

INSPECTION REPORT

MINEHEAD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Minehead

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123876

Headteacher: Mr Paul Rushforth

Lead inspector: Mr Martin Pavey

Dates of inspection: 19 - 21 January 2004

Inspection number: 258701

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	9 - 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	621
School address:	Ponsford Road Minehead Somerset
Postcode:	TA24 5RH
Telephone number:	01643 704191
Fax number:	01643 705693
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Simon Stokes
Date of previous inspection:	March 2002

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Minehead Middle School is a school for boys and girls in Years 5-8. About three quarters of the pupils come from the small town of Minehead and the others travel by bus from a wide, rural area. There are 621 pupils on the roll, rather more boys than girls, and the school is far larger than the average middle school. The great majority of pupils, 599, are of White background, and there are a further 20 of mixed White with another background. There are only two children from other ethnic backgrounds. There are 63 pupils on the roll with special educational needs (SEN). Of these pupils, 20 have statements, including statements for four autistic pupils and one for a pupil with hearing difficulties. The school has provision for nine SEN pupils who have behavioural, moderate, or profound and multiple learning difficulties and would otherwise have attended a special school. One pupil is at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Four pupils are looked after by the local authority. Overall, ability on entry is in line with the nationally expected level. Generally, the socio-economic background of pupils' families is average, but a significant minority of pupils comes from families suffering a higher than average level of deprivation.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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16950	Dr Caroline Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
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28097	Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics
20497	Dr Vernon Williams	Team inspector	Geography
10340	John Lockett	Team inspector	Design and technology
12121	Jack Mallinson	Team inspector	English Drama English as an additional language
1413	Sa'ad Khaldi	Team inspector	Science
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	History
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective and rapidly improving school, which provides a **satisfactory standard of education**. Standards are in line with the national average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Leadership and management are good. The school has a good ethos and provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the headteacher and governors is very good.
- Standards attained in the national tests taken at the end of Year 6 improved greatly in 2003.
- Behaviour has also improved greatly and is now good, while learning is satisfactory.
- There is some very good teaching. There are also some areas for further improvement, particularly in teaching style and use of assessment.
- Teachers need to improve their use of homework; also the teaching of able pupils, and of numeracy across the curriculum.
- Heads of department are not yet taking enough responsibility for the monitoring and development of standards in their subjects.
- The provision of extra-curricular sports and musical activities is very good, and participation by pupils is high.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. There has been a good improvement overall in the leadership of the school, and behaviour has greatly improved. Standards have risen. The school is now far more competent in teaching the skills of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum. Though the school now provides even fuller information on pupils' levels of attainment, there has not been enough improvement in teachers' use of these data in assessing pupils' work and helping them to improve it.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in all years. Standards of attainment are in line with nationally expected levels. Results in the tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 2003 improved markedly, and pupils attained standards well above those in similar schools. Pupils make sound progress overall in their work. Though standards in English were well below average in the tests taken at the end of Year 6, standards seen during the inspection were above average and were rapidly improving. Standards are average in mathematics and science.

Pupils' attitudes and values are good overall. Their personal development is good; spiritual development is satisfactory; moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality good. Pupils' attitudes to the school are satisfactory. Behaviour has improved markedly and is now good, especially in lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Much teaching is good and there is some very good teaching, particularly in art, which is a very strong subject. However, teachers' use of assessment and homework is unsatisfactory. There are also some areas for further improvement, particularly in teaching style, so that pupils are more positively informed about what they will be learning, and involved in the process. Other areas for improvement are the teaching of able pupils, and of numeracy in the different subjects of the curriculum.

The curriculum is good, with particularly good provision for pupils to participate in sport and in the arts. There are good procedures for the care, consultation, and health and safety of pupils. Links with parents and the community have improved and are now good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. Very good leadership by the headteacher and governors is bringing rapidly improving standards. Management is good.

The headteacher leads the school very well. He has high professional competence, supported by perception, determination, kindness and conviction. Governors lead very well. They share very high aspirations with the headteacher, and hold the school to account very well. Leadership by heads of department is satisfactory overall. Subject leaders need to take more responsibility for monitoring the quality of their department's work. Management is good overall. Data on the performance of pupils are very well managed. Staff are given good opportunities for professional training and development. Leadership of the SEN department is good and management satisfactory. Leaders successfully include all pupils in the process of education, though their provision for gifted and talented pupils needs further development.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are pleased with the school. They praise the recent improvements and are warm in the school's support. Parents at the meeting before the inspection were anxious that homework should be made more useful, and inspectors share this view.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

Further improve the effectiveness of teaching by encouraging teachers to

- widen the styles of teaching and learning, so that pupils are more fully involved in lessons,
- make fuller use of the information they receive on the attainment of pupils to provide lessons better geared to the needs of pupils of all abilities, and
- improve their use of homework. (see paragraph numbers 16-18, 20)

Extend provision for gifted and talented pupils, and for the teaching of numeracy across the curriculum, (see paragraph numbers 5, 71-72)

Increase the responsibility of heads of department for the monitoring and development of standards in their subjects. (see paragraph number 43)

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Note:

Attainment answers the question, 'how high are standards?' This means the actual standards pupils have reached, compared with the national average in tests, or the average level expected nationally in work seen during an inspection.

Achievement answers the question, 'are standards for individual pupils high enough?' This means the level pupils have reached, based on the progress they have made in relation to their capability.

Standards of attainment are in line with nationally expected levels. Results in the tests taken at the end of Year 6 in 2003 improved markedly, and pupils attained overall standards higher than those in similar schools. Over their time in the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. They make sound progress overall in their work. Standards in English seen during the inspection were above average and rapidly improving, while those in mathematics and science were average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved since the last inspection, particularly in the results gained in the tests at the end of Year 6.
- Standards are above average in all years in information and communication technology (ICT) and art and design. They are below average in RE, but pupils' achievement is satisfactory in this subject.
- Pupils' achievement and progress are good in all years in English, modern foreign languages and ICT, and very good in art and design.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	25.4 (24.7)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.8 (25.1)	26.8 (26.7)
science	30.1 (27.9)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 147 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. When pupils join the school, their attainment is in line with the nationally expected level. Over the two years until the end of Year 6, they achieve satisfactory standards in relation to their different levels of ability. Overall, their results in the tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, taken at the end of Year 6, are in line with those gained nationally. These results are high when compared with those of pupils in similar schools. At the end of Year 8, when pupils leave the school, standards seen are at the nationally expected levels. These pupils have continued to achieve satisfactory standards for their ability and to make sound progress.
2. Test results for Year 6 pupils improved greatly in 2003, making this school the most improved in Somerset in these tests. This is the result of a considerable effort by many teachers, ably led by their new headteacher, and has reversed the trend of under-achievement in the school. Teachers have a new confidence that they can improve results for their pupils, and are tackling their lessons with increasing success. The result is a rise in standards at all levels, reflected in the demanding targets which the school has set for itself in performance in tests at the end of Years 6 and 8.

3. Standards in the core subjects are overall in line with expected levels. In English, by the end of Year 6, pupils' standards, seen in their work during this inspection, were above the nationally expected level. Those in Years 7 and 8 were weaker on entry than current Years 5 and 6, and reach standards in line with this level. In English, boys attain standards lower than girls, but narrow the gap during their time in the school. In other subjects, there are no marked differences. Overall in English, pupils are achieving very well by the end of Year 6, and well in Years 7 and 8. Their progress is due to good teaching, which gives pupils a clear knowledge of what to do and a pride in their achievement.
4. In mathematics, standards are in line with nationally expected levels by the end of Year 8. Results in the national tests for Year 6, which were below average over several years, matched the national average in 2003. Achievement during the course is satisfactory in all years. Standards in science are average in all years. Though they were well below average in the tests for Year 6 pupils at the last inspection, the 2003 test results were considerably above average, thanks to good, specialist teaching. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in all years.
5. Achievement of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is satisfactory, while those with more complex needs develop their independence well, thanks to the success of the school's programme in social competence. In most subjects, pupils with SEN make progress equal to that of their peers; they make particularly good progress in French, thanks to the expertise of their teachers and support assistants. Pupils who are gifted or talented also make progress equal to that of their peers. However, only in modern foreign languages and music were such pupils seen to make good progress, and this is an area for more vigorous development by senior staff. There are very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, and they are fully integrated in the school, making progress in line with their abilities just as all other pupils. Overall, the school's clear wish to include all its pupils equally in the process of education results in appropriate achievement and progress for all.
6. Despite the low results in the 2003 tests, attainment in English is now the highest among the core subjects, due to the particularly well-informed recent leadership of the subject. Among other subjects, standards in ICT and art are consistently high, thanks to good leadership and teaching. These qualities are having a very positive effect on other areas too, for example modern languages and music. The following table gives a summary of attainment and achievement in each subject:

Standards in:	Attainment Years 5-6	Attainment Years 7-8	Achievement Years 5-6	Achievement Years 7-8
English	above average	average	very good	good
Modern languages	-	average	-	good
Mathematics	average	average	satisfactory	satisfactory
Science	average	average	satisfactory	satisfactory
ICT	above average	above average	good	good
Geography	below average	average	satisfactory	good
History	average	average	satisfactory	satisfactory
Religious education	below average	below average	satisfactory	good
Design and technology	average	average	satisfactory	satisfactory
Art	above average	above average	very good	very good
Music	above average	average	good	satisfactory
Physical education	average	average	satisfactory	good
Citizenship	average	average	satisfactory	satisfactory

7. Since the last inspection, the school has made good progress in improving pupils' attainment, particularly in gaining such improved results in the Year 6 tests. Attainment and achievement are now at the level they should be for this school, and there is potential for further improvement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and values are good overall. Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality is good. Pupils' attitudes to the school are satisfactory. Behaviour has improved markedly and is now good, especially in lessons. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory, and their moral, social and cultural development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils behave well in lessons because teachers manage them effectively.
- Pupils enjoy the opportunities they now have to exercise responsibility through the councils and house systems.
- Pupils show little capacity for independent learning unless they are engaged by vibrant and challenging teaching.
- Holidays taken during term time have an adverse effect on attendance.

Commentary

8. The rate of attendance at the school has shown a gradual improvement. It was very close to the national average for the academic year 2002/2003 and has continued to improve. The level of unauthorised absence is lower than average. However, the school does have concerns about the number of days lost because children are taken on holiday during the school term. Punctuality is good.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year, 2002-03 (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.4	School data	0.2
National data	6.0	National data	0.3

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

9. Pupils' attitudes to the school, their work and to activities outside lessons are all satisfactory. In many lessons, pupils have good attitudes: they are well motivated and work hard at the tasks they are set. In other lessons, pupils show limited interest and tend to talk too much. Pupils' capacity to work independently is limited unless they are challenged and engaged by lively, demanding teaching. In conversation, pupils expressed a preference for lessons which involve active participation. However, pupils interviewed all said that they were happy at the school.
10. The improvement in behaviour was a common thread that ran through discussions with parents, pupils and members of staff. The reason for this improvement was obvious to them: teachers now expect pupils to behave and they handle incidents of bad behaviour with firmness and consistency. This was clearly evident during the inspection. Pupils behave well because teachers manage them effectively. This improvement is clearly appreciated by all members of the school, who were keen for the inspection team to realise this. Bullying – though it can happen – is perceived as something to be reported and dealt with. The number of exclusions is about average, but refers to a small number of pupils. Unacceptable behaviour is the main reason why pupils are excluded.

Exclusions

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	599	34	1

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

11. Developing a sense of pride and respect – for oneself, for others, for the environment, for the school and for learning – lies at the centre of the school’s approach to pupils’ personal development. As part of this, pupils have been given more opportunity to exercise responsibility through the year and house systems. Formal assemblies and team activities help promote cooperative work and a sense of community within the school, which encourages pupils’ moral and social development. The effectiveness of this approach is demonstrated by the manner in which pupils carry out their responsibilities and duties, and by their growing desire to take advantage of what the school offers by joining in activities.
12. The school successfully promotes the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Pupils display positive attitudes towards their peers with special educational needs, for example when they attend the lunchtime ‘signing club’ and learn to communicate with another pupil who has a hearing impairment. Pupils with SEN develop their confidence and self-esteem well, for example when Year 8 pupils take part in the ‘buddy system’, which helps new pupils to settle into the school at playtime.
13. Improvement in pupils’ attitudes and behaviour has been very good since the last inspection, and the school’s provision for pupils’ personal development is now much more effective.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Much teaching is good, but teachers’ use of assessment and homework is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is good, with particularly good provision for pupils to participate in sport and in the arts. There are good procedures for the care, consultation, and health and safety of pupils. Links with parents and the community have improved and are now good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The quality of both teaching and learning is good in the majority of lessons, but teachers’ use of assessment is unsatisfactory in several subjects. Homework needs improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In two thirds of lessons seen, teaching and learning were good or very good.
- Many teachers engage and encourage pupils well. They provide lively, enjoyable lessons, which they manage well. They enjoy teaching and pupils respond positively.
- Teachers’ use of assessment needs improvement in several subjects.
- Many teachers do not set and mark homework as well as they might.
- Generally, styles of teaching and learning need greater thought and variety. At present, pupils are generally not good at learning independently, and rely heavily on their teachers.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 80 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (1%)	18 (22%)	34(43%)	26(33%)	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.

14. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although more good or very good lessons were seen than those which were simply satisfactory. Many lessons contain strong features, and teaching and learning are good in several subjects. This is a summary of the quality of teaching in the subjects seen:

subject	teaching and learning
English	good
Modern languages	good
Mathematics	satisfactory
Science	good
ICT	good
Geography	satisfactory
History	satisfactory
Religious education	satisfactory
Design and technology	satisfactory
Art	very good
Music	good
Physical education	good
Citizenship	satisfactory

15. Lessons are often positive and enjoyable. Pupils are actively engaged and teachers set them relevant, interesting tasks. Teachers' management of behaviour is good, so that pupils work productively and collaborate well with their teachers and each other. Teachers make lessons enjoyable, so that pupils are happy to learn. There is a busy, contented atmosphere, greatly helped by the learning support assistants who work well with teachers, and everyone gets on well.
16. The quality of teaching and learning is therefore secure and positive, but there are some aspects which need improvement. Teachers have now succeeded in establishing good behaviour in lessons, while before they were expending much effort to maintain control. They can now start to consider the best way to help pupils learn. In a lesson lasting an hour, with pupils now generally happy to learn, there is time for a greater variety of teaching and learning methods which will encourage pupils to learn more independently. For example, teachers make little use of presentations by individual pupils and seldom challenge individuals to say what they expect they will be learning and how they will do so. Even in good lessons, there can be an atmosphere of incuriosity among pupils, which a greater variety of method, leading to a livelier challenge to individuals, would help to redress. In the best lessons, pupils are fully engaged, for example in a very good French pronunciation lesson seen. A fresh focus on teaching and learning styles would help spread the good practice which is clearly increasing in several departments. Teachers have become proficient in their present, effective style, and

now have the ability to increase their challenge and pupils' response. A new focus on helping pupils learn more successfully, combined with the quality of teaching seen, has good potential for improving their achievement.

17. Parents report, and inspectors agree, that homework is not generally well used to extend what has been learned in lessons. There is still a proportion of homework which is routine and not well marked. Marking is a further area for improvement. Some marking, for example in English, is of high quality; it is based on the levels of the National Curriculum, suggests how pupils can improve their work, and results in pupils' being able to set themselves clear targets for improvement. This is very good practice. Examples such as this are in use in the school, and now deserve to be more widely used.
18. At the moment, teachers are not generally making such clear use as in the example above of the good data they receive on pupils' achievements. As a result, though teaching and learning are often good in general, opportunities are missed to provide work clearly designed for the different levels of ability in the class. Pupils of higher and lower ability do not often have work well provided for their particular needs. Again, there are splendid exceptions, for example in a Year 6 religious education lesson, when the teacher had very carefully provided quite different tasks on the same theme to give everyone an idea of the basic tenets of Islam. This work gave every pupil, at their own level, the chance to grasp something of the achievement of this religion, and made a vital contribution to their spiritual development.
19. The teaching and learning of pupils with SEN is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, teachers give clear explanations and are skilful at pitching questions at the right level, so all pupils take part. Teaching assistants work creatively with individual pupils and withdrawal groups, which has a positive impact on the learning of pupils with specific literacy and numeracy difficulties, and for those needing additional help to develop their social and independence skills. Teachers and assistants use praise well to recognise the effort and achievement of pupils with learning difficulties.
20. Although pupils are assessed and have their special needs appropriately identified, the targets contained in their Individual Education Plans are not consistently used by teachers to help them plan lessons. This results in tasks not always being closely matched to the ability of pupils with more complex needs, which limits their progress.
21. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teaching now has the potential to improve learning very considerably.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good, and is well planned, except in the humanities programme in Years 5 and 6 and the provision for numeracy across the curriculum. It has particular strengths in the very good provision for pupils to participate in sport and the arts.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is well planned and generally provides well for pupils' needs.
- Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are very good.
- Arrangements for teaching humanities subjects in Years 5 and 6 do not allow pupils to make the progress they could.
- Provision for numeracy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

22. The curriculum is good, provides a range of subjects well suited to the age of the pupils, and prepares them effectively for the senior school. The National Curriculum for Years 5 to 8 is fully implemented and is enhanced by opportunities for a second modern foreign language, and drama. However, arrangements for teaching humanities subjects in Years 5 and 6 impede

pupils' progress in each subject. Provision for personal, health and social education as well as citizenship is satisfactory. Assemblies are very good, and the daily tutorial time and reading time after lunch are used well.

23. Curricular planning in individual subjects ranges from satisfactory to very good. Well-structured overviews for each subject, informed by the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, are developed into competent schemes of work and lessons plans. However, these are not always well translated into tasks to match the needs of each group of pupils, including those who are gifted and talented. Provision for literacy and ICT across the curriculum is improving and is generally satisfactory. The planning of homework is variable in quality. Not all homework usefully or positively extends learning after the school day. The cross-curricular support of pupils' numeracy skills is unsatisfactory, because not all departments have included numeracy in their schemes of work, and the whole-school audit is not yet complete. Nevertheless, the school has created a very good basis for the further improvement of numeracy across the curriculum.
24. The programme of extra-curricular activities is very good. There is a wide range of sporting, musical, arts and other opportunities, such as the writers' club and puppet workshop. Take-up of these activities is high. Lunchtime activities to support the inclusion of groups of pupils with a range of challenging needs are good and contribute well to their integration in the main school. More generally, the combined effect of the curriculum and extra activities provides good opportunities for the inclusion of everyone in the education offered by the school.
25. The school has forged strong links with its feeder schools and with the senior school. As a result of a planned programme of visits and induction activities, the pupils make a comfortable transition from Year 4 to Year 5. A regular pattern of curriculum meetings and agreed assessments allows pupils to move smoothly to the senior school and to achieve well a year later in the national tests. Through the tutorial programme, pupils experience the beginnings of a careers education and guidance programme, by looking at the different roles people occupy in the world of work.
26. Accommodation is satisfactory. The extensive site is enhanced by very good display and good maintenance. There are deficiencies in a number of areas, for example in art and design, and technology, and in the size of the room allocated currently for cross-curricular ICT use. The multi-purpose school hall is too small to allow the whole school to gather, even for assemblies. Across the school, resources are satisfactory, including those for ICT, which have been improved very recently. The school is well staffed with a full complement of teachers and good support staff, all of whom have benefited from appropriate training opportunities.
27. The school provides a good curriculum for pupils with special educational needs. Support is well matched to pupils' learning and social needs and there is a good balance between additional help in class, and individual and group withdrawal activities. These include specialised literacy and numeracy programmes and a social competency course, which effectively promotes independence and self-confidence through horse riding, cookery and a structured swimming programme.
28. There is a useful range of special resources, for example communication aids, laptop computers and software using symbols. However, there is insufficient use of ICT in lessons to support the learning of pupils who have more complex needs. This limits their ability to work independently.
29. Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection, although not enough progress has been made in the provision for numeracy in mainstream classes across the curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

There are good procedures for the care, health and safety of all pupils. The quality of the advice, support and guidance that pupils receive is now effective and therefore satisfactory. The procedures

for involving pupils in the work of the school through class, year and school councils and the four houses are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The structure of the class, year and school councils involves all pupils and allows them to contribute to the development of the school.
- Pupils in difficult circumstances receive sensitive support to help them integrate and work without disrupting lessons.
- Advice and support on academic progress is weaker than that on personal progress.

Commentary

30. There are good procedures for the care of pupils and these include appropriate systems for child protection. Health and safety procedures are comprehensive. Movement around the school has been reduced by reorganising lessons. Lunch and break involve much energetic play, but pupils are supervised effectively. Teachers and tutors know pupils well – especially in Years 5 and 6 – and have good relations with them. Pupils who find good behaviour difficult receive sensitive support to help them integrate and work without disrupting lessons. The behaviour manager plays an effective role in helping these pupils cope with problems.
31. On balance, arrangements for pupils' support and guidance are satisfactory. Links established with other local schools help pupils settle in easily when they come to the school, as well as when they move on to secondary education. Pupils' personal progress is monitored effectively. There has been a strong focus on monitoring behaviour in order to achieve higher standards of behaviour and greater consistency in the application of the behaviour policy. Other aspects of personal progress are now included, for example the routine monitoring of rewards. However, target-setting based on assessment is still at an early stage of development, which means that advice and support on academic progress are weaker than that on personal progress.
32. The class, year and school councils are constructed to involve all pupils (not just those elected to the higher echelons) in contributing to the development of the school. Pupils interviewed praised the councils and commented that good ideas would be acted upon. They felt that the system worked. One year council during the inspection included a heated discussion on uniform change. The four houses provide an additional forum for involving pupils, who have a say in the running of house activities. The house system is important for pupils, whose individual rewards (given for all kinds of achievement as well as sporting prowess) count towards house points.
33. Statutory requirements for the review of statements for pupils with SEN are fully met. The school works closely with appropriate visiting professionals, which results in good individual therapy programmes. There are very good arrangements to prepare pupils with SEN for when they enter the school and also for when they leave.
34. Improvement in provision for care and welfare has been good since the last inspection, particularly in the management of behaviour and the development of forums for discussion among pupils.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents have improved and are now good. Community links are also good. The school has good links with local first schools and works well with the local college.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curricular links with West Somerset College help to ensure an effective transition for pupils.

- The newsletter, the 'Friday Flyer', is an effective way of getting information to parents.
- The local community has helped to renovate the school.
- The headteacher holds a consultation forum for parents each term.
- Comments in some annual reports concentrate more on attitude than on telling parents what their children can do and how they can improve.

Commentary

35. The school has worked hard to improve links with parents because it wants them to play a more active part in their children's learning. It is prepared to be flexible in order to make it easier for parents to come and discuss their children's work, for example by holding consultation sessions during the day (when more individual time is allowed) as well as in the evenings. The use of a link parent to check on homework in each tutor group is sensible since this is a concern shared by both parents and the school. The headteacher holds a parent consultation forum each term, which the chairman of the governing body also attends. It is open to all parents, but personal invitations are sent to those parents who have raised concerns. These forums are well attended and provide the basis for an effective dialogue.
36. The irregularity of information worried some parents at the time of the previous inspection. This has been overcome by the routine publication of the *Friday Flyer*. It appears each Friday and can be sent electronically directly to parents as well as being taken home by pupils. The *Flyer* keeps parents up-to-date and briefs them well about a whole range of issues connected with the school and their children's education. Governors and headteacher are very keen for the *Flyer* to be read, so the headteacher 'phones parents, asks questions, and correct answers get a reward. These are fewer than the school would wish, but suggest that parental complaints of lack of information may be due more to scanty perusal of the *Flyer* than to lack of communication.
37. The information that parents receive about their children's progress is good, when considered as a whole across the year, because of the sequence of review sheets and consultation sessions. However, comments in some annual reports concentrate more on a pupils attitude instead of telling parents what their child can do, cannot do and how they can improve in that subject. The best are very clear in what they tell parents, but there is a lack on consistency between subjects.
38. Links with the local community are used effectively. The school takes advantage of its geographical position to extend pupils' knowledge of their area. The bright and welcoming decoration of the school is due to work done by community services. Members of the community take part in aspects of school life, while other groups benefit from using its facilities.
39. Effective links with the local secondary school help to ensure a smooth transition with little loss of momentum. This is particularly important since the move takes place towards the end of Key Stage 3 and pupils have barely two terms in their new school before they take their tests at the end of Year 9. There are good links too with first schools. Regular meetings of the head teachers of the local partnership, as well as joint monitoring of work by the heads of subject departments, strengthen the links among the schools.
40. The special needs department gives good information to parents about the help their child is receiving and the progress he or she makes. Social competency activities are well supported by members of the community.
41. Since the last report, improvement in partnership with parents and the community has been good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. Very good leadership by the headteacher and governors is bringing rapidly improving standards. Management is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher leads the school very well. He has high professional competence, supported by perception, determination, kindness and conviction.
- Governors lead very well. They share very high aspirations with the headteacher, and hold the school to account very well.
- The senior team leads well and is helping heads of department to improve the leadership of their subjects, which is at present satisfactory overall.
- Management is good overall. Analysis of data by the senior team on the performance of pupils is very good. Staff are given good opportunities for professional training and development.

Commentary

42. The reason for the greatly improved results, behaviour and sense of purpose, now so evident, is the very good leadership of the headteacher. Pupils, parents and community all say that, in less than two years, he has given the school new aspiration and confidence. He knows exactly how to improve the all-important areas of teaching, learning and behaviour, and has already made huge progress towards realising the school's new motto, *Strive for Excellence*. He works very well with governors, who share his aims entirely and also lead the school very well. Because of this partnership and the high ability of individual governors, the school has been able to analyse its current achievement very accurately. As governors say, the school is on a journey and knows where it is going. Headteacher and governors are not content merely to run a satisfactory school. They want it to be excellent. All statutory requirements are met. The school's leaders have created a community where all pupils are well included in its life and activities. Strategic planning is good and reflects the school's aims well. Governors are closely involved in monitoring the improvement plan and the work of their subject areas, sharing their findings with teachers and reporting them to other governors.
43. Deputy headteachers lead well. They have a clear grasp of how to maintain and improve standards, and work effectively with heads of department and years. Leadership of departments is satisfactory overall, and has led to competent teaching and an improving curriculum, across all subjects. However, many heads of department are not yet leading as positively as they might in these areas, to ensure that pupils always respond well to demanding teaching and make all the progress they could. The senior team needs to give heads of department a more challenging brief, particularly in the monitoring of teaching standards and the level of demand made on pupils in schemes of work and lesson planning.
44. Management is good overall, with strengths in the analysis of data by senior staff on pupils' performance. However, use of data in the classroom is unsatisfactory. A further strength is the provision of training for teachers. The headteacher's management of staff recruitment is excellent, and this has led to some very strong appointments and some first rate practice, notably in English and modern languages, which now join art as subjects which benefit from very good management. Generally, management of departments is satisfactory, but heads of department are not much involved in the monitoring of teaching, and so are not as aware as they should be of how well their schemes of work are being taught.
45. Heads of year manage their tutors and pupils well, making a positive contribution to the good standards of welfare and behaviour which the school now enjoys. They are well supported by the behaviour manager, the teaching and other assistants, who work well together to achieve a happy and well run school. Premises, clerical and domestic staff are efficient and friendly. Canteen staff hold the award for the best kitchen in Somerset secondary schools. The site manager takes a personal pride in the appearance of the school, working many voluntary extra

hours to make the school safe, open and welcoming. Parents were particularly pleased with the helpful approach of the reception staff. The good care of, and contribution from, the support staff reflects the school's success in including everyone – pupils, parents, staff – in the community of the school.

46. The leadership of the SEN department is good, and has seen the introduction of curriculum initiatives for pupils with SEN in response to their changing needs. The SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) is a member of the senior team and is therefore in a good position to give leadership for the school's wide provision in this area. Management is satisfactory. Because the SENCO has many other responsibilities, she does not have the time to monitor the progress of the many positive activities provided by the department, but these are effectively delegated to senior assistants.
47. The following is a summary of the quality of the provision in subjects overall and of their leadership and management:

subject	overall quality of provision	quality of leadership	quality of management
English	good	very good	very good
Modern languages	good	good	good
Mathematics	satisfactory	satisfactory	satisfactory
Science	satisfactory	satisfactory	satisfactory
ICT	good	good	good
Geography	good	satisfactory	satisfactory
History	satisfactory	satisfactory	satisfactory
Religious education	satisfactory	unsatisfactory	satisfactory
Design and technology	satisfactory	good	good
Art and design	very good	very good	good
Music	good	good	good
Physical education	good	good	good
Citizenship	satisfactory	good	good

47. The headteacher gives good financial leadership. He has reviewed staffing levels and saved a number of posts, redirecting the money freed by this into projects to develop the curriculum, notably in ICT, where resources have greatly improved. He is aware of the principles of best value and applies them successfully, for example in consulting parents and the community to measure how well they feel the school is performing. Financial management is satisfactory. The school currently lacks a leader in this area and is hoping to recruit a bursar, to pull together the many aspects of financial management now shared among a number of people. The expenditure per pupil and the quality of education provided by the school represents satisfactory value for money.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1931833	Balance from previous year	13142
Total expenditure	1888434	Balance carried forward to the next	56541
Expenditure per pupil	2769		

48. Since the last inspection, improvement in leadership has been very good. Improvement in management has been good.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English and drama

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- Almost all teaching is at least good, and many lessons very good.
- Leadership and management ensure high motivation among colleagues, and consistency of approach.
- Enthusiasm and enjoyment pervade the whole department, shown in part by the very high quality of display.
- Improvement has been marked in many respects since the last inspection.
- Pupils' output of extended writing is limited.

Commentary

49. By the end of Year 6, pupils are reaching standards above the national average. Those in Years 7 and 8, weaker on entry than current years 5 and 6, are reaching standards in line with nationally expected levels. Boys attain standards lower than girls, but narrow the gap during their time in the school.
50. The school's emphasis on writing is showing fruitful results. Standards of writing could be even higher if pupils had more opportunity to write at length, and so practise the skills covered in class. Pupils write few short stories or poems.
51. Reading and speaking are generally average. Opportunities for pupils to speak in class, to explain, describe or persuade, are often missed. Pupils read widely, and keep a record of books read.
52. Standards in drama are satisfactory. Pupils can create a tableau, produce a monologue to illustrate images of war, and explore the theme of friendship in small groups. Teachers work from well-devised schemes, and ensure a good pace and changes of activity. Learning in one lesson was rapid, pupils listening attentively and responding quickly. The studio is equipped to a high standard, but the subject lacks a specialist in charge.
53. Pupils enter the school with attainment at or below the national average. They are therefore achieving well in years 7 and 8, and very well by the end of year 6. Their progress is due to good teaching. Pupils know what is expected, and take a pride in their work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, but those who are gifted and talented are not specifically identified.
54. Teaching overall is good and often very good. Strengths lie in planning and preparation; in teachers' creating happy relationships with pupils, so that attitudes and behaviour are alike are good; and in some imaginative teaching methods. Pupils learn from evaluating their work, and building on success. Collaboration is rare, but when observed it was very effective. Most teachers give helpful comments in exercise books, so pupils can devise their own targets for improvement. However, teachers do not require sufficient extended writing. More tasks should be adapted to differing levels of ability. Teachers use information and communication technology too seldom as a tool for improved presentation, drafting and research.

55. Leadership and management are both very good. The newly appointed head of department has achieved a vast amount in only six months. As a result there have been major improvements in many aspects, particularly in applying the National Literacy Strategy, in overhauling the curriculum, in writing new schemes of work and in establishing consistency in the way teachers teach. Extra-curricular activities are widening opportunities, among them a Christmas production involving drama and music. Effective assessment systems have been introduced, and data are now readily available and well used. Above all, standards have risen, particularly in years 5 and 6.
56. Improvement since the last inspection has been good

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. Generally, standards are good, and the school policy is proving effective. But there is a need to involve all staff, and see that principles are thoroughly understood and applied.
58. Writing in most subjects has improved. Good results were seen in history, geography and religious education.
59. The library is well run and effective. However there needs to be regular monitoring of loan rates to encourage boys to borrow more books than they do. The school's practice of devoting ten minutes each day to reading is good. This ensures that all pupils have reading material, but the time allocated is too short for sustained reading to occur.
60. There are devices, for example a balloon debate, to encourage formal speaking, but in general teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to speak in class. Good examples of speaking were seen in geography, and perceptive listening in drama, but opportunities were missed in PE, science and design technology.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in modern languages is **good**.

All pupils study French in Year 7 and 8. In addition, in Year 8 the two top sets begin German as a second foreign language. German lessons were not seen.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good; pupils achieve well.
- Pupils behave well and have good attitudes towards French.
- Some teachers do not use quite enough French in lessons.
- Pupils, especially the higher attainers, do not write extensively enough in Year 8.
- There is insufficient observation of teachers to ensure best practice is shared.
- ICT developments have very good potential.

Commentary

61. Standards in the books and lessons seen in Year 8 were broadly average overall. Speaking and listening skills develop well, because these skills are well taught. Writing is less well developed. Pupils, especially the higher attainers, do not always write at the length they should. Most pupils copy-write accurately. Pupils are, however, not required to do corrections after teachers have carefully marked their work. Low attainers do not receive enough help in basic handwriting skills.
62. Pupils achieve well overall by Year 8. In Year 7 a significant proportion of pupils achieve very well because of very good teaching. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in both

years because of teachers' excellent behaviour management and real understanding of these pupils' individual needs.

63. Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good. Teachers plan well to meet the needs of pupils in different sets. In Year 7, the new well-chosen textbook sustains pupils' interest very effectively. Overall, teachers provide a wide range of stimulating and accessible activities. Assessment arrangements are generally good, but some marking is not detailed enough and homework is not always well set. Other areas for further improvement include: more use of French by some teachers; more work with the overhead projector; a requirement for pupils to correct at least some of their work after teachers have marked it carefully; more attention to the presentation and accuracy of written work among a small minority of pupils, mostly boys.
64. The department is well led and managed. The acting head of department has a very clear vision for future developments. Challenging new schemes of work are being written for Year 7. Visits and exchanges are well planned and enrich the curriculum. Setting procedures and individual targets help pupils to progress well, according to their ability. In addition, pupils now have ample time in the curriculum to make good progress. Gifted and talented pupils are well provided for in the top sets in both years and in Year 8, to judge by the written work seen, all pupils make a good beginning in German. A club for modern languages is in the planning stage and ICT developments have very good potential. More observation of teaching would help teachers share the best practice across the department.
65. In most respects standards have been maintained since the last inspection, and in some areas improved, mainly because of better staffing.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in mathematics are in line with nationally expected levels at the end of Year 6 and Year 8.
- Most pupils make satisfactory progress across all areas of mathematics.
- Teaching is satisfactory, but teachers' planning does not always match work sufficiently to pupils' needs.
- Teachers miss opportunities to assess learning in lessons and written work.

Commentary

66. At the end of Year 8, inspection evidence indicates that standards in mathematics are in line with nationally expected levels. This judgement is supported by the school's data, based on regular and structured tests. Results in the national tests for Year 6 have been consistently below, or well below average, over several years. However, in 2003, results improved to levels matching the national average.
67. Achievement in lessons and in the pupils' exercise books is generally satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 as well as in Years 7 and 8. The pupils' annual examinations and unit tests indicate that most groups are making satisfactory progress. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys or girls but some pupils, whose attainment is below average on entry, make slower progress than their peers, hampered by a limited recall of earlier work. Mathematically gifted pupils make satisfactory progress over time, while those with complex special needs make good progress in lessons. Able pupils are particularly successful in explaining their findings in investigative tasks. The work of some pupils, especially boys, suffers as a result of poor presentation and careless graph and drawing skills.

68. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, there is a brisk pace, good targeted questioning, with pupils clear as to what is expected of them. Teachers have a good understanding of the subject matter. In less successful lessons, not all work is sufficiently matched to pupils' needs, including those with individual learning plans. There is a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching, because lesson planning does not take sufficient note of pupils' understanding of earlier work. As a result, pupils waste time in chatter and immature behaviour.
69. The use of day-to-day assessment in mathematics requires improvement. Although some pupils receive helpful and immediate oral feedback in lessons and there are examples of good quality diagnostic marking, too much marking is cursory and fails to show pupils how to improve. Some teachers fail to check the individual pupil's progress effectively during lessons, and thereby miss opportunities to correct errors at an early stage.
70. The day-to-day management of the department is sound, with teachers clear as to the sequencing of the topics they teach. The satisfactory leadership of the department, however, is hampered by too little time to make necessary adjustments to the scheme of work, to monitor and evaluate the work of the department, and to provide training activities for the large number of non-specialist teachers of mathematics. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory but much remains to be done to develop a wider range of teaching and learning approaches.

Mathematics across the curriculum

71. Standards of numeracy are average overall, and sufficient to support the pupils' work in other curriculum areas. However, manipulative number work is weaker than the pupils' understanding of graphical relationships. This is particularly clear in science where graphical skills are taught and used effectively very early in the curriculum. Pupils use accurate measuring skills in design and technology as well as problem-solving skills, as in the resistor project. The art department lays a strong emphasis on correct mathematical vocabulary and liaises closely with the mathematics department on aspects of teaching shape and space. Although pupils' numeracy skills are sufficient to support work in geography, there is not yet a clear departmental strategy to use or develop numeracy. Within physical education, pupils use aspects of numeracy in athletics. In music, they are made aware of rhythmic patterns and spatial structure in composition.
72. The school has a comprehensive numeracy policy that provides very good guidance to departments on consistent methods for calculations, data handling and graphicacy. Opportunities for departments to use and enhance the pupils' mathematical skills are highlighted. However, not all departments have as yet incorporated numeracy into schemes of work, nor is the whole-school audit complete. Nevertheless, the current work provides very good foundations for future developments.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Year 6 standards are high. These are linked to improved assessment and a focus on the quality of teaching and learning.
- There is good coverage of the curriculum, apart from that of scientific investigation.
- More emphasis is also needed on numeracy and the data-logging aspect of ICT.

Commentary

73. Pupils enter Year 5 with standards slightly below the national average, but by the end of Year 6 are at the national standard or higher. In the national tests in 2002, at the time of the last inspection, Year 6 pupils achieved well below average results. The 2003 test results were considerably above average (the most improved in the county) due to good specialist teaching. The department is now successfully retaining this improved practice and also offering additional booster classes to the present Year 6 classes. Pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory in their first two years.
74. In Years 7 and 8 standards measured in teacher assessments linked to science attainment targets 2 - 4 (life processes, materials, physical processes) indicate sound progression in knowledge and understanding. However, slower progress in target 1 (science investigation) constrains pupils' overall attainment. Achievement and progress are satisfactory over these years also.
75. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, but standards and achievement are no more than sound. This mismatch is due largely to a need to further apply aspects of science policy relating to numeracy, the data-logging aspect of ICT and the fuller integration of investigation. There is insufficient curricular enrichment through the offer of science clubs. The science teaching seen does, however, have a range of significant strengths and the overall picture is one of improvement. Teachers are confident in their knowledge of science, and this was seen in their extensive subject repertoire, questions and explanations. There is a shared understanding of how a good three-part lesson is conducted, with lesson objectives shared at the outset and appropriate use of plenary sessions to review and share knowledge and understanding. Data projectors add to the quality and range of presentation in Years 7 and 8, giving pace and interactivity to lessons. Principles of safety are well communicated. Pupils use textbooks well. Scientific literacy is well supported, with keywords explained and displayed, but pupils could be offered more help to improve the independence of their writing.
76. The leadership and management of science are sound and shared between two teachers, one the acting head of department. The development plan is too general and requires more vision about standards and achievement. Accommodation and resources are good, with few deficiencies. The science technician is also a qualified teacher and currently teaches a Year 6 class.
77. The department is now well placed to continue with its improvement, which has been satisfactory since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is above average at the end of Year 8.
- Overall achievement in ICT is good.
- Learning objectives are not related to assessment criteria.
- The use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is not assessed.

Commentary

78. Pupils make good progress in lessons and their achievement overall is good.
79. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 6 is slightly above average. As pupils' attainment on entry to the school is average, their achievement is good. By the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment recorded by teacher assessment is above average, and is close to what is average for Year 9 pupils. The accuracy of these assessments was confirmed in observation of lessons and the scrutiny of pupils' work.

80. Overall, teaching is good. Teaching is knowledgeable, enthusiastic and imaginative, particularly in the way teachers stimulate pupils' interest and link the work to pupils' use of ICT in other areas of the curriculum. Good attention is paid to developing pupils' literacy skills. Teachers give clear explanation of tasks and demonstrate the use of new skills effectively. Pupils are keen to learn and once they have received instruction, they work independently, without recourse to their teachers. In Year 5 and 6 lessons, there is an over-reliance on verbal instructions. In Years 7 and 8, with greater use of written instructions, pupils are able to work at their own pace and develop more independence in their learning. Teachers need to give more attention to the assessment of pupils' work, in addition to the assessments at the end of units of work. Though this final assessment gives detail of how well pupils have done and helps in setting targets for future work, assessment does not inform learning objectives for each lesson, so work is not appropriately given for pupils of different abilities.
81. ICT is well led and managed as a separate subject. Clear vision has been shown in the purchase of hardware needed to meet the needs of the curriculum and raise attainment. The head of subject monitors teaching regularly. This new computer system has been quickly incorporated into lessons and new software is used effectively to cover all National Curriculum requirements. The computer to pupil ratio has improved and is now 1:5.5. Pupils now develop skills in using industry standard generic software as well as having access to the latest educational software. Overall, there has been considerable improvement since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. There have been improvements in the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum. These improvements are continuing with the extension of the network and the purchase of software to bring ICT to other curriculum areas. ICT use is now included in some schemes of work, particularly in humanities subjects. There are new developments, associated with new equipment and software in PE, languages, art and music. However, pupils' use of ICT in individual subjects is not assessed or planned to contribute to the development of the pupils' overall capability in ICT. In these different subjects, pupils are not informed of their progress or set targets for further development.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils in Years 7 and 8 are well motivated, achieve well and produce sound standards of work.
- Good teaching across Years 7 and 8 results in good learning.
- Pupils gain greatly from fieldwork in Years 5 to 7, but there is none in Year 8.
- More time is needed to ensure that the leadership and management of the subject are developed.

Commentary

83. Standards by the end of Year 6 are just below average and achievement over Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6 pupils have a basic grounding in observational skills and have acquired a simple geographical vocabulary. Because of a wide variety of topics, these are covered in too general a way, and pupils lack opportunities to develop writing skills. Higher attainers, including the gifted and talented, need to be stretched more. Average and low attainers generally work to expected levels.

84. Standards in Year 8 are in line with nationally expected levels. Over Years 7 and 8, most pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 8, pupils have a satisfactory grounding in geographical skills. Map work is generally sound, but the presentation and analysis of statistical data graphically are underdeveloped. Knowledge of place is good, but the understanding of spatial patterns is weak. Higher attaining pupils are challenged appropriately. Most middle and lower attainers achieve well, except for a few boys who are reluctant writers. Presentation of work is usually good, reflecting the good attitude and behaviour of most pupils.
85. Teaching is satisfactory overall and there was some good and very good teaching in Year 8. Teachers are committed and supportive, relate positively to pupils, and generally manage them well. The best teaching has clear aims, detailed planning, effective presentation, good pace and a suitable range of teaching methods. In these Year 8 lessons, staff have a secure command of the subject and engage pupils well. Lesson aims need to focus more on the learning objectives pupils need, with more re-enforcement of the main teaching points, for example by visual consolidation on the board.
86. The subject is soundly led and managed. Insufficient time is provided for monitoring curriculum development. There has been good progress in ICT, but a coherent programme is needed over Years 5 to 8. Fieldwork undertaken in Years 5 to 7 results in effective learning, but there is none in Year 8. Marking is usually well done, but a greater commonality of practice is needed, with targets and closer tracking of progress. A fieldwork budget, more Ordnance Survey maps and up-to-date atlases for teaching in Year 5 and 6 are all needed. Improvement since the previous inspection has been sound.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are at the national average in Years 6 and 8 and sound teaching promotes appropriate achievement across the school.
- Resources are good and are well used.
- Links with other schools to ensure the continuity and progression of learning are good.
- History makes a valuable contribution to the development of literacy, ICT and citizenship.
- Some pupils fail to respond well to the subject and teachers do not always have high enough expectations of their work and behaviour.
- The current arrangements for allocating pupils to classes are not helpful to the subject.
- Insufficient time is available for monitoring standards and planning, across the school.

Commentary

87. During the inspection, lessons were only observed in Year 7. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that standards in Years 6 and 8 are at the national average, and that achievement is satisfactory. The standard of research and extended writing of many pupils in Year 8 is particularly good. Boys are sometimes inattentive in class and some girls are reluctant to participate, but overall there is no difference in achievement.
88. In some lessons, attitudes and behaviour are good and pupils work hard, take responsibility and enjoy the activities. However, some behaviour is unsatisfactory and is not dealt with firmly enough. Because of the range of learning activities by Year 8, most pupils have sound research skills. Work on the Tudor period showed good use of ICT skills and the ability to use and evaluate sources of evidence, including portraits. Resources are good and used well.
89. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Most teachers are not specialists, but have appropriate knowledge and expertise. The quality of support for pupils with special educational needs

enables them to participate actively in lessons. The highest attaining pupils are challenged by the provision of extension work. Ability in mathematics is used to place pupils in sets. This is inappropriate and the school plans to change procedures soon. Although pupils are given varied tasks, including writing frames, more is often needed to provide for the full range of ability, as pupils can be inattentive if not kept fully occupied. There is a good focus on homework and developing literacy skills. Assessment procedures have been developed well, although there is still some inconsistency in marking and the way topics are taught.

90. The new head of department provides sound leadership and has identified the need to review the thematic approach used in Year 7. Links with other schools are well developed, but there is a need to monitor teaching and learning carefully, to ensure continuity and progression. At present, insufficient time is available for this role. Standards have been maintained and improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

Religious education

Provision in religious education (RE) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The lack of any subject specialist restricts efforts to raise standards.
 - An imaginative range of teaching ensures that pupils develop independent research skills.
 - The subject contributes effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - Learning methods make a good contribution to developing pupils' standards of literacy.
91. Standards throughout are below the expected national level. Pupils enter the school with below average standards, but make satisfactory progress in Years 5 and 6. By Year 8, pupils have made further progress and, within the limited time given to the subject, their achievement is good. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 can write and illustrate imaginative pieces of work on the religions they have studied. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 develop good research skills to create pieces of extended writing showing they have understood difficult concepts. Pupils are able to compare different aspects of the religions they study. Progress for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory because work is carefully matched to their needs.
92. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good features. During the inspection it was only possible to observe lessons in Years 5 and 6. Even though none of the teachers are subject specialists, many lessons challenge the pupils and some teachers have high expectations. Pupils are articulate in class discussions and respond well to exciting stimulus material. In Years 7 and 8, teachers encourage pupils to learn independently. They use ICT effectively for research and presentation. There is a strong emphasis on using specialist vocabulary, and a good range of writing tasks is set such as diaries, letters and radio scripts which fire the imagination of pupils. Marking is positive and targets are set. However, the end of unit assessments which are turned into National Curriculum levels are not accurate because the pupils have not covered enough of the locally agreed syllabus and there are too many non-specialists involved in awarding levels for which there is no moderated standard.
93. Since there is no subject specialist, the leadership of the department is unsatisfactory. Day to day management is satisfactory and the head of department has introduced some monitoring of books, improved provision for independent learning, and the use of ICT. Some of the issues arising from the last report have been met. There are no departmental meetings, so there is little opportunity to develop the subject. Improvement since the last inspection is just satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new leadership is good and provides a clear vision.
- The support staff does a very good job helping very busy teachers.
- The class sizes are far too large and this hinders both attainment and progress.
- The classrooms are too small for the numbers of pupils and are under-resourced, causing a lack of technological experience and too much wasted time in practical lessons.

Commentary

94. By the end of Year 6, pupils' presentation skills are average and their drawing skills are unsatisfactory. Their technical vocabulary is average, but they do not remember simple facts well. The rooms are small and under resourced, with the result that pupils have unsatisfactory access to sewing machines, cookers and the machines in the resistant materials area. Hence the pupils' experience of a range of technology is limited.
95. By the end of Year 8, pupils' presentation skills have improved satisfactorily but their drawing skills have not. Three-dimensional isometric or perspective drawing was not seen and initial sketching did not develop properly into fully dimensioned working drawings. Practical skills were better in all areas. Experience of technology was again limited. There was little work using metal, and the ICT provision was inadequate as pupils did not have the chance to develop their computer aided design (CAD) work, nor learn enough about electronic circuitry. Other areas including structures, mechanisms and control technology were not covered deeply enough. This meant that numeracy links were weak.
96. Teaching in all areas was at least satisfactory and sometimes good. In Years 5 and 6, pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers, aided by a group of excellent support teachers, assistants and technicians. Teachers structure lessons well, dividing each class because of numbers and facilities. This brings extra pressure on already busy teachers. The interest of pupils is captured well. Homework is used regularly, but not rigorously enough, and the most able and talented are not challenged sufficiently. Projects stimulate interest, but do not increase enough in difficulty.
97. In Years 7 and 8, pupils develop their learning skills well and some good research skills were seen using ICT. The tasks in the folders were the same for all pupils and only in a few cases were adaptations made to cater for the less able. However, pupils with special educational needs achieved as well as their peers. Pupils were not good at evaluating their projects. There was a lack of exemplar material and display areas. This meant that pupils could not benefit properly from the experience of others and so ideas and progress were limited. Lessons always offered interest and challenge, but the response from some pupils showed a lack of motivation.
98. The department is well led and managed by a new head of department. He has introduced a new and effective marking scheme, which gives pupils a target and a National Curriculum level for their work. He has designed a new project to introduce plastics into the scheme of work. There is regular monitoring of work and teaching. The timetable does not use the rooms as efficiently as it could, and overcrowding brings a health and safety risk. There is a lack of a printer and a scanner for ICT work. So far, lack of time and money have impeded the developments needed, but improvement since the last inspection has already been satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above nationally expected levels in Year 6 and Year 8.
- Achievement from the start of Year 5 to Year 8 is very good.
- Teachers are very well informed and possess very good subject knowledge.
- Assessing, recording and tracking systems are lacking in rigour.
- Opportunities for developing ideas through ICT are very limited.

Commentary

99. Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 5 is below nationally expected levels. However, they enjoy drawing and painting and make rapid progress throughout their first two years. By the end of Year 6, the standard of work produced is above nationally expected levels. This improvement continues throughout Year 7, and in Year 8 many are beginning to work independently, producing work of above average quality. Achievement from the start of Year 5 to Year 8 is very good.
100. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the tasks their teachers set. They settle readily to their work and behaviour is usually very good. There is little difference to be seen in the performance of boys and girls and relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into groups.
101. Teaching is very good. Teachers are very well informed, possess very good subject knowledge and are able to provide very good advice and support to pupils. There is evidence of very good planning prior to lessons and management of pupils is very good during lessons. Teachers have high expectations and all pupils are expected to work to develop their full potential through art and craft activities. They are encouraged to develop appropriate oral and writing skills through discussion and annotation of their work in their visual diaries.
102. The curriculum is good but undue emphasis is placed on the acquisition of drawing, painting and craft skills, with little opportunity for design work using computers, digital cameras or printers. However, within these constraints, pupils explore ideas and experiment with a wide range of media and materials. Pupils in Year 8 are currently working on a very ambitious, large three-dimensional construction.
103. Leadership is very good and management good. The Head of Department has a very clear vision of how he would like to see the department develop over time, by making much greater use of specialist art staff, and by introducing design skills through the use of ICT. Assessment, recording and tracking systems are lacking in rigour at present and need to be improved so that much more accurate and detailed feedback can be provided to individual pupils, to help them improve the standard of their work. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is above average by Year 6.

- Good leadership and management, and good aspects of teaching and learning, are promoting improvements in pupils' attitudes and standards of work.
- Many pupils enthusiastically support a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- Some classes are too large for the available resources and for all pupils to have equal support from the teacher.
- There are no ICT facilities for pupils' use.

Commentary

104. Pupils' standards on entry are below average. By Year 6, standards are above average and pupils are developing a good balance of practical skills in performing and composing with knowledge and understanding. Achievement by Year 6 is good.
105. By Year 8, standards are average overall, but above average for a growing proportion of pupils. Despite the good aspects of teaching and learning, standards are higher in Year 7 than in Year 8. There are still some pupils in Year 8 who find it difficult to concentrate or work hard and take the subject seriously, and whose behaviour occasionally distracts the teacher and other pupils. Classes are too large in Year 8 for the available resources, especially electronic keyboards, and it is difficult for teachers alone to provide all the individual support pupils need. Achievement by Year 8 is satisfactory.
106. Pupils with special needs achieve as well as others, because their tasks are adjusted well to their capabilities. Inevitably, lower attaining pupils claim the majority of the teachers' time in group activities, with the result that higher attaining and talented pupils are sometimes left to fend for themselves. Then they do not always achieve as well as they should.
107. Teaching and learning are always satisfactory and often good. They are good overall. Good teaching promotes good learning by
- making challenging demands on pupils in well-planned lessons with a good variety of activities
 - very effective use of powerpoint technology and technical keywords
 - creating a climate of enjoyment, good humour and positive relations with and amongst pupils
 - giving encouraging feedback and good support, despite large classes.
108. Learning would improve if teaching always
- adopted a tighter lesson structure and faster pace
 - gave pupils tighter deadlines for group activity and dealt with common problems with the whole class rather than individually
 - maintained consistency in behaviour management, especially in Year 8.
109. Over 100 pupils have instrumental lessons and they and many others participate enthusiastically in a very good range of vocal and instrumental activities, which are coached at a high standard. There are many opportunities for performances, in school assemblies and concerts, musical theatre and in the county junior youth orchestra. This enrichment contributes much to the focus and status of music and contributes well to pupils' personal development. There are plans for ICT facilities, but at present pupils have no access to music computer programmes.
110. Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department provides a well organised environment in which everyone knows what is expected and responds well.
- Teaching enables all pupils to make at least satisfactory progress.
- There are high levels of strenuous activity and much enjoyment in all lessons.
- There are very good relationships between staff and pupils and the behaviour of pupils is very good.
- Health-related physical education is not sufficiently embedded in all lessons.
- There is not enough challenge in a minority of lessons for higher attaining pupils.

Commentary

111. By the end of Year 6, most pupils attain standards that are broadly in line with nationally expected levels. In Years 7 and 8 a very high proportion of pupils are attaining standards that are at least in line with expected levels. The achievement of pupils in relation to their capabilities is satisfactory by Year 6, and good by Year 8. Most pupils can demonstrate appropriate responses for their ages, in games and gymnastics. They understand and explain key elements of effective technique and tactics in team games.
112. Teaching is generally good and sometimes very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed during the inspection. The best lessons are characterised by very high expectations of behaviour, physical effort and concentration. Planning is detailed and provides for a well thought-out progression of activity within lessons. Staff and pupils enjoy very good relationships. Pupils respect their teachers and co-operate willingly with them. All pupils make significant gains as a result of this effective teaching. They benefit from high levels of activity and enjoyment. They make good use of opportunities to practice and improve their skills and their behaviour is generally very mature. An understanding of fitness and health is developed well in some lessons. All staff provide good care and support for pupils with special educational needs. Sometimes the most able pupils are not sufficiently extended in their work. Assessment in lessons is used skilfully to address individual needs and to adapt whole-class teaching.
113. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department has clear, sound views about what constitutes good practice and quality in physical education, and communicates these effectively to his colleagues. He has a clear and accurate view of current strengths and areas for development. There is a good programme of extra-curricular sport in a wide range of activities. The development of an extensive house competition system has been very successful in involving a high proportion of pupils in enjoyable and rewarding physical activity.
114. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. The department is exploring the effective use of ICT and video in practical lessons. Dance has been incorporated into the curriculum for Year 8. The revision of schemes of work is taking place, and assessment is clearly documented.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although the implementation of citizenship has been delayed, the new subject co-ordinator provides good leadership and management.
- An increasing range of opportunities allows pupils to develop skills of enquiry and participation.
- Assessment procedures have begun, but are not yet fully developed.

Commentary

115. An audit of the potential contribution of subjects and basic planning for the implementation of citizenship began last academic year. However, staffing difficulties prevented further development and a new co-ordinator was appointed in September 2003. Citizenship is taught as a separate subject in Years 5 and 6 and through other subjects as tutor periods in Years 7 and 8. It is well supported by a range of visits and activities such as a community walk to Dunkery Beacon, the establishment of class, year group and school councils, and a number of visitors.
116. Standards of work are satisfactory. All pupils have a specific file for their work on citizenship which is marked regularly. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have studied topics such as personal safety, crime and punishment, rights and responsibilities, conflict and the media. Pupils have done significant amounts of research and investigation and take care with the presentation of their files. Research on the rules of the countryside and attitudes towards the environment are especially good. Lower achieving pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress although their answers tend to be less full. Achievement is satisfactory in all years.
117. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. An increasing range of opportunities is provided for pupils to participate in citizenship within lessons, fund-raising events and community projects. Where citizenship is taught within other subjects in the curriculum, it is clearly identified as citizenship and work is kept separately. It was not possible to observe any lessons during the inspection, but the files of the pupils showed that a good range of teaching approaches is leading to effective learning. Pupils say they enjoy their work in citizenship.
118. Leadership and management of the subject are both good. The subject co-ordinator has made significant progress since September and has a clear and informed vision of how the department will progress further. Staff regularly attend conferences and courses. New resources have been purchased, including books, videos and websites. Schemes of work are being developed along with appropriate assessment. Citizenship is currently reported to parents as part of the pastoral programme, but there are plans to provide a specific report on citizenship in the near future. A good foundation has been laid in this relatively new subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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