

INSPECTION REPORT

STOWMARKET MIDDLE SCHOOL

Stowmarket

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124821

Headteacher: Mr Gordon Ewing

Lead inspector: Mrs J Greenfield

Dates of inspection: 26th - 28th April 2004

Inspection number: 258791

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:	610
School address:	Walnut Tree Walk Stowmarket Suffolk
Postcode:	IP14 1JP
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E-mail address:	head@stowmarketmiddle.co.uk
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R Hall
Date of previous inspection:	29 th June 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Stowmarket Middle School is bigger than most other middle schools. With 610 pupils on roll, it caters for pupils aged 9 - 13. It is a popular school and receives more applications than the number of places it has available. Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, which provide a broad mix of pupils. About a fifth of pupils come from outside the school's normal catchment area, either at the request of the local education authority or of parents. Nearly all pupils are of white British origin and no pupil is in the early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is average. Attainment on entry is also broadly average, although as a school with an area support centre for pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties, it has a higher proportion of pupils with a statement of special education need than usual. Fewer pupils than the national average are on the special educational needs register. The range of special needs includes a relatively high proportion of pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties and a small proportion with speech and communication, physical and other difficulties. The school holds the Charter Mark for Excellence in Public Services and the Basic Skills Agency Quality Mark.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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13452	Mr H Meggitt	Lay inspector	
20709	Mr D MacIldowie	Team inspector	English and drama
30553	Mr R Fuller	Team inspector	Mathematics
2711	Dr A Jarvis	Team inspector	Science
31688	Mr B McGonagle	Team inspector	Art and design
18542	Mr G Griffin	Team inspector	Design and technology
19530	Ms J Bray	Team inspector	Geography
18032	Mrs I Randall	Team inspector	History Information and communication technology
4617	Mrs R Fox	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31660	Mrs M Young	Team inspector	Music
4647	Mrs J Evans	Team inspector	Physical education
4372	Mr R Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship Personal, social and health education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Stowmarket Middle School is a **good school** which has several very good features. The very strong leadership of the headteacher ensures an ethos in which all pupils are valued and encouraged to do their best. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good, as is their behaviour and they respond well to the school's high expectations. Teaching and learning are good and enable pupils to achieve well in most subjects. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- By Year 8, standards exceed the national expectation in English, history, design and technology, art and design and music.
- Very good leadership by the headteacher ensures that there is a clear focus to the school's work and a strong commitment to improvement.
- Pupils of all capabilities achieve well in most subjects, because of effective teaching, but they do not achieve as well in mathematics and science as they do in English.
- The school's very positive ethos and inclusive approach contribute considerably to pupils' confidence and self-esteem and to their very good attitudes to learning.
- The provision for citizenship, especially in Years 7 and 8, is not sufficiently well planned to meet statutory requirements.
- Pupils are given very good opportunities to contribute to decisions about matters that affect them directly and their views are taken very seriously.
- Teachers assess pupils' work satisfactorily but assessment information, including data, is not used systematically or consistently to monitor progress over time and set challenging targets.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) has improved considerably in recent years but the development of pupils' ICT capability in Years 5 and 6 is not coordinated well enough.

Since its last inspection in July 1998, the school has made satisfactory progress in addressing the key issues. Standards have improved, with particularly good progress made in English. Pupils' progress is checked more frequently and targeted pupils receive additional support. The school has increased the level and quality of resources for ICT considerably. Greater use is made of ICT to support learning in subjects, but there is not enough coordination and planning in Years 5 and 6.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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 good overall although not consistently so across all subjects. By the end of Year 6 and Year 8, standards overall are as expected nationally but are above this by the end of Year 8 in English, history, religious education, design and technology and music and well above expectations in art and design. In the national tests in 2003, standards were in line with the national average and were average when compared with the results in similar schools and when account is taken of their earlier performance in the tests at the end of Year 2. Pupils did far better in English than they did in mathematics and science. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in all years because they receive good support from their teachers and teaching assistants. The most capable pupils and the small number of pupils from minority ethnic heritages also achieve well.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Both in lessons and around the school, their attitudes are very good, as is their behaviour. Attendance is well above average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good overall and enables most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs, to learn and achieve well. Pupils' work is generally marked and assessed thoroughly and constructively, but assessment, although satisfactory overall, is not consistently used to plan the next stage of learning for individual pupils. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well, although there are weaknesses in the provision for citizenship in Years 7 and 8. There are good opportunities for enrichment, particularly in sport and music. Standards of care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Pupils receive good support and guidance from staff and the arrangements for involving pupils in the work of the school are very good. The school's partnership with parents is good and links with other local schools are very good, especially in the induction and transfer of pupils.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher's very good leadership provides clear direction to the school's work, especially in implementing a range of innovative strategies designed to improve teaching and learning and pupils' achievements and ensuring that it is responsive to the needs of all pupils. He is effectively supported by his senior management team and other staff with leadership responsibilities. The governing body undertakes its responsibilities satisfactorily in supporting the school, but does not yet provide the level of challenge expected or ensure that all statutory requirements are met in full. The routine management of the school is effective. The school monitors its work satisfactorily, but lacks a strong enough overview of pupils' progress and achievements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are positive about the school and particularly about the way it is led and managed. They appreciate the regular information they receive about their child's progress, which they see as good. Some parents express concerns about behaviour and the arrangements for homework. Inspectors consider that behaviour in the school is generally very good and that the arrangements for homework are satisfactory. Pupils like school and they feel that they are expected to work hard and do their best. As with parents, a number of pupils also comment unfavourably about behaviour.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise achievement in mathematics and science to the level found in English.
- Coordinate more effectively the development of pupils' ICT capability in Years 5 and 6 and report their progress to parents.
- Use assessment information, including data, more rigorously to monitor progress over time and to set challenging targets for pupils.
- Strengthen the coordination, planning and teaching of citizenship in Years 7 and 8.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils achieve well throughout the school in most subjects, including English and very well in art and design. By the end of Year 6 and Year 8, standards are as expected overall, but are above expectations by the end of Year 8 in English, history, religious education, design and technology and music and well above expectations in art and design. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in all years. The most capable pupils and the small number of pupils from minority ethnic heritages, also achieve well. There are no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieved very well in the national tests in English in 2003 and the results were well above the national average.
- By Year 8, standards are higher in English, history, design and technology, art and design, music and religious education than normally found in other schools.
- Pupils achieve well in several subjects and particularly well in art and design.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well through the support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants.

Commentary

1. The school's overall results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were in line with the national average and were average when compared with the results of schools with a similar level of attainment in the tests at the end of Year 2. The school is designated as an area support centre for pupils with moderate and specific learning difficulties. This means that it has a higher proportion than the national average of pupils with a statement of special educational need, which can affect the school's overall results. In Year 6 in 2003, a much higher proportion of pupils than usual had a statement of special educational need which depressed the schools results.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.5 (27.2)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.4 (25.6)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.1 (28.5)	28.6 (28.3)

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

2. Pupils did particularly well in English in 2003. The results in this subject, when all pupils are taken into account and at the higher Level 5 or above, were well above the national averages and when compared with the averages for similar schools. They were also above the national average at the expected Level 4 or above. In mathematics and science, the results were below the national averages overall and at Level 4 or above, but were in line with the national averages at the higher Level 5 or above. A similar picture exists when the results are compared with those of similar schools. When account is taken of the higher proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational need in the year group, the school's results in mathematics and science are in line with the national averages and the averages for similar schools. At the higher Level 5 or above, the results in mathematics were marginally above the

averages for similar schools. In all three subjects, boys performed better than the girls in relation to their respective national figures. This has been the pattern for the last three years.

3. Pupils achieved as expected in the national tests in 2003 and did particularly well in English. The school's results have improved considerably since the last inspection. Over the past five years, this improvement has been in line with the national trend although it has varied from year to year in all three subjects and particularly in mathematics. The school has encountered considerable difficulty in recent years in recruiting specialist teachers of mathematics, which has affected standards. The school exceeded its targets in English and science but did not meet them in mathematics.
4. Pupils' attainment is broadly average when they enter the school in Year 5, although the higher than average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs depresses it slightly. By Year 6, current standards are in line with national expectations in most subjects and are better than this in a few. Most pupils are achieving well, although not consistently in all subjects. Standards are typical of those found nationally for pupils of this age in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Achievement is good in English and satisfactory in mathematics and science. In the remaining subjects, standards are in line with expectations in French, German, ICT, geography, religious education, design and technology and physical education and are above the national expectation in history, art and design and music. Achievement is good in geography, history, religious education, design and technology, music and physical education, because pupils' skills and understanding in some of these subjects are not as well developed as other areas when they enter the school. Pupils' achievement in art and design is very good by Year 6. In French, German and ICT, achievement is satisfactory.
5. By Year 8, standards are typical for pupils of this age in most subjects, including mathematics and science and are higher than this in several, for example, in English, history, religious education, design and technology and music. In these latter subjects and in physical education, achievement is good in Years 7 and 8. In art and design, standards are much higher than normally found by Year 8 and in this subject, pupils achieve very well because the work provided is challenging. It is not possible to make a judgement about standards in citizenship as no work was available and no lessons were seen in this subject. In the personal, social and health education programme in all years, pupils achieve well and their knowledge, skills and understanding of a range of topics are as expected for pupils by Year 6 and Year 8.
6. Pupils' achievement is not consistently good across the subjects, although it is never less than satisfactory. For example, pupils' achievement in English is better than their achievement in mathematics and science. The differences in their achievement across the subjects are due to a number of factors. Where achievement is good or very good, this is usually closely related to the effectiveness of the teaching and the provision of a variety of challenging tasks and the teachers' high expectations of pupils' work and response. The satisfactory achievement in a few subjects relates mainly to the school's difficulties in recruiting specialist staff, as in mathematics, to a lack of clarity and challenge in some of the work, as in science and insufficient time for the subject, as in ICT and modern foreign languages.
7. In their current work, there is very little difference between the attainment and achievements of boys and girls and little evidence to show why boys do better than the girls in the national tests at the end of Year 6. Only in geography, in Years 7 and 8, is the work of boys better than that of the girls. In science, there are signs that the gap in performance between the boys and girls is getting narrower. Pupils with special educational needs, including those with a statement, make good progress and achieve well in all areas of the curriculum. They receive good support from their teachers and teaching assistants, which enables them to cope well in lessons. The standard of their work in English and mathematics, as well as other subjects, is also enhanced by the regular use of a computer-based commercial program, which helps to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. The most capable pupils, including those who are included in the more able pupil programme (MAPP), achieve as well as their peers because in

most subjects they receive work that extends them further. However, they are not always sufficiently challenged in mathematics. The achievement of the very small number of pupils from minority ethnic heritages, all of whom are fluent in English, is good.

8. Pupils' literacy and language skills are good overall and are sufficient to enable them to cope with the demands of their subjects and make good progress. Nearly all subjects give good consideration to the development of pupils' skills in these areas, especially in the correct use of specialist subject vocabulary. Pupils use their mathematical skills satisfactorily to support their learning in most subjects, although there is a lack of coherent planning for the development of numeracy. There is good use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum and pupils' competence in using their ICT skills to support learning in most subjects is satisfactory.
9. The school's performance in the national tests has risen in recent years, although not consistently from year to year. This improving picture is confirmed by the inspection evidence, which shows that standards are rising, albeit slowly. An important contribution to the higher standards has been the implementation of some of the approaches recommended in the national strategies, particularly for Key Stage 3, for improving the quality of teaching and learning and planning. In addition, the school has placed emphasis on developing pupils' thinking skills as well as a focus on their preferred learning styles. As yet, the whole-school systems for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress across the subjects are not sufficiently consistent or robust to make a sufficient or significant difference to raising standards further.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good overall. Pupils relate well to one another and to adults. Attendance and punctuality are very good. The school helps pupils to develop their capacity to respect other people, distinguish right from wrong, act responsibly in the community and make very good contributions to school life.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Both attendance and punctuality are very good.
- The school has created a very positive ethos that successfully promotes pupils' academic and personal development.
- High expectations of pupils' conduct are largely achieved in practice due to the very strong moral and social provision.
- The school could do more in planning and coordinating its approach to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development across the school.

Commentary

10. Pupils' attendance is very good and well above the pattern nationally. In the 2002/03 academic year, it was 94.7 per cent, an improvement on the previous year and just short of their current target of 95 per cent. This year, there is every indication that the high levels of attendance will be maintained.
11. The vast majority of pupils are punctual and like coming to school; punctuality for lessons, too, is very good. The school continues to promote high levels of attendance and frequently reminds parents that their support is also very important. The school's systems for monitoring and reporting attendance are very effective. Its close working links with the education welfare service ensure that any emerging patterns of poor attendance or punctuality are acted upon quickly and appropriately. This close working relationship and sensitive approach has helped a number of pupils to improve their attendance.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	5.0
National data	6.0

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.3
National data	0.3

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

12. Pupils like school; they feel secure and are enthusiastic to participate in the wide range of additional activities provided. This enthusiasm, together with their positive attitudes, combines well to enhance the pupils' personal development and achievement. The school makes clear to pupils the attitudes and values it wants them to uphold and pupils respond well to these demands. Pupils have a good view of the school's academic expectations for them, saying that teachers expect them to work hard and do their best.
13. In lessons, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They listen to their teachers and are positive and keen to respond when asked. Attitudes are rarely unsatisfactory, either when working on their own or in groups. Pupils settle quickly at the start of lessons and are generally confident, showing a willingness to contribute to discussion. Pupils respect the views of others, showing politeness and consideration when others are talking.
14. Pupils with special educational needs and the very small number of pupils from different minority ethnic heritages, are integrated very well into the school. They work hard and take pride in their achievements. Their attitudes to learning and their relationships with other pupils and with staff, especially the teaching assistants, are very good. A few pupils with special educational needs have considerable behavioural difficulties and, at times, they are not as attentive or as positive as others in the class. In most cases, teachers manage this behaviour well.
15. Behaviour around the school is very good. Pupils understand and accept what the school expects of them in terms of conduct and during break time they play well together, needing the minimum of supervision. They respect each other, as well as the property of the school and many are engaged in additional activities during lunchtime. The school's behaviour policy sets out clear values and principles, what is expected of pupils and how they are to be supported. Parents are also sent a summary of the policy identifying the code of conduct, the rules and the sanctions to be used for bad behaviour.
16. The school uses exclusion as the punishment of last resort. Whilst the number of exclusions in the current academic year appears high, this is attributable to a small number of pupils, many of whom are from outside the school's normal catchment area. Approximately one-third of these pupils have now been permanently excluded. The school's methods for dealing with incidents of extreme and continuing bad behaviour remain very good and this process also includes working closely with the parents and appropriate external agencies.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	600	130	3
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0

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

17. Most aspects of pupils' personal qualities are developed very well, particularly their social and moral awareness, which are slightly stronger than their spiritual and cultural awareness. The school's very positive ethos enables pupils to develop and become mature and confident young people. Pupils are well aware of distinguishing right from wrong and have a very clear knowledge of what is expected of them; they respond very well to these expectations. Pupils are keen to be involved in the range of activities provided by the school and they relate very well to adults and to their peers. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility and they undertake these tasks with enthusiasm. Examples of the pupils' social responsibility include the 'buddy system', whereby older pupils are linked with younger pupils, the recent introduction of 'playground helpers' to support lonely pupils at break times and the work of pupils who undertake a range of activities to support the school's Eco status. The school council works well, engendering in pupils a sense of confidence that they have a responsible role to fulfil within the school and in the wider community.
18. Pupils respect the beliefs of others and have a clear understanding of them. They are able to reflect on issues of importance to them and to form judgements that enable them to develop greater insights. Religious education and its teaching provide opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils and this is further enhanced in several other subjects, especially English, music, history and geography. Pupils attend assemblies regularly, which are generally held for year groups, but the school does not provide pupils with the opportunity for a daily act of collective worship. Pupils have a good awareness of their own cultural heritage as well as that of others. Although they are able to develop an awareness of the rich variety of different cultures and traditions that exist in this country, many opportunities that would enhance this aspect of pupils' personal development are missed, because it is not explicitly planned for.
19. The school is fully aware of the importance of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils and the impact it has on their progress, attitudes and achievements. The personal, social and health education programme, together with the school's wider enrichment and extra-curricular programme, make a considerable contribution to these aspects of pupils' personal development. The distinctive contribution that individual subjects can make is not as explicit in teachers' planning. Better coordination of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural dimensions across the school would ensure that opportunities for their development are tackled more systematically.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good overall and enables most pupils to learn and achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from their teachers and teaching assistants, enabling them to make good progress and achieve well. Pupils' work is generally marked and assessed thoroughly and constructively, but assessment, although satisfactory overall, is not consistently used to plan the next stage of learning for individual pupils. The curriculum meets the needs of pupils well, but the provision for citizenship does not meet statutory requirements. There are good opportunities for enrichment, particularly in sport and music. Standards of care, welfare, health and safety are very good. Pupils receive good support and guidance from staff and the arrangements for involving pupils in the work of the school are very good. The school's partnership with parents is good and links with other local schools are very good, especially in the induction and transfer of pupils.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and as a result, most pupils achieve well. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory in most subjects, although it is not always used consistently to set targets for pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most of the teaching in history and art and design and in English in Years 7 and 8, is very good.
- Teachers plan their lessons well to provide pupils with a variety of challenging and interesting activities, although not all of the planning takes sufficient account of pupils' individual needs.
- The use of a computer-based program is helping to develop some pupils' literacy and numeracy skills well.
- Teachers give constructive feedback to pupils about their work but do not always set clear targets for improvement.

Commentary

20. Teaching and learning are good overall and enable pupils to make progress and achieve well in most subjects. The table below indicates the quality of teaching seen across the school as a whole. Almost all of the teaching is at least satisfactory. It is good or better in two-thirds of lessons and very good and sometimes excellent in over a quarter. There is little difference in the quality of teaching and learning across the year groups, although there are some small variations between the subjects. Both parents and pupils are positive about the teaching in the school and these views are supported by the inspection findings. The amount of good or better teaching is not significantly different from the time of the last inspection but there has been a decrease in the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 102 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (4%)	24 (24%)	40 (39%)	33 (32%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	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.

21. There are examples of good and very good teaching in nearly all subjects. In a few subjects, for example English, art and design and history and religious education, some of the teaching is excellent. The teaching in art and design and history is very good overall and also in English in Years 7 and 8.
22. Most teachers plan and structure their lessons well, using their specialist subject knowledge appropriately to provide a variety of tasks and activities to interest and challenge pupils and help them learn effectively. In English, the planning is particularly thorough. Lesson plans

clearly identify the objectives of the lesson and, in most instances, these objectives are shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson so they are clear about what they are to do. Occasionally, as in some science lessons, for example, pupils are not always clear about what is expected of them and what the purpose of the activity is. In such lessons, pupils do not make as much progress as they might.

23. The use of a good range of resources, including interactive whiteboards and other materials, is a strong feature of much of the teaching and supports pupils' learning well. In art and design, teachers make excellent use of exemplar material to prompt discussion. The use of ICT to support subject teaching is effective in many subjects, particularly in French and German, but is not integrated into the work sufficiently in geography and music. Teachers themselves provide good role models to the pupils in their own use of ICT to support their teaching.
24. Teachers are using many of the approaches recommended in the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, including the format of the three-part lesson, which includes a starter activity, focused individual, paired or group activities to meet the learning intentions of the lesson and a concluding whole-class activity to check what learning has taken place and to outline what is to happen in subsequent lessons. Not all teachers are using this approach consistently, for example in science and modern foreign languages, and, as a result, learning is not as effective in some of these lessons.
25. Most lessons include opportunities for pupils to work on their own and with others in pairs and small groups, as well as contributing as a whole class. Teachers question pupils carefully and thoughtfully, giving pupils plenty of opportunity to think before responding. The school as a whole has had a specific emphasis for some time on developing pupils' thinking skills, and is achieving some success. Questioning is particularly challenging in history and brisk recall activities and sharp questioning in geography encourage considerable discussion in some lessons. Lessons generally proceed at a suitable pace to ensure that pupils' concentration is maintained and the amount of work undertaken is productive. In most lessons, pupils are fully involved and want to learn.
26. Pupils with special educational needs learn well in most lessons, because of the support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants. Individual education plans are readily available and are mostly well used to plan appropriate work for these pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together in most subjects to ensure that pupils receive the appropriate support. Foreign language assistants also enhance pupils' learning and their attitudes to the foreign language. Occasionally, as in some mathematics lessons, lower attaining pupils and some pupils with special educational needs, are given too many uninspiring worksheets and do not encounter the range of interesting resources found in lessons for other pupils. The use of a computer-based program to develop their literacy and numeracy skills is working effectively.
27. Not all teachers ensure that the planned work fully meets the needs of individual groups of pupils in the class. As a result, their learning remains satisfactory rather than good. Examples were noted of tasks not being adapted to meet individual needs in English, French, German and science and of a lack of challenge in some of the tasks given to some higher attaining pupils in mathematics. In other relatively less effective lessons, although satisfactory overall, some of the work failed to capture pupils' imagination, as in design and technology, or too much emphasis was placed on developing pupils' skills rather than understanding, as in ICT.
28. Teachers develop pupils' literacy and language skills well in most subjects, especially in the use of subject specialist vocabulary, in the emphasis placed on developing their speaking and listening skills and in the care with which they correct grammar and punctuation in pupils' writing. Although satisfactory, teachers do not develop and emphasise the use of numeracy as effectively. The use of ICT is mostly satisfactory although it is not fully coordinated or planned in Years 5 and 6. Subjects contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development but these aspects are not always planned for explicitly in all subjects.

29. The use of assessment is satisfactory overall. The thoroughness and constructiveness of assessment are generally good and are very good in English and design and technology where teachers give very detailed and specific regular feedback to pupils related to their individual targets. The school system is used in almost all subjects with the exception of personal, social and health education, ICT in Years 5 and 6 and religious education. Although grades are not related to subject-specific issues, teachers' comments give useful guidance on strengths and weaknesses in tasks.
30. Teachers' use of assessment to meet the needs of individual pupils is satisfactory. Although teachers know, as a result of frequent and thorough marking, how well pupils are doing, only in English, mathematics and design and technology do they use this information well to set targets for improvement for individual pupils or to plan individual support. Teachers do, however, provide specific support for pupils with special educational needs by combining information from subject assessments with that on their individual education plans.
31. In most subjects, where there are no individual targets for pupils, pupils' knowledge of how to improve their work in specific tasks is satisfactory. Teachers are beginning to encourage pupils to evaluate their own work, but this is largely based on effort and presentation of work rather than requiring them to think about their subject strengths and weaknesses.

The curriculum

The school offers a good curriculum, which meets the needs of different groups of pupils in the school well. There are good opportunities for enrichment, for example, through extra-curricular activities in sport and music. Accommodation, staffing and other resources are also good and effectively meet the needs of the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The breadth of curricular opportunities provided is good but pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not have a planned programme of citizenship.
- A large number of pupils gain considerable benefit from the very good opportunities provided for extra-curricular activities and those in music and sport are very good.
- The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The school does not ensure that all pupils have a daily act of collective worship.
- Good levels of resources are effectively used to meet pupils' curricular needs.

Commentary

32. Throughout the school, the curriculum is well structured and enhanced by the specialist facilities available. It meets all requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The early introduction of French and German in Years 5 and 6 provides pupils with a good foundation for when they are required to study it later on. The curriculum is further broadened through a good programme of personal, social and health education. There is no explicitly planned programme for citizenship in Years 7 and 8.
33. The good curriculum in most subjects makes an important contribution to the overall good achievement in the school. The curriculum is very good in English and history where there is very detailed planning. In both mathematics and science, the curriculum has been strengthened. The good provision has not yet had sufficient time to fully feed through to improve achievement.
34. The curriculum is generally well timetabled. Ample time is allocated for English, mathematics and science and most other subjects have enough time to teach the planned programmes of work. In contrast, religious education has insufficient time in Year 6. The time allocated to modern foreign languages has been reduced since the last inspection. In French and German,

one hour a week is allocated in Years 5 and 6, which is more than would be the norm in a primary school, but the allocation of one hour in Year 7 is lower than is normally found in a secondary school.

35. At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum for ICT was judged to require improvement, particularly in Years 5 and 6. Much development has taken place and the ICT curriculum is broadly covered in Years 5 and 6, where it is taught through work in individual subjects. However, the curriculum in Years 7 and 8 is better and effectively meets the needs of individual pupils because it is more coherently planned.
36. Pupils in all years take part in assemblies, which provide a daily act of collective worship on two out of the five school days each week. On other days, pupils not in assembly undertake a variety of activities with their form tutor, which sometimes, but not always, include a 'thought for the day'. The school's arrangements for collective worship do not meet legal requirements. The school's stated reason for the non-compliance is that it lacks the space for whole school or year assemblies to take place each day and it cannot guarantee that all members of staff ensure requirements are met in individual classes.
37. The overall curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good and contributes to the school's intentions of providing an inclusive education for all its pupils. Pupils with special educational needs, including those who are attached to the area support centre, have good access to the full range of curricular, enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities provided by the school. Teaching assistants help pupils well in lessons, enabling them to tackle all the activities and tasks undertaken by their peers. In most cases, the work is adapted to meet their needs well but there are examples of the overuse of worksheets, especially in mathematics, which constrains their learning.
38. The school actively promotes participation in a wide range of clubs, sports events, the arts, visits and residential experiences. The quality of extra-curricular and enrichment activities to support the curriculum is good and levels of involvement are high. Staff provide a varied programme that effectively develops pupils' interests, enhances their experiences and promotes lifelong learning. A particularly interesting feature, which is working well, is the more able pupil programme (MAPP), which has a good uptake in Years 5 and 6. This is designed to both extend their learning and their view of the world.
39. The school provides very good opportunities for music. A large number of pupils benefit from peripatetic music lessons and go on to attend various music groups, with opportunities to perform in front of audiences. The school has a choir, chamber choir, orchestra, string orchestra, wind, brass and jazz ensembles and recorder group. School concerts and musical events give pupils the opportunity to share their achievements with other pupils and parents, as well as with the wider community.
40. Sport is also a strong feature of the school. The physical education department provides a good range of sporting activities. A large number of pupils participate in clubs, house competitions and sports day and represent the school in matches, leagues, tournaments, athletics meetings and swimming galas. As a result, the school is successful in competitive sport in the major games, athletics and swimming.
41. The match of teachers and support staff to the curriculum is good. The school has had a number of staff changes over the past two years and has had particular difficulties in appointing specialist mathematicians. The school is now fully staffed and successful efforts have been made to appoint well-qualified permanent staff. Although most subjects are not fully staffed with specialist teachers, this is not affecting unduly the overall quality of teaching and learning. Teaching assistants are used well to support the learning of individual pupils.
42. Overall, accommodation is good and supports the curriculum well. Classroom facilities are heavily used and there is little free space. Some specialist classes have to be taught in rooms

some way from the subject bases. The school has extensive playing fields a short distance from the school and external sports facilities are good. In inclement weather, however, there is pressure within the school buildings owing to a limited amount of hard play area for the number of children.

43. The quality and range of learning resources are good. The school library has a good stock of books, particularly reference materials and is well used by pupils. Resources are very good in art and design and ICT, and good in all the remaining subjects, other than design and technology where they are satisfactory. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards that help enliven pupils' learning. In many subject areas, though, there are insufficient ICT resources available in classrooms. Subjects make very good use of outside agencies to support pupils' learning. A particular strength is the contribution made by a local police officer to the personal, social and health education programme.

Care, guidance and support

Effective procedures are in place to provide very good standards of care, welfare, health and safety for pupils. Pupils receive good support, advice and guidance from teachers. The school has very effective induction arrangements for pupils. Procedures for involving pupils in the work and development of the school are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures for the protection of pupils are very good and health and safety policies and procedures are implemented effectively.
- Most pupils feel that they have good relationships with one or more adults in the school.
- Induction procedures involving the local primary schools are very good.
- Pupils are able to make a very good contribution to the school's work and development.

Commentary

44. The procedures for child protection are effective and in line with locally agreed child protection arrangements. There is a named teacher for child protection who has undertaken appropriate training. All staff understand the child protection procedures fully and work to implement them effectively. Internet access policies are clearly defined and adhered to by staff.
45. There is good health and safety awareness and staff work to county procedures. Staff have had appropriate training. Appropriate medical procedures are in place. Risk assessment records are available in all subject areas. They are very good in science and design and technology, but more formal procedures are required in physical education. Systems to ensure that pupils work within a healthy and safe environment are good. Staff are well briefed and use the procedures effectively.
46. The form tutor system ensures that good relationships are established between teachers and pupils. Each pupil has a logbook, which is used effectively to record homework and teachers' and parents' comments. A section in the logbook permits pupils to raise concerns about performance in class, behaviour or difficulties with friends. Other, more serious matters relating to discipline can be raised with the head of year or with the headteacher. In addition, the logbook contains an outline summary of the *Rapid Checks* marks, which informs parents about the performance of pupils throughout the year. Achievement, relating to attendance and behaviour, is analysed regularly and records kept on computer. There is a very good policy document on tackling bullying which clearly states that staff, pupils and parents are expected to work together to ensure that bullying will not be tolerated. Detentions are given for poor behaviour outside the classroom, but when all due procedures have been followed, a *helpline* can be set up to support and guide pupils who have misbehaved. Since September 2003, this system has been successful in reducing the number of pupils needing a *helpline*.

47. Teachers respond well to pupils' academic and personal needs. The knowledge teachers have of the pupils enables them to provide pupils with well-targeted advice, guidance and support. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants in meeting the targets in their individual education plans. A very good mentoring system helps pupils who are not achieving their full potential. Pupils are able to choose their mentor, who sets time aside to help pupils to plan their work in school and at home and to organise their time more effectively.
48. Very good induction procedures, involving the three main contributory schools, have been established. In the autumn term, the head of Year 5 visits the local primary schools and engages in some teaching of Year 4 pupils. In the spring term, the coordinators for English, mathematics and science visit the primary schools and in the summer term, the coordinator for special educational needs spends some time in each primary school. There are also two induction days in the summer term when pupils from the primary schools come into the school. Transfer arrangements for pupils to the upper school are also very good. Excellent links have been established and the Year 9 tutor visits the school to address Year 8 pupils in assembly and to interview them about their preferences and concerns.
49. The majority of pupils feel strongly that their views are sought and acted upon. School council members were recently involved, alongside governors, in the interviewing of prospective candidates for the post of headteacher. Pupils' views are also sought by means of questionnaires and the school takes appropriate action to respond to their views. This is a very strong picture that is reflected throughout the year groups.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school is held in high regard by parents. Both parents and pupils feel that it is a good school to attend. Parents are pleased with the progress their children make and they support the high expectations held by staff. The school works closely with its contributory primary and upper school partners. The arrangements for the induction and transfer of pupils are major strengths.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The induction and transfer of pupils from primary and to secondary education is very well handled.
- Twice termly *Rapid Checks* and parents' evenings enable regular reviews of pupils' progress.
- Pupils' logbooks are generally well used for maintaining contact between home and school.

Commentary

50. The school's links with parents are good. Both parents and pupils value the school and consider that the teaching is good. As a result of the high regard in which the school is held by the community, an increasing number of parents are choosing the school for their children, creating oversubscription for the number of places available.
51. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress in a variety of ways – as, for example, through half-termly parents' evenings, the *Rapid Check* system and the annual written reports. The pupils' logbook is generally well used by teachers as well as parents and contains much useful information including the homework timetable and reference to pupils' targets. The termly magazine *News and Views* provides good coverage of the school's activities and achievements. It is distributed to residents close to the school, as well as to all parents. The high level of consultation and response to parents' ideas and concerns is also borne out by the Charter Mark award that the school currently holds.
52. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the content and comment in its annual reports to parents. Clear guidance has been given to teachers and, as a result, pupils'

achievements and targets are clearly identified. However, reports to parents do not meet the requirement to report pupils' progress in ICT in Years 5 and 6.

53. The school has good contacts with the parents of those pupils with special educational needs. The vast majority of these parents attend the meetings at which their child's needs are reviewed. As a result of these good links, parents have a better understanding of how to help their children at home.
54. The school seeks the views of parents on a regular basis and, importantly, acts appropriately upon the findings. The arrangements for homework and the development of the home/school agreement, for example, have been improved as a result of such consultations. In addition to the formal links with the school, parents are encouraged to make contact with the school if any concerns or complaints should arise and such approaches are handled in a professional and systematic way.
55. The school's links with the community are good. The school recognises the importance of its role in the local and wider community. There is now a high level of use of the school's facilities by local clubs and groups. Pupils visit and support elderly residents in the community. The Friends Association is an active group and raises valuable funds that benefit the pupils.
56. A particular strength of the school is its very good links with contributory primary schools and the neighbouring high schools taking its pupils in Year 9. Staff from the school visit all the relevant primary schools to talk to pupils and teachers in Year 4. Careful consideration is given to personal factors in the construction of tutor and teaching groups. Parents and pupils are invited to come to the school prior to joining and a carefully prepared programme of visits and activities ensures a smooth and enjoyable transition. In addition, there are curriculum meetings between staff to make arrangements for transition units and to discuss and implement standardisation of teaching methods.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and he is well supported by senior staff who share his educational vision. The new governing body gives appropriate strategic guidance to the school and undertakes its responsibilities satisfactorily. However, the governing body does not fulfil its statutory responsibilities in relation to the teaching of citizenship in Years 7 and 8, the provision of a daily act of collective worship and the reporting of progress in ICT in Years 5 and 6. The routine management of the school is effective and good financial structures and procedures are in place.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision and provides very good educational direction for the school.
- Senior management does not monitor the quality of assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress regularly or with enough rigour.
- Area and subject coordinators have built cohesive teams with shared strategies for raising standards.

Commentary

57. The new governing body, which has been substantially reorganised since 2003, has precise terms of reference for its committees and an effective system for reporting and accountability. There is a clear view of how its members need to develop as a group, although it is not yet fully representative in the absence of parent governors. The governing body has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and of its role in holding the school to account. It is supportive of the senior management team but does not yet sufficiently

challenge the headteacher and senior staff in relation to improving identified areas of weakness.

58. The governors are beginning to shape the future strategic direction of the school more directly through the appointment of a new headteacher and revision of the school improvement plan. They do not meet their statutory responsibilities for ensuring provision of a daily act of collective worship, the teaching of citizenship, or in the reporting of progress in ICT in Years 5 and 6.
59. The headteacher has a very clear and articulate educational vision for the school as an inclusive community. He has supported the governing body well through a period of considerable turbulence and kept both them and parents well informed about school policies. He has directed a number of substantial curricular innovations, such as the incorporation of thinking skills, which are improving the quality of teaching and learning.
60. The senior management team actively shares the headteacher's vision and works cooperatively to ensure efficient day-to-day management of the school. Nearly all parents also consider that the school is led and managed well and this view is shared by the pupils. Several senior managers have a range of whole-school responsibilities, which they carry out effectively, but these leave insufficient time to implement strategies to raise standards in their own departments.
61. Subject coordinators, many of whom are recent appointments, are good role models and have established cohesive teams of specialist and non-specialist staff. These teams have worked collaboratively on departmental improvement plans, which link well to the overall strategic direction of the school. However, there is no clearly defined system for the line management of subject areas and monitoring within departments is not regular or rigorous enough. Data on pupils' progress is not monitored centrally by the school in such a way that challenging targets for improvement can be set and measured on a regular basis.
62. Leadership and management of the provision for pupils with special educational needs are good. The statutory requirements for the annual review of each pupil's statement of special educational need are met in full. The special educational needs coordinator, together with the coordinator of the area support centre, have a good understanding of the needs of these pupils and maintain effective liaison with teachers, parents and external agencies. The progress of pupils with special educational needs in meeting the targets in their individual education plans and in the core subjects is monitored carefully to ensure that they receive the appropriate support. However, the effectiveness of the support provided for these pupils is not systematically monitored and evaluated and records of the progress they make in individual subjects are not held centrally.
63. The school has a very good programme for the induction of new staff and makes a good contribution to initial teacher training through several close partnership arrangements. The performance management system for staff is in place and clearly linked to their continuing professional development. The school has managed well the difficulties it has faced in the recruitment and retention of staff. Financial management is good and spending decisions are well targeted to meet educational priorities. The school applies the principles of best value well in managing and using resources in order to secure improvements.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,671,147	Balance from previous year	82,334
Total expenditure	1,670,030	Balance carried forward to the next	83,451
Expenditure per pupil	2,760		

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test results at the end of Year 6 have substantially improved and achievement is good in all years.
- Very good leadership and management enable the subject to be consistently well taught.
- The very well planned programme of study provides variety and challenge, particularly for Years 7 and 8.
- Lessons are very well planned so that pupils build effectively on existing skills and knowledge.
- Although assessment is usually of very high quality, some teachers' comments are too brief to be helpful.
- English makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development as young citizens.
- Some tasks need adapting to meet the needs of high and low attainers in Years 5 and 6.

Commentary

64. In 2003, the results in the national tests at the end of Year 6 were well above the national average and the average for similar schools. Both boys and girls outperformed their national counterparts, with girls attaining marginally higher standards. Given their average prior attainment, the achievement of these pupils was very good. Standards have risen steadily in recent years. In work seen, standards are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6 and pupils achieve well. Most pupils speak clearly, with the most able using extended sentences. They listen well to the teacher and increasingly well to each other. They frequently read aloud with clarity and good expression. Written responses to their reading are lively and their writing improves in length and accuracy. Pupils with special educational needs make equally good progress, as do the small number of pupils from ethnic minority heritages. By Year 8, standards exceed the national expectation, indicating good achievement. Pupils speak with confidence and listen with good concentration. Pupils of all capabilities read a wide range of challenging literature, including Shakespeare. A Year 7 lower set made exceptional progress in their understanding and enjoyment of Shelley's *Ozymandias*. Pupils become skilful in analysing and reproducing techniques used in a variety of non-fiction texts, including advertisements and teenage magazines, often using ICT to enhance their work. Most pupils are able to adapt their style to suit the purpose and readership.
65. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall and very good in Years 5 and 6. They arrive punctually and ready to work. They co-operate well, particularly in mixed-gender pairs and groups, on a range of tasks including improvised plays and shared reading. Listening to one another's ideas with respect, they enjoy each other's successes. Most develop good study habits such as note-taking and annotation of texts. By encouraging pupils to work together to consider serious issues, such as relationships with parents, English makes a valuable contribution to their personal development as young citizens.
66. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Years 7 and 8, where there is a higher level of challenge. In nearly half the lessons seen, teaching was very good and occasionally excellent. Planning is very thorough, providing a good variety of activities that enable pupils to develop further their knowledge and skills. The purpose of the lesson is always shared with pupils and progress is usually carefully reviewed at the end. Pupils are quickly engaged by appropriate starter activities, following the recommendations of the national strategies in both key stages. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and pupils usually

respond well. They are encouraged to explore and discuss texts together, giving them fresh insights and developing their own thinking. Relationships are positive, with plenty of praise and challenge and pupils are pleased when they do well. Resources are carefully prepared and often provide helpful frameworks and prompts, enabling most pupils to succeed, although the department recognises that some tasks should be adapted to meet the full range of ability, especially in Years 5 and 6. Teachers know pupils well as individuals; they are very aware of any special needs and use appropriate strategies to meet them. Partnership with support staff is effective. Homework is used well to prepare and follow up class work. The quality of assessment is very good overall. Marking is usually detailed, analytical and specific in its advice on how to improve. However, a few teachers do not mark as well as this. The department makes very good use of data, such as practice test results, to plan future teaching and to target areas of weakness.

67. The curriculum is very well planned to meet National Curriculum requirements and provide a broad and stimulating programme of study. It is particularly rich and challenging in Years 7 and 8 and includes drama and elements of media studies. The department is well equipped and makes good use of audio-visual aids.
68. Both leadership and management are very good. The coordinator has very clear vision and high aspirations, which have already led to substantial improvements in attainment. The large team of staff teaching English is given very good professional advice and direction and they share a common commitment to improvement. The scheme of work provides detailed lesson plans and teaching approaches, reflecting the best features of the National Strategies for Literacy and Key Stage 3. Resources are of good quality and they are very well managed. Monitoring is regular and leads to constructive self-review. New members of staff are very well briefed and supported. Very good links with both primary and high schools lead to smooth transition and the exchange of expertise.
69. Improvement from a strong position in the last inspection has been good. Standards in tests are higher and the proportion of very good teaching has risen. Planning is very good and marking has improved. Other high standards have been maintained.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. With encouragement and advice from the English coordinator, most subject teams have adopted a strategy to develop pupils' literacy skills. There is strong encouragement to use subject vocabulary accurately and in subjects such as science, frameworks are provided to help pupils to structure their written work. Many subjects give pupils opportunities to speak and listen and in religious education and history they read a good variety of texts. Inspectors judge that pupils have ample literacy skills to cope with the demands of their subjects.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Higher attaining pupils attain above average standards and achieve well.
- Pupils learn and achieve equally well in both French and German.
- Achievement overall is restricted by the reduced time currently provided, particularly in Year 7.
- Good teaching, supported by foreign language assistants in both languages and residential visits abroad, results in good learning.
- Attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Assessment procedures, particularly marking systems, are applied inconsistently.

Commentary

71. Pupils in Year 5 make a very good start to learning French and German. By the end of both Year 6 and Year 8, standards are in line with national expectations in both languages, with no difference between the performance of girls and boys. Pupils achieve well in lessons, but a reduction in the amount of time given to the subject means that their achievement overall is only satisfactory. Pupils in Year 6 understand teachers' frequent use of French and German and respond with individual words or short phrases. Higher attaining pupils write individual paragraphs of three or four sentences about themselves and are able to substitute new words into a provided model. Lower attainers complete similar exercises but sometimes have problems finishing the work because it is too difficult for them. In Year 8, pupils make good progress in developing their reading and writing skills but are reticent when using the languages for themselves. Higher attainers use the past tense fluently to talk about their weekend activities and write paragraphs containing a range of vocabulary and structures, whilst lower attainers write sentences in the present tense on topics such as sport. Pupils with special educational need and those with English as an additional language receive good individual support and achieve in line with their peers.
72. Teaching and learning range from very good to satisfactory, but are good overall. Four qualified linguists teach a variety of activities, which enable pupils to make good progress in lessons. Lessons are well prepared and teachers use a wide range of resources, which ensures that a steady pace is maintained. Most lessons begin with the sharing of clear learning objectives with the class and, as a result, pupils are fully involved and want to learn. Foreign languages assistants in both languages and visits abroad, enhance these positive attitudes. Computers are used frequently to support the learning. Literacy skills are developed well through the variety of different activities provided and appropriate emphasis is placed on numeracy.
73. Where learning is less successful, teachers are not adhering closely to the structure recommended by the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the material presented does not match pupils' abilities closely enough. In addition, as a result of the restricted time allowance in Year 7, teachers sometimes place too much emphasis on the grammatical elements of the course at the expense of the development of speaking and listening skills. Assessment is satisfactory overall. Although work is well marked and good feedback is given, there is some inconsistency in the marking systems used.
74. Leadership has good focus and leads by example. There is a clear view of how to raise standards and there has been improvement in this since the last inspection. Nevertheless, a number of issues remain unresolved, particularly with regard to monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department, leading to inconsistencies such as those in assessment procedures, which were identified as an issue at the time of the last inspection and the need to develop speaking and listening skills. As a result, management is satisfactory, as is improvement since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving as a result of well-planned teaching, but achievement is below that in English.
- Pupils generally learn well from teaching that is supported by the use of modern technology.
- Thorough marking and the setting of individual targets help pupils to progress well.
- Insufficient challenging work prevents some capable pupils from making rapid progression.
- Pupils' diligence and effective learning are rooted in good relations with teachers.

Commentary

75. With the exception of those joining the area support centre, the majority of pupils come to the school with standards in mathematics that are typical of pupils of their age. In the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003, the results overall were below the national average and below the average for similar schools, with boys doing better than girls. However, this group of pupils contained a much higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs attached to the area support centre, whose performance lowered the overall results. When account is taken of this factor, the results are in line with the national averages on both measures. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was above average, with girls outperforming boys in relation to their respective national figures. Pupils attached to the area support centre achieved as expected when account is taken of their attainment on joining the school. By Year 6, standards of work in lessons and in pupils' books are in line with the national expectation and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are good at mental work involving number; they write solutions to problems logically, giving clear explanations.
76. By the end of Year 8, pupils' attainment is in line with national expectations, representing a relative improvement from Year 6. Their achievement is satisfactory. Concepts are extended coherently from Years 5 and 6, but pupils do not retain knowledge well over time. A minority of higher attaining pupils is not challenged by their work and, consequently, their progress does not match their capability.
77. Teaching and learning are good in both key stages but only a small proportion of lessons results in very good learning. Teachers' enthusiasm is reflected by pupils, who are diligent and take pride in their work. Pupils generally learn well, but lower attaining pupils do not fully benefit from good teaching in Year 5 because of poor concentration and, in Year 8, because of insufficient recall of previous work. The well-planned use of resources, such as interactive whiteboards, computers and practical activities, contributes significantly to pupils' mathematical understanding. Sometimes less inspiring materials, including worksheets, are used, particularly with lower attaining pupils. These differences of approach were highlighted very clearly in two Year 5 lessons on symmetry. One class used an interactive whiteboard, colour and mirrors; in the other, pupils with special educational needs worked with uninteresting tiny monochrome diagrams. Teachers are generally good at determining the pace of lessons. A Year 6 class made very good progress with multiplication and division because the teacher provided a rich range of activities and quickly addressed difficulties. Higher attaining pupils in Years 6 and 7 became disinterested because the pace of their unchallenging lessons was too slow.
78. Regular marking and assessment support learning well; pupils respond enthusiastically to their individual targets. Regular tests, though, are more suited to higher attaining pupils; marks are reported to parents each half term. A feature of the course is the emphasis on applications of mathematics, both in individual lessons and through investigations that span a week; this provides a very good introduction for investigative work. Pupils in Year 8, for example, enjoyed using directional clues and knowledge of Pythagoras' theorem to solve relatively complex puzzles. Teachers infrequently draw upon their knowledge of other subjects to illustrate mathematics and work is not planned to incorporate citizenship or aspects of social or cultural understanding. However, pupils experience interesting contexts, such as a class comparison of individuals' arm span and foot size, using computers to analyse the data. Teaching assistants provide effective support for some pupils with special educational needs.
79. Leadership of mathematics is good. Teachers are enthusiastic. The subject coordinator has judged priorities well to effect improvement, but the time-scales shown in the subject improvement plan are too fluid and lack detail of individual responsibilities. Productive liaison with primary schools, measures to raise the number of pupils at Level 4 in Year 6 and the acquisition of stimulating resources have been implemented. Data analysing techniques are insufficiently informative to identify areas for improvement. Management is good and ensures similar provision in terms of display in classrooms and a commitment to monitoring progress

and raising standards. The high turnover of staff teaching mathematics and the large number of teachers currently involved hinder the universal development of good practices. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Attainment has recently improved and has returned to that recorded at the last inspection, but standards lag well behind those of English.

Mathematics across the curriculum

80. Pupils use their mathematical skills satisfactorily to support their learning in other subjects. Pupils apply their knowledge of shapes, angles and percentages but, beyond mathematics lessons, there is a lack of coherent planning for the development of numeracy. Data is used well in geography to compare features of different countries; pupils are good at map-work skills, including use of scale, direction and height. Pupils have adequate mathematical skills to help draw conclusions in history, such as the use of estimates to appreciate the impact of the Black Death. Accurate measurement is a feature of science and design and technology. Spatial concepts in design and technology and graphs in science are used satisfactorily. In most other subjects, reference is seldom made to mathematics.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is led and managed well and good steps are being put in place to improve further teaching, the curriculum and assessment.
- Good procedures for assessing how well each pupil is doing are giving an accurate picture of standards but pupils need more guidance on how to improve.
- Teaching, although enabling pupils to work productively, is not yet offering the consistently good level of challenge needed for pupils to do well.

Commentary

81. The results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003 were below the national average and those for similar schools. However, this group of pupils contained a number of pupils with particular learning difficulties, whose performance lowered the overall results. When adjusted for this factor, standards were in line with the national averages on both measures. These results represent satisfactory achievement from broadly average standards on entry. Boys have been doing better than the girls.
82. By the end of Year 6, achievement is satisfactory because pupils are learning the right things at the right time, a positive climate for learning has been established and teaching enables all groups of pupils to work productively. Standards remain in line with national expectations, are still rising and the gap between boys and girls is closing. Pupils show an equally sound recall of the key facts related to living things, materials and physical processes and make satisfactory gains in their learning. Pupils use these well in explaining important ideas but are less confident when applying them in new situations. They use conventions well, such as drawing the correct symbols in electrical circuits or using arrows in food chains to show the correct order in which different animals eat their food. They have developed sound investigative skills but are less skilful in making sense of the significance, validity and reliability of the data they collect in their enquiries. Much work is presented well and pupils have a good scientific vocabulary. Pupils use ICT effectively to enhance their understanding and present the data obtained in investigations but there is scope for more data to be collected and captured electronically in their investigations. Standards are being helped by a well thought through and improved revision programme for the National Curriculum tests.
83. By the end of Year 8, achievement is satisfactory. Standards are in line with national expectations for pupils of this age. All groups of pupils build steadily in their scientific

understanding and work securely at the higher level expected in these years. Many show increased independence when undertaking investigations as a result of the stronger focus given to identifying their own investigations and methods.

84. Teaching is satisfactory at all stages. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Effective use is made of teaching assistants to support the learning of pupils with special educational needs. A variety of methods and well-prepared resources help maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Teachers use the interactive whiteboards in each laboratory particularly well to enliven presentations and discussions. There are two key reasons why teaching is not yet resulting in good achievement. First, the pupils are not always crystal clear about what it is they are working towards, what standards the teacher is looking for and how much they have really learnt in the lesson. Secondly, lessons do not consistently identify specific activities or targets for different groups of pupils so as to provide each pupil with a good level of challenge.
85. An improved, accurate and well-organised assessment system is in place. The information is used well to help plan better coverage of the curriculum and to identify pupils who are capable of reaching a higher level. The weakness in assessment is that the information is less well used to set short-term targets for each pupil and provide them with the guidance to help them do better, although pupils know the level they are working at.
86. Both leadership and management of the department are good. The coordinator has a good vision for further improvement. Good teamwork has been established. She has correctly prioritised the need for staff to make the quality of teaching and learning more effective. Documentation is clear, helpful and of a good quality. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection because standards have been rising in line with the national trend.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Use of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy and the development of thinking skills are giving a clear direction to teaching in Years 7 and 8.
- Good resources, both in ICT rooms and across the school, benefit teaching and learning in all subjects.
- There is not enough monitoring of the curriculum and standards in Years 5 and 6 to make sure that ICT is being taught, as well as used, effectively.
- Best practice is not shared to help all learning in ICT lessons for Years 7 and 8.
- ICT is not reported to parents as a separate subject in Years 5 and 6.

Commentary

87. Standards by Year 6 are in line with national expectations and there are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Although no teaching of ICT in Years 5 and 6 occurred during the inspection, pupils, interviewed with their work, have satisfactory technical skills by the end of Year 6 across the range of the statutory curriculum. They use a wide range of effects to enhance the appearance of documents, including the insertion of clip-art and photographs. Higher attaining pupils use good skills and judgement when they download information from the Internet and insert it into their documents. Pupils with special educational needs use word-processing software well to express their ideas. However, pupils have not yet learned to evaluate the extent to which their work suits its purpose. For example, they select colours that they like, regardless of the extent to which they are legible on the screen. By Year 8, standards are in line with national expectations. There is evidence that pupils' judgement is improving, especially when higher attainers are beginning to evaluate the impact of their work in the light of its intended audience and purpose. Most pupils select web

sites to provide them with specific information, whilst the most capable pupils judge the quality of sites accurately. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Pupils use their basic skills to carry out tasks at the levels required in almost all subjects by the end of Year 6 and Year 8, although they have not learned to use their personal judgement to plan independently or to improve their outcomes.

88. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. During the inspection it was not possible to see the teaching of ICT to Years 5 and 6, as it is covered in the context of other subjects. Two specific units of ICT are taught as part of the design and technology curriculum. Teachers plan relevant contexts for the use and development of ICT, especially in mathematics, science, design and technology and German. Discussions with pupils and an examination of their work, indicate that teaching is satisfactory but that the main focus is on the development of skills rather than understanding. Teachers are good role models in that they use ICT well for the presentation of ideas. Since ICT is not assessed as a subject, teachers cannot build on strengths identified in other subjects. Where there is a separate course in Years 7 and 8, the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is beginning to be used to plan for the growth of understanding, with good initial results. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 and 8 and there are some examples of very good teaching. Where teachers use contexts that are meaningful to the pupils, learning is good. In some lessons, teachers do not explain in full the purpose of a task and so pupils are less well motivated. Teachers who involve pupils in working out their own ideas reinforce their learning by practice, but this is not universally applied. All teachers use the school's assessment system well to show pupils how they can improve. They work very well with teaching assistants to help pupils with special educational needs.
89. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Whilst they are good in Years 7 and 8, they are unsatisfactory in Years 5 and 6 as there is not enough collaboration to ensure that all subjects teach, as well as use, ICT. There has been too little monitoring of the curriculum, teaching and standards in Years 5 and 6. In particular, teachers taking Year 7 are not told how well pupils attain at the end of Year 6 and so cannot plan in advance to meet individual needs. As yet, ICT in Years 5 and 6 is not reported to parents as a separate subject. In Years 7 and 8, the coordinator is a good leader, with a clear view of what is needed to develop the curriculum and assessment. She works well with other local schools to provide for similar experiences throughout these years and therefore smooth progression to the next phase. Her good management provides teachers with lesson plans and units of work that make clear the common objectives, but staff do not share the most effective practice. The department does not analyse data thoroughly enough to identify points of strength and weakness in teaching and learning, although the success of lessons and units with individual classes in Year 7 has been used to develop the scheme of work in its second year. Improvement since the last inspection has been good in that the curriculum now meets statutory requirements throughout the school, with the help of greatly improved staff knowledge and resources.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

90. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good in the use of ICT across the curriculum. The school has greatly improved the availability and quality of equipment, especially through the purchase of interactive whiteboards that are beginning to be used to help learning in most subjects. It is now possible for every class to book a computer room at some point in each term. Teachers have been trained to use ICT in lessons well, especially in science, mathematics, modern foreign languages, design and technology and history. However, where the school depends on other subjects to teach ICT in Years 5 and 6, there is still too little monitoring, collaboration and overall planning to provide the continuity of experience that would lead to good progress.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils respond with enthusiasm to good teaching and achieve well in Years 5 to 6.
- The setting of targets, based on rigorous monitoring and assessment of pupils' progress, is not in place.
- Opportunities to develop ICT, literacy and numeracy skills are not yet fully integrated into all schemes of work.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

Commentary

91. On entry to the school, pupils' attainment is typical for their age, but they have weak geographical skills. Their achievement by the end of Year 6 is good and they reach the standards expected for their age. Pupils have a good knowledge of the local area and use technical terms well to describe the main features of river valleys. Standards remain in line with national expectations by Year 8 and pupils' achievement in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory. They understand the processes that cause earthquakes and volcanoes and their map skills are well developed.
92. Boys achieve at least as well as girls in class, in response to the variety of practical activities and, in Years 7 to 8, they do better than the girls. The achievement of higher attaining pupils is satisfactory, but they would benefit from more challenging extension tasks or individual research projects. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school, as a result of careful attention paid to the targets in their individual education plans and the personal attention they receive.
93. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 5 to 6. In all years, pupils benefit from teachers who have good subject knowledge and who plan well-structured lessons with varied activities and resources. Pupils are interested in the subject and work well together. Lessons start briskly with recall activities and questioning techniques are used well to encourage discussion. The modular approach to homework is used satisfactorily to extend learning and teachers' comments in general terms show pupils how to improve. Assessment based on rigorous tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress is not used sufficiently to set targets.
94. Pupils develop satisfactory literacy skills through the reinforcement of key words and the many opportunities for discussion, although these are not explicitly planned for in the schemes of work. Good teaching of numeracy skills results in the accurate use of graphs and charts. The use of ICT and Internet research are not yet integrated into all units of work, although the statutory entitlement is met. Pupils' use of evidence from world-wide case studies contributes well to their cultural and moral development.
95. Although the subject coordinator has several other senior management responsibilities, both leadership and management of the geography department are satisfactory. Experienced and non-specialist staff work well as a team. There is a clear understanding of the strategies needed to raise standards, but insufficient time is given to implement them or to monitor the performance of the department. The routine management of the department is efficient. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The absence of curriculum time for geography in Year 6 has been remedied since the last inspection and teaching resources have been updated.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well throughout the school as a result of very good teaching.
- The curriculum is well planned and provides a rich variety of experiences that enliven the subject and engage pupils' interest.
- Teachers ask challenging questions that promote very good development of thinking.
- Teachers collaborate well to provide uniformly good experiences for pupils.
- The reduction in time from two hours each week in Year 7 to one hour in Year 8 slows the pace of improving standards.

Commentary

96. Standards by Year 6 are above the national expectation. Pupils show good understanding of aspects of situations in the past and give good explanations of events and changes. They report accurately on details in historical sources, while higher attaining pupils make logical deductions by linking the evidence in the sources to its context. By Year 8, standards are again above those expected of pupils of this age. For example, pupils write reconstructions of the past in the form of letters and diaries, with good understanding of people's feelings and motives. They construct arguments well when they discuss the extent to which Oliver Cromwell was responsible for the massacre at Drogheda. Following their visit to Orford Castle, they bring together evidence from a variety of sources to draw conclusions about the building's purpose and history.
97. Both boys and girls achieve well throughout the school. They enter Year 5 with levels of attainment in line with those found nationally. They develop their thinking skills well, learning to support their ideas from their research or experience in class. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils write clear descriptions and explanations that are supported well from evidence. The majority achieve well in that they begin to understand the importance of using evidence to support their growing ability to make deductions. Given help with reading, pupils with special educational needs show that they understand historical situations and draw conclusions about them from the evidence. By the end of Year 8, pupils have learned to think about issues as well as simple changes. This is particularly impressive in pupils with special educational needs, whose ideas are at a higher level than their powers of written expression. The oral work of the highest attaining pupils shows that they have begun to think through issues from the perspective of the time, looking for historical reasons when behaviour and beliefs were different from today. The majority of pupils show good development of historical knowledge and understanding, founded on a high level of interest in class activities.
98. This good achievement is the result of very good teaching, outweighing the impact of having only one hour per week for history in Year 8. There is a very good range of activities planned to arouse and sustain pupils' interest by matching their individual learning styles. Teachers plan challenging questions to promote historical thinking. There are well-constructed opportunities for paired and group discussion to bring about good understanding of cause and effect. Teachers give very good support to pupils with special educational needs, especially in collaboration with teaching assistants, so that they understand situations and events. These activities all support the development of literacy, with several planned opportunities to see the impact of the use of numeracy on historical discovery. The department is beginning to make use of ICT for research and the expression of ideas, in particular, making a good contribution to the teaching of presentation techniques. Teachers mark work thoroughly with supportive comment and useful details about how to improve. Homework is well designed to be set in units, resulting in the production of substantial pieces of work. The curriculum contributes well to pupils' moral and social education and very well to the broadening of pupils' awareness of other cultures, for example through a thoughtful study of the beliefs and customs of native peoples of North America.

99. The department is successful because of the very good leadership of the coordinator whose vision and dynamic approach provide a very good role model. Management is good in the provision of curriculum planning, resources and support to provide a common approach. There are good systems for the evaluation of the work of the department, the coordinator having carried out a voluntary review earlier this year. As a result, teaching across all year groups is very good. The good practice that was begun at the time of the last inspection has continued to improve, resulting in good achievement by pupils throughout a stimulating and thought-provoking course.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 and 8 and attain above average standards.
- Teaching is good and contributes well to pupils' achievement.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Good leadership and management ensure that future changes will enable the subject to move forward.
- The monitoring of the work of the subject is unsatisfactory.
- The limited amount of curriculum time for the subject in Year 6 reduces the breadth of pupils' learning.

Commentary

100. By Year 6, standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Given pupils' below average levels of knowledge and understanding on entry to the school, these standards represent good achievement. During Years 5 and 6, pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of how they can learn from religion and apply it in their lives. They question and explore their own attitudes in depth as a result of teaching that enables this to happen. In Year 6, the reduction in the amount of curriculum time constrains coverage of the agreed syllabus. For example, it does not give pupils enough opportunity to reflect on their experiences or to learn from religion as well as they might. It was not possible to see any teaching in this year group.
101. By Year 8, standards are above average in relation to the Suffolk Local Education Authority (LEA) agreed syllabus. There are some good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. For example, in one lesson, pupils explored why people from different religious backgrounds have different beliefs and practices. They are able to link their knowledge of religion with their everyday experiences well. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. The use of key words, subject specific language and very good discussion work enable pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills. Overall, achievement in Years 7 and 8 is good.
102. The teachers' good use of discussion and questioning enables pupils to express their opinions and form clear judgments about religious and moral issues. Pupils' spiritual and moral awareness is particularly strong. They demonstrate a very clear respect for the views, faiths and traditions of each other. All teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed and these characteristics are effective in contributing to pupils' good achievement. The assessment procedures provide a sound basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. However, teachers do not use levels of attainment nor do they set detailed targets. As a result, pupils are unclear about the progress they are making. Nevertheless, pupils are clear from the detailed comments in their books about what they need to do to improve.

103. Curriculum leadership is good and provides a clear sense of purpose and direction. The subject coordinator approaches the task with great enthusiasm and a strong commitment to raising standards. She has been successful in developing a strong team approach and is very well supported by other teachers, none of whom is a specialist. Management of the subject is good but, although already identified as a priority, not enough is done to monitor the work of teachers and pupils.
104. Since the last inspection standards have improved, especially in Years 7 and 8. Good improvements have been made in planning and in the schemes of work. The hard work of the curriculum leader has achieved great credibility for the subject. The quality of teaching has also improved. These developments have had a good impact on pupils' progress and achievement.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good because of the good teaching they receive.
- Pupils enjoy design and technology and work hard.
- The curriculum offers a wide range of experiences for pupils.
- In a minority of lessons, teachers' plans do not provide enough suitable work for higher attaining pupils.

Commentary

105. By the end of Year 6, standards are in line with national expectations overall. Pupils mark, cut and join materials with a fair degree of accuracy. They work very safely. Standards of decoration of finished articles are above average. When designing, pupils undertake appropriate research, with higher attaining pupils using a wide variety of sources. Pupils' understanding of the purpose and audience of their designs is satisfactory. Lower attaining pupils produce simple, but clear, step-by-step plans for making their designs. However, design drawings do not usually carry clear measurements which can be used by pupils in their practical work. Pupils' evaluations of finished articles are clear and refer back to the design brief.
106. By the end of Year 8, standards are above the national expectation. Pupils skilfully use a good range of hand and machine tools to fashion a wide range of materials safely. They are very adaptable and pupils successfully change their ideas and methods of working when they meet problems in their practical work. When designing, pupils use an extensive range of research information well to develop their ideas. Pupils model a good range of ideas before choosing one to make. However, the models are not usually to scale. Evaluations are comprehensive, because pupils seek the views of others on their work and say clearly how their products can be improved. Pupils' knowledge of materials and structures is good.
107. Achievement is good in all years. Pupils enter the school with little experience of design and technology and leave with above expected standards. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is similar to other pupils and is good.
108. While teaching and learning are good overall, in almost half of the lessons they were very good. In all lessons, teachers' very good subject expertise ensures work focuses on key facts and skills, which accelerates learning. In the most effective lessons, pupils are excited and are thoroughly engaged by the teachers' great enthusiasm. Challenge and expectations are very high and pupils are very productive. A Year 6 class tackled the making of cakes in food technology with tremendous gusto and a Year 7 class rapidly gained the theory of cams and

their application in a resistant materials lesson. Behaviour is excellent the result of teachers' very good class management. Lesson planning in these more effective lessons is very good, with teachers providing different work for lower and higher attaining pupils in the mixed ability groups. However, in the minority of satisfactory lessons, pupils are less well motivated because the work does not capture their imagination and teachers' plans do not take sufficient account of the wide range of attainment in the classes. Assessment is very good and pupils' work is well marked. The end of module review gives each pupil a National Curriculum level and usefully sets clear targets for improvement. Teachers make good use of the data from these reviews to track progress in Year 8 but less so in other years. Teachers make a positive contribution to pupils' literacy skills through the stress they put on the correct use of technical vocabulary.

109. Leadership and management are good. Leadership is committed to raising standards and is enjoying a good measure of success. The design and technology team are very innovative. For example, they are working closely with the upper school in the development of control technology, computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacture (CAM), which are making a significant contribution to the very broad curriculum in all years. Although the subject coordinator is not able to observe the work of teachers at first hand, staff development is well managed and the support for new teachers is good. There is insufficient technician support and, as a result, teachers spend too much time on routine tasks, such as cutting wood and clearing up.
110. Progress since the last inspection has been good. The good teaching has been consolidated, standards remain above average, electronics is now well established in the curriculum and there has been very good progress with the development of ICT, CAD and CAM.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are above national expectations by Year 6 and well above expectations by Year 8.
- Achievement from Year 5 to Year 8 is very good.
- Teachers possess very good subject knowledge.
- Pupils are actively encouraged to work independently to develop their own ideas.
- There are insufficient computers and digital cameras in the art studios.

Commentary

111. Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 5 is below the standard normally found of pupils of this age. However, they enjoy the subject and make rapid progress in the first year. They make very good use of their visual diaries as a means of collecting a wide range of visual images and by the end of Year 6, standards are above the national expectation. Achievement in Years 5 and 6 is very good. Pupils continue to make very good progress in Year 7 and standards are well above the level expected by the end of Year 8. Pupils with special educational needs are very well assimilated into teaching groups and make very good progress. There is little distinction between the standards attained by boys and girls and achievement, overall, is very good from the start of Year 7 to the end of Year 8.
112. Pupils in all year groups have very positive attitudes to art and design and settle very readily to the tasks that are set by their teachers. They make concentrated effort to communicate their ideas and express their feelings through work in two- and three-dimensions. Pupils are very keen to acquire new knowledge and develop skills in drawing, painting and craftwork.

However, there are few examples of images produced in a design context using computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers and the availability of such resources in the art studios is rather limited. Behaviour during lessons is usually very good and sometimes excellent, with all pupils making a valuable contribution to discussions about their own work and that of other artists. Relationships with teachers and between pupils are very good.

113. Teaching is very good and has some excellent features. Teachers are very well informed and possess very good subject knowledge. Planning is thorough and detailed and excellent use is made of exemplar material to prompt discussion. Teachers employ a range of teaching methods that are appropriate to the nature of the tasks. Tasks are challenging and pupils are expected to develop their capacity for working independently. The majority of pupils work well to develop excellent oral skills when discussing their own drawings and paintings and those of other artists. Their written skills, as seen in their visual diaries, are of a very high standard.
114. Leadership is very good and management good. The coordinator has a very clear vision of how she would like the subject to develop. These views are expressed in the department improvement plan, which is reviewed annually. She is a very good role model for both staff and pupils in the department and relationships are very good. The coordinator has successfully created an effective teaching team and very good use is made of non-specialist art teachers. The displays of art and craft work in the art studios and throughout the school, are very good and show to good effect the high standard of work produced by pupils. However, although informal assessment during lessons is very good and feedback is provided to pupils on a regular basis, more formal written systems currently lack rigour.
115. Attainment in art remains well above national expectations and pupils continue to explore the work of other artists to inform their own drawing and painting. Teaching is of high quality. Pupils in Year 5 are now taught in a large, spacious and airy studio. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 6 and Year 8 are above national expectations.
- Lessons are interesting and varied; pupils are expected to do their best.
- Assessment data does not give a detailed picture of pupils' musical abilities.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive; they enjoy the varied range of musical activities, which contribute significantly to their personal development.

Commentary

116. Standards are above the national expectation by Year 6 and because pupils' musical ability is lower than expected on entry to the school, their achievement is good. By the end of Year 8, standards are higher than normally found of pupils of this age. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 and 8, including those who are identified as gifted and talented or who have special educational needs, is also good. This is due to the specialist teaching they receive from Year 5, which means that pupils learn how to compose and develop their musical skills systematically. Some of their written work and class discussions show a good understanding and use of musical language, especially by more competent pupils in Year 8 when describing chromatic notes and use of chords. Pupils' rhythmic work is strong. As they are able to use authentic multicultural instruments, they learn through first-hand experience how to perform African rhythm patterns as a whole-class ensemble. During these lessons, the pupils who led the ensemble derived great self-esteem from directing their peers.

117. Teaching is mostly good and teachers have a secure understanding of their subject. Planning is thorough and teachers use their personal interests to enliven lessons and give pupils regular opportunities to reflect and describe their compositions. Activities are linked together well, but there is still insufficient ICT equipment for pupils to use. Teachers' enthusiasm, combined with good working relationships, keeps all pupils involved. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and show consideration to each other during lessons, especially during performances. Written work is neatly presented. However, there is a lack of rigour in marking, which means that mistakes in spelling and grammar are not always corrected.
118. Leadership is good. There is a good sense of teamwork and a shared approach to provide the best possible musical experiences for pupils. The links with other schools in the local area are good; musical information is shared and pupils have continuity in their instrumental lessons. Extra-curricular activities are very good and about one in six pupils benefit from the free instrumental tuition that the school provides. The department runs smoothly and management by the coordinator is satisfactory. Assessment is used regularly, but needs refining to identify pupils' musical strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to set their own targets at the end of units of work. Timetable constraints means that the coordinator is unable to monitor the quality of teaching and learning by other teachers. The department has made good improvement since the last inspection; standards are higher and the quality of teaching and accommodation has improved.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Large numbers of pupils participate in the good range of extra-curricular activities.
- Teaching and learning are good; pupils respond well to the high expectations demanded of them and, as a result, attitudes are very good.
- Relationships are very good; pupils are interested in and enjoy physical education.
- An overemphasis on games limits the amount of time to cover other areas of the curriculum.

Commentary

119. Standards by the end of Year 6 are in line with national expectations. The timetable during the inspection did not allow any observations of the work of pupils in Year 8, but standards attained by pupils in Year 7 are typical of this age group. Pupils achieve well in relation to their attainment on entry and make good progress in Years 5 to 7. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in the physical education curriculum and achieve well.
120. In Years 5 and 6, lessons were seen in swimming, games and athletics. On completion of the extended programme for swimming, the majority of pupils are able to swim a range of recognised strokes and carry out personal survival skills. In a Year 5 swimming lesson, pupils' achievement in the top group was very good and standards overall were above expectations as a result of the very good teaching. In games, pupils perform throwing, catching and fielding skills with increasing confidence and control, both individually and with a partner.
121. By the end of Year 7, pupils become more expert in their skills and techniques and how to apply them into different activities. In Year 7, lessons were seen in games and athletics. The majority of pupils achieve well in athletics and build upon previous experience in improving their sprinting technique and in developing their throwing skills. In cricket and rounders, pupils perform a range of skills with increasing coordination and control. Pupils use the specialist equipment and facilities with care and attention and have a good awareness of their own and others' safety.

122. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The majority of lessons are taught by an established and experienced team of knowledgeable specialists. Lessons are generally well planned, managed and organised, with a good balance of activities, although lessons do not always end with a cooling down activity. In one lesson, the organisation of the activities did not allow pupils to learn as effectively as they might. The National Key Stage 3 Strategy is used well to develop pupils' use of technical language, enabling them to express themselves appropriately when observing and evaluating their own and each others' work. Teachers develop very good relationships with all pupils; as a result, pupils listen well, respond quickly to tasks and work hard. Assessment has improved since the last inspection. Teachers are able to track pupils' progress from Year 5 to Year 8 and constructive and evaluative feedback given in lessons is used effectively to improve performance. However, assessment needs further monitoring and moderating to ensure that judgments about pupils' performance at the end of Years 6 and 8 accurately reflect the level they are working at.
123. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They respond well to the high expectations demanded of them and, as a result, behaviour is good. In all areas of activity, pupils demonstrate good social and cooperative skills.
124. Leadership is good. The subject coordinator has established a shared goal and the staff work well together as a team. They are committed and give generously of their time to extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The subject leader has a number of responsibilities within the school and some areas within physical education have not improved sufficiently. There is still an emphasis on games in the curriculum as identified in the last inspection, and schemes and units of work for Years 7 and 8 are still outstanding.
125. Pupils benefit from a wide range of activities. The provision of dance has improved and the scheme and units of work in Years 5 and 6 have been successfully implemented. However, games activities continue to dominate the curriculum in both key stages, limiting the amount of time spent on other areas of activity. A significant amount of time is allocated to swimming and boys in Year 8 do not have the opportunity to follow a dance course. The use of double lessons for some activities is too long for some of the younger pupils and reduces curricular flexibility. Extra-curricular provision is very good, with a large number of pupils participating. The school is successful in sporting fixtures and events, with a number of pupils regularly selected to play locally, regionally and nationally.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Provision in personal, social and health education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching allows pupils to reflect on their experiences and develop positive attitudes and values.
- Good leadership and management ensure that all pupils benefit from the programme.
- The programme makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development.
- Insufficient time is given to the subject in Year 6 to enable proper coverage of the programme.
- The assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

126. By Year 6, standards are in line with expectations of pupils of this age. Pupils are making good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of a range of personal and social themes. However, in Year 6, the subject has insufficient time and standards are being affected because it is not possible to cover the programme of work properly. By Year 8, standards are typical of pupils of this age. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of concepts such as rights and responsibilities, community and healthy living and can relate these to their own and others' experiences. Throughout the school, pupils achieve well in this area of the curriculum. Personal, social and health education is seen as a vital resource in supporting pupils' personal development, enabling them to develop appropriate skills, attitudes, values and independence of thought, feelings and actions.
127. Teaching, which is nearly always good, ensures that pupils learn well. In Years 5 and 6, pupils are encouraged to develop a clear understanding of the importance of personal safety. The teachers' approach to the topic enables pupils to feel confident in expressing their own views in an atmosphere of trust. Such approaches ensure that the subject makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development. Teachers use a range of skills that encourage pupils to reflect upon issues as well as learning about them. The teaching team is beginning to develop good expertise. They are secure in their knowledge and approach topics with confidence. This enables pupils to feel secure in discussing personal issues. The assessment of pupils' work is unsatisfactory and is recognised by the department as an area for development. It needs to be more formal in order to provide evidence of pupils' progress and achievements. The assessment of pupils' attitudes and values are insufficiently developed.
128. Curriculum leadership and management are good. The subject manager approaches the work with commitment, a clear vision and a clear sense of purpose and direction. He has been successful in developing a strong team approach and is very well supported by other teachers. However, not enough is done to monitor the work of teachers and pupils to ensure consistency of approach. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Citizenship

129. No specific teaching of citizenship occurred during the inspection and therefore it is not possible to make a clear judgement on standards, achievement or teaching and learning. The school is committed to the provision of citizenship and sees it as an important aspect of pupils' personal development. Citizenship is taught as part of the personal, social and health education programme. Although some steps have already been taken to plan for the teaching of citizenship, not enough has been done to provide a proper curriculum for pupils in Years 7 and 8 that fulfils statutory requirements.
130. Citizenship is not, as yet, supported by related themes and topics explicitly covered in other subjects. The contribution of other subjects to the development and teaching of citizenship themes is currently unplanned and is not monitored in a systematic way. Pupils have additional opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process through activities such as the school council. However, these activities are not sufficiently linked to the other important strands of the citizenship curriculum. The development of citizenship themes, such as law and economic and industrial understanding, is underdeveloped. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. A review of where citizenship elements can be taught is recognised as an important priority. Overall, these activities require considerable development, especially in Years 7 and 8, if citizenship is to feature effectively in the school's provision and meet statutory requirements.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
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	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
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	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
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	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	3
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).