by Year 8 are below average
Achievement in Years 5-6 is satisfactory	Achievement in Years 7-8 is satisfactory
Quality of teaching is good	Quality of learning is good
Leadership of the subject is good	Management of the subject is good
Improvement since the previous inspection is good	

Commentary

90. By the end of Year 6 standards in physical education are average. Compared with standards on entry to Year 5, which are below average, this represents good achievement. By the end of Year 8 standards are below average, which represents unsatisfactory achievement. Across all years the standard of girls' work is the same as that of boys.

91. In work seen in Years 5 and 6 the strategies introduced by the head of department during his two years at the school have resulted in good achievement. Pupils in gymnastics now have a good knowledge and understanding of balance and can use linking movements to produce a sequence. Some pupils are able to perform these sequences demonstrating good body shapes and tension. By the end of Year 8 standards represent unsatisfactory achievement. However, in work seen in Years 7 and 8 pupils' achievement was satisfactory. This is due to the teachers' focus on raising standards, which results in pupils developing good basic techniques in most major team games. In volleyball pupils have good body positioning in performing most basic shots. For some pupils learning is restricted by poor hand-eye co-ordination. Pupils are able to observe and analyse performance but less able to give feedback to other pupils.

92. Teaching and learning are now good. In most lessons observed in Years 5 and 6 teachers had a good knowledge of the subject, ensured that pupils worked in a safe environment, and intervened with individual pupils so that they knew what they had to do to improve. Where learning was not so good, teachers did not make pupils aware of what they were expected to achieve working at their own level, and in some cases moved them on before they were ready. In most lessons observed in Years 7 and 8 pupils were engaged well in a variety of interesting and challenging activities which motivated them and kept them engaged. For some pupils the lack of consistency in teaching strategies to develop literacy skills is restricting their learning. A large number of pupils enhance their performance in sport through a good extra-curricular programme.

93. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has been in post for two years. During that time he has developed a shared vision for the future, focused on raising standards. He has introduced strategies and materials which support teachers. Provision for pupils with SEN is now good. Standards are improving because the quality of teaching has improved. The improvement since the last inspection is good. Assessment systems and procedures are now in place. Analysis of assessment data should be used to inform development planning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is overall **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been well planned.
- There is a good range of resources, and teachers provide a variety of activities in lessons.
- There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and participate in community activities.
- The monitoring of procedures needs to be strengthened.
- The use of assessment information to promote improvements in learning is not sharply focused.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards by Year 6 are above expectations	Standards by Year 8 are above expectations
Achievement in Years 5-6 is good	Achievement in Years 7-8 is good
Quality of teaching is overall good	Quality of learning is overall good
Leadership of the subject is good	Management of the subject is good
Improvement since the previous inspection: Not applicable	

Commentary

94. Judgements on citizenship are based on the observation of one specialist lesson, a sample of pupils' work throughout the school, discussions with pupils and teachers, and evidence from inspectors across a range of subjects. The levels of participation observed in pupils during the inspection, their willingness to share ideas in debate and to listen with courtesy, their social skills and their levels of co-operation are all above expectations.

95. As they move up the school pupils make use of many opportunities to gain insights and participate in decision-making and community activities such as the Alban Pupils Forum, charity fund-raising activities, events sponsored by industry and countywide activities.

96. Teachers use a variety of styles to promote learning in lessons. These include teacher-led discussions, group work, games, competitions, questionnaires, and pupils' individual research on the Internet. Visiting speakers, for example from the police or industry, feature prominently. Pupils also take responsibility for looking after visitors and ensuring the smooth running of events. This fosters their organisational and social skills. Teachers also take opportunities to promote citizenship in other lessons. For example, in one English lesson in Year 8 there was a very mature level of debate on the morality of war. Teachers take opportunities to reinforce pupils' literacy skills by highlighting key vocabulary and insisting on good levels of spelling. Boys and girls participate equally well in lessons and other activities. There is very little support from learning assistants in lessons although teachers take care to ensure that pupils with SEN can take a full part in activities.

97. Schemes of work are clear and manageable and teachers have access to a wide range of resources. Drawing on the strengths of 'personal, social, and health education' lessons there has been detailed planning to incorporate citizenship into the curriculum. The subject leader has a broad grasp of the issues facing citizenship education nationally, of the resources available and of local opportunities for participation by pupils. Opportunities to monitor the work of other teachers need to be strengthened, however, to ensure that the teaching and learning in all lessons match what is found in the best. There is insufficient use of assessment to promote learning and show teachers how to tailor their lessons more effectively to pupils' needs.

98. Links with industry, an area of concern at the last inspection, have been strengthened. Citizenship, introduced as a subject in its own right since the last inspection, has made a good start and is well placed to improve.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	5
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).