

INSPECTION REPORT

ETONBURY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Arlesey

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109644

Headteacher: Mr I Mitchell

Lead inspector: Mr M Beale

Dates of inspection: 26 – 28 April 2004

Inspection number: 258626

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	9 to 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	486
School address:	Stotfold Road Arlesey Bedfordshire
Postcode:	SG15 6XS
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Arden
Date of previous inspection:	13 July 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is an above average sized middle school serving the mid-Bedfordshire villages of Arlesey and Stotfold. The roll is more or less equally divided between boys and girls. There is considerable house building in the area and the school roll is likely to increase substantially over the next few years. The school is currently fully subscribed but subject to some movement in and out during the year. The number of pupils entitled to a free school meal is close to, but slightly below, the national average. Virtually all of the pupils are from white-British backgrounds and no other ethnic group is represented in substantial numbers. Few pupils have English as an additional language and no pupils are identified as being at an early stage of learning English. The percentage of pupils identified with special educational needs, including with statements, is broadly average. The main reasons for higher levels of need are moderate learning difficulties. Attainment on entry in Year 5 is in line with the national average in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. The school was awarded the Sportsmark Award in 2002 as recognition of its physical education activities. The current headteacher was appointed to the school in September 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9708	Sylvia Daintrey	Lay inspector	
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	English Special educational needs English as an additional language
32379	Bob Brewster	Team inspector	Mathematics
30563	Jackie Pentlow	Team inspector	Science
4126	Clive Parsons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
20716	Reg Grogan	Team inspector	History Religious education
11190	Winifred Burke	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology
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31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Music
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This reasonably effective school provides satisfactory value for money. Following a period of limited progress, the school is now improving under the astute leadership of the headteacher who has been in post for five terms. However, much remains to be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to raise achievement and standards.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in mathematics, particularly in Years 5 and 6 and test results have fallen over the last three years.
- Challenging science teaching focuses well on investigation and experimentation; this interests the pupils and leads to good achievement and above average standards.
- The headteacher has identified shortcomings in teaching and learning and has introduced strategies for their elimination that are being successfully embraced by most staff.
- There is a reasonable proportion of interesting teaching; however, several teachers have low expectations of the pupils and do not use assessment information sufficiently to plan the next steps in individual pupils' learning.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their work, behave well and participate in large numbers in the range of extra-curricular activities on offer.
- Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently to enhance teaching and learning in most subjects.

Improvement has been unsatisfactory since the last inspection in 1998. Overall Year 6 test results have risen at roughly the same rate as nationally. There has been varied success in dealing with other shortcomings. For example, it is only recently that sufficient data has been gathered to enable a systematic and valid self-evaluation of the school to be undertaken. Similarly, co-ordinators are only just coming to terms with monitoring the quality of work in their subjects. Professional development is now more effective and is based more securely on meeting school priorities.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Achievement is satisfactory overall throughout the school and attainment by the time the pupils leave in Year 8 is close to that expected in most subjects. One exception to this is science, where standards are above average throughout the school largely because of the quality of the teaching that interests and engages the pupils. By contrast, unsatisfactory teaching in mathematics, particularly in Years 5 and 6 is resulting both in the pupils not achieving as well as they should and standards that are below average by Year 6 but in line with the national average by Year 8. Pupils achieve well in art and design and in music throughout the school and in religious education in Years 7 and 8; they respond well to effective teaching by working hard and giving their best. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in English and in information and communication technology. Standards in English are average throughout the school and attainment in information and communication technology is in line with national expectations. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to others in their year groups.

The pupils' personal development, including their moral and social development, is good. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. The pupils have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. The action taken to reduce absence has been successful in improving attendance to above average. Pupils arrive at school and to their lessons punctually.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is satisfactory. There are strengths in teaching in art and design, science, and music but, because of shortcomings, most notably in mathematics in Years 5 and 6, **teaching is only satisfactory overall.** The principles and structures of the national strategies for literacy and numeracy have not been effectively implemented and inadequate use is made of assessment information to support learning. Teachers do not consistently challenge pupils although the recent introduction of extension lessons has broadened the pupils' learning experiences. Pupils participate in considerable numbers in the good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly sporting and musical. The school successfully involves pupils in decisions about its future through the school council. The pupils benefit from the links between the schools in the local consortium that ease transfer to the next stage of education and support learning.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is led and managed well. The strong leadership of the experienced headteacher has enabled shortcomings to be identified and much appropriate action taken to improve teaching, learning and the achievement of all pupils. He has been supported well in this by the new assistant headteachers. However, there is scope for subject leaders to take a greater leadership role as is happening in science, the most successful subject in the school. Governors are becoming increasingly effective and challenging; they ensure that all statutory responsibilities are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views, while largely supportive of the school, are mixed. A considerable number have not been happy with recent changes to classes and the communication of these changes. While the inspection team notes the parents' concerns, it judges the action taken to be one reason for the school's recent improvement. Pupils' views of the school are more positive. They feel this is a good school to be at but have some reservations about behaviour. This matter was followed up by inspectors in discussions with pupils who report that they know of others who misbehave but that generally this is dealt with constructively by school staff.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise the achievement and standards of all pupils in mathematics;
- ensure that all staff demonstrate high expectations by planning challenging lessons based on the secure assessment of pupils' progress;
- develop the role of subject leaders so that they are more accountable for achievement, standards and provision in their areas of responsibility;
- ensure that systematically planned opportunities are provided for the use of information and communication technology in all subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Achievement is satisfactory overall throughout the school but varies between subjects. The overall standard of the work seen during the inspection was in line with national averages. Standards are above average in science and average in English throughout the school. Standards in mathematics are below average in Years 5 and 6 and average by Year 8. Boys do not achieve as well as girls in many subjects, a matter the school has identified and is starting to tackle with some success.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in science and standards are above average throughout the school.
- Shortcomings in mathematics teaching are leading to unsatisfactory achievement in Years 5 and 6.
- Achievement is good in art and design and music throughout the school and in religious education in Years 7 and 8; however, pupils do not achieve as well as they should in history in Years 6 and 7.
- The new setting arrangements have brought some advantages that support achievement, but are not utilised fully by all staff.

Commentary

1. The overall improving trend in the school's Year 6 test results over the last five years masks a slight decline since a high point in 2001. This decline is particularly marked in mathematics where the 2003 results represented poor progress for pupils from their earlier Year 2 tests. This was in sharp contrast to the 2003 science results, which represented good progress from Year 2 for the same group of pupils. The gap in the performance of girls and boys grew wider in 2003. The overall pattern for the last five years is of girls achieving better than boys at Year 6 and by a greater margin than nationally. There are too few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds to give any validity to an analysis of their comparative performance.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.1 (26.6)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	25.8 (26.2)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.4 (29.5)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 118 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Pupils do well in science because a significant proportion of the teaching is lively and interesting, focusing particularly effectively on investigation and experimentation. Pupils' minds are engaged, they are given clear targets to help them improve and there is a good level of challenge. Effective teaching, coupled with positive attitudes of the pupils also results in good achievement throughout the school in art and design and music. This is in spite of some discontinuity to teaching because of timetable rotations. Achievement is also good in religious education in Years 7 and 8. In each of these subjects, the pupils' skills and understanding develop more rapidly than might be expected, bearing in mind their attainment on entry to the school.
3. In sharp contrast to these subjects, insufficient progress has been made in raising standards in mathematics, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The failure to adopt wholeheartedly the

principles and structures of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a detrimental effect on achievement. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are not achieving as well as they should. They have not made sufficient progress in the recent past, as reflected in the most recent Year 6 test results. Although achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8, progress is not rapid enough for all pupils to make up for the earlier lost ground. Standards by Year 8 are average, reflecting the average results these pupils achieved in the 2002 Year 6 tests. There is also an insufficiently concerted effort in all subjects to support the development of numeracy. This means that number skills are not consolidated through their application in a wide range of contexts. Achievement is also unsatisfactory in history in Years 6 and 7 largely because the schemes of work are out of date. The pupils develop secure skills in information and communication technology lessons throughout the school. However, there is insufficient use of these skills to support their achievement in subjects other than science and physical education.

4. The school has introduced a new arrangement of organising the pupils into classes according to their ability with some further setting based on their prior attainment. This has some advantages that support the pupils' achievement. It enables support to be focused on pupils with special educational needs. This support has a very positive effect in many subjects with pupils making good progress in lessons and achieving well. However, achievement is less marked either when this support is not present or when a pupil with a specific literacy need is in a high ability set. This is because teachers do not consistently adapt the work to meet individual needs effectively. This means that the overall achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. In general, pupils in high ability sets benefit from this arrangement because of the extra challenge provided by their teachers and the extension lessons in mathematics, science and information and communication technology. The achievement of these pupils also benefits from their positive approach to learning. The same cannot always be said in the lower ability sets in the older classes. Here examples were observed where a lack of concentration and motivation adversely affected the pupils' achievement, particularly that of boys.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good. Social and moral development is promoted well, and spiritual and cultural development is promoted satisfactorily. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour have a positive effect on their progress and the quality of the learning environment.
- Provision for collective worship has improved since the last inspection and most subjects make a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development.
- The school has worked very effectively with the education welfare officer to improve attendance from the below average levels of last year.

Commentary

5. Pupils' attitudes to learning are particularly strong in science, and pupils also enjoy other practical and creative subjects such as drama, physical education and design and technology. Pupils in Years 6 and 7 show the most enthusiasm for school and were able, for example, to concentrate for long periods of time in art and design lessons. In the best lessons, pupils respond very well to the high level of challenge and respect shown to them by their teachers and so they achieve well. Pupils in the upper sets often showed excellent attitudes and behaviour, and pupils in lower sets also frequently responded well, even when the teaching was unsatisfactory. Most pupils are keen on taking part in extra-curricular activities, such as sports clubs and music events, and some have set up their own bands. A few pupils in Year 8, especially boys, nearing the end of their time at Etonbury, are a little more negative about

their experiences. Although pupils' attitudes are not of such a high standard as reported at the last inspection, they remain a strength of the school.

6. Pupils behave well in most lessons and in other activities around the school. As at the last inspection, there is little vandalism or graffiti and pupils treat equipment and resources with respect. This results in an atmosphere of trust in which pupils are able to get on well with each other and make progress in lessons. Parents and pupils value the merit system introduced by the headteacher this year which is having a positive effect on motivating pupils to behave well. In contrast, and with some justification, they do not believe that the detention system is always fair or effective. The school is rightly making packages of training available to staff as part of the national strategy for improving behaviour in Years 7 and 8. In the inspection questionnaires, a significant number of parents and pupils expressed concerns about behaviour and bullying, but these were not borne out during the inspection. Pupils' behaviour deteriorated only in a few lessons when their attention was not engaged. This occurred occasionally, but not exclusively, in some lower sets in English and mathematics. When questioned further, both parents and pupils said that bullying is dealt with well when reported to staff. The main problem is name-calling, which can include racist remarks, and which the school recognises as needing further work to overcome. There have been no permanent exclusions for the last two years. The rate of fixed period exclusions is slowly, but not significantly, rising, as the school takes on more pupils who have been excluded from other schools.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	457	8	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0

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

7. Provision for spiritual development was unsatisfactory at the last inspection and collective worship did not meet statutory requirements. The school now has a planned programme for collective worship which includes a weekly theme and materials for form tutors to expand on it. During the inspection, the theme of 'teamwork' was well implemented in the assemblies observed and satisfactorily developed in form time. This included good involvement by Year 8 pupils, for example, but sometimes opportunities were missed to include religious observance. Pupils' moral and social development is encouraged well in science, religious education, art and design, music, drama and physical education, and is also supported effectively by the programmes for personal, social and health education and citizenship. Subjects such as history and religious education satisfactorily promote multi-cultural education, and the headteacher ensures that pupils are introduced to other cultures in assemblies. Drama and music contribute successfully to pupils' cultural development through joint productions, but other cultural activities, such as theatre and art gallery visits, exchanges with a school in France, and fieldwork in history and geography have been curtailed.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.9
National data	6.0

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	0.3

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

8. Attendance has fluctuated since the last inspection and was below the national average last year. However, this year there has been a successful drive to raise attendance levels, which are now on course to meet the school's target of 94 per cent. This is a result of senior, pastoral and office staff working very well with the education welfare officer to monitor and follow up absences more closely, make better use of data and provide more effective support for the few pupils who find full-time attendance at school difficult. Unauthorised absence is currently above average because there is a very small number of pupils, mainly in Years 7 and 8, whose long-term absences are being condoned by their parents or carers. Very few pupils are late for school at the start of the day and lessons usually start promptly.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is satisfactory overall. Teaching has strengths but low expectations and the failure to use assessment information limit its effectiveness and the impact it has on pupils' learning. Redesigning the curriculum has been a major priority for the headteacher since his appointment and it now better reflects typical middle school practice. There are considerable strengths in the close relationship between the local lower, middle and upper schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall throughout the school. Assessment is unsatisfactory overall. Procedures have improved but use is not made consistently of the information to guide planning and pupils have too little understanding of how they can improve.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a considerable proportion of lively and challenging teaching, particularly in art and design, music and science that leads to rapid learning of new skills.
- Mathematics teaching lacks drive and focus particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- Several teachers do not have consistently high expectations of the pupils and a few have been reluctant to implement strategies designed to improve teaching and learning.
- Good use is made of ICT in subjects such as science and physical education, but other teachers do not use computers and other new technology sufficiently to enliven their teaching and to extend the pupils' learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 90 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	11 (12%)	39 (43%)	34 (38%)	3 (3%)	2 (2%)	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.

9. The quality of teaching and learning has declined since the last inspection. This is despite the focus recently placed on improving classroom practice by the new headteacher. This decline is largely because nationally recommended strategies that have been implemented with success in other schools have not permeated many classrooms sufficiently at Etonbury. One significant example of this is in mathematics. The principles of the national strategy to improve the teaching of mathematics have not been adopted by a significant proportion of teachers, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Consequently, standards have been falling. In attempting to remediate this, externally produced lesson plans have been introduced without a clear understanding of how they should be interpreted. This teaching lacks focus and drive, skills are not developed systematically and the pupils' learning suffers despite their patient efforts to concentrate.
10. Several teachers have high expectations of the pupils in their classes, whatever ability set it might be. Their lessons are exciting and challenging and learning drives forward in a lively and enthusiastic atmosphere in which pupils are quite clear about what is expected of them. They rise to the challenge and learn new ideas rapidly. Science lessons benefit particularly in this respect with the sharp focus on investigation and experimentation. Information and communication technology is used effectively to enhance teaching and learning in subjects such as science and physical education, but there is little systematic use of it made elsewhere.
11. Recently introduced streaming is used to good effect to focus work more closely on the needs of the pupils. This is particularly successful where assessment information is used to guide planning such as in science. However, several teachers rely too much on streaming and do not take account of the range of attainment and aptitudes within their classes. Materials and methods are not adapted sufficiently and teaching is too often pitched at the middle of the class. Furthermore, several teachers have low expectations of the pupils. This is manifested not just through the work set, but also in how they talk to groups and individuals. Examples were observed of staff who find it difficult to praise good work but who are quick to criticise an incorrect answer. Pupils with special educational needs are catered for well when teaching assistants are present to guide and help them. However, when this is not the case teachers do not consistently use information from individual education plans to set tasks or modify their teaching styles to meet the identified needs of pupils.
12. The school has identified that boys do not do as well as girls. Strategies have been introduced such as boy/girl seating, setting short-term goals and then giving regular feedback on the pupils' success in meeting them. Teaching and learning have benefited considerably where these strategies have been embraced and implemented enthusiastically. Boys were seen to concentrate well, participate effectively in paired work and have a very clear understanding of what they need to do to improve. This is particularly the case where secure assessment information is used to modify planning and where marking is used constructively to explain how work can be improved and then suggestions are followed up. There is little discernible difference between the learning of boys and girls when all of these strategies are adopted. However, these strategies have not been consistently implemented by all staff despite their promotion as whole-school policies. Where boy/girl seating is not adopted, boys are seen to lose concentration. Where assessment information is not used to set short-term achievable goals, there is insufficient focus on the pupils' learning. The quality of marking also varies considerably as does the quality of feedback pupils receive on their work. There are good examples of thorough marking with constructive and helpful comments for the pupils to follow to improve their work. By contrast, a significant amount is cursory and offers little guidance for pupils to follow.
13. The shortcomings identified by the headteacher and senior staff and the action being taken are entirely appropriate for the school's current position. To be fully effective and to raise the quality of teaching and learning they need to be embraced by all staff and rigorously implemented.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory and is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. There is an adequate number of teaching staff, but insufficient support staff to meet the learning needs of all pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reorganising the curriculum to give a greater primary school focus in Years 5 and 6 is proving beneficial for the pupils' smooth transfer into the school and their subsequent achievement.
- Considerable thought has been given to the development of an effective personal, social and health education programme.
- The attention paid to refurbishing the accommodation over the last two years has resulted in improved facilities for music, food studies and to the Year 5 block.
- Many pupils take advantage of the extra-curricular activities on offer but trips to support learning are very limited in number.

Commentary

14. The headteacher has used reorganising classes and other changes to the curriculum as key strategies in the approach to raising standards and pupil achievement. These changes have included grouping pupils by ability and various timetable rotations. Particular strengths of the curriculum include providing French from Year 5 upwards and the concentration within science on developing the skills of investigation and experimentation. The personal, social and health education programme is carefully planned to include units of work on careers education in addition to supporting the teaching programme of sex and drugs education. Units of citizenship have been incorporated so that, along with aspects taught in other subjects, the National Curriculum requirements for this new subject are met. All other National Curriculum requirements are fulfilled with the exception of the use of information and communication technology within most individual subjects. While reasonable attention is paid to developing literacy in all subjects, numeracy has received limited attention.
15. The timetable rotation has the benefits of a reduction in class sizes, and the pupils have the opportunity to work in a variety of groupings. However, the rotation also results in discontinuities in the learning because subjects are taught in blocks with considerable gaps in time between them. Furthermore, time allocations for music and art and design fall below recommendations in Years 7 and 8 resulting in some aspects not being tackled to sufficient depth in spite of the quality of teaching in both subjects.
16. The new banding and setting arrangements are used to good effect to provide extension lessons for upper band pupils in mathematics, science and information and communication technology. These arrangements also enable pupils in the lower band to have additional time with their form tutor in which they develop a range of study and personal skills. This arrangement also enables support staff for pupils with special educational needs to be concentrated in lower band groups but does not compensate for the insufficient number of such assistants. Furthermore, not all pupils requiring support are in lower bands and their needs are not always suitably tackled by class teachers. In general, the provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection. The additional provision for literacy is good, although there is no specialist withdrawal teaching from which several pupils would benefit.
17. A further significant development is that Year 5 pupils are now taught for a significant part of the week by their form tutors, thus building well on lower school practice. This eases their transition while gradually introducing specialist teaching. This arrangement has been supported by the complete refurbishment of the Year 5 block into a suite of primary style classrooms with an additional small computer suite.

18. Many pupils participate in sporting, musical and dramatic extra-curricular activities. A good proportion of the pupils also learn to play a musical instrument through lessons provided in school. One shortcoming is that trips and visits to enhance learning have been severely curtailed. This is in part because staff have not been either available or in some cases willing to take responsibility for supervising the pupils. It is a particular weakness that no geography fieldwork takes place other than on the school site, and history visits have been limited to a Year 5 trip to the British Museum.
19. Considerable refurbishment of the buildings has taken place, resulting in improved facilities for music and food technology. The pupils' learning benefits considerably from specialist accommodation for subjects such as science, art and design, music and design and technology and from the extensive outdoor areas for physical education. However, there are shortcomings within this in that there are insufficient science laboratories for present timetable arrangements and both the art and design and resistant materials rooms are in need of refurbishment. The library is a further strength of the school's facilities. The two computer suites and the new Year 5 suite provide a reasonable number of computers; however, the main suites are small and poorly set out. Plans are at an early stage for a building programme to accommodate the school's likely expansion over the next few years; these include proposals to extend considerably the school's computer facilities.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for ensuring the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory. Support, advice and guidance for pupils are satisfactory. The school involves pupils well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures for child protection and first aid are good, but those for health and safety, although satisfactory, are not always as securely implemented as they could be.
- There is effective provision for more able pupils which enables them to make good progress, but the insufficient number of classroom assistants limits the support for lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Pupils' views and ideas are increasingly valued and acted upon.

Commentary

20. There are two designated teachers for child protection who keep up to date with local procedures by attending termly training. They ensure that teaching and non-teaching staff are aware of what to do if any anxieties arise and, together with the co-ordinator for special educational needs, are vigilant about any vulnerable pupils. A multi-agency team of pastoral staff and external agencies meets termly at the school and works effectively to discuss children causing concern. A good number of staff are trained in first aid; treatment and accidents are recorded correctly. The health and safety issues identified at the last inspection have largely been dealt with, although there is a hygiene issue in food technology. Regular fire drills have been reinstated now that the new extended fire alarm system is working properly. Risk assessments are routinely carried out for educational visits and individual lessons, but are not sufficiently formalised in the physical education department.
21. Parents of more able pupils are pleased with the support provided for their children. They feel that these pupils are suitably stretched and involved well in directing their own learning. More able pupils are benefiting from the banding arrangements introduced this year, and also from the extension activities in mathematics, science and information and communication technology provided for them in Years 7 and 8. The daily recording books are a useful mechanism for pupils to organise and reflect on their own learning. On the other hand, parents are not as confident that other ability groups of pupils are as well supported. Inspectors found that the progress of the pupils in the lower bands in English and mathematics is hindered by

the shortage of support staff. Although good use is made of outside agencies and advice, there is a lack of specialist teaching for pupils who need support on an individual or small group basis. Some good guidance is being provided in Year 6 to help pupils prepare for their national tests. For example, a group of boys targeted for extra support in literacy has shown steady improvement, and a parent of a pupil with special educational needs commented favourably on the individual support given after her child struggled during the practice week for the tests. Provision for the care and support of pupils is broadly similar to that found at the last inspection.

22. Pupils' views are actively sought on a range of aspects of school life. For example, a sample of Year 5 pupils were surveyed about their experiences of the new transfer arrangements, which will be adjusted this summer in response to their request for a social event to help new pupils get to know each other better. The school council has been established well by the current senior management team, with the result that pupils in Years 5 to 7 feel that their ideas, such as about improvements to the playground and provision of lockers, are listened to and acted upon. Pupils in Year 8 are not quite as positive as they are worried about not being able to see their ideas implemented before they move on to the upper school. Pupils were involved in drawing up the new code of conduct earlier in the year and they contribute to their annual reports by commenting on their own progress and setting personal targets. They are not yet consistently involved in assessing their progress and setting their targets within individual subjects. An example of good practice is in science where pupils are confident that they know how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents and the community are satisfactory. Links with other schools and colleges are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides parents with a helpful and improving range of information about its work and their children's progress.
- Parents are not as supportive of the school as they were at the last inspection.
- The school is working effectively with its feeder schools and the upper school to ensure smooth transition for pupils and to develop projects to raise pupils' achievements.

Commentary

23. The good quality of information given to parents has been maintained since the last inspection, and has improved further in some important respects. General information about school activities continues to be well publicised in regular newsletters. These are now also available on the school's web-site which includes a wealth of useful information about the curriculum, how parents can help - especially when their children are preparing for the Year 6 national tests - and practical details such as term dates and forthcoming events. Parents greatly appreciate the improvements made to the reporting system. Parents of pupils in Year 6 and Year 8 now receive full reports on their children's progress part-way through the year so that they can be more fully involved in helping their child prepare for the national tests and the transition to upper school. Parents in Years 5 and 7 receive interim reports, as well as the full reports at the end of the year. Annual reports now provide good information about the levels which pupils have achieved and the targets they are working towards. The 'passport' or 'day' books, in which pupils record matters such as homework, provide a useful means of communication between home and school. Parents of pupils with special educational needs have been invited to meet the new co-ordinator to discuss their child's individual education plan and targets and to see a literacy support programme in action.
24. Parents and carers have responded well to the school's drive to raise attendance levels this year. Some make an active contribution by accompanying staff and pupils on trips and

supporting Etonbury Association events, such as the recent auction of promises and quiz evening which raised £700 for school resources. They responded in good numbers to the inspection questionnaire and the meeting with the lead inspector. Although the majority are satisfied with the school, a significant number expressed concerns which centred around the behaviour of pupils and the way the school communicates with parents. While the inspection team was unable to investigate individual cases, it found that overall behaviour is good and that communication is satisfactory. The school has recognised the need to develop and maintain an effective partnership with parents as a priority in its school improvement plan. It has surveyed parents' views and committed itself to taking on board all comments, both positive and negative. The two new parent governors are playing a valuable role in helping the staff to improve parents' perceptions and to involve parents more in the future direction of the school.

25. Links with the community are not as strong as at the previous two inspections, but there are still good links with local churches, external agencies such as the police, and some visiting speakers and sports coaches; these enhance aspects of the curriculum and pupils' personal development. The school has the confidence of the local community and pupils take part in charitable fund-raising and in local surveys which seek the views of young people. There is some use of the site by community groups, which governors and senior management plan to develop further once staffing and accommodation issues have been resolved. There is insufficient use of the local community in geography and the range of enrichment activities for English, art and design, history and French has declined.
26. The school plays an active part in meetings and initiatives organised by local schools with the aim of providing a seamless educational experience for children from the age of three to 19. Links with the upper school, to which nearly all pupils transfer, are well established; for example, there are liaison panels for each subject to ensure that pupils continue to make progress when they move on to Year 9. Links with the feeder schools have not been as strong in the recent past, but are now developing well with much more liaison between teachers in Years 4 and 5 and between the co-ordinators for special educational needs. This recent improvement has helped both the more able pupils, who are not held back when they start at middle school, and those with special educational needs whose individual difficulties when they join Year 5 are now more accurately known. Etonbury is poised to benefit from the joint projects being undertaken in areas of common concern, such as weaknesses in mathematics, the underachievement of boys and strategies to help pupils with social, emotional and behavioural problems.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher provides very effective leadership, and is supported well by the senior team. Management procedures are satisfactory. Other members of staff with management responsibilities provide satisfactory leadership. Governance is satisfactory and improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has brought considerable improvements to the school in the five terms since his appointment although not all staff are coping with the required pace of change.
- There is considerable scope for developing the leadership role of subject managers.
- Governors are rapidly developing a good understanding of the school's strengths and shortcomings and are beginning to take a more significant role in shaping its future.
- Prudent financial planning and the acquisition of additional funding have enabled the refurbishment of many areas of the school to take place with further developments planned.

Commentary

27. Monitoring teaching and learning by the new headteacher on his arrival at the school, along with support from local education authority advisers, revealed many strengths in teaching but also significant shortcomings. For example, the headteacher discovered that many of the national developments in teaching and learning that have been introduced in recent years had not been adopted by the school. He quickly established strategies, including professional development and training, to eliminate these shortcomings. Action is also being taken to tackle the lower achievement of boys. All this action has met with some success. The headteacher has also introduced more systematic monitoring of the work of staff through classroom observation and work scrutiny. This is part of a strategy to identify and share good practice such as the qualities in areas such as science. The benefits of this are starting to be seen. A significant proportion of the teachers have successfully embraced the developments introduced by the headteacher to the benefit of the pupils' achievement. Most others are willing to adapt and improve their teaching. However, a small group has been resistant to change and have not seen the benefit to pupils' achievement of the policies and practices introduced. This has limited progress in these subjects
28. When appointed, the headteacher had little systematically gathered assessment data on which to base an evaluation of how well the school was doing and whether the pupils were achieving all that they should. Much assessment data linked to National Curriculum levels has now been gathered. Structures have been established to enable this data to be evaluated. This is now very effective at a whole-school level and in subjects such as science, but its impact elsewhere is patchier. Developing the role of the subject manager has not received sufficient attention since the last inspection. Few had taken a significant leadership role. It is only recently that they have been required to take greater responsibility for the quality of the provision and standards in their areas. This is another area where change has been embraced by a significant number of staff while others remain unsure of their new role. In spite of rigorous procedures, the line management of subjects has not had an impact in ensuring that school priorities are tackled robustly and consistently in all areas.
29. The governing body has recently been strengthened by new members and by a more effective implementation of structures and processes. This enables governors to have a clear understanding of the school. They have supported the headteacher well through a difficult transition period and have developed their expertise considerably. All statutory responsibilities are met. A strong core of the governors fully understands their role and recognises that the next stage of their development is to become more challenging of the headteacher and the school. There is a strong commitment from governors and senior staff to ensuring that all pupils benefit from the opportunities offered by the school. It is partly for this reason that the changes in class organisation have taken place. Special educational needs provision has improved and is now satisfactory, but with considerable scope for further improvement. The school has an effective race equality policy, which is implemented and carefully monitored.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,319,239	Balance from previous year	74,522
Total expenditure	1,358,103	Balance carried forward to the next	35,658
Expenditure per pupil	2,847		

30. Various financial and staff models have been prepared and considered for the expansion of the school over the next few years to take account of the comparatively random arrival of new children as new house building is completed. Best value principles underpin all financial decisions. Governors are rigorous in their search for value for money from the decisions that they take. Given that the school is reasonably effective and provides a satisfactory quality of

education at below average expenditure per pupil, it gives satisfactory value for money. The strong and effective leadership of the headteacher and the support from senior staff and governors place the school in a secure position to make progress over the next few years. The priorities identified in the school's improvement plan are entirely appropriate for its present position and the challenges of expansion facing it.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2 and 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High attaining pupils reach above average standards in Year 6 tests.
- Teachers correct and mark work carefully to help pupils improve.
- Tasks are not always sufficiently adapted to meet the needs of all pupils; there is little use of information and communication technology.
- New leadership and management are promoting higher standards.
- Limited concentration of a minority, mainly boys, affects learning adversely in some lessons.

Commentary

31. Achievement is satisfactory throughout the school although boys are not doing as well as girls. Since the last inspection, standards have remained broadly similar as has the quality of teaching. Results of Year 6 national tests in 2003 were average overall, but an above average proportion of the pupils achieved the higher Level 5. When compared to similar schools, results were broadly average. However, the gap between boys' and girls' results was wider than usual and this was also reflected in the lessons seen. High attaining boys produce some very good work but most, although they answer well in lessons, do not write as effectively. The department is now mentoring a group of boys who are on the borderline of Levels 4 and 5 and their work has improved. There is evidence from assessments of the current Year 6 pupils that results will improve overall this year. At the end of Year 8, pupils' work is in line with expectations. In some lessons, usually in the lower bands, some boys do not concentrate well once group work or writing begins. Learning support assistants are effective in ensuring steady work but are not available in all lessons. Pupils with special educational needs receive extra support from teachers but, at times, the approach used or assignments set do not cover all needs, even in an ability class. Pupils' progress is satisfactory because they enter with broadly average skills and continue to achieve steadily to the end of Year 8. Teachers are more successful in challenging the higher-attaining pupils.
32. Pupils listen carefully when interested and can explain points in some detail. They enjoy their class readers, responding sympathetically to Will in *Goodnight Mr Tom*, but there is little evidence of substantial reading for pleasure. The library has a good range of fiction, but only a limited range of books is widely read. Teachers emphasise the development of varied and extended writing skills and are most successful with the girls. Almost all girls write fluently at the end of Year 8 but boys struggle to develop their ideas.
33. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and there are good features. The pattern of learning is similar except when limited concentration slows the pace of the lesson. Learning objectives are clearly stated and progress towards them is evaluated at the end. In the best lessons, pupils participate well and respond to the enthusiasm of the teachers. Work is carefully corrected and marked; comments indicate how to improve. In most lessons, emphasis on literacy is effective and pupils develop their vocabulary and ability to make deductions. There is limited use of information and communication technology, including word processed answers, because access to the computer room is not always possible. In one classroom, acoustics are poor so comments and instructions have to be repeated and the pace slackens.

34. Changes of staff have affected literacy throughout the school and year teams have also changed so that co-ordination has not been consistent. The new head of department has produced a realistic development plan with clear priorities. The schemes of work are being re-written to provide better adaptation to the range of abilities. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have secured satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. There has been little progress in modifying work for pupils of low attainment although high attainers are now challenged.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

35. Standards of literacy are satisfactory. In mathematics and geography, technical words are not always taught nor are mistakes in exercise books corrected; this constrains the pupils' achievement in these subjects. In science, literacy is good because pupils are taught the vocabulary and are helped by writing frames and corrections. Teachers in music, physical education and religious education teach the key words and ensure that they are understood and used. The development of literacy is supported well in art and design, but opportunities are missed in design and technology. The opportunities for discussion vary from subject to subject but in general, pupils explain clearly. Their vocabulary is adequate, although not extensive. Comprehension skills are satisfactory, although there is little systematic attempt to develop them further. The literacy co-ordinator is aware of this and plans to encourage much more reading. Good opportunities for extended writing exist in subjects such as history and religious education.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers create a disciplined learning environment, encouraging good attitudes.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to use computers to support their learning.
- The department does not have sufficiently robust procedures by which the quality of teaching can be improved.
- The department does not analyse performance data or act on the results.

Commentary

36. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They are well disciplined in lessons and try hard, organising and presenting their work well, but it is rare for them to feel achievement in the ability to speak French because they do not have enough opportunity to use the spoken language in lessons. They gain a reasonable foundation for further learning in Years 5 and 6, but attainment in Years 7 and 8 shows that, while girls perform in line with national expectations, most boys are below that level. Standards observed in lessons confirmed this, but some boys with high prior attainment reached average and above average levels. Overall, standards are average.
37. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in all year groups. Pupils work hard because teachers are friendly but firm, create an atmosphere in which they feel safe and mark their books carefully. Teachers provide good levels of challenge for the most able in Year 8, but practice is not consistent. Most pupils are not challenged enough, especially in speaking, and the opportunities provided by the setting system are not always exploited, particularly in Year 5. Pupils rarely speak French in an authentic context and the use of the foreign language by teachers is much less intensive in some lessons than in others. The department has not planned to use information and communication technology in lessons and pupils do not develop independent learning skills. Assessment procedures provide information on levels and targets but pupils cannot explain what they need to do to move to the next level. Pupils with

special educational needs receive good support from teaching assistants and make better progress than the others.

38. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory, and suffer from a lack of experience, training opportunities and time to monitor the department's work adequately. Some policies have been established but their application is not yet consistent. An external consultant has observed some lessons but there are no plans for regular monitoring within the school and no procedures for sharing and spreading good teaching practice. Analysis of assessment data does not take place routinely. Consequently comparisons, leading to action, are not made between the performance of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls or those with high or low prior attainment. The last report mentioned several positive features. Whilst some, such as pupils' attitudes and progress, have only declined a little, others, including boys' achievement and the link with a French school, have not been sustained, so improvement is unsatisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The benefits to teaching and learning offered by the national strategies for mathematics have not been realised.
- Tasks set are insufficiently adapted to challenge all pupils.
- Good relationships in classes allow pupils to learn in an environment free from stress.
- A detailed database allows pupil progress to be tracked and targets set but the information is insufficiently used by teachers to diagnose and meet individual learning needs.
- A good start has been made in the monitoring of teaching but this has yet to impact beneficially on standards.

Commentary

39. Achievement is unsatisfactory overall and there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection. Key shortcomings have not been tackled adequately and the quality of teaching has fallen. Furthermore, results of Year 6 national tests have fallen in the past two years and were below the national average in 2003. Compared to similar schools, results were well below average. Mathematics is the weakest of the core subjects. Girls are outperforming boys, a marked difference from the last inspection when there was no difference. The underachievement of boys in relation to that of the girls is recognised through activities outside lessons. Successful steps have been taken to increase the number of boys at the mathematics club. However, this matter is not being tackled successfully in lessons as seen by test results and the balance of boys and girls in the different sets.
40. Standards are below average in Years 5 and 6 and close to the national average in Years 7 and 8. Books contain good quantities of work, satisfactorily presented at appropriate levels. However, the quality of work in Year 6 is below expectations and shows little progress over that in Year 5. Books are marked regularly although there are some gaps. In the best examples, the marking is a useful aid to learning. Elsewhere, the spelling of technical words has not been checked and examples of incorrect marking can be seen. Opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills are not embedded in the work of the department. Few rooms have clear displays of technical words. There is no consistent strategy being used to encourage the correct use and spelling of subject-specific vocabulary. Questions posed by staff do not give pupils opportunities to develop their speaking skills. Pupils with special educational needs progress more rapidly than others because of good work by support staff, despite inconsistencies caused by having different staff in different lessons. However, other teaching rarely shows a response to the pupils' individual education plans.

41. Although satisfactory in Years 7 and 8, teaching is unsatisfactory overall. Some good lessons were seen but teaching in the majority is rarely better than satisfactory and some poor teaching was observed. Inadequate planning fails to make the best use of hour long lessons. The benefits of an appropriate starter and an effective plenary¹ session are not realised. Teachers' expectations are too low, leading to moderate pace and challenge which do not fully engage the pupils. Pupils' learning follows the pattern of the teaching. Attitudes are good on the whole and pupils behave well despite the lack of engagement. Relationships are good and pupils work happily together. Their response to questions is hesitant but usually with good answers. The most able do not make the progress their ability warrants, a weakness that existed at the last inspection. Good work is being undertaken with gifted and talented pupils outside lessons where several challenging activities are offered. This good practice is not apparent in lessons. Investigations are used well by teachers, giving good practice in the use of mathematics. The use of information and communication technology is built into the scheme of work to cover an identified topic. However, its use as an aid to teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. With little equipment available in normal teaching rooms it is difficult to provide regular, frequent access.
42. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The lack of a co-ordinator for Years 7 and 8 has added to the pressures, although there is a shared vision for the priorities for raising standards. Monitoring of teaching has only been undertaken since September. The observations made were perceptive and were followed up in department meetings to make a good starting point to raise standards of teaching. A development plan has been produced but this is insufficiently focused on action to raise standards of teaching and learning. A new work scheme, based on national strategy units has been introduced; however, further refinement is required, including adaptations to meet the needs of the whole attainment range before the benefits of the system can be realised. The school has a detailed database of pupil progress which the department uses to set targets. However, the use of this information as part of a strategy to involve pupils in raising their own standards is limited.

Mathematics across the curriculum

43. There is no whole-school policy to develop mathematics skills across the curriculum. A co-ordinator was appointed in September and a start on this was made. A draft policy on graph work has been produced but staffing difficulties within mathematics have diverted attention away from the issue at present. There is good practice within departments such as science, design and technology, music and French where teachers take positive steps to ensure that pupils' mathematical skills meet the specific needs of the subject. In others, development takes place incidentally in the normal course of the lessons. As a result, pupils' basic number skills are, for the substantial majority, just in line with national expectations and sufficient to allow access to the school curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The concentration on investigative methods in all lessons develops the pupils' scientific understanding.
- Good teaching is contributing to above average standards.
- There are very good procedures for pupils' self evaluation and tracking of their own progress but these are not used by all staff.
- The marking of books is variable.

¹ Plenary refers to parts of lessons that bring all pupils together with their teacher to share their learning and evaluate progress so far.

Commentary

44. Results of national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were above the national average and above average when compared with similar schools. The results show that the pupils made good progress when compared to their previous levels of attainment. They were better than results in mathematics and English. This good progress continues in Years 7 and 8, so that standards are above average by the time the pupils leave the school. These standards have been maintained over the last four years. Achievement is good. The performance of girls and boys varies between year groups but with no consistent pattern. Pupils with special educational needs also achieve well because work in lessons is suitable for their needs.
45. Teaching is good although it is slightly stronger in Years 7 and 8. The lessons seen ranged from excellent to satisfactory. The good teaching is leading to good learning. A particular strength is the emphasis on scientific investigation. Pupils enjoy this practical element. It contributes to the pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour that in turn contribute to the pupils' good progress within lessons. Pupils work well as individuals, in pairs and in groups. Learning is further enhanced by constructive teacher-pupil relationships and high expectations combined with the high level of challenge. Relative weaknesses in teaching are the occasional loss of pace and inconsistent staff practices. Pupils' books are marked with encouraging comments, but these do not always indicate how work can be improved. Furthermore, the comments are not always followed up. This means that opportunities for consolidation and clarification of understanding are missed. There are very good procedures for pupils to track and monitor their own progress but these are not used by all staff and so again opportunities for pupils to identify how they can improve their work even further are missed. Effective use is made of homework to develop the work undertaken in lessons. There is a strong emphasis on the use of technical vocabulary and the department has a structured plan to incorporate the numeracy skills needed within the subject. The use of information and communication technology, data-logging and sensing equipment has improved since the last inspection and is still developing. Homework is set regularly but is not always sufficient to fill the time allocated.
46. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a clear vision for improvement and data is used to identify areas that require improvement. The department is recognised as a lead in the local authority for its schemes of work. There are very good assessment and monitoring systems, which are in the process of being developed further. Management is good. Teaching and learning are monitored but there is inconsistent use of the very good procedures available. This is hindering further development. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Areas identified for improvement have been tackled successfully alongside developments in other areas such as investigative science, target-setting and extension lessons for the more able pupils. There is considerable potential to improve even further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good because there is a good focus on what the pupils will learn and how this will be achieved.
- The curriculum is well planned and covers National Curriculum requirements but timetable arrangements are too complex.
- Access to computers has improved significantly but information and communication technology suites now need remodelling to provide an environment to support better learning.
- Other subjects do not make sufficient use of information and communication technology to support learning and to extend the pupils' skills.

Commentary

47. Discrete information and communication technology lessons ensure that all students have access to opportunities to develop their understanding and key skills systematically throughout Years 5 to 8. Attainment is in line with the levels expected nationally by the end of Year 6 and in Year 8 and pupils are achieving appropriately. There is no evidence of significant variation in the achievement of particular groups of pupils so that pupils with special educational needs or those with a particular aptitude all make secure progress over time. The curriculum that they follow meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and the expectations of the National Primary and Key Stage 3 Strategies. However, timetabling arrangements can weaken the security of pupils' learning as continuity and progression of skills and ideas are lessened when information and communication technology is involved in a rotation system with other subjects. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress in lessons because they are well taught.
48. Lessons are planned well with each linking systematically to those before ensuring that there is a coherent development of ideas and skills. Teachers are clear about what they expect the pupils to learn and the tasks and activities used are chosen well to support the intended learning. Teachers use their good subject knowledge and expertise to challenge pupils and to provide them with effective support and feedback. The pupils mostly respond well to the focus and direction expected, engage with the ideas and apply themselves well to the activities. Consequently, teaching and learning are good. The smallness and poor layout of rooms means that teachers have to work hard and skilfully to achieve these positive outcomes.
49. Leadership and management are secure and there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The close liaison with other local schools, including discussion about standards, helps teachers to establish appropriate expectations for the pupils. There is some monitoring of the work within the teaching team but monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning within information and communication technology has not been the focus of the school's work so far this year. There is the capacity to continue to improve at a secure rate.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

50. The provision for the use of information and communication technology on a consistent basis to enhance teaching and learning in other subjects is unsatisfactory. The exceptions to this are science where valuable data logging activities have been introduced and physical education where the pupils are able to use video cameras to analyse their technique in cricket. Other subjects do not have immediate access to computers or do not plan to take classes to the computer suites on a regular basis. In many cases, opportunities for the use of information and communication technology are not written into schemes of work. Where examples are seen of the pupils' incidental use of the Internet as a research tool or word-processed pieces of work, skills are broadly as expected for their age.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory overall** but with a few significant shortcomings.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The positive attitudes shown by pupils enhance their learning.
- Procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of the teaching of geography are ineffective.
- The limited use of information and communication technology and practical fieldwork opportunities restricts pupils' achievement.
- The reliance upon worksheets because of insecure subject knowledge restricts the opportunities for extended writing, particularly in Years 6 to 8.

Commentary

51. Pupils' achievement in geography is satisfactory because of the positive attitudes shown by pupils to their own learning. It was not possible to observe lessons in Years 5 and 6; however, from the pupils' work seen in Year 5, higher-attaining pupils are being set challenging tasks and show good achievement. In Year 6, weaker literacy and numeracy skills restrict progress particularly for average-attaining pupils. Achievement in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory, but is impeded by the reliance upon worksheets, insufficient opportunities for extended writing and limited teaching methods. Girls achieve as well as boys. The effective use of a learning support assistant in a Year 8 lesson enabled pupils with special educational needs to achieve at a satisfactory level.
52. Standards are average in Year 6 and Year 8 and are above average in the present Year 5. The differences mainly reflect variations in attainment on entry, particularly in communication and language skills, but also better challenge currently for the more able pupils in Year 5. In Year 5, pupils are generally working above expectations and show a good range of mapping skills including the accurate use of six-figure grid references. Pupils in Year 6 can describe physical landforms, but are not able to explain their formation. In Year 7, pupils can locate places at a variety of scales, but display a limited range of skills particularly in the construction of graphs and diagrams. In Year 8, due to their improving literacy skills, higher-attaining pupils can explain with confidence the formation of physical features.
53. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8 but does not always challenge the more able sufficiently. It is not possible to make judgements for Years 5 and 6. Positive attitudes mean that, in the majority of lessons, pupils work collaboratively and respond well to their teachers' questions. They quickly settle to work and are able to maintain their concentration throughout lessons. Teachers make every effort to include all pupils including low attainers who are therefore able to make a valuable contribution. In a few lessons, effectiveness is not as good as it could be due to teachers' insecure subject knowledge and a lack of challenging work for the more able. Generally in Years 7 and 8, opportunities for independent learning are limited because teachers rely too heavily on either worksheets or a textbook. Furthermore, planning does not take into account the learning needs of all pupils, particularly the more able.
54. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory as are leadership and management. A scheme of work is in place but requires updating as it has taken little account of the new setting arrangements. Strategic planning is weak with little vision of where geography will be in the future. There has been insufficient professional development for non-specialists. The very limited fieldwork at present, together with limited access to computer facilities, restricts pupils' opportunities to develop their practical skills and undertake more independent research. There is no effective method of evaluating and monitoring the work of the department or the use of assessment data to improve teaching and learning.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory** but with a few important aspects for improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching of higher attainers is effective in raising achievement through academic challenge.
- Pupils use historical sources well to reconstruct past events in imaginative reports.
- There is insufficient support and training for non-specialists.
- Assessment lacks sufficient rigour to identify accurately pupils' levels of attainment and monitor their progress.
- Learning resources are inadequate for meeting the needs of lower attainers.

Commentary

55. There are weaknesses in the management of the subject that are affecting standards in Year 6 and 7 where pupils' attainment is slightly below nationally expected levels. The schemes of work need updating and are difficult to use. They do not give sufficient guidance on teaching strategies to assist non-specialists; the accompanying resources are quite limited in their range and suitability. Subject leadership is satisfactory, providing a good role model for teaching and offering specialist advice but there has been little monitoring of teaching or development of staff expertise through in-service training.
56. Monitoring of pupils' performance is inadequate because the assessment process is not being implemented with sufficient rigour. Pupils' work is marked regularly and helpful comments made but there is little objective, moderated assessment using the subject criteria and level descriptors of the National Curriculum. Pupil self-review sheets are used effectively at the end of units to set targets and a system of pupil profiles exists that could plot progress, if used extensively. As it is, records are at best patchy.
57. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 5 and 8. The good teaching is characterised by well chosen activities that allow pupils to use evidence in imaginative ways to demonstrate understanding and develop their writing. As a result, pupils are achieving well in Year 8 and reaching nationally expected levels of attainment with a significant number performing above this level. Achievement is satisfactory in other years. Some teaching, whilst satisfactory, lacks the variety of learning styles to engage pupils fully in the work. There is very good teaching in the top sets, equipping pupils with the skills for analysing historical sources, challenging their thinking and giving them scope for initiative in how they use and present information. Where teaching was unsatisfactory it lacked sufficient historical content to advance pupils' learning and relied too heavily on teacher exposition, rather than pupil activity. Different interpretations of people and events are a neglected area of study. There are some opportunities for pupils to find out information for themselves in projects but they not structured tightly enough to target the skills of independent enquiry and serve the purposes of assessment. Similarly, information and communication technology is sometimes used for research in class but not in a systematic, planned manner.
58. The limited range of resources for learning is affecting standards in Years 6 and 7. The Year 6 materials on the Aztecs are not sufficiently discriminating to meet the needs of pupils at different levels. Consequently, achievement is unsatisfactory as pupils are not producing enough structured work to demonstrate the expected level of organisation of historical information. In Year 7, much of the work is based on a particular textbook which provides a wealth of source material for average and higher attainers but there is no alternative for lower attainers who find it difficult. Experienced teaching overcomes these difficulties in Year 8, bringing the sources to life through skilful questioning so that pupils are able to use them to trace the religious changes brought about by Tudor monarchs.
59. Literacy skills are being promoted well through the teaching of history. The central focus on the study of historical sources develops pupils' reading comprehension well and provides the stimulus for imaginative and authentic reports, reconstructing the past. In class questioning and paired discussion, pupils are improving their ability to express ideas clearly. The study of ancient civilisations and the evolution of British society enhance pupils' moral, social and cultural development. Except for the Year 5 visit to the British museum, opportunities for fieldwork in the subject are restricted.
60. Improvement has been at a standstill since the previous inspection. Standards have slipped in Year 6 but have been maintained in Year 8. Changes in staffing and the organisation of teaching groups have presented challenges for the management of the subject, which have not been resolved.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Efficient organisation and clear direction are supporting good teaching overall.
- Attainment is improving as a result of the use of test data to set targets and track pupils' progress.
- Pupils display positive attitudes towards the subject and apply themselves well to their work.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of independent enquiry.

Commentary

61. Many teachers are involved in teaching religious education for just one or two lessons a week. Good management of the subject is co-ordinating their work effectively. Well-constructed schemes of work, supported by appropriate resources support teachers' lesson planning and ensure consistency of learning by pupils in different classes. As a result, the teaching is good overall. Teachers manage the pupils' work efficiently, creating the right ethos for learning and encouraging them through helpful marking of work. Teaching is stronger in Years 7 and 8 where there is more teaching by specialists and satisfactory in Year 6 where there is no direct specialist input. The opportunity for in-service training to develop teachers' subject expertise is limited at present.
62. A new assessment scheme to determine pupils' level of attainment in the subject was successfully introduced last year and the resulting data used to set targets for pupils and track their progress this year. Attainment in Year 6 is in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Higher attainers are doing better with their 'eyewitness' reports of Biblical events and comparisons of the birth narratives in the Gospels. Pupils showed reasonable understanding of the meaning of parables in lessons and their achievement over the course has been satisfactory, gaining expected understanding of creation stories and festivals in different faiths. The emphasis on literacy is enabling lower attainers to develop their writing in a range of styles and improve their technical accuracy. Attainment in Year 8 is above levels expected by the locally agreed syllabus and pupils are achieving well, showing good understanding of Christian teaching on salvation and how beliefs influence one's lifestyle. Higher attainers, in particular, showed insight with their poems on the Incarnation. Lower attainers make good progress through the variety of learning activities employed.
63. Pupils in Years 5 and some in Year 8 have researched information on Christian reformers using information and communication technology but it is not widely used to extend pupils' learning; access to computers is a problem for some classes. Similarly, a Year 7 survey of people's views on religious beliefs gave scope for independent enquiry, but the skills of finding out information for homework from reference books and other sources are not a regular feature of pupils' work in the subject.
64. The new setting arrangements have laid the foundations for improved performance in the subject, as teachers are able to pitch lessons at the right level. Where teaching assistants are involved in lessons, their work is carefully directed to meet pupils' special educational needs, enabling them to make good progress. In some lessons, tasks and resources do not suit lower attainers. For example, Year 6 pupils struggled to interpret the meaning of parables, needing a more structured approach to the task to gain the required insight.
65. Religious education is making a good contribution to pupils' personal development, giving them opportunities to reflect on spiritual and moral teachings and apply them to their own lives. Pupils' response to learning from religions is positive; they express their views well in class discussions and produce thoughtful, written work on issues such as suffering and evil. In general, boys are more vocal in discussion and girls more detailed in writing. In their use of Bibles, pupils acquire the ability to look up references and show due respect for the scriptures. The same understanding and respect was evident in the Year 7 guides to a Sikh Gurdwara.

66. Effective leadership of the subject supports teaching with thorough planning, adequate resources and direct involvement with three of the four year group teams. A valuable development has been the setting up of a database to track pupils' progress which allows the subject leader to monitor pupils' performance across the school and pass on accurate records of pupils' attainment. School priorities have relegated time for monitoring and development of teaching to the summer term. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. One particular feature is the strong links with the upper school through the religious education liaison group, smoothing the transition by involving their teachers in team teaching Year 8.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

67. In addition to inspecting art and design, design and technology, music and physical education in depth, two lessons of drama were also observed. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are taught **drama** as part of the timetable rotation arrangements. In the two lessons seen, attainment was in line with expectations. Pupils understand and use such techniques as 'freezing', explain what they are doing and why, and understand some stage effects such as the use of lighting. Teachers are enthusiastic and pupils respond well and enjoying learning. Pupils evaluate their own and each other's performances sensibly. They collaborate well in groups. The drama curriculum is effective in supporting literacy, numeracy and social and moral issues in citizenship.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good.
- Assessment procedures and information are used well to guide the pupils' learning.
- There is insufficient opportunity for the use of information and communication technology to enhance teaching and support learning.
- The accommodation is in need of refurbishment.

Commentary

68. Pupils make good progress from slightly below average attainment when they enter the school so that attainment of the substantial majority is in line with national expectations by Year 6. For example, most pupils reach a level that is close to that expected in observational drawing of portraits. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 understand the quality they are aiming for because the teacher shares learning objectives with them at the start of the lesson. Self-evaluation is a strong aspect of learning. Pupils with special educational needs who have literacy difficulties are helped to express themselves in whole-class situations and are well supported by displays of key words. Boys and girls work well together. The best achievement is in Year 5 weaving, inspired by works of art and in the embroidery based on *The Wave* by Hokusai. Boys enjoy success in this medium as much as girls. Progress is better for pupils in Years 5 to 7 than it is for Year 8, because the younger pupils have adjusted more quickly to the new teacher's high expectations.
69. Standards are also average in Year 8. Pupils understand Surrealism from studying reproductions and worksheets. They are confident when experimenting with a range of materials. Most can sensibly evaluate each other's work. Sketchbooks have been well developed for experimentation, research and observational drawing in both Years 7 and 8. Brainstorms reveal good knowledge and understanding. Drawing and painting studies show high levels of sensitivity to the mood being sought or the culture being studied. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have literacy difficulties are liberated when reading works of art. They achieve as well as everyone else. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Apart from some research using the Internet,

information and communication technology does not currently contribute to the achievement of pupils in any year group.

70. Teaching is always good and occasionally very good. The newly qualified teacher in charge of the subject is primary trained and uses the three-part lesson well to involve pupils fully in their own learning. Brainstorming and group discussions are strong features of the teaching. Some adjustment still needs to be made to cope with the tendency of the oldest pupils to engage in social chatter when producing practical work.
71. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The teacher in charge has brought a new impetus to learning, literacy is well supported and evaluation by pupils is a regular feature. The leadership of the subject is good. Good links have been made with other schools in the pyramid. The schemes of work are good. Moral, social and cultural aspects of the curriculum are planned for well although there have not been any trips out of school or artists in to talk to the pupils. Management is satisfactory. Much time has had to be spent in sorting out the art room including the displays. There is no technical help. Whilst National Curriculum levels are awarded there has been no moderation of results to ensure accuracy. There is no levelled folder of exemplary work to help pupils to understand the quality aimed for. The accommodation is in need of refurbishment.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory** but with aspects for improvement, particularly for lower-attaining pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The more able pupils are mostly well challenged by the teaching and their achievement is good.
- The timetable rotation arrangement adversely affects the learning of lower-attaining pupils.
- Opportunities are missed for supporting pupils' literacy development.
- The subject leader has a clear vision for the development of the subject.
- Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently to support and extend pupils' learning.

Commentary

72. Achievement is satisfactory and standards are average overall. This is similar to the previous inspection. The more able pupils generally do well in Years 7 and 8, particularly when designing and problem-solving fires their imaginations, they are excited and their minds are fully engaged. However, average and less able pupils sometimes struggle because their understanding of subject terminology is insecure and because their literacy skills are limited. For example, a number of pupils do not know that some sentence structures are more appropriate for speech than writing. They write as they speak in several workbooks rather than in an appropriate written form. Progress between Year 5 and Year 8 is more rapid for higher-attaining pupils than for lower attainers. In part, this is because the timetable rotation arrangement in each year group leads to discontinuity of experience which particularly affects lower-attaining pupils. This is largely because they cannot recall what they have learned previously when there is a gap of some months between lessons. For example, many Year 6 pupils had forgotten what a 'specification' is because of the time interval since they last produced one. As a result, they needed extra support in planning the structure of their work on buggies.
73. Learning in lessons in Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory overall but is restricted occasionally because key subject terminology is not developed purposefully enough by teachers or displayed adequately on the board. Learning in work with resistant materials is better in Year 5 than in Year 6. This is because a problem-solving approach is adopted with direct feedback

from the teacher as to the strengths and weaknesses of their design. Pupils with special educational needs thrive in this situation. They are well supported by both the teacher and the learning assistant. Learning is better with resistant materials than it is in food technology in Years 7 and 8. One factor being that Year 7 pupils respond well to challenge. Pupils appear confident as they draw and make modifications to their ideas. Peer support is particularly evident among the boys.

74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The strengths are in the teachers' encouragement and engagement of pupils' interests and in the pupils' application and productivity. Weakness occurs in one teacher's subject knowledge and in the inconsistency of challenge for the potentially highest attaining pupils. In a Year 8 food lesson, there was insufficient rigour in the teaching to challenge able pupils to do better. This, however, is an exception to the generally good challenge for the more able pupils elsewhere in the subject. Satisfactory links exist between design and technology and the information and communication technology curriculum.
75. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The subject leader has a clear vision of what should be happening and is providing satisfactory leadership and management. This is evident in the schemes of work for resistant materials and in the good quality of pupils' workbooks. The food room has been refurbished but there are health and safety concerns about the chopping boards and the efficiency of the extractor fans. One aspect that needs exploration is that there are some uncertainties as to which aspects of the food technology curriculum need to be tackled at Etonbury and which are covered at the upper school in Year 9. The resistant materials workshop is old and in need of refurbishment including providing better information and communication technology provision. Best practice would ensure the placing of line markers in front of electrical machines in order to indicate safe queuing distance. The lack of technical help is a major concern. Display is not a strong feature.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to pupils achieving well in all years.
- Pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not have the nationally recommended amount of time for the subject preventing them from attaining better still.
- The subject is very well led and managed effecting substantial improvement since the previous inspection.
- Many pupils extend their musical skills through participation in extra-curricular activities.

Commentary

76. Pupils' attainment in Year 6 is broadly average. Standards in Year 8 are above average. Achievement is good in all years. However, in Years 7 and 8 the timetable rotation system is a barrier to progress, reducing by one-third the amount of time normally given to teaching the subject and interrupting the continuity of lessons.
77. Pupils in all years sing unison songs with enthusiasm. However, part-singing is under-developed, so that, when their voices break, boys do not have the skills to use their voices in a well-directed manner. Pupils pay careful attention to technique and co-ordination with others when performing at keyboards. They improvise and notate rhythmic, melodic and harmonic compositions and, by Year 8, employ a range of techniques to vary and develop musical material. They listen to and appraise a wide range of musical styles from across the world and from different times using and understanding appropriate musical vocabulary well. Music contributes well to literacy and numeracy skills although spelling mistakes are not always corrected in pupils' written work. Higher-attaining and talented pupils achieve well because activities are well tailored within the streamed classes and their involvement in out-of-hours activities. Two boys' rock groups from Year 7 and 8 showed clear musical awareness to complement their technical accomplishment. Achievement of boys and pupils with special educational needs is good.
78. Teaching shows very secure subject knowledge and skill. Lessons are very well planned to build on prior learning and secure best progress despite the adverse time allocation. A wide range of teaching styles is used to draw musical responses from all pupils although the explanation of theory and notation is insufficiently supported by musical exemplification. Very good inter-personal relationships and attitudes are cultivated through a climate of humour and purpose. Clear routines ease behaviour management. Pupils enjoy making music and the subject contributes significantly to their personal development. Assessment of pupils' work is thorough with feedback to pupils that gives them a clear understanding as to how they can improve. Pupils set their own targets for improvement and review their progress against these targets regularly. Reports are equally constructive.
79. Standards have risen since the previous inspection in part because a much broader and more balanced curriculum is in place. However, listening appraisal work in Years 5 and 6 is limited and the use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped, due to an inadequate distribution of computers to the department. Accommodation has significantly improved enabling the department to offer instrumental lessons to an above average proportion of pupils. Participation in the choir and orchestra is good. The clear vision of the subject leader ensures very good liaison with both the local music services and the upper school. These links support a considerable number of varied activities and productions.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Large numbers of pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Current arrangements do not ensure that all pupils are able to meet the swimming standards expected by the National Curriculum.
- Teachers are skilled at promoting literacy and use information and communication technology to enhance teaching and learning.
- Lesson planning has improved since the last inspection but there is scope for lessons to be more challenging.

Commentary

80. Pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6 where they learn new skills and improve and refine existing ones. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8. There have been improvements in lesson planning since the last inspection; however, a lack of challenge in lessons results in a small number of pupils not fully meeting their potential. An assessment policy is now in place to track the pupils' progress. Where it is being used effectively it is providing staff with information on pupils' abilities and is supporting teaching; however, it is not consistently used to guide lesson planning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and they can work on ideas they are given to improve their performance in cricket and athletics. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
81. The attainment of the substantial majority of pupils is in line with National Curriculum expectations throughout the school as it was at the last inspection. In Year 6, pupils can bowl a ball accurately and select the appropriate shot to play in a limited game situation. In a Year 8 game of rounders, pupils were seen starting to develop bowling tactics to outwit batters as well as showing an understanding of specific fielding positions in game situations. In athletics, pupils understand the importance of warming up the body and they can carry out effective stretches under teacher direction. Able and talented Year 8 pupils show a good understanding of current topics in athletics and they can suggest ways to improve their own and others performance. However, there is scope for them to achieve more as they have little opportunity to plan, evaluate or lead practices which will improve their own and the performances of others in athletics and rounders.
82. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and they set clear objectives to pupils at the start of lessons. Good use is made throughout of applying keywords and spelling strategies to develop pupils' literacy skills. The use of information and communication technology is also being incorporated into lessons to support pupil learning, such as through using a video camera for pupils to analyse movement in cricket. Where teaching is good, lesson pace and challenge results in pupils making good progress in developing their skills. Where teaching is only satisfactory, there is insufficient adaptation of activities to take into account the full range of pupils' abilities. The relationships between pupils and staff in all lessons are good and the pupils' behaviour is consistently good.
83. Leadership and management are satisfactory and have secured satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The subject leader has a good vision for physical education. He has a sound philosophy on the importance of the subject which results in a broad and balanced curriculum supported by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available to all pupils. This includes Year 8 pupils being able to undertake leadership qualifications to support younger pupils in gymnastics. Pupils have regular opportunities to participate in competitive matches against other schools in a wide range of sports. Pupils have swimming lessons at their lower schools but there are currently no arrangements to enable those who have not met the requirements of the National Curriculum at that stage to do so at Etonbury. Department policies are in place; however, they are not always aligned to emerging whole-school policies. There is also only limited monitoring of provision to inform departmental planning and to identify where further professional development is needed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

84. Personal, social and health education, citizenship and careers education are taught as units of work largely by form tutors. They are further supported by outside speakers and a theatre group which deals with aspects of drugs education. Three lessons on drugs awareness were observed during the inspection; all were taught by school staff. Teaching in one Year 8 lesson was good because of the very good atmosphere generated and the use of well structured activities while teaching was unsatisfactory in another because pupils became disengaged. One satisfactory Year 7 sex education lesson dealt carefully with a sensitive area of exploring different forms of love, expression and feelings.

85. Only one lesson as part of the **citizenship** programme was observed although a small amount of work was analysed from each year group. It is not possible to make valid judgements on achievement, standards or teaching from this small amount of evidence. The Year 7 lesson on government was planned well by a knowledgeable teacher although several pupils became distracted during what was the last lesson of the day.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	4
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	3
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	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	4
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	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
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).