

INSPECTION REPORT

HUGH SEXEY CHURCH OF ENGLAND MIDDLE SCHOOL

Wedmore, Somerset

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123897

Headteacher: David Cameron

Lead inspector: Mr R C Drew

Dates of inspection: 15 – 17 September 2003

Inspection number: 258666

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:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	9 to 13 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	638
School address:	Blackford Wedmore Somerset
Postcode:	BS28 4ND
Telephone number:	01934 712211
Fax number:	01934 712998
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Tattersall
Date of previous inspection:	15 September 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Hugh Sexey is a larger than average Church of England Voluntary Controlled Middle School with 638 pupils aged 9 to 13 on roll. It has Beacon School status and holds numerous awards, including the School Achievement Award and the Education Business Partnership Award. It works in close association with the Cheddar Valley Group of schools and the Somerset Association of middle schools. It serves a wide rural area with most pupils requiring transport to attend school. The area as a whole enjoys considerable social and economic advantage by national standards and less than 3 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Overall pupils' standards on entry are above average, although there is a wide range. The proportion of pupils on the special educational needs (SEN) register is below average. The vast majority of pupils are of white (British) heritage with about 2.5 per cent coming from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds. All pupils pupil use English as their mother tongue.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7281	Robert Drew	Lead inspector	
9710	Elizabeth Burgess	Lay inspector	
30899	Kenneth Boden	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology
18447	Ronald Cohen	Team inspector	History Religious education
19586	Wendy Easterby	Team inspector	English
31100	Geoffrey Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics
21785	Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	Special educational needs Science
31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Music
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
19404	Les Schubeler	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
10564	John Tomlinson	Team inspector	Geography
12972	Anthony Weaden	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school with many very good and excellent features. Recent underachievement in important areas is being acted upon effectively. It offers good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards of attainment, compared with the national ones for all schools, are well above average in ICT, music, science, physical education and history and above average in all other subjects.
- Pupils' achievement is very good in ICT, design and technology and science and it is good in music, art, history, citizenship and physical education.
- The leadership of the headteacher is very good.
- Leadership and management are excellent in science and very good in music, design and technology, ICT and physical education.
- Pupils' attendance is excellent and their attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Teaching and learning are both good overall and in music and science and design and technology they are very good.
- The curriculum is very good and the moral guidance provided is excellent.
- The way pupils are cared for and involved in shaping the life of the school is excellent.
- Links with other schools are excellent and there are very good links with parents and the wider community.
- The governing body is very well informed and most effective.
- Recent standards in English have been much lower than previously and were below the average for similar schools in 2002. Achievement in English is currently unsatisfactory, reflecting unsatisfactory leadership and management of the subject.
- In mathematics, standards at the end of Year 6 are currently, counter to school trends, below the average for similar schools, though pupils are making satisfactory progress in lessons.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory in geography.

The school has improved its provision on many fronts since the last inspection, including all those features listed as 'key issues'. In nearly all respects, it has sustained or improved on its high level of effectiveness, with significantly better facilities, more effective teaching and learning styles, far better assessment arrangements and much improved support for pupils with special educational needs. However, at the time of this inspection, standards in two core subjects are lower than usual for the school and improvement since the last inspection reduced as a result. Nevertheless, the school has made sound overall gains since 1997.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
English	A	A	B	D
Mathematics	B	A	C	D
Science	B	A	A	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.

Currently, overall achievement in the school is satisfactory, though statistical data shows it has been good until very recently. This is true for both Years 5 and 6 and for Years 7 and 8.

Standards seen during the inspection at the end of Year 6 are above average in English and mathematics and well above average in science. In National Curriculum tests in 2002, science

results were well above the average for all schools and above the norm for schools in the same free school meals category. In English, the 2002 test results were above average for all schools, but below the standards for similar schools, while mathematics results were average compared with those for all schools and below average for results in similar schools. These results and the work seen during the inspection indicate that pupils are achieving well in science, satisfactorily in mathematics but unsatisfactorily in English. Pupils enter the school with above-average levels of attainment in English and, although they are making progress, the 2002 and (unvalidated) 2003 results show they are not achieving as well as they should. The senior managers of the school have taken a range of measures that have successfully identified the relevant weaknesses and led to action to remedy the problem. There are encouraging signs that the effects are already being felt especially in the latest Year 9 results in English for pupils from this school.

In the other subjects of the curriculum, standards in Year 6 are well above average in music, ICT, history and physical education and above average in all others, and pupils are achieving well in all these subjects and particularly successfully in ICT.

By Year 8, standards of work seen during the inspection are again above average overall. This is true for English and mathematics, while in science, standards are well above average. By the time the school's pupils have completed National Curriculum tests in Year 9 at their high school, results are well above the national average for all schools and show good achievement across Years 7 to 9 in science, and satisfactory achievement in English and mathematics. Achievement is also satisfactory in geography, modern languages and religious education, but it is good in most other subjects and very good in ICT and design and technology.

Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress because support is so well organised. Girls attain higher standards than boys across Years 7 and 8, especially in English.

Personal and social standards

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. They are a credit to the school, being unusually mature, polite and considerate. Attendance is excellent and fully indicative of the very positive attitudes and very good behaviour that characterise pupils both in lessons and beyond.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching is good across the school. Teaching and learning are both very good in ICT, science and music and good in most other subjects. In English, mathematics, modern languages and geography, the quality is satisfactory. In all subjects, there is a particularly strong command of their subject amongst teachers, who are very good at ensuring high standards of behaviour and using support assistants effectively. They have no weaknesses by national standards but the range and effectiveness of teaching methods, while especially high in science and physical education, for example, is less varied and rich in mathematics and English.

The school has established a very good formal curriculum across Years 5 to 8 and links this particularly well with pupils' experiences in first schools and subsequent work in the local high school. This coherent progression is a major asset to pupils' learning. The excellent level of care and guidance pupils receive in school and the very strong parental support that prevails both serve to help pupils maximise the benefits of the learning opportunities provided by the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher has provided very clear yet collaborative leadership for a sustained period. This approach has enabled the school to establish very high aspirations for the quality of all that it does and for the way pupils develop personally, socially and academically. It has created very effective processes for building up the skills of senior and management colleagues, governors, parents and pupils in the development of the school. Support for staff and pupils is extremely strong. If problems emerge in any aspect of school performance,

there is analysis of possible causes and usually effective action is taken; occasionally, these corrective processes lack sufficiently decisive and rapid impact. The governing body is very effective in all aspects of its work.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents' support for the school is very strong. It is oversubscribed because of its popularity in the area. A far greater proportion of parents than average responded to the Ofsted questionnaire and indicated unusually high levels of support for the school's activities. Pupils in their questionnaire and in interviews with inspectors were strongly supportive of the school: 95 per cent said they were pleased to be there.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

In order to sustain the high quality of much of the school's work and rectify current underachievement, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

- improve the leadership and management of English so that there is: a complete and effective scheme of work; consistency in the use of assessment to plan lessons and help pupils; and a consistent high quality in teaching;
- ensure that in mathematics, leadership and management monitors, evaluates and encourages staff and pupils with greater rigour, focus and prominence;
- improve the leadership and management in geography, especially by ensuring that: the strengths evident in Years 5 and 6 become whole-school strengths; and assessment is used to guide pupils and staff more effectively;
- modify the senior management team's current monitoring and evaluation processes so that they more consistently lead to: clear overall judgements about the quality of teaching and subject leadership and management; judgements on progress being made against measurable targets; early, decisive action when problems arise.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

1. Pupils' **achievement** in Years 5 and 6 and again in Years 7 and 8 is currently satisfactory overall, but good in many subjects. It is very good in science, satisfactory in mathematics, but unsatisfactory in English. It has been better than this until very recently. Achievement is good or very good in the foundation subjects. **Standards** in English, mathematics and some foundation subjects are above average, while in science and the remaining foundation subjects standards are well above average. Again, standards were higher in English and mathematics until 2002.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is very good in science, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology and good in most other subjects.
- Standards of attainment are well above average in ICT, music, science, physical education and history and above average in all other subjects.
- Trends in results since the previous inspection until 2002 have been positive in all core subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good overall progress.
- Boys do better than girls in mathematics and science.
- 2002 results in English were much lower than previously and were below the average for similar schools. Achievement in English is currently unsatisfactory.
- 2002 results in mathematics, while average for all schools, were lower than usual and below the average for similar schools.
- Boys do less well than girls at English, especially at writing.

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.9 (29.4)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	27.0 (28.6)	26.7 (26.6)
science	30.0 (31.0)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 167 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The table refers to **standards of attainment** and shows that results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2002 were above average for all three core subjects compared with those in all schools nationally, but had been higher the year before. It does not show that collectively, however, they were average compared with results from similar schools, and in the case of English and mathematics below the average for similar schools. Science results have been consistently impressive for many years, and unvalidated results for 2003 confirm this strong positive trend. In English, results in 2002 declined from a consistently strong position held for several years. Those for 2003 confirmed this negative trend. In mathematics, the generally well above average results from 1999 to 2001 gave way to average by the standards of all schools in 2002 and 2003. As a consequence, in 2002 the school fell short of its agreed English and mathematics targets for the first time in many years; it is actively seeking strategies to restore its previously very positive performance in this respect.

3. Standards in the work seen during the inspection in English, mathematics and science largely confirm the picture given by test results. Pupils' work in science in current Year 6 is well above average and there is consistently very good **achievement** in lessons, reflecting the strength in teaching that prevails and the excellent quality of leadership and management of the subject. In mathematics, leadership and the guidance it gives to colleagues are sound and pupils achieve satisfactorily, while in English long-term progress or "achievement" is currently unsatisfactory, because the scheme of work and use of assessment do not enable pupils to make the substantial gains of which they are capable.
4. At the end of Year 6, in the other subjects of the curriculum, **standards** in the work seen during the inspection are generally above and sometimes well above national standards. They are particularly high in ICT, history, music and physical education, and pupils' **achievement is good or very good** in most of the Foundation subjects and satisfactory in geography and religious education. This success is because the teaching in the vast majority of subjects is authoritative, exciting and well planned and the leadership and management of the subjects clear. The work of successful departments is well supported by detailed schemes of work, regular marking and consistent assessment practice.
5. By the end of Year 8, as pupils leave the middle school, **standards** in English and mathematics are above average. Given the standards already reached at the end of Year 6, **achievement** is unsatisfactory in English and satisfactory in mathematics. In science, the standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average and indicate that pupils continue to achieve very well. In the other subjects of the curriculum, the standards of work seen amongst Year 8 pupils are above average, and are particularly good in ICT, design and technology, physical education and history, indicating that pupils continue to make good progress in these lessons; in ICT, design and technology they achieve very well during their last two years in the school.
6. The positive progress evident in Years 7 and 8 are confirmed by the pupils' results in tests and teachers' assessments when they reach the end of Year 9 after transferring to the high school. The standards reached are generally above or well above average and in most cases indicate good achievement or "added value". Given the standards with which pupils began Years 7 to 9 in English, the achievement in this subject was not as great as it should have been in 2002, though unvalidated results for 2003 indicate a very marked recovery.
7. Pupils with special educational needs are now far better identified and supported by staff than at the time of the previous inspections and these pupils achieve very well. Those who enter with poor literacy skills show rapid improvement in reading, which underpins success in the wider curriculum. Pupils with hearing impairment overcome their difficulties and reach standards that are commensurate with their capabilities. Gifted and talented pupils have only recently been formally and systematically identified, yet most lessons offer sufficient challenge for them to achieve well. Boys' overall standards at the end of Year 6 are very similar to those of girls, though this masks their stronger performances in mathematics and science and some relative under-performance in English. In Years 7 and 8, boys' work in English, especially writing, remains weaker than that of girls, but this concern is being actively pursued by the school and new approaches to teaching and subject management are being devised. The 3 per cent of pupils who come from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds achieve entirely in line with other pupils.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

8. Pupils' attendance is **excellent**. Attitudes and behaviour, including the incidence of exclusions, are **very good**. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance in the year 2002/2003 was exceptionally high compared to other schools nationally.
- Pupils consistently demonstrate very good attitudes to all aspects of school life and behave very well in line with the school's high expectations of them.
- Pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, respond very well to the specialist support provided.
- Very good enthusiasm is shown for the clubs and trips that are provided.
- The vast majority of pupils report that they enjoy school.
- Not all subject areas plan sufficient opportunities for pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness.

Commentary

9. Attendance is carefully monitored and the school and parents work well to ensure that pupils do not miss school through absence or lateness. Attendance rates, which historically have been very good, have improved further.
10. Pupils in all year groups are very positive about the opportunities provided and enjoy their lessons and the clubs and trips outside school. Nearly all say this is a good school to be at. They are keen to learn and to do well. They understand the need for rules and the school community is free from bullying or other forms of harassment. Relationships throughout the school are very good.
11. The behaviour of all groups of pupils, regardless of age, ability or gender, is very good, although exceptionally, in a lesson where the teacher had low expectations of what pupils could achieve, some unruly behaviour was exhibited.
12. Pupils with special educational needs recognise their difficulties and welcome the help they receive without embarrassment. Hard work and determination to overcome problems are outstanding characteristics of these pupils.
13. The school's aims and values are reflected in assemblies and tutor periods for reflection and pupils are helped to develop as mature members of the school community. Pupils are attentive and reflective during assemblies and tutor periods and their achievements in all fields are valued. Moral development is excellent. Staff provide good role models and pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong. Pupils feel part of the community and contribute to its development through the school council and by exercising responsibility as monitors and in helping others through, for example, raising money for people less fortunate than themselves, or in acting as buddies when new pupils join the school.
14. Particular emphasis is given to the personal development of pupils with special educational needs and all make significant gains in social skills, self-confidence and the many other qualities necessary for independence in both school and the outside world.
15. Pupils' development of spiritual awareness is good, but is not planned into lessons as often as it could be. In citizenship, pupils learn about individuals' rights and responsibilities and recognise the need for laws in society; and in religious education pupils understood the value of looking after the earth, so that all peoples and species can survive. An awareness of their own and others' cultural traditions is fostered well, especially through music, with many pupils participating in choir and orchestra. In art, pupils apply their knowledge of other countries' artefacts, for example in creating masks on an African theme, and study the relationship between Pop Art and western 1950s culture. In design and technology, exploration of aspects of food and diet contribute well to cultural understanding.

16. Since the last inspection, pupils have sustained very high standards of behaviour and very positive attitudes to school. Pupils continue to contribute very well to all aspects of school life and are fully involved in its development through the school council. There have been some improvements in subject areas to foster greater spiritual awareness and to explore the cultural diversity of Britain, by continuing to offer an increasingly wide range of visits and trips to support class work, including the creation of links with a school in Coventry where children are less advantaged as well as exploring the different cultures of European and other countries.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.5	School data	0
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	597	3	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
White – any other White background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

17. The overall **quality of education** provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are good with areas of great strength and some satisfactory areas; the curriculum and provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are both very good and the school provides excellent care for its pupils. These features are given strong support by very good or excellent links with parents and other schools.

Teaching and learning

18. Teaching and learning in the school are good, and in nearly a quarter of the lessons observed, the quality of both was very good or better. Many subjects have consistently good teaching and learning, and in a few the quality is very good. In none is it unsatisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in science, music and design and technology.
- The quality of both is good in history, religious education, citizenship, physical education, art and ICT.
- Teachers have a wider range of strong subject expertise than is common in middle schools.
- Teachers are very good at ensuring good behaviour in lessons.
- Pupils' very positive attitudes help their learning significantly.
- Pupils show better powers of concentration than average.
- Specialist teaching and in-class support for pupils with special educational needs, including those with hearing impairment, are very good and facilitate good learning across the entire curriculum.
- A minority of teaching lacks the pace and high level of challenge found in most lessons.
- English teaching, while satisfactory, is less well guided by its scheme of work than it needs to be.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 100 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (3%)	20 (20%)	51 (51%)	24 (24%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	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.

19. Year 5 and 6 lessons had broadly similar qualities to those in Years 7 and 8, but a higher proportion of good teaching and learning occurred in the latter. There is generally a very good level of subject expertise amongst teachers across more subjects than is usual in middle schools. This high quality reflects the imaginative use of several strategies promoted by the headteacher and colleagues, including very careful budgeting, to ensure that good appointments can be made irrespective of cost, and also the successful use of extensive team teaching, with staff broadening their expertise by working alongside established specialists. This strategy has been used to great effect in science, ICT and physical education. There is also greater consistency than usual in the success staff have at ensuring very good behaviour from pupils.
20. Teachers establish relationships of mutual respect with pupils of all backgrounds and are helped by the very positive ethos of commitment to work and respect for others which pervades the school.
21. There are no areas that are weak by national standards, but the range of teaching methods and the consistency with which homework is used are satisfactory rather than strengths. The great variety of teaching strategies, exciting pace and strong practical involvement that characterise some subjects are less evident in others. They are largely the norm in science, ICT, design and technology and music, and common in art and physical education lessons. They are found in some English, mathematics, modern language and geography lessons, but are not typical.
22. The impact of the overall **good teaching** on pupils' work is very marked and largely explains the well above average standards and considerable achievement over time made in science, ICT, design and technology, art, physical education and music. Teaching and learning are sound in nearly all other subjects, enabling pupils to progress satisfactorily and build securely on the above average standards they bring to the school. In turn, this beneficial impact owes much to the very clear and strongly motivational leadership that typifies science, design and

technology, art, physical education and music. In addition, these and most other subjects have detailed schemes of work and agreed marking and assessment procedures which help staff consistently raise the level of challenge as they progress through lessons and topics and ensure pupils know how well they are doing and what more is required to reach higher standards.

23. A combination of withdrawal for individual tuition, highly skilled support and imaginative use of technology enables pupils with special educational needs to overcome barriers to learning. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together and their very professional relationships result in lessons being effectively tailored to meet special needs. Progress of pupils with special educational needs is monitored almost lesson by lesson. The individual education plans form an excellent framework for setting targets. Teaching assistants take a major responsibility for monitoring the plans, modifying them as targets are met.
24. In English and mathematics, teaching is satisfactory overall. Much is good and occasionally excellent, but more is below this standard and a very small minority of lessons has unsatisfactory teaching. Pupils' learning matches this pattern. In mathematics the secure scheme of work and a range of assessment procedures ensure that pupils make satisfactory achievement over time; currently in English these factors are less effective and pupils do not learn as effectively as they should. Consequently, while the results in National Curriculum tests are above the average for all schools, they are not as high as they should be for pupils entering the middle school at above average levels.
25. Teaching in the most successful subjects consistently stretches pupils. For example, in a particularly successful science lesson in Year 6, the preparation had been so clear and stimulating that pupils arrived already excited and well briefed. The mixture of carefully structured and open-ended work allowed the full range of pupils to make very good progress. The structure of the lesson struck exactly the right balance between independent work by the pupils and well-timed instruction from the teacher. In a Year 8 music lesson with very good teaching, pupils identified as gifted and talented had opportunities to develop very high-level skills. The teacher was equally aware of the need to develop basic literacy confidence with other pupils. The lesson structure was so clear and the variety of tasks so great that the pace of the lesson was consistently strong and the level of pupils' involvement consistently high.
26. Where teaching is less successful, the pace of the lesson has several low points, the objectives for lessons are not immediately obvious to pupils and they are not sufficiently aware of the standards they have reached and precisely what is required to improve.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall curriculum planning provides clear guidance for the development of the subject areas.
- Curricular links with neighbouring schools are very good.
- The school has a professional approach to new initiatives that makes life more interesting for pupils and improves their learning.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The class sizes in design and technology are larger than is ideal.

Commentary

26. Overall the curriculum provides very good opportunities for all pupils. There is clear planning and reviewing and the school recently made appropriate changes to the timetable. All National Curriculum subjects are included, together with religious education, drama and a second

modern language in Years 7 and 8. Therefore the curriculum meets statutory requirements. The time allocations to different subjects are appropriate.

27. The school liaises professionally with other local schools to ensure that the move from Year 8 to Year 9 is not a problem. This collaboration is of a high quality and has a very positive impact on the learning of pupils. This aspect deserves the support it receives from the Beacon School programme and from the local education authority. The school monitors and reviews its work and is innovative. Citizenship courses were introduced a year before the national requirement, a good example of the way that the school approaches curricular development to ensure high-class opportunities for pupils. The school assesses weaknesses and takes steps to overcome them. For instance, using the facilities at the Kings of Wessex School redresses the limited space for some design and technology activities. The use of more laptop computers is being actively investigated to overcome the heavy demands on existing computer rooms.
28. Pupils with special educational needs have complete access to the National Curriculum and take as full a part as is feasible in the enrichment programmes. Withdrawal for specialist tuition is kept to a minimum and organised to give the least possible disruption to mainstream work. Specialist staff work closely with departments to modify lesson plans and teaching methods so that pupils, for example with hearing impairment, can learn successfully. There is extensive provision for gifted and talented pupils in many subjects, especially music and physical education. Extension work in lessons is quite common and a specially designed enrichment programme is being created for implementation in the near future.
29. The provision of personal, social and health education is good. This work has recently been reviewed and modified with resulting clear plans for all years. The school is part of the Healthy Schools Programme and takes this seriously. Currently they are assessing the impact of drinking more water and are tackling this in their usual systematic way. Pupils are encouraged to develop their personal and social skills in a supportive and friendly atmosphere. This work includes sex education, substance abuse and a positive approach to relationships that emphasises personal responsibility and contributes significantly to the moral and social development of pupils. This, together with links with local businesses, contributes to the very good preparation of pupils for later stages of their education.
30. Despite the geography of the area, the school places high value on out-of-school activities and runs an extensive programme of clubs and visits. The participation of pupils in sports and the arts is very good.
31. The school is aware of the difficulties posed for isolated rural areas and endeavours to develop the opportunities for all pupils. Visits to London and Paris help to extend the experiences of the pupils beyond their everyday rural background. There is a valuable link with a multi-cultural school in Coventry and with schools in Bristol. All year groups have a residential experience and the majority of pupils participate. This is a valuable way of extending the curriculum and encouraging the social development of pupils.
32. The accommodation and resources of the school support the curriculum very effectively. The school is well resourced, particularly so with regard to ICT. There are interactive computer whiteboards in most curriculum areas including mathematics, science, English and ICT, which teachers use to enliven their lessons and improve the quality of their presentation. No subjects are unduly hampered by lack of textbooks although in some areas such as mathematics there are still not enough for every pupil to have their own to take home.
33. Accommodation is good and in many areas very good. Classrooms are light and airy. The walls and corridors are rich with the display of children's work. Specialist science laboratories provide much better for pupils in Years 5 and 6 than is normally the case and are a strong contributory factor to pupils' high achievement in science. A recent building programme has provided improved disabled access and new accommodation for pupils with special educational needs. On the other hand, several subjects such as English, French and mathematics do not have enough rooms to provide for all of their lessons so that some

teachers in Years 7 and 8 are itinerant and have to carry equipment and materials around from one classroom to another. This is especially irksome for single periods and makes lesson preparation more arduous. Space in design and technology is insufficient to house equipment for computer-aided manufacture and design so that pupils have to travel to the local high school site for these lessons. Lack of space also means that an area designed for teaching food technology has also to be used for lessons in textiles.

34. There is a good match of staff to the curriculum in most subjects. There are specialist teachers teaching in all subjects in Years 7 and 8, and many lessons are taught by specialists in Years 5 and 6. There are very effective support strategies, in science in particular, in most subject areas to ensure that non-specialist teachers gain in confidence and ability in teaching less familiar subject material. The support staff are very well matched to the curriculum, including good special educational needs support staff, a well-qualified teacher for the deaf, seven peripatetic music teachers and a very good and efficient range of administrative and ancillary staff, who do much to assist in the effectiveness of the teaching staff. The quality of science technicians is very good, but their current workload is excessive.

Care, guidance and support

35. The procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **excellent**. The support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development are **very good**. The extent to which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school places a very good emphasis on safe working practices and safe conduct.
- Tutors and other staff provide very good network of support for all pupils.
- Pupils with special educational needs benefit from additional high quality and appropriate support provided by specialist staff.
- Pupils with physical needs are supported very well.
- Induction arrangements for pupils new to the school are very good.
- The involvement of pupils in the life and development of the school is excellent.

Commentary

36. The school is fully aware of its responsibilities to ensure the health and safety of pupils at all times and has appropriate procedures to deal with child protection issues in line with current legislation. First aid arrangements are well established and appropriate safety checks are conducted.
37. Induction arrangements enable pupils to settle quickly into school life. Individual needs are recognised, supported and monitored well. The school builds on information received from previous schools. Tutors and heads of year fulfil their pastoral roles well and pupils feel that any problems would be sorted out quickly. The short periods with tutors at the start of each morning and afternoon session are used effectively. Pupils' achievements are recognised and celebrated, for example in the display of newspaper cuttings and certificates on the "Achievement Wall" near the entrance hall, and in assemblies.
38. The recently developed facilities to provide for the needs of pupils with severe physical impairment are of very high quality and are used very effectively. The efforts the school went to in planning and providing these facilities is another strong indication of its commitment to inclusion.

39. Pupils interviewed during the inspection said that they are valued as members of the school community and that their views are regularly taken into account. Those not personally represented on the school council felt that its work is effective and that they can make their views known when they wish to. Year 6 pupils felt that staff are very interested in what they think about school, and in what they achieve outside school.
40. Pupils set individual targets, which are displayed in their tutor group bases and make comments about their progress on the annual reports that are sent to their parents. The school tracks pupils' progress well and analyses the progress and attainment of different pupil groups effectively.
41. No pupils are excluded from participation in the diverse opportunities offered through day and residential trips because of financial difficulties, and appropriate arrangements are made for the few pupils whose parents do not wish them, for whatever reason, to take advantage of these extra-curricular events.
42. The care provided by the school continues to be a strength of the school and further improvements have been made since the last inspection to involve pupils in decisions about school developments.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

43. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is **very good**. The quality of links with the local community is **very good**. The school's links with other schools and colleges are **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good exchange of information between parents and school.
- Parents are very involved in their children's learning and always made welcome by the school.
- Very close and effective relationships are maintained with the parents of pupils who have special educational needs.
- Excellent links with the Cheddar Valley "Family of Schools" contribute to pupils' welfare and a continuous curriculum.
- Facilities and resources are shared with the upper school and university.
- A range of companies and organisations have contributed to pupils' learning and broadened their experiences.

Commentary

44. Good care is taken in providing parents with information about the school which informs and involves them, so that they understand school routines and procedures and know what their children are learning and what extra opportunities are provided for each year group. Annual reports on individual pupils' progress are good, explaining how they are getting on and what they could do to improve further. Regular contact is maintained through a home-school diary. Parents contribute to school life with direct help in class and on trips, by attending meetings and performances and through an active parent-teacher association that organises social and fund-raising events, as well as practical help with daily transport. As a result parents of all backgrounds have confidence in the school.
45. Additional meetings for the parents of pupils with special educational needs and very helpful printed information greatly enhance co-operation and have a very positive effect on achievement.
46. Links with the immediate and wider community are strong. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in national events, such as Year 6's successful entry in a competition for a Museum

in the Classroom, which contributed to their knowledge of Aztec culture. In music, pupils participate in local festivals. Local people attend school events. Several subjects, especially art, design and technology and citizenship, benefit from significant input from commerce and industry, such as a visit to Pizza Express to stimulate ideas for work in cooking and presenting pizzas and involvement in a children's parliament with other schools.

47. The quality of links with local schools at many levels is exceptional and creates a continuum of education from the first schools, through the middle school, to university entrance or joining the world of work. Joint planning of the curriculum, the sharing of resources and the exchange of data, along with well-established pastoral induction procedures, promote learning for all pupils.
48. Parental and community links were found to be a strength of the school at the last inspection. Staff are not complacent about their achievements in this field and continue to work closely with the school's partners, and seek new ones, to the benefit of all pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

49. Leadership and management in the school are good. The headteacher's leadership is very effective, most other key staff lead well and the quality of governance is very good. Management arrangements are generally good, with much that is very impressive and a few weaker areas.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides very clear vision and sense of purpose and sets high very aspirations for pupils and staff.
- Strategic planning is very good and has enabled the school to provide distinctively and effectively for pupils.
- The headteacher's support of staff and pupils and his commitment to inclusion are excellent.
- Financial management is excellent.
- Other senior staff work very well with the headteacher as a team.
- Leadership and management by heads of year is very good.
- Subject leadership is, overall, good and much is very good.
- Leadership and management of science are excellent.
- Leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs (including those with hearing impairment) are very good.
- The governing body plays a very effective role in school life.
- Leadership and management of English and geography are unsatisfactory.
- While usually successful, the monitoring of staff performance by the senior management team does not always lead to early, decisive change and improvement.

Commentary

Financial information for the year April 2000 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,625,692	Balance from previous year	185,971
Total expenditure	1,622,108	Balance carried forward to the next	178,626
Expenditure per pupil	2585		

50. The headteacher's leadership is very successful because he has established principles and procedures that set the tone for all the school does. He has used his significant time in post to ensure that colleagues, pupils and parents have been able to create a shared vision for the school and to see that the desired ethos of care, respect, co-operation and striving for

improvement has been established. Its contribution to the positive attitudes and effective learning by pupils is evident on a daily basis and underpins their very good behaviour in lessons and around school, as well as their willingness to get involved in the wider life of the school. It also gives complete reassurance to staff that their management of pupils will proceed along consistent and agreed lines. The headteacher leads very well by example. He displays the concern for individual pupils that he requires of others, and exhibits determination in seeing plans through to completion, including demanding projects with long-term benefit, because they are right for the children. The reorganisation of special educational needs provision and the creation of facilities for pupils with physical disabilities illustrate the commitment to inclusion. The excellent collaboration between this school and its partners demonstrates his encouragement of teamwork within and beyond his school. Consequently, many members of senior and middle management have been able to develop their leadership and organisational potential: they have planned curricular continuity, joint activities, regular meetings and very detailed and helpful data transfer, all of which has helped pupils move smoothly from first to middle and then to high school, building on prior work far more effectively than is common.

51. Work involving pupils with special educational needs is very well organised. Pupils are carefully grouped in classes that are provided with as much in-class support as possible. All the pupils in these classes benefit from the presence of well-briefed and skilful teaching assistants. The recent review of the deployment of assistants is now resulting in very effective partnerships between teachers and support staff. The school is quick to use innovative technological approaches to meeting problems; this has led, for example, to rapid improvements in the learning of pupils with dyslexia.
52. The willingness to delegate significantly has allowed deputy heads, year heads and heads of department to operate independently within agreed guidelines. The work of one deputy head in devising a citizenship programme and the other in developing new assessment arrangements has greatly expanded their own expertise, promoted their training skills and greatly improved the confidence of colleagues. The headteacher has not needed to hold the initiative in these areas, but has retained adequate oversight. Most heads of departments have learnt to use the assessment data well but there is scope for better implementation in several subjects including geography and English.
53. Induction arrangements for staff are very good. They are supported between appointment and starting by a visit to the school, formal and informal mentoring and by a programme of regular meetings with key staff. There is a strong sense of teamwork, with much sharing of expertise within departments and, for example in information and communications technology, across specialist areas. Senior managers place a strong emphasis on the well-being of their staff. Staff have a generous allocation of professional development opportunities, linked to their own targets for further training and to the school improvement plan. There is also a strong emphasis in many areas on team teaching to help teachers hone their classroom skills. Opportunities for continued professional development are very good. The school also makes a good contribution to the training of new teachers by taking up to five student teachers each year from one of three linked universities. Enhanced by the allure of Beacon status, but also through careful selection, the school manages its recruitment of staff very well and has no difficulties retaining staff. Staff are very well deployed, with a good balance of experienced and younger staff and a high proportion of specialist teachers. Assistants and ancillary staff contribute integrally to the smooth functioning of the school, helping to relieve teachers of work overload, a real concern with such a committed and professional team.
54. The governing body is more fully involved in the work of the school than is common and key governors are extremely well informed about its strengths and weaknesses. The quality of their support is very good and all statutory duties are fulfilled. This gives the staff, especially senior staff, strong reassurances on a day to day basis that their efforts are appreciated and approved of; it also leads to many situations in which governors can directly help the school, for example, in dealings with the local education authority, contractors or parents. The school's

consultative approach means that many governors are regularly on site and can acquire their own first hand impressions of school life; they also receive excellent reports on a regular basis. Their involvement in development planning allows the school to draw on their invaluable experience and strong commitment. As a result, the giving of strategic advice and role of “critical friend” are both carried out very effectively.

55. Strong leadership and clear monitoring and good planning procedures have enabled the school to make very good improvements on many issues since the previous inspection. These have been especially strong in special educational needs, assessment, pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the range of teaching skills used by most teachers. Senior managers have been aware of recent shortcomings in the achievement of pupils in English and have used several strategies, including external advice to try and restore the previous high standards. The current unsatisfactory leadership and management of this department and of geography reflect the fact that more rigorous evaluation and action is sometimes required to ensure no potential problems escape attention or early corrective action. However, there are signs that some strategies in English are beginning to bear fruit, especially for the older pupils, and the school has a very clear understanding of what is required to restore matters and is fully committed to urgent action.
56. The headteacher, finance officer and governors have established excellent financial management arrangements. This benefits the school considerably, especially through the security it brings. All educational priorities are very efficiently costed and the school is very good at directing income to support key development and seeking additions funds when necessary. Best value principles are evident here in the way a larger than average carry forward sum is retained, partly to ensure that the best candidate is appointed for every post even when they may be medium or high cost on the salary scale. The school is also very adept at ensuring best value from catering and cleaning services and in comparing its performance against all relevant benchmarks.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Years 6 and 8. They are best in reading and speaking and listening.
 - Pupils behave well and their good attitudes to work help them to improve.
 - Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and receive good support.
 - Achievement is unsatisfactory. Though many pupils achieve well, too many underachieve.
 - Standards of writing, especially those of boys, are substantially below those of speaking and listening and reading.
 - Assessment is not used effectively to help raise standards.
 - Leadership and management in the department are unsatisfactory.
57. Results of the national tests in Year 6 are above average. In 2002, they were above average compared to pupils' prior attainment, but below average compared to pupils from schools with a similar intake. Pupils did less well than in previous years, and this downward trend continued in 2003. They performed better in science. The school has recognised this and has begun to take steps to raise standards to their former heights. They have appointed a dynamic co-ordinator for Years 5 and 6, and have begun to extend and re-develop their schemes of work, focusing more on improving writing and providing more challenging work.
58. Standards of Year 6 work seen during the inspection are above average. Though many pupils make good progress from entry, too many do not achieve as well as they should, therefore achievement is unsatisfactory. Standards are higher in reading and speaking and listening than they are in writing, and girls perform better than boys. Both boys and girls are well-read and enjoy reading, both in class and independently. They can discuss Roald Dahl's books, for example, with delight. They have a wide vocabulary and answer questions thoughtfully and in detail. Though some write detailed, lengthy pieces, many write only simple sentences and their spelling and punctuation are flawed. Too much written work of lower attainers relies on filling in worksheets, with too little opportunity to develop writing at length.
59. Standards of Year 8 work seen during the inspection are above average. Many pupils achieve well and go on to perform very well in their national tests in Year 9, but too many do not achieve as well as they should, given their prior attainment, so achievement is unsatisfactory overall. Writing is the weakest area. Pupils are articulate, with an extensive, apt vocabulary, and readily proffer extended ideas, working well in co-operation with each other. They read fluently, with understanding of character, and are beginning to understand how an author creates effects. Though many pupils produce well-structured effective pieces of writing, too many still struggle with weaknesses such as spelling, and use no effective strategies to improve. Pupils with special educational needs are given sensitive and well-focused help and make good progress. They often have work directed to their specific needs, but also take a full part in the lessons.
60. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Some teaching is good, occasionally very good, especially in Year 5, but much is satisfactory and some unsatisfactory. Teachers' good classroom management and good relationships with pupils leads to ordered classrooms where pupils can learn effectively. Discrete drama is a beneficial extension to the curriculum in Years 7 and 8. Where teaching is inspiring and interesting, pupils show excellent attitudes and learn quickly, showing creativity and the ability to concentrate on independent study or co-

operate well in their groups. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, pupils produced original and lively metaphors about themselves because the teacher had high expectations that they could extend their ideas beyond simple comparisons, and made the lesson varied and absorbing. Where lessons move at too slow a pace, or are pitched at too easy a level, pupils become restless, and learn little. Work is not always matched to pupils' attainment level. For example, in a lesson on how to punctuate direct speech, pupils learnt little because they all did the same work, regardless of their own ability in this area. Systems of assessment are unsatisfactory. Assessment is not used sufficiently to encourage pupils to improve and pupils do not know their strengths and weaknesses. Assessment systems used across Years 5 to 8 are complex, confusing and inconsistent.

61. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Problems are beginning to be addressed, but the department lacks cohesion and consistency of approach. There is insufficient monitoring, either of teaching or the curriculum, to pinpoint precisely areas of weakness so that they can be rectified. However, the school has identified writing as a broad area of concern and made a new appointment to speed up improvements in Years 5 and 6.
62. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards and the quality of teaching have declined and assessment is still an area of weakness. Some of the National Literacy strategies, such as the four-part lesson, have been successfully introduced, but there is work to be done on developing the schemes of work.

Language and Literacy across the Curriculum

63. Standards of literacy are above average on entry to the school and remain so through to Year 8. Pupils read a wide range of material with understanding and enjoyment. In music, for example, Year 8 pupils read aloud parodies of familiar rhymes in order to aid understanding of what constitutes parody in music. Pupils speak confidently, both in front of the whole class and in smaller groups, using an extensive vocabulary and employing specialist words accurately. They are given lots of opportunities to discuss ideas together. Most subject areas introduce new vocabulary carefully and effectively. Pupils in a Year 8 design and technology lesson developed good awareness of the difference between chilled and frozen food because of the emphasis on individual words. However, not all teachers point out spelling patterns or reinforce correct spelling in written work. Writing is the least successful aspect of pupils' work, though standards are, nevertheless, above average. Many opportunities are missed to develop the range and accuracy of written work, with too much concentration on worksheets and short responses.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The principal language inspected was French, but provision in German was also sampled.

Provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

French

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan lessons well and use effective methods that enable pupils to take an active role in their lessons.
- Good collaboration between the teachers in the department ensures that the teaching methods used in all classes are consistent.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make good progress in the limited time allocated to the subject.
- The achievement of pupils at the end of Year 8 is not as good as it should be.
- Formal procedures to follow up classroom observations and set targets for improvement in the subject's performance are inadequate.

- Pupils are not aware of specific steps they need to take in order to improve their standards.
64. During Years 5 and 6, pupils make good progress in French. During their thirty minutes per week they succeed well in acquiring a good range of basic vocabulary and expressions, in addition to learning something of the everyday life and culture of France.
65. At the end of Year 8, standards in French and German are good, as they were at the time of the previous inspection. Reflecting the national picture, girls perform better than boys. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented, make satisfactory progress. Pupils have a good knowledge of vocabulary and a good understanding of both the spoken and written language. They display good speaking skills when practising language structures with one another or with their teacher. When they are required to speak spontaneously outside situations controlled by the teacher, they lack confidence. Although they make good progress in most of their individual lessons in terms of acquiring new vocabulary or learning new structures, their learning over the longer term is less secure.
66. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned. They enable pupils to take part in a variety of appropriate activities that develop their language skills. Pupils respond well to the tasks and show interest. A brisk pace ensures that pupils' interest is sustained. Extensive use of the foreign language by the teacher sets an appropriate challenge to the pupils. However, there is not enough insistence on making pupils use the foreign language in routine classroom exchanges. Pupils' work is regularly marked and constructive comments are recorded in their books. Specific learning targets relating to National Curriculum levels are not set. Consequently, pupils are not aware of what they need to do in order to improve their performance, although they do have a general awareness of their individual strengths and weaknesses. The lack of a second specialist classroom militates against effective delivery of the subject.
67. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The head of department and her colleague collaborate well in their planning of the curriculum for both foreign languages. Schemes of work are thorough. However, the monitoring of the work of the department is insufficiently rigorous. Formal procedures for setting targets designed to raise standards further are inadequate.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national average.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- Positive relationships encourage the pupils' good attitudes to their work.
- Good provision of ICT is often used well to enhance lessons and learning.
- Results in National Curriculum tests in 2002 were below those for similar schools.
- Assessment is not yet used sufficiently well either to identify areas for improvement in the mathematics curriculum or to inform the pupils how they might improve.

Commentary

68. Pupils' results in 2002 in the National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 6 were in line both with the national average and below those for similar schools. These results showed a marked decline from those in 2001 and previous years. The 2003 test scores are higher than those for 2002, reflecting steps taken by the mathematics co-ordinator and the teachers to improve. Some outstanding staffing problems have also now been resolved and standards are again rising.

69. Pupils' work seen in lessons was above average, reflecting satisfactory achievement in mathematics throughout their time at Hugh Sexey. Arithmetic, both mental and written, is a relative strength. By the age of 11, all can recognise when two simple fractions are equivalent and higher attainers can add and subtract using negative numbers. Almost all pupils are at National Curriculum Level 4 or above by the end of Year 8. The highest attainers can solve linear algebraic equations and draw and interpret pie charts. All areas of the National Curriculum for mathematics are covered and the pupils display no notable weaknesses in any of them.
70. Progress over time is satisfactory. Pupils learn to produce neater, more accurate drawing in geometry and improve at handling data. Higher-attaining pupils argue more effectively in mathematical terms, using letters substituted for numbers and variables to generalise statements. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Help from well-qualified learning support assistants is a strong feature contributing to this progress, both for those who have learning difficulties and for those with hearing impairment.
71. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Just under half of the lessons seen were good or better with one that was excellent; in one, teaching was poor. All teachers, including those for whom mathematics is not their first discipline, have sound or better knowledge of the subject and a good understanding of how to apply the National Numeracy Strategy in their lessons. Books are all marked up to date, many with encouraging remarks and with the pupils rewarded for good work with stickers and smiley faces. Relationships in the classroom are positive. All teachers clearly like and respect their pupils, displaying the school's emphasis on working as a friendly and happy family. As a result, pupils are confident and happy in their work. They apply themselves well in homework and in class and there is very little unsatisfactory behaviour. In the best lessons, the quality of preparation is excellent, as was the case with a Year 8 lesson on place value. Here, the teacher aroused the pupils' interest by giving them real money (one million and five million Turkish dollar notes) to hold. She used these and a number of other techniques to build on what they had learned in homework and thus improve their understanding of large numbers with a clear but rigorous explanation of using zero as a placeholder. By contrast, weaker lessons were less well prepared so that the pupils' interest was not as intense and learning much less effective.
72. Resources are good. The two main teaching rooms are equipped with computer interactive whiteboards, which the teaching staff are beginning to use more effectively. There are enough textbooks for work in class, though as yet insufficient for every pupil to have their own copy. There is a small but well-used computer laboratory for small group work, in addition to the two school workshops, which are booked for use by whole classes at a time. Classrooms are of a good size, light and enhanced by good displays of pupils' work on the walls. There are not enough, however, to allow each teacher to remain in their own room, contributing to some of the difficulties with lesson preparation.
73. The main reason why the pupils' learning and achievement is no better than satisfactory is that the department is making insufficient use of some good pupil data provided by tests and examinations. Setting of specific, measurable targets for improvement for either pupils as individuals or in groups is not done well enough. Staff targets are lacking in rigour and not used to ensure "added value" to pupils' progress. As a result, departmental leadership and management are graded only as satisfactory, in spite of good leadership. The mathematics co-ordinator is an experienced teacher who enjoys the respect of both pupils and colleagues. He works hard and has a desire to raise standards and gives high-quality support and advice, especially in the use of ICT in the classroom.
74. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, despite the drop in results referred to above. Overall results have risen in line with those seen nationally and the support for teachers in the form of schemes of work and teaching and computer resources are much improved.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. Pupils demonstrate mathematical and numerical skills that are above the national norm across the range of subjects they study and none is denied access to understanding through lack of number skill. In science, in particular, very good use of measurement and graph work contributes to very high standards.
76. However, the work of other teaching departments does less to promote the pupils' skills and understanding in mathematics than it might. There are examples where teachers independently produce good work. In physical education, for example, pupils were helped to improve their understanding of averages in the context of scoring at basketball. In design and technology, pupils consider risk factors and quantify them in a consideration of how to make their work safer. Overall, however, the fact that the school policy and documentation for mathematics across the curriculum has not yet been published means that there are subjects, such as art, where opportunities for teaching number have not been identified, and less emphasis is placed on enhancing number skills than should be the case.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

- Very good, imaginative teaching is resulting in lessons that pupils enjoy and in which their learning is very good.
- Excellent leadership and management results in all aspects of work being efficiently and effectively organised, very high staff morale and excellent team work.
- Pupils' experience of science is greatly enhanced by the innovative use of ICT.
- The amount of technical support is insufficient.
- The quantities of some resources are insufficient.

Commentary

77. Results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 are consistently well above the national averages and well above the standards achieved by pupils who were at a similar level at the end of Year 4. Results are above those of pupils who attend similar schools. Observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work fully confirm the maintenance of these high standards. By the end of Year 8, pupils are already working at levels that are above those expected at the end of Year 9. In 2003, almost 70 per cent of pupils from this school gained the higher levels in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in the upper school. Experimental work is a great strength; some of the investigations produced by Year 8 pupils would achieve a grade for course work in GCSE.
78. Pupils enter the school with standards that are above the national average. The rise in standards and the maintenance of high levels throughout their time at this school represents very good achievement. Boys, girls, higher attainers, lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs all significantly improve the quality of their work. At all times, pupils are succeeding in lessons that test their capabilities to the full.
79. Very good learning is the natural outcome of exciting, imaginative teaching in which the degree of difficulty is well judged. The schemes of work generate lesson plans that always include relevant and interesting practical work. The resources, provided by the excellent technicians, are of high quality and very well organised. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers, evident in every lesson observed, together with the excellent planning produces consistently very good learning. A Year 5 lesson on senses typified the quality of teaching. Each group of pupils was given five, colour-coded little bottles containing different smells, followed by each child being given small, brightly coloured sweets. The colours were intentionally designed to confuse ("lemon" flavour was bright blue). The last section used overhead projection of optical illusions. Throughout, the excitement and joy of the pupils was

palpable. By the end, all pupils (including some with special educational needs, who were supported by a teaching assistant) had accurately recorded their observations on an appropriate work sheet. All had learned a great deal about human senses in a way that they will not easily forget!

Example of outstanding practice

AN ILLUSTRATION OF EXCELLENT TEACHING

(Last few minutes of a year 6 science lesson. Pupils have been testing a variety of materials to see if they will or will not conduct electricity. Mrs "Smith" is a support assistant.)

Teacher:

"Stop for a minute, we've got a real problem. Mrs Smith is starting to wonder if her husband really loves her!"

Puzzled pupils, all startled into riveted attention.

"What's the matter etc.?"

"Well he's given her a diamond ring and now she's worrying that it might not be real."

Mrs Smith, clutching diamond ring, mimes devastation.

"I just don't know what to do, he says it cost a fortune but it might just be cheap glass...."

Teacher:

"Now isn't diamond a form of carbon?"

Explosion from entire class:

"We can test it, we can test it, carbon is a conductor!"

Whole class literally jumping up and down with excitement. Teacher quickly picks a suitable group who come forward clutching batteries, circuit, bulb etc. Whole class waits with bated breath while pupils get the electrodes in contact with Mrs Smith's diamond. A bright light flashes from the bulb.

Pupils clap and cheer, Mrs Smith looks overwhelmed with relief. Teacher (and inspector) smile. Pupils will undoubtedly tell Mum and Dad what they did in science today.

80. Each pupil's progress is closely monitored and targets for improvement are very well used. Weaker areas are discussed with individuals and strategies to effect improvement mutually agreed.
81. Excellent leadership and management are evident in many ways. The centrally organised planning and the technical support for all teachers underpin the high quality of all lessons. Support and professional development provided for non-specialist and new colleagues are exemplary. The department is constantly seeking new ways of improving the quality of lessons and the speed and effectiveness with which the National Strategy for science education has been introduced is most impressive. The enthusiasm and confidence that teachers, who are not science specialists, bring to their work is perhaps the most outstanding feature of the department.
82. The innovative use of ICT to make lessons more effective and stimulating is of an unusually high standard. Interactive white boards and lap top computers, linked to the Internet or data-logging equipment, are constantly in use to enrich the opportunities for learning. Using electronic sensors to take temperatures and watching a graph of the results come up on a computer screen, or researching through the Internet as part of an ordinary lesson are regular activities for all pupils in this school. This standard of provision exceeds that of most secondary schools.
83. The numbers of classes timetabled simultaneously for science, combined with the extensive and high quality provision for experimental work is placing undue strain on the technician time available and the stock of some resources. Standards are being maintained, but only because of the dedication of the technicians. These factors will limit further development.
84. Since the last inspection, there has been very good improvement in the quality of provision. Standards are higher, teaching is better and the curriculum is much improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in ICT are well above national expectations.
- Pupils have very good attitudes and behaviour in ICT lessons.
- Resources for learning in ICT are very good.
- There is very good challenge in the schemes of work.
- Technical assistance in ICT is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching is good.
- Assessment procedures are good.
- Some teachers do not allow their pupils to experiment enough and so inhibit progress.

Commentary

85. In the year after pupils leave the school, they are formally assessed by their high school ICT teachers. In the past few years, Hugh Sexey pupils have consistently been assessed as performing well above average in ICT. This can in large part be ascribed to the strength of their ICT education at Hugh Sexey. The school's own assessment procedures are good. They clearly show that pupils in Year 6 and in Year 8 are well above average in all areas of National Curriculum ICT, which was verified during the inspection by an analysis of a sample of work from all years. These high standards are an improvement on the situation reported in the last inspection, when some areas were deficient. The achievement of pupils over the four years at the school is very good as they arrive in Year 5 with ICT levels that are above average and leave with well above average levels. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls or those pupils with special educational needs.
86. Teaching is good overall. There is very good teaching by a number of teachers. When it is very good, there is clear structure to lessons. Introductions are short and punchy, establishing what has already been learned, giving pupils a clear picture of what they are going to do and exciting imaginations. Activities are challenging and varied and lessons end with clear understanding of how well they have done and what progress has been made. This leaves them wanting more. Some teachers are less confident than others and slow down the pace of pupils' progress by moving through demonstrations one step at a time, not allowing the young minds to learn through experimentation. All teachers manage their pupils very well. The inspection took place during the first weeks of term and teachers were still getting to know their groups. Nevertheless relationships are generally very good and no learning time is wasted by teachers having to deal with incidents of misbehaviour or inattention.
87. The leadership of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator has a very clear view of how to progress the subject in the school and works tirelessly to achieve it. She supports other teachers very well and has developed strong and demanding schemes of work. Assessment procedures are well developed and provide a clear view to pupils telling them in accessible language what they are capable of and what they must do to improve.
88. There has been very good improvement overall since the last inspection. Teachers are now better equipped to teach ICT because of a very good training programme delivered by the ICT co-ordinator, though more still has to be done to allow teachers who are less confident in their own ICT skills to concentrate on developing more relaxed styles of teaching and learning. The resources that support teaching are greatly improved and are now very good. Technical support is very good and is often available to offer valuable assistance to teachers in the

computer rooms. Display systems and interactive whiteboards are used very well to stimulate and communicate.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

89. The promotion of ICT through all the other subjects of the curriculum is very good. ICT resources have been made accessible to all subject areas and the confidence amongst non-specialists is now high because of very supportive and helpful training. ICT is particularly well used in science, design and technology, art and music and well used by most other subjects. There is scope for greater use in geography and English.

HUMANITIES

Geography

The overall provision for geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The results of pupils are well above national average.
 - There are good relationships between staff and pupils.
 - Pupils are well behaved and sensible and their concentration in lessons is good.
 - The assessment system is not used to set pupils targets, track their progress and identify underachievement.
 - There are insufficient planned opportunities for the development of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills.
 - The overall management of geography does not ensure clear curricular planning or the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning.
90. The results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 6 are well above the national average. At the end of Year 9, pupils from this school attain well above the national average in the high school. The standards of work seen during the inspection were above average. The difference is partly a result of the date of the inspection so early in the year and partly the fact that the pupils are very well motivated and respond well to testing. In Year 5, pupils carried out a useful survey of settlement in Wedmore. Their analysis made good use of graphs and sketches. Year 6 pupils are aware of natural processes and use appropriate vocabulary to explain the water cycle. By the end of Year 8, most pupils have a good understanding of locations. They make clear comparisons between their local area and other locations. Most can describe physical processes but their understanding of some processes is not strong.
91. The achievement of pupils is satisfactory. In all lessons, they gain new knowledge and develop their skills. A Year 6 lesson on water made good use of the local Ordnance Survey map and most pupils were able to recognise features and locate them accurately using 4-figure grid references. Achievement in this lesson was good. The pupils' exercise books show that they make steady progress through the material, but in lessons many, and certainly the higher attainers, could make more progress.
92. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In Years 5 and 6, teaching and learning are often good. In these years, teachers are more aware of the need to develop the pupils' literacy skills. The subject knowledge of teachers is good, which helps them to interest the pupils. Teachers develop good relationships and encourage pupils with appropriate use of praise. Lesson planning is satisfactory, but in Years 7 and 8 relies too much on schemes produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), without adapting them to suit the needs of these pupils. Classroom activities do not include sufficient attention to the planned development of literacy, numeracy and ICT. In some lessons, pupils rely too much on the teacher and are not being challenged enough. This tendency is especially true of the higher-

attaining pupils. The teaching methods include some variety, with practical work in Year 5, but overall, there are not enough opportunities for fieldwork. The individual studies in Year 8 are commendable in terms of the efforts of pupils, but are not sufficiently focused on the geographical aspects of the settlements, nor do they provide opportunities for the development of geographical skills. There is insufficient attempt to modify work to meet the needs of individual pupils, although where there is in-class support, it is effective. Marking is conscientious, but does not provide pupils with enough information on how they might improve. The comments of teachers refer more to presentation than to the standard of attainment. Assessment is not used to identify underachievement or to help pupils understand their strengths and weaknesses.

93. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient co-ordination across all years. The quality of teaching and learning is inadequately monitored. The assessment system is poorly developed and still does not make effective use of National Curriculum levels. There is no target setting or tracking of pupils and the records that are passed on from year to year are unsatisfactory in that they do not make clear the strengths and weaknesses of the pupils.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards across all years are well above national expectations and pupils make good progress.
 - The teaching of history is good, with some very good features.
 - History is well planned and well managed by the new head of department.
 - Teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable.
 - Very positive relationships exist that encourage and support learning.
 - Pupils' free writing skills are underdeveloped.
 - Assessment for Year 6 pupils is not formalised around history skills.
 - Gifted and talented pupils are not sufficiently challenged or extended.
94. Standards of attainment of pupils on entry to the school are above average. However, observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work confirm that by the end of Year 6, attainment in class work is well above national expectations. All pupils are able to use a wide range of materials, including thematic worksheets, pictorial evidence, timelines, card-packs and a range of primary and secondary evidence. The average-attaining pupils develop an understanding of chronology, whilst higher-attaining pupils acquire a wide range of subject skills, including prioritising of historical issues and interpretation of evidence. For example, in their studies of life in Victorian times, Year 6 pupils examine and evaluate artefacts from the period, such as irons and parasols, and correctly ascribe their origins to the homes of rich or poor people. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 also attain well above national expectations. They build upon the skills of their first two years in school and augment them with higher-order skills of analysis of historical data. For example, Year 8 pupils, studying poverty in Tudor times, effectively analyse case histories in order to distinguish between the deserving poor and the various categories of undeserving poor. These high standards and good achievement are underlined by the results the pupils attain in the year after leaving school, which continue to be well above national averages.
95. Pupils across all ability levels make good progress in all years in the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in line with other pupils, because their teachers know them well, use good materials, adapted to the varied needs of pupils, and provide effective guidance in lessons. There is particularly good use of in-class learning support.

96. Learning is good. Pupils behave very well, with high concentration and focus. Very good relationships underpin learning and pupils listen intently to each other and work well together in all years. In several lessons, pupils worked very effectively in mixed pairs, a method of organisation thoughtfully employed by the department, mindful of supporting the attainment of both girls and boys.
97. Teaching is good overall, and it is very good in some lessons. A similarly strong profile of teaching applies to all years. Teachers know their subject very well. They have an obvious love for it and this commitment is strongly communicated to pupils, providing a firm basis for learning. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a range of methods that support learning well. There is appropriate emphasis on some aspects of literacy, such as the use of correct technical language. However, pupils' own independent learning and writing are still not developed sufficiently. Moreover, their overall attainment is hampered by the need to share textbooks, the lack of in-class IT facilities, such as an interactive white board to encourage independent learning skills, and by the accommodation, which does not allow for the development of more creative, less traditional use of space. This lack impedes the desire of the head of department to promote less didactic teaching and more independent learning.
98. The subject is well led and managed. The recently appointed head of department has already produced documents that are informed and informative and which underpin much of the good work of the department, particularly, but not exclusively, in the areas of new schemes of work and in formal assessment of work in Years 7 and 8. She is aware of the lack of formalised assessment at the end of Year 6 and of the lack of extended and challenging work for the gifted and talented pupils. She has a clear vision for the future of the subject, but does not have the time to monitor and evaluate classroom teaching of the subject. She is a good role model of commitment to continually improving standards.
99. There has been good improvement in several areas since the previous inspection report, particularly in the deployment of staff with subject expertise across all years.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards across all years are above both national expectations and the expectations of the local agreed syllabus.
 - The teaching of religious education is good.
 - The newly appointed head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject.
 - There is strong support for the subject from the senior management team.
 - Pupils' free writing skills are underdeveloped.
 - Assessment for all pupils lacks rigour.
 - Gifted and talented pupils are not sufficiently challenged or extended.
 - Monitoring and evaluation of religious education are not yet firmly embedded.
100. Standards of attainment of pupils on entry to the school are above average. Observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work confirm that by the end of Year 6, attainment in class work is also above national expectations and those of the local agreed syllabus. All pupils can describe the key beliefs of the religions studied and they show understanding of what belonging to a religion and a community involves. The higher-attaining pupils explain how selected features of religious life and practice make a difference to the lives of individuals. For example, in their studies of initiation ceremonies, pupils describe the feelings of Jewish boys and girls at the time of Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 also attain above the expectations of the local agreed syllabus. They successfully use the knowledge of religion to respond to religious perspectives on a range of contemporary moral issues by relating them to their own lives. For example, in their studies of the environment, Year 8 pupils used, with good effect,

biblical exhortations concerning the stewardship of the world as a basis for discussion about the moral imperatives concerning pollution of the earth.

101. Pupils across all ability levels make satisfactory progress in all years in the school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because their teachers know them well, use good materials suitable for the whole range of pupils, and provide effective guidance in lessons. There is particularly good use of in-class learning support, especially for pupils with hearing disabilities. However, there is a lack of appropriate foundation level textbooks, which inhibits these pupils' advancement. Plans to offer appropriately challenging work to gifted and talented pupils are in the very early stages of development
102. Learning is good and pupils learn successfully. They behave very well, with high concentration and focus. Pupils work well both collaboratively and individually. There are very good relationships and pupils collaborate well.
103. Teaching is good overall. Teaching benefits from the recent appointment, as head of department, of a religious education specialist whose work is already beginning to have a positive impact. Non-specialist teachers display a strong commitment that is effectively communicated to pupils, providing a firm basis for learning. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a range of methods that support learning well. There is appropriate emphasis on some aspects of literacy, such as the use of correct technical language. However, pupils' own independent learning and writing are still not developed sufficiently. Moreover, their overall attainment is hampered by the lack of in-class ICT facilities, such as an interactive white board, which would encourage independent learning skills, and by the lack of detailed assessment to enable pupils to focus more accurately on their individual strengths and weaknesses.
104. The subject is led and managed satisfactorily. The very recently appointed head of department has only been in the school for two weeks. She has inherited much good documentation from the previous head of department, who was acting in a caretaker role. However, she has already a very clear appraisal of the strengths and areas for development and has a clear vision for the development of the subject, to include the important areas of assessment and monitoring and evaluation. She is strongly supported by the senior management of the school. A good example of their support is the establishment of very good accommodation as the teaching base room for the subject.
105. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the time of the previous report. Many of the good features outlined in that report currently obtain. However, some key areas, such as assessment and the encouragement of independent writing, are not yet sufficiently improved. The recent appointment has now given the department the capacity to move forward on these challenges.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art

Provision in art is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and a well-organised course lead to above-average standards for pupils at the end of Year 8.
- Good management of pupils, resources and time enables standards to be maintained despite limitations of accommodation and ICT resources.
- Sketchbooks are used effectively as a record of pupils' work, but assessment procedures are not strong enough to provide an overall picture of how well pupils are progressing.

Commentary

106. Standards of work for pupils at the end of Year 6 are above average. From the beginning of Year 5, pupils are taught to use sketchbooks to record their ideas and these form a valuable record of artistic techniques and styles as well as a visual record of their progress. Pupils rapidly become familiar with the basic vocabulary of art and develop a good understanding of how line, tone, colour, shape and texture can be applied. For example, higher-attaining pupils are able to create detailed collage work using a variety of materials and techniques. Because the key elements of art are taught together, pupils develop an understanding of the relationship between them and how they can be combined to best effect. For example, Year 6 pupils were able to use good observational drawing skills to produce self-portraits in preparation for making masks, but were also able to capture facial expression and represent emotion by combining line and colour. This was exemplified through reference to Picasso's "Woman Weeping". During class discussion, pupils were able to demonstrate a very good understanding of how masks played an important part in different world cultures. One pupil gave a very full description of how masks were used to represent gods in Indian drama. From the outset of Year 5, pupils are introduced to the work of a wide range of established artists and develop good independent learning skills as they gather information. In Years 7 and 8, pupils undertake more detailed analysis of established artists and artistic movements such as "pointillism" and "impressionism". Higher-attaining pupils write extended responses to these and adopt the styles skilfully. Lower-attaining pupils benefit from the opportunity to respond in a practical way by working in the style of, for example, Roy Lichtenstein. Some pupils do not always use computer-generated research information selectively. Despite the limitations of accommodation and resources for three-dimensional work, pupils develop good practical skills in working with clay and other pliant materials. Because pupils work through a clearly structured course there is clear evidence that they achieve well and make good progress. By the end of Year 8, pupils have good practical skills across a wide range of artistic materials and processes and a good understanding of aesthetic elements and the emotional impact of a work of art, which forms the basis for good results in later assessments.
107. Teaching is good. Lessons are well structured to provide a good balance of practical activity and supporting class discussion. In a well-taught introductory lesson on "pop art", for example, the teacher was able, through discussion, to explore the relationship of the artwork to the social conditions prevailing at the time. Good questioning techniques enabled pupils to develop a good understanding of how "pop art" could be interpreted in today's society. Individual contributions were valued and the extended discussion formed a worthwhile contribution to pupils' social and cultural development and to their ability to express their views verbally. The quantity and value of assessment records are limited by the logistical difficulties of having only one teacher to assess all artwork for every pupil. Pupils are given good verbal advice on the quality of their work and progress but written evidence is insufficient to inform fully curricular development. For example, the school has identified an issue of boys' underachievement, but strategies to remedy the situation are not yet fully formed. Good techniques for managing pupils have helped to maintain the quality of learning despite large group sizes in limited space. Good co-operation between teacher, support assistants and technician, for example, enabled pupils with special educational needs to be fully included in a Year 5 lesson. Pupils were able to respond to the written tasks successfully.
108. Leadership and management are good. The head of art has wisely made use of visiting artists and craftspeople to strengthen areas of the curriculum and to complement her own skills. Consequently, pupils have experienced different media, such as stained glass work and sculpture. Ceramic work has only been possible by using kiln facilities at the high school, but despite this, good quality examples can be seen on display around the school. High-quality displays of both two- and three-dimensional work help to create a stimulating working environment. There are no in-class resources for ICT, which limits pupils' ability to use computers as an additional tool in their work.

109. Since the last inspection, there have been satisfactory improvements in the range of three-dimensional work undertaken, a greater emphasis on critical appraisal skills, and opportunities for pupils to demonstrate research skills.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and leads to well above average standards at the end of Year 8.
- Very good leadership and management enable pupils to receive a worthwhile technological experience, despite limitations of accommodation and resources.
- Pupils' experiences are enriched further by very good involvement with business and the community.
- Very good relationships, a well-organised curriculum and good management of resources provide a rich learning experience for pupils.

Commentary

110. Standards at the end of Year 6, measured by teacher assessments, are above average and inspection evidence shows that pupils' achievements at this stage are good. Because pupils are introduced to design processes from the beginning of Year 5, they develop a good understanding of how to find and select information, how to record and develop ideas and to evaluate their own work critically. Pupils are given the opportunity to develop and extend project work on their own initiative and higher-attaining pupils are able to do so readily. Pupils identified as gifted and talented gain particular benefit, whilst lower-attaining pupils receive good guidance as they work through structured design tasks. Pupils of all abilities had, for example, produced colourful and imaginative ideas for 'slippers'. Their design models had utilised a range of materials and constructional techniques to very good effect and demonstrated good practical skills. Evidence from pupils' work during the inspection revealed differences in the quality of graphic and written work between boys and girls. The school has identified that some boys are not realising their potential and has taken steps to present work in a way that suits both boys and girls. The effectiveness of these measures is being monitored. By the end of Year 8, pupils are working at well above the national average and are able to move to the high school with a very good grounding in design and technology skills, knowledge and processes. Higher-attaining pupils are able to analyse a design task and construct a design specification to meet it. They plan and sequence their work well and can write extended evaluations of their work. Pupils make effective use of ICT at all appropriate stages of their work. For example, research from the Internet and CD-ROM is used selectively and data from questionnaires is processed and presented using bar charts or pie charts. Because pupils with special educational needs receive good support, both from teachers and support assistants, their progress is in line with that of other pupils.
111. Teaching is very good and this is a significant factor in pupils' high standards. Lessons are planned thoroughly within a carefully thought out scheme of work. Two very experienced teachers work co-operatively and each complements the skills of the other. Very good relationships with pupils result in good behaviour and a positive learning atmosphere. Pupils respond to high expectations with high levels of interest. Pupils' work is thoroughly assessed and good written and verbal comments to pupils enable them to understand what they must do to make progress. Very good techniques for managing activities in practical areas help to overcome the problems associated with large group sizes and limited accommodation, with the effect of promoting good independent learning skills and a strong sense of personal responsibility and regard for others. High-quality displays contribute to pupils' literacy skills and

provide a stimulating and informative workplace. Teachers receive good support from technicians, who are also used to support pupils during lessons.

112. Leadership and management are very good. Extensive use is made of business and community contacts to provide pupils with experience of the wider uses of technology in society as well as utilising skills and resources not readily available in school. For example, use of the upper school computer-aided design and manufacturing facilities compensates for lack of appropriate facilities on site. The long-standing association with Somerset Education and Business Partnership has resulted in many deserved awards. Pupils benefit from similar contacts with local companies and higher education establishments. As a consequence the curriculum is not only broad and balanced but also rich and varied.
113. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. There is better provision for ICT and pupils are using this effectively. Pupils are given more detailed written information on their work and progress and teachers and pupils are given better technician support.

Music

The provision for music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 6 are well above the national average and there is a culture of good achievement that is evident in all years.
 - Teaching is very good and the department is very well led and managed.
 - The curriculum is very well planned.
 - Extra-curricular music, singing in particular, is of a very high standard.
 - The lack of soundproofing of practice rooms disturbs other lessons.
 - Assessment procedures are not rigorous and insufficient attention is paid to small details in teaching.
 - Planning for citizenship in the music curriculum is not formalised.
114. The standards of work seen during the inspection for pupils at the end of Year 6 are well above average. At the end of Year 8, they are above average. Pupils enter the school with above average skills in music and therefore achieve well in Years 5 and 6, making good progress. Pupils' achievement and progress in Years 7 and 8 is also good, having maintained high standards, despite the inconsistent provision for the subject in the period preceding the appointment of the current head of department in 2002. There is no significant difference in achievement of boys and girls, although girls strongly outnumber boys in their participation in the larger extra-curricular activities of choir and orchestra. Those pupils who have special educational needs achieve well. Those designated talented achieve very well, able to exploit the many opportunities for instrumental tuition and extension activities within the curriculum and the extra-curricular programme.
115. By the end of Year 6, pupils sing very well, with strong, accurate voices and a well-developed understanding of singing in parts. All pupils are able to compose by structuring their own rhythmic material and perform with a good sense of timing. Higher-attaining pupils extend these skills to integrate dynamics, tempi and other imaginative elements to create work of marked individuality. All have some understanding of staff notation and chords, and higher attainers can apply these well in composition tasks. By the end of Year 8, pupils can compose using electronic keyboards to good effect and are able to discuss and evaluate, using correct technical vocabulary, how purpose affects the way music is composed, as in the Year 8 lesson in which Ives' "America" was appraised. Several Year 7 and 8 pupils are very capable performers, able, for example, to accompany the school choir.
116. Teaching is very good across all years. As a result, pupils learn very well. Teaching shows very good subject skills, which are used to motivate, support and challenge the pupils.

Lessons are very well structured and planned and, while largely practical, always include some element that helps pupils to be aware of their use of language. Worksheets are well prepared and a good choice of materials ensures lively presentation, to which the pupils respond very enthusiastically, engrossed in their work. Resources are used well and teaching methods are never less than good, although there are occasional oversights, such as beaming the overhead projector to a position where not every pupil can read from the board, which creates some minor inattentiveness. However, in collaborative work pupils' attitudes are excellent, with full participation in singing and purposeful cooperation in group work. Homework is set regularly, supporting the work covered in class.

117. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department prioritises her tasks very well. Having concentrated on revitalising the curriculum and the instrumental and extra-curricular provision in her first year, she is now beginning to develop systems of assessment to support learning and to increase liaison with partner schools. She has created an excellent ethos for music in the school and has secured the support of several of the visiting instrumental teachers to assist in running lunchtime activities. Well over 15 per cent of pupils learn instruments and a similarly large proportion performed in the impressive summer concert.
118. The new curriculum is very well thought through to develop progress and continuity, including a good balance of traditional and ethnic musical styles. Elements of citizenship teaching are not formalised in it, but pupils participate strongly in community music making and are given opportunities to be responsible, such as by rehearsing in steel band ensembles by themselves at breaks. The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the pupils, including Year 6 pupils singing regularly at Christmas in Wells Cathedral. While accommodation and resources for music are good, penetrating sound from the brass and drum lessons disturbs the teaching of several subjects in adjacent rooms. Too few keyboards have recording facilities, which limits the scope of composition work. Since the previous inspection the department made good improvement.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High standards have been maintained and improved upon.
 - The teaching is good and often very good, with high but realistic expectations.
 - The number of specialist teachers is very good.
119. Standards of work seen in Years 7 and 8 are at least in line with expectations for their age in a range of games and gymnastics. Many pupils exceed age-related expectations in rugby and gymnastics. In rugby, handling, running and evasive skills are well developed across the majority of boys and some show a good understanding of the principles of attacking play within the game. In gymnastics, the boys are ambitious with their movements, but the girls show more poise and control. All pupils show a good awareness of their own and others' safety. In hockey, girls develop good basic skills of passing and dribbling in isolation, but some are less assured in a competitive context. A similar picture is evident in basketball, where boys are more confident in possession, while many girls have not yet fully recognised the significant differences between netball and basketball. The ability to employ a critical evaluation of their own and others' performance is developing, with opportunities to compare performance against specific criteria, as in the case of basketball set-shooting.

120. Across Years 5 to 8, all pupils make good progress in acquiring and developing ball skills that enable them to participate in a range of games. Attainment by the end of Year 6 is well above average and is particularly impressive, reflecting the specialist teacher input within a broad games programme across Years 5 and 6.
121. It is rare that pupils with special educational needs can be distinguished from the rest and many make good progress in practical work as a result of a variety of tasks and challenges appropriate to their ability. Many pupils extend and refine their skills further in extra-curricular sessions. The provision for sporting activity is very good and the school has enjoyed national success in rugby and regional and local success with football hockey and netball.
122. The majority of teaching is good or very good. Across Years 7 and 8, teaching is very good where good subject knowledge is underpinned by accurate observational skills that lead to pertinent feedback to be given to individuals thus increasing challenge and motivation. Appropriate objectives, planned progressions at brisk pace and worthwhile intervention are often evident. In a basketball lesson, pupils were challenged to dribble while looking away from the ball, encouraged to shoot against the clock as a team, work co-operatively in improving one another's set-shot and compete in a game context with the emphasis on shooting. In the majority of lessons, there is a very good working atmosphere, with a good balance of small group tasks, partner work and whole-class activity. Early on in Year 5, appropriate emphasis is sensitively placed upon essential procedures, safety and the awareness of others as important contributions to successful physical education lessons.
123. The department makes good use of the excellent outdoor accommodation and non-participation in lessons is minimal. Very good leadership and management are major factors in the success of the department. There is a clear vision for the department that in turn has been translated into realistic aims and objectives. There is evidence of a reflective culture and a team ethos is well developed within the department. The curriculum is well thought out and all pupils have the opportunity to experience the six activity areas of the National Curriculum. The increase in the number of specialist teachers to deliver the curriculum has been a significant improvement since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The introduction of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject has been well planned.
 - It builds successfully on the curriculum for personal, social and health education in earlier years.
 - Developing skills of participation and responsible action is a strong feature.
 - Specific staff training has not taken place.
124. Activities that contribute to Citizenship in other curriculum areas are not always fully recognised and utilised.
125. In Years 7 and 8, pupils' attainment is good in relation to the development of participation and responsible action. Pupils have a good knowledge and understanding of some aspects of society, particularly the importance and value of rules and the need to safeguard human rights. The work has built on the sound knowledge base developed through the personal, social and health education programme in Years 5 and 6. Pupils can appreciate how an issue such as bullying can develop from an individual concern to a potential conflict of human rights. The quality of discussion and debate is often good and ideas are well expressed.

Performance in examinations is less secure and may indicate a lack of depth in subject knowledge and understanding about key issues. The range of tasks undertaken has provided opportunities for pupils to think, write and discuss becoming informed citizens.

126. There is a high expectation that pupils will get involved in school and community activities. Many pupils take advantage of frequent opportunities to apply skills of enquiry and communication. Some justify and express their opinions in the wider life of the school, such as the School Council. Pupils represent their year group's views, following sessions with respective tutor groups prior to main council meetings. Some pupils research and contribute to assemblies, while others, particularly in Year 8, take on responsibilities in many aspects of school life. Some higher-attaining pupils have made valuable contributions to the pupil-produced school newspaper.
127. The majority of teaching is good and there is a dedicated team for the subject. In good lessons, expectations and objectives are clearly outlined and shared with pupils and challenging ideas stimulate group discussions. Full participation is actively encouraged and key concepts are explained clearly. Opportunities to reflect on actions are a regular feature. In a lesson that encouraged pupils to recognise the conflict of rights, good examples were used from recognisable situations, such as smoking in a restaurant or keeping a noisy dog. Pupils were encouraged to appreciate the conflict of interests and try to seek a compromise. Learning was then extended through relevant follow-up work for homework.
128. The assessment and recording of pupils' achievements is developing well. A range of assessment strategies now includes presentations and written assignments as well as contribution to discussions, and a portfolio of work is compiled. However, the potential for other curricular areas to contribute directly and reinforce issues is not always recognised or grasped.
129. A senior manager has led the development of citizenship well and planning is done jointly with the high school. The curriculum is well structured and tailored to meet the needs of the school. There not has been any staff training as yet, but the high quality of the programme serves the school well and is becoming a reference point for other schools.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	1
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	3

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