

INSPECTION REPORT

SAINT BEDE'S CATHOLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL

Redditch

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 116998

Headteacher: Mr D Larkin

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald
17932

Dates of inspection: 7 to 9 July 2003

Inspection number: 259762

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Holloway Lane
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R Thatcher

Date of previous inspection: October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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17932	John Bald	Registered inspector	English as an additional language	The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9756	Ken Parsons	Lay inspector	Race equality and inclusion	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22691	Ray Woodhouse	Team inspector	Mathematics	
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English	
31441	Margaret King	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curriculum and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30973	Geoff Hancock	Team inspector	Design and technology	
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music	
32115	John Foster	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	
10759	Lynn Bappa	Team inspector	History Citizenship	
20247	Roger Parry	Team inspector	Geography	
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8360	Fred Peacock	Team inspector	Special educational needs	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Saint Bede's is a voluntary aided Catholic middle school for boys and girls aged nine to thirteen. The school has 640 pupils, and is much larger than most middle schools. Nine-tenths of pupils are white, and a tenth come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. A few pupils learn English as an additional language. Most of these pupils have very good English, but a very small number are in the early stages of learning the language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs, including those with a Statement of Special Educational Needs, is broadly average; a small number of these pupils have significant behavioural difficulties, and some have physical disabilities. Pupils join the school with broadly average standards for their age, and most come from favourable backgrounds.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Saint Bede's is a good school with very good features. Pupils reach above average standards in a broad range of subjects by Year 8, and have many opportunities to work creatively. Teaching is good overall, and very good in Years 7 and 8. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good, and all have equal opportunities to achieve well. The headteacher and his senior colleagues lead and manage the school well, with strong support from the governors. Value for money is very good.

What the school does well

- Standards are above average in very nearly all subjects at the end of Year 8
- The headteacher, senior staff and governors provide strong leadership and good management
- Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in Years 7 and 8
- Skilled and talented support staff make a key contribution to the work of the school
- Provision is very good in design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design, history, and for pupils with special educational needs
- Pupils have very good attitudes to work, and leave very well prepared for secondary education

What could be improved

- Standards and achievement in mathematics are not high enough in Year 6
- Standards need to be more closely analysed and tracked from the time pupils join the school
- Some aspect of middle management need to be strengthened
- The library does not provide effective support for learning and for reading for pleasure

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1997. At that time, standards were above average in Year 8, and well above average in national tests in Year 6. The school was very well led and managed, and had many excellent features. Since the last inspection, the school has had a high turnover of staff, and the proportion of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs has doubled. The school has dealt effectively with these difficulties, making good improvements in its provision for special educational needs, and developing new procedures to ensure equal opportunities for all pupils, including those from different ethnic backgrounds. Results in national tests in Year 6 are no longer above average, and are below average in mathematics, but there has been an overall improvement in standards in Year 8. Arrangements to assess and track progress have shown very good improvement in Years 7 and 8, but need further development in Years 5 and 6. Overall, the school's improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and it is in a good position to improve its work further.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
End of Key Stage 2 tests	C	C	C	D

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Despite the increase in the number of pupils with special educational needs, the proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching or exceeding the nationally expected standard in English and science is similar to that at the time of the last inspection, though fewer pupils achieve this in mathematics. In 2003, test results improved significantly in English and science, but fell in mathematics. Targets are set at a very demanding level, and have not been met in English and mathematics in either of the past two years. However, the school exceeded its science target in 2003. Analysis of pupils' work shows broadly average standards in Year 6 in all three subjects, but that pupils are not using and applying their mathematical skills enough. Standards in Year 6 are above average in very nearly all other subjects. Overall, achievement in Year 6 is satisfactory, but it is unsatisfactory in mathematics.

Standards in Year 8 are much better. They are above average in English, mathematics, science, and almost all other subjects, with well above average standards in design and technology, ICT, art and design and history. Standards in food technology are very high, and represent outstanding achievement. Pupils reach average standards in modern foreign languages. The high standards in Year 8 help pupils to do very well in national tests at the end of their first year in secondary school.

By Year 8, boys and girls reach similar standards, but girls in Year 6 do not do as well in mathematics, and have more errors in their writing. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good by Year 8. Pupils with English as an additional language, other pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds, and gifted and talented pupils, achieve well by Year 8. By Year 8, pupils' achievements from their starting points on joining the school are good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils work hard, and are pleased to accept responsibility.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave very well in class and around the school, and there is very little bullying. A small minority of boys regularly misbehave.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils respect their teachers and are happy to help them. There are very good relationships among pupils of all backgrounds.
Attendance	Average. Most pupils attend very regularly, but a small minority do not.

Pupils give excellent and unobtrusive support to those with special educational needs. They take a very active part in activities outside lessons, complete homework conscientiously, and some ask for voluntary extra homework. Attendance suffers from unauthorised holidays taken in term time.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 – 6	Years 7 – 8
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

The main reason for the differences in these judgements is that the teaching of science and mathematics is good in Years 7 and 8, and satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. Teaching in mathematics lessons was satisfactory during the inspection, but analysis of pupils' work showed weaknesses in its scope over that school year. English is taught well throughout the school. Across subjects, the teaching of literacy skills is good, and that of number skills is satisfactory. Work in most subjects contributes very well to ICT skills.

Teachers form good relationships with pupils, whose very good attitudes contribute much to their learning. Lessons throughout the school are thoroughly planned, and pace is good. Teaching makes good provision for creative work. It is almost always best when teachers are teaching their specialist subjects, and heads of department teach to a very good standard. Additional teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very good, and they receive very good support from teaching assistants. Technical support in ICT makes an outstanding contribution to teaching and learning. There were examples of excellent teaching during the inspection in science and art and design. Teaching in food technology is consistently excellent, leading to very high standards among boys and girls.

Where teaching is satisfactory, it ensures adequate learning, but it is not matched closely enough to the needs of all pupils to ensure good progress. Occasionally, teachers give too little praise for good work. There is a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, which lacks challenge and pace.

The high quality of teaching in Years 7 and 8 is the key to the above average standards reached in Year 8. It ensures that teaching meets the needs of all pupils well in the course of their school career.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum enables all pupils to achieve well across a broad range of subjects and to work creatively.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Pupils are well supported in lessons and receive very effective specialist teaching, including very good use of computers.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils' needs are carefully assessed. Additional teaching is good, and pupils benefit from the strengths in the school's general teaching, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school's Christian values provide a very effective framework for moral and social development, which are very good. Spiritual and cultural development are good, and pupils are well prepared for life in modern British society.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Pupils receive very good personal guidance. Guidance on work is very good in Years 7 and 8 and satisfactory in Years 5 and 6.

The school has a good working partnership with parents. Activities outside lessons are very good, and the school has Artsmark and Sportsmark gold awards. The curriculum for food technology is excellent.

Pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their mathematical skills in Years 5 and 6, and do not have the opportunity to learn a second foreign language. Teachers know the pupils very well, and the deputy headteacher makes an outstanding contribution to care across the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher gives a very strong and effective lead, and is well supported by the senior management team. Subjects are well managed, but some aspects of management are not fully in place.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. Governors are in close touch with the school and play an effective role in its direction. They are strongly committed to its Christian values.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The school's effective analysis of data from national tests makes an important contribution to standards in Years 7 and 8.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school ensures that scarce resources are used to support key long-term priorities, including equal opportunities for all pupils.

The school has sufficient teachers to teach the National Curriculum. Heads of department are very well qualified for their work. Teaching assistants and technical staff are well qualified and very effective. Accommodation is adequate, though not all classrooms are accessible to people with disabilities. The site is well maintained by the site manager and his staff, and pupils treat it with respect. Learning resources are adequate overall, and very good for some subjects, including art and design and design and technology. ICT resources are of very good quality, but there are not enough to support learning in all subjects. The library has far too few books to support learning in most subjects, or to help pupils foster their interest in reading.

The headteacher and senior staff have built a strong sense of teamwork among all adults in the school. There are particular strengths in managing teachers' performance, care and personal guidance to pupils, and special educational needs. The governors have clear and effective policies to promote race equality, and back these up with monitoring and training. There is very good management in art and design and history, and excellent management in design and technology. However, the school has been unable to fill some management positions. This places a strain on some senior managers, and leads to weaknesses in co-ordination, particularly in Years 5 and 6. The headteacher and governors manage the school's limited finances effectively. They have good understanding of the principles of providing and obtaining best value, and apply them well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are expected to work hard and do their best • Children behave well, care for each other, and learn responsibility • There is very good support for children with special educational needs • The school is well led and managed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework • The quality of information for parents

A very large majority of parents expressed positive views of the school, and inspectors agree with them. Inspectors found that homework was regularly set, but that some was not matched closely enough to pupils' learning needs, and that some teachers did not keep to the timetable. They found that pupils' annual reports did not tell parents enough about what pupils were actually achieving.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. The standards reached by pupils joining the school range from well above average to well below average, and are broadly average overall. There has been a significant rise in the proportion of pupils with special educational needs since the last inspection, and the proportion of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs has doubled. These pupils include several with behavioural difficulties on the autistic spectrum, and a small number with significant physical disabilities. On the other hand, most pupils receive effective support from home, and begin with positive attitudes to education that contribute to learning and achievement. The small number of pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds begin with similar overall standards to other pupils. Most pupils with English as an additional language have reached above average standards for their age when they join the school.
2. Standards in Year 8 are above average in almost every subject, and are well above average in art and design, design and technology, ICT and history. Standards in these four subjects have improved significantly since the last inspection. Standards in food technology are very high, and would represent very good levels of achievement for GCSE candidates. Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science, and are reflected in well above average results in Year 9 tests from St Bede's pupils in their secondary school. Standards in all other subjects are above average, apart from modern foreign languages, where pupils reach average overall standards after two years of French. This represents a fall from above average standards at the time of the last inspection. By Year 8, pupils' work in many subjects shows a high level of creativity. Overall, there has been an improvement in standards in Year 8 since the last inspection.
3. The results of Year 6 national tests in 2002 were broadly average in English and science, but below average in mathematics. The school's results in 2003 showed good improvements in English and science, but a fall in mathematics. Pupils' work in mathematics lessons, and in their books over the year, was of a broadly average standard, with some good number work. However, its scope was too narrow, and pupils in Years 5 and 6 do not have enough opportunities to use and apply their mathematical knowledge and skills. Standards and achievement in mathematics in Year 6 are, therefore, significantly lower than they should be. Standards in other aspects of English, mathematics and science in Year 6 are broadly average. Pupils read and write fluently, though their work has more errors than it should, and higher-attaining pupils should read a broader range of literature. The breadth of the curriculum, and good teaching in subjects, leads to above average standards in all other subjects in Year 6 except for geography, where standards are broadly average. This work prepares pupils for the high standards they achieve across subjects in Year 8.
4. By Year 8, boys and girls reach similar standards. In Year 6, however, girls do not do as well as boys in mathematics, and make more errors in their written work. The achievements of gifted and talented pupils are good by Year 8, though they need more consistent challenge in Years 5 and 6. Most pupils with English as an additional language reach high standards by Year 8 and achieve well. The achievements of pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds are generally in line with those of other pupils in their classes, and their achievements are good. Pupils with special educational needs make very good all-round progress in response to effective support and carefully planned additional teaching, including effective use of ICT.
5. Targets in Year 6 have been set at high levels over recent years, and have not been met except for the 2003 target for science, which was exceeded. There was also good improvement in the 2003 English result, though it did not reach a very high target. Precise target setting is hindered by the absence of a clear baseline in each subject for pupils joining Year 5. The standard of work seen during the inspection indicated that achievement overall in Year 6 is satisfactory except for mathematics. Standards in Year 8 represent very good progress from results in Year 6 national tests, and good achievement from pupils' starting points in Year 5.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. Pupils enjoy coming to school, and see it as a friendly place which contributes positively to their lives. They show this in the cheerful way they come into school in the morning and in the speed and efficiency with which they go to their classrooms, ready to work and to settle to their tasks at the start to the school day. They have very good attitudes towards the school and their work; for a minority it provides a consistent pattern to their otherwise unstable lives; for all it is a place where they are listened to and valued. They are proud to be members of the St Bede's community and take full advantage of what the school has to offer.
7. Behaviour at the time of the last inspection was very good and often excellent. Since that time, the school has admitted a higher proportion of pupils with special educational needs related to behaviour, and of others who do not behave as they should in school. The vast majority of parents think that behaviour in the school is good and inspectors agree. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school, trying hard to meet the school's expectations. In most lessons, pupils are actively engaged, enthusiastic and confident, and the teacher does not have to spend much time maintaining order. Good behaviour stems from the school's strong ethos, which provides clear and consistent expectations throughout the school, coupled with the professionalism of staff in motivating their pupils to behave well. Nevertheless, a small minority of pupils make teaching and learning difficult by misbehaving, and some of these pupils' parents do not support the school effectively in ensuring that their children behave well. The school provides good additional support to these pupils and involves them as far as possible in all aspects of its work. Pupils with special educational needs related to behaviour respond well to the school's provision, and often make very good progress.
8. Pupils are usually polite to each other and to staff. They are friendly and courteous to visitors. They move around the school sensibly, following the keep left code in corridors. Pupils respect the property of the school and that of other pupils; for example, Euro coins are on open display in the library. Play at break and lunchtimes is mainly good-natured. No incidents of bullying were observed during the inspection, and they are rare. In the last year there have been one permanent and ten fixed-term exclusions, mainly for incidents of violence. This is a broadly average figure, and the school monitors exclusion closely. Almost all pupils excluded were white. Racial harmony in the school is very good.
9. One of the school's aims is to create "a caring environment where people respect each other" and it is successful in meeting this objective. Pupils' personal development and their relationships are very good. They often work together well in lessons in pairs or groups, encouraged by teaching that encourages such co-operation. Pupils respect and listen to the ideas of others and understand their feelings, even when they are different from their own, encouraged by the school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship provision. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are very positive; in Years 5 and 6, in particular, form tutors teach their own class for much of the school week giving pupils a strong learning partnership. Pupils' desire to please their teachers is a strong incentive for hard work and good behaviour. In the playground pupils generally play well together. They can organise their own games well, with several games of football taking place alongside each other without friction. Most pupils show good self-confidence and talk naturally to adults, although a small minority can at times be immature. Pupils with special educational needs address their learning problems with maturity. When given responsibility, for example, as members of the school council, as prefects or monitors, pupils respond sensibly.
10. Attendance is broadly average, with little unauthorised absence. Attendance figures are affected by holidays taken in term-time, and by the poor attendance of a very small number of pupils. A small minority of parents go ahead with additional holidays knowing that the school has not authorised them. Pupils come to school on time, and punctuality during the day is very good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

11. Overall, the quality of teaching is very similar to that when the school was last inspected – in both inspections, for example, teaching was good or better in seven-tenths of lessons. However, teaching is now very good in Years 7 and 8, in lessons taught by heads of department, and in provision for pupils with special educational needs. This teaching leads to above average standards and good achievement in Year 8, and contributes to the very good results pupils from St Bede's achieve in their secondary schools. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is good in most subjects, and offers good opportunities for creative work, but has some weaknesses in mathematics and science, where a relatively low proportion of lessons are taught by specialists in the subjects. Its overall quality is satisfactory, and it has good features. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen to a very low level. The contribution of teaching assistants has been very effectively developed throughout the school. The school has been able to maintain this high quality of teaching, despite losing a significant number of experienced teachers, through the professional commitment of all staff, and consistent and careful attention to teaching by the headteacher and his senior colleagues.
12. Teachers plan all lessons thoroughly, develop good working relationships with pupils, and maintain a good pace of work throughout the school day. This, with the very good attitudes to learning of almost all pupils, results in good learning in almost all subjects. Where teaching is very good, in a third of lessons across the school, these qualities are combined with high levels of subject knowledge and understanding, which are used to plan engaging and challenging activities that extend pupils creatively as well as academically. Teachers often make effective use of ICT in presenting lessons and to promote independent learning. In Years 7 and 8, they use assessment very well to promote high standards in each subject, with clear targets drawn from the National Curriculum, and very good involvement of pupils in assessing their own work.
13. There was excellent teaching during the inspection in art and design in Year 6 and science in Year 8. The Year 6 lesson, on designing a headdress, involved excellent exploration of ideas and cultural features, with exceptionally effective support for pupils with special educational needs. The science lesson, on rock structures and cycles, made excellent use of a wide range of resources, including video, and a toothpaste tube to demonstrate extrusion. Arrangements for pupils to record their work in class and for homework were very well planned, and pupils reached the standard expected for very higher-attaining pupils at the end of Year 9. Sustained excellence in food technology teaching in Years 7 and 8 leads to very high standards. Imaginative focal points engage the interests of boys and girls, and enable them to work experimentally, combining ingredients from all over the world. Design sheets provide a clear and flexible framework that encourages pupils to make their ideas explicit and helps them to modify them as they are tried out in practice. Pupils work imaginatively, and take pride in presenting their work to a near-professional standard. They evaluate their achievements thoughtfully, and are always looking to do better.
14. Teaching in just under three tenths of lessons is satisfactory. These lessons are thoroughly planned, and most are well paced. They enable pupils to make adequate progress, but work is not finely tuned to the needs of all pupils in the class, and in some subjects, notably science and mathematics in Years 5 and 6, teachers have some weaknesses in their knowledge of advanced features of the subject. In a minority of lessons, teachers take pupils' very good attitudes for granted, and do not give enough praise for good work. In most subjects, teachers do not use assessment as effectively in Years 5 and 6 as in Years 7 and 8. In the very small number of lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory, work lacked pace and challenge.
15. Teaching is very good throughout the school in design and technology. In Years 5 and 6, this enables pupils to reach above average standards despite having very little teaching time. In English, ICT, art and design and history, teaching is good in Years 5 and 6, and very good in Years 7 and 8. Teaching in mathematics and science is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. However, pupils in mathematics lessons have too few opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge and skills, and there is too little challenge to the highest-attaining pupils in some science lessons.

Good teaching in mathematics and science in Years 7 and 8 deals with most of these weaknesses, though pupils' skills in using and applying mathematics are still not as strong as their work in other aspects of the subject in Year 8. Teaching is satisfactory in modern foreign languages, and is good throughout the school in music, geography, physical education and citizenship. Specialist teaching for pupils with special educational needs is very well informed and well matched to individual needs, with a consistent emphasis on thinking and learning skills that promotes independence. Teaching assistants are highly skilled, and some have additional talents, such as graphic design and drawing, that are used to develop very effective learning resources to help individual pupils. Their contribution to teaching and learning is outstanding. Technical support in ICT makes an invaluable contribution to teaching by building teachers' confidence and skills, and keeping the school up to date on new developments.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?

Learning opportunities

16. The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities, and has been well designed to meet the learning needs of all of the pupils. The headteacher and governors monitor provision for each subject, and see the breadth of the curriculum as a key element in their provision for equal opportunities, as it enables pupils with interests and talents in any subject to achieve well. All legal requirements are met, and all subjects in the National Curriculum are supported with policy statements and planning that takes good account of national guidance. There are particular strengths in the curriculum for art and design, physical education and design and technology in Years 7 and 8, where provision for food technology is excellent.
17. The curriculum offers equal opportunities to all groups of pupils. It meets the needs of pupils with different ethnic backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language, well. These pupils are often among the highest-attaining in the school. They benefit both from the accessibility of work in Years 5 and 6, and from the increasing challenge in Years 7 and 8. There are very good learning opportunities for pupils with special educational needs. Teachers in nearly all lessons adapt work to their needs, and the teaching and learning support provided by teaching assistants is of consistently high quality. Additional specialist teaching is well planned and very effective, benefiting from the co-ordinator's high levels of professional skill. Where necessary, the curriculum is effectively extended by the use of external specialists, for example to help pupils control their behaviour. The consistent emphasis on thinking skills in special educational needs provision builds confidence and helps pupils learn in all subjects. The curriculum provides good opportunities for gifted and talented pupils. Their progress is tracked, and the school makes good use of additional learning opportunities for them, including summer schools. In all subjects, increased use of specialist teaching and of information from assessment ensures that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils well in Years 7 and 8.
18. The strengths of the curriculum lie in the work of each department, and there are some weaknesses in co-ordination. The school has been unable to fill posts for the co-ordination of the national strategy for Years 7 and 8, and co-ordination of literacy and numeracy work across subjects is weak in Years 5 and 6. While the work of departments ensures satisfactory provision for numeracy and good overall provision for literacy, these factors contribute to a lower overall pattern of achievement in Year 6 than in Year 8. There is imaginative and very effective use of ICT in most subjects, but the school does not yet have enough facilities to allow enough access to computers in mathematics, modern languages and music. The school is developing facilities as quickly as possible, with effective support from the ICT technician. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not have the opportunity to study a second foreign language.
19. The programme for PSHE is well organised and comprehensive. It includes effective provision for education against the misuse of drugs. It has been successfully extended to introduce citizenship as a subject. Planning for this has been very detailed and effective. There is suitable provision for careers education, in which pupils are encouraged to think about the requirements of different types of jobs and identify their own strengths and weaknesses. The school makes good provision

for sex education in the context of its Catholic values and beliefs. There are very good links with Catholic first schools and also with the local Catholic high school. These include good exchanges of information, and effective co-ordination of the curriculum for most subjects. The school has good links with its local community, in particular, the Catholic parishes that it serves. The school makes use of sporting and leisure facilities in the locality to support curriculum delivery, such as the Arrow Valley Lake and Bishops Wood Environmental Centre. Redditch Rangers contribute to several aspects of the curriculum, such as environmental and science projects, as well as geographical field-work. The school actively works with the local police and support organisations.

20. There are very good opportunities for learning outside lessons. An extensive range of music and sporting opportunities has led to the award of Artsmark and Sportsmark gold awards. Teachers in all subjects provide extensive learning opportunities, including homework and booster clubs, fieldwork and visits. Sculptures and other works of art from the art club are prominent in all parts of the school, and include beautiful illustrations of Bible stories in the chapel. Residential trips include very well-organised week-long visits to France and to North Wales. Pupils have contact with Japanese culture and language through the work of a Japanese intern.

Personal development

21. The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual development. The Christian values and care for the whole school community permeate day-to-day life. All individuals are valued equally, and the school makes particular efforts to ensure that all pupils' cultural backgrounds are understood and respected. Assemblies provide an opportunity for a range of social, moral and cultural issues to be explored and always include a period for reflection. Reflection on human experience and discussion of beliefs and values are features of many lessons. For example, in food technology and music pupils are given opportunity to recognise their own and others' creativity. However, the contribution of some subjects, such as mathematics, to spiritual development has yet to be fully developed. Pupils take an active part in charity collections and are encouraged to feel, through fasting for short periods, the discomfort and pain caused by lack of food. This practical response helps pupils understand the purpose of giving to charity.
22. Provision for moral development is very good, and helps all pupils, including those with behavioural difficulties, to form positive attitudes so school. Teachers actively promote and demonstrate the principles that distinguish right from wrong. The school has a clear Christian ethos in which teachers and other adults provide very good examples of considerate and courteous behaviour, so that pupils show respect for them and for each other. Pupils are trusted. Moral issues are discussed in many subjects, including English, science, geography and history. There is clear moral teaching through the religious education and the personal, social, health and citizenship programme.
23. The school's very good provision for social development is closely related to its moral and spiritual values. It leads to very good relationships throughout the school. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to exercise responsibility, for example through the school council, an active organisation, with its own budget, and the prefect system. Year 8 pupils are being trained to mediate disputes between younger pupils. Pupils are encouraged to volunteer for additional responsibilities – inspectors spoke to a group of Year 5 pupils, for example, who regularly volunteer to pick up litter. Their only complaint was that too many children wanted to participate and therefore opportunities were limited to a week at a time! Children help to look after the garden near the Year 5 area. Pupils are actively encouraged to behave responsibly in the playground. The school has provided a large selection of playground games to encourage co-operation and to ensure that all pupils have something enjoyable to do. Many lessons provide opportunities for pupils to work in teams, small groups or with a partner. Achievement awards are given for such qualities as always joining in lessons and for trying hard.
24. Provision for cultural development is good. Pupils are introduced their own and to a wide variety of other cultures through class work, displays, workshops and visits within this country and abroad. Examples of good work include the study of dance from a wide range of cultures in physical education, and the study of native American art in art and design. The school ensures that pupils

understand cultural values other than their own, and that they are well prepared for life in modern British society. There are regular visits to France. Around the school are very good displays of artefacts from European countries and Japan. Different cultures are explored in many different subjects. Examples include dance forms, the variety of music studied, historical visits and practical work in art and design and food technology.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

25. Strengths in personal care and support for pupils have been maintained since the last inspection. Arrangements for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good, and very well managed by the deputy headteacher. The school provides a very caring environment in which pupils feel safe and valued, allowing them to develop fully as individuals. The school's aims include several that emphasise the importance placed on the pastoral care and support of pupils, and it takes very good account of individual needs, for example, to ensure that pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and other faiths are fully supported. All teachers try to support the welfare of individuals when they need it; form tutors and heads of year know their pupils well and put in considerable time and effort to help them. They keep records to help them monitor progress and the annual reports to parents contain very good detail on pupils' personal development.
26. Procedures for child protection and welfare are good, and meet all local requirements. Pupils are helped to be aware of issues and ways to keep themselves safe through the school's well-planned PSHE programme, and have the confidence to approach an adult should the need arise. Heads of year and form tutors actively promote the welfare of their pupils. Routine health and safety procedures are in place, and suitable risk assessments are carried out. The school has satisfactory procedures to monitor and support attendance. Registers are properly completed and data is collated to provide management information. The school is active in encouraging parents to contact the school to provide reasons for their child's absence and actively discourages parents from taking their children on holiday in term-time. The educational welfare officer monitors the registers regularly and is involved in encouraging better attendance by pupils.
27. Procedures to deal with misbehaviour and to promote good behaviour are good. Conduct logs are used to monitor behaviour, and parents are involved if necessary. Pupils appreciate rewards for good behaviour, and there is effective additional support for pupils who find it difficult to behave properly. However, policy documents do not always set out procedures in sufficient detail to help staff in cases where there may be doubt as to whether a particular piece of misbehaviour is serious or not. Procedures for dealing with oppressive behaviour are good, and pupils have full confidence in them.
28. The school has extended its arrangements to assess and track pupils' progress since the last inspection, and many of the new developments have been good. Assessment is used very well across the school in Years 7 and 8 to ensure that pupils work at a suitably challenging level. Pupils are involved well in assessing their own work, and there is outstanding work in some subjects, notably English, history and design and technology. The school uses information from assessment effectively to track the progress of pupils with different ethnic backgrounds. In Years 5 and 6, however, assessment is less sharply focused in some subjects, and the school does not establish a clear baseline for pupils joining Year 5. The lack of a clear starting point makes it more difficult for the school to track progress in Years 5 and 6, and is one reason why some teaching in these years is less closely focused on pupils' learning needs than in Years 7 and 8. The assessment of pupils with special educational needs is carried out to a very good standard, and includes effective involvement of teaching assistants. Pupils and their parents are very well involved in this assessment. Some individual education plans, however, contain too many different targets to be fully effective.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

29. Parents' interest in and support from the school was shown in an exceptionally high level of response to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Many parents send their children to the school from some distance away, and comment positively on its Christian, Catholic ethos. The school takes

care to involve parents from all ethnic and religious backgrounds – for example, the deputy headteacher is arranging for parents of Muslim pupils to contribute to provision for religious education. Parents believe the school is well led and managed and this provides a strong foundation for its work. They are pleased with the quality of the teaching and with their children's progress. Virtually all parents agree that the school expects children to work hard, that behaviour is good, and that children become mature and responsible. Inspection findings support these positive views.

30. A minority of parents think homework could be improved – most think too much is set, although a few think there is too little. Inspectors found that homework was used much more systematically than in most schools, and that pupils asked for voluntary homework in subjects where none was set. On the other hand, pupils in Years 7 and 8 told inspectors that teachers did not always keep to the timetable, so that they had too much in some subjects, and inspectors agreed with them. Some parents do not think that they are kept well informed about their child's progress or that the school works closely with them. Inspectors found some grounds for concern in annual reports, that tend to concentrate on pupils' attitudes rather than on what they are achieving in each subject, but otherwise found that the school works very closely indeed with parents, particularly where there are problems.
31. The school provides sound information for parents. Weekly newsletters let parents know about the life of the school. Homework diaries provide very effective two-way communication with teachers; they are used much more systematically than in many schools, and are regularly monitored. Annual reports on children's progress are satisfactory. They have good information on personal development, but limited information on strengths and weaknesses in each subject, and most targets are too vague to make a practical contribution to progress. On the other hand, many reports contain perceptive comments by pupils on their own performance. The school provides two formal opportunities per year for parents to talk to staff about children's progress. The prospectus and the governors' report both meet legal requirements.
32. Almost all parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning. They encourage homework, contribute generously to fundraising activities, and almost always co-operate in helping the school tackle behavioural or other difficulties. A small minority, however, do too little to check poor behaviour, and a few take children on holiday in term-time after the school has refused permission. Parents help provide transport so that pupils living some way away can attend school clubs. The school's home-school agreement has been signed by most parents. There is an active parents', teachers' and friends' association.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

33. The headteacher and senior management team and provide strong leadership, based on the school's Christian ethos, on careful provision for the personal development of all pupils, and on a commitment to high standards. They lead by example, working extremely hard and fostering a sense of commitment and teamwork among all of the staff. As a result, relationships among all adults working in the school are very good. All teachers, teaching assistants and technicians work confidently and are fully involved in the school's development. These values are very effectively passed on to the pupils, who develop a sense of service to each other and to the community as well as a positive attitude to work. Senior staff and governors are careful to ensure that all pupils, including those from other faiths, are fully involved and included in all aspects of the school's life and work. Policies for special educational needs and for race equality and inclusion are well thought out, supported by training and followed out in practice, with regular monitoring and reports to the governors.
34. The senior management team is well organised and effective. There are particular strengths in the management of provision for special educational needs and of personal care and guidance for pupils. Arrangements for managing teachers' performance identify strengths and weaknesses well, and observations are followed up by action. They do not, however, make full use of the specialist skills of heads of department in setting targets for improvement. The management of subjects is good, with very good management in art and design, history and citizenship, and excellent

management in design and technology. However, too many middle managers report directly to the headteacher, and the strain on management has been increased by problems the school has encountered in filling some management positions. For example, the head of Year 8 has had to act as co-ordinator for ICT, and the headteacher has had to undertake almost all of the co-ordination of the curriculum in addition to his normal management duties as head of a large school. This situation has led to some weaknesses in the co-ordination of literacy and numeracy in Years 5 and 6. Nevertheless, the overall quality of management remains good, and effective quality control of subject management is a key factor in ensuring the quality of the curriculum and the standards achieved in very nearly all subjects in Year 8. There is a good school improvement plan, with clear targets and systems for evaluating its effectiveness.

35. The governors are very well organised, know and understand the school well, and play a full part in its direction. Governors have good relationships with teachers and senior managers. However, there are at present no teacher governors as no teachers have been prepared to stand for election. Governors monitor the progress of all pupils, and are particularly closely involved in monitoring the progress of those with special educational needs. They are fully involved in setting targets. Governors manage finances astutely, allocating funds to educational priorities, making very effective use of additional grants, and developing the school's site effectively. The school understands and applies the principles of best value well. For example, all external advice and training courses are evaluated in terms of the value they provide, and all financial decisions are taken with the long-term interests of the school in mind. As the cost of educating each pupil is significantly lower than in most schools of this type, standards in Year 8 and the very good provision for pupils' personal development represent very good value for money. On the other hand, in deciding how best to allocate limited funds to clear priorities, such as improving access for pupils with disabilities, the governors have had to divert them from other important areas, so that the school has been unable to attach sufficient responsibility points to attract candidates for some management posts. While the governors' priorities are successful, the limited allocation of funds to support management is placing a strain on the school's managers.
36. The school has sufficient teachers, and heads of department and pastoral staff are very well qualified for their work. There has, however, been a significant turnover of staff in the past two years. Several experienced teachers have left, sometimes in the middle of the school year. The school has found it difficult to recruit teachers with specialist skills in ICT, where there is no specialist co-ordinator, and in mathematics, where teachers' knowledge and understanding are only just adequate in Years 5 and 6. Because of timetabling problems, the head of mathematics is also required to spend too much time teaching other subjects; the school has plans to increase her teaching commitment in Years 5 and 6 from September. These factors have hindered the school's efforts to raise standards in mathematics by Year 6, though good specialist teaching of older pupils ensures that standards are above average in Year 8.
37. The school makes good provision for the professional development of all staff, based on priorities in the school improvement plan and on the needs of individual teachers. It makes good use of external specialists. There are good arrangements to support staff joining the school, including newly-qualified teachers. As at the time of the last inspection, the school has received a very positive report from Investors in People, which praised the provision of training for all members of staff and the sense of teamwork within the school. Teaching assistants and technical support staff are very well qualified and effective. Several have valuable additional skills in art, graphic design and photography.
38. Resources for learning are adequate overall, and sometimes outstanding. For example, the planning and evaluation sheets designed by the head of design and technology are exceptionally effective, and a teaching assistant has designed excellent visual resources to support pupils with behavioural difficulties. The school is developing increasingly good resources for ICT, though these are not yet sufficient to allow teachers in all subjects, including music, to use ICT effectively in their work. The library has good collections for some subjects, such as history, but pupils told inspectors that it needed more books, and inspectors strongly agreed. While there are some books for most subjects, and a good display of books designed to combat racism, the library, overall, is not equipped to support learning throughout the school's work, and pupils have too little

access to it, both during and after school. This restricts reading and independent learning in several subjects. For example, Year 6 pupils read a good range of currently popular literature, but read too few really demanding books. Girls use the library much more than boys.

39. Accommodation is adequate overall, and good for some subjects, including ICT and art and design. As at the time of the last inspection, however, work in some classrooms is hampered by noise from work in nearby practical areas, and accommodation for music is barely adequate. There is good access for people with disabilities to most areas of the site, but not to first floor classrooms. The school tackles this problem by rescheduling some classes to the ground floor, and is making good arrangements to improve access in new building. It has very good plans to improve accommodation for music.
40. The school's circumstances have changed significantly since the last inspection, and it has adapted its management procedures well to meet them. There are significantly more pupils with special educational needs, and the co-ordinator for special educational needs is now a member of the senior management team, with suitable additional responsibilities for the professional development of staff. While more work is needed in the management of assessment when pupils join the school, the use of assessment in Years 7 and 8 is much more consistent than in most schools, and management of assessment is much stronger than at the time of the last inspection. The school continues to be less well funded than most schools of its type, and the current results achieved in Year 8, with the school's very good provision for pupils' personal development, represent very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

41. In order to maintain the school's strengths and tackle its remaining weaknesses, the headteacher and governors should take the following steps. The school has already taken some measures to address point 1.

- 1 Raise standards and achievement in mathematics in Year 6, by:
 - improving the range and quality of learning activities in Years 5 and 6;
 - taking further steps to develop teachers' professional skills in mathematics teaching;
 - extending arrangements to monitor and support standards and teaching in Years 5 and 6.

Paragraphs 3, 5, 11, 14, 15, 48-54.

- 2 Improve arrangements for assessing and tracking progress in Years 5 and 6, by:
 - establishing a clear baseline in each subject for all pupils joining the school;
 - using information from this assessment to match teaching more closely to pupils' needs;
 - setting clearly defined targets for pupils and monitoring progress towards them.

Paragraphs 3, 5, 14, 28, 82.

- 3 Improve arrangements for middle management, by:
 - establishing clear lines of responsibility between middle and senior management;
 - ensuring that all managers have an equitable workload;
 - allocating additional funds for management allowances in the budget.

Paragraphs 18, 34, 35.

- 4 Improve library provision, by:
 - developing a collection of suitable books and resources for each subject;
 - establishing a programme of library use for each subject;
 - monitoring the use and effectiveness of the library more closely.

Paragraphs 3, 38.

Additional issues to be included in the governors' action plan.

Continue to make every effort to recruit to vacancies in the governing body. *Paragraph 35*

Extend access to computers in subjects where this is weak. *Paragraph 18*

Take further action to improve accommodation where it is cramped and where noise levels are high.
Paragraph 39

Continue to discourage parents from taking children on holiday in term time. *Paragraph 10*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	87
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	29	30	23	2	0	0
Percentage	3	33	34	26	2	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	640
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	26

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	12
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	145

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	9

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	13

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8
National comparative data	7.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	1.2

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	74	91	165

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	53	61	61
	Girls	71	60	82
	Total	124	121	143
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	76 (82)	73 (65)	87 (92)
	National	75 (75)	73 (71)	86 (87)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	55	55	58
	Girls	72	59	74
	Total	127	114	132
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	77 (79)	69 (69)	80 (79)
	National	73 (72)	74 (74)	82 (82)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese

No of pupils on roll
521
3
58
1
1
2
5
3
5
0
0
4
4
4
2

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
10	1
0	0
0	0
1	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0

Any other ethnic group	
No ethnic group recorded	

6
21

0	0
0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	28.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	25

Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	210

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	31.9
Key Stage 3	32.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2002-3
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	£
Total income	1,586,923
Total expenditure	1,579,951
Expenditure per pupil	2,476
Balance brought forward from previous year	83,865
Balance carried forward to next year	90,837

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	9
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	640
Number of questionnaires returned	439

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	48	7	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	35	58	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	39	53	5	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	57	17	3	2
The teaching is good.	39	56	2	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	53	17	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	38	5	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	66	33	1	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	53	16	3	2
The school is well led and managed.	49	44	3	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	45	5	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	34	45	10	3	7

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6, and very good in Years 7 and 8.
- Work is rigorously monitored and evaluated.
- Pupils are eager to learn, and are fully involved in assessing their own progress.
- There is good leadership and management.

Areas for improvement

- Girls in Years 5 and 6 are not reaching sufficiently high standards in their written work.
- Pupils in Years 5 and 6 do not read enough challenging literature.

42. Standards are broadly average in Year 6 and above average in Year 8. The results of Year 6 national tests were broadly average in 2001 and 2002. They were lower than in most similar schools, but represented satisfactory achievement from these pupils' starting points. There was a significant improvement in results in 2003, reflecting the work of the head of department and the good teaching seen during the inspection. Girls do slightly better than the boys, but the gap is narrower than in most schools. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, and gifted and talented pupils reach very high standards by the end of Year 8. Pupils with different ethnic backgrounds are often among the highest-attaining pupils by Year 8, and their achievement is good. Overall, the pattern of achievement is satisfactory in Year 6, and good by the end of Year 8. This represents satisfactory progress since the last inspection.
43. Speaking and listening skills are average in Year 6 and above average in Year 8. By the end of Year 8, pupils speak confidently and fluently; they adapt their speech for a range of purposes and audiences and use Standard English in appropriate contexts. They work well collaboratively, sharing ideas and showing respect for the contributions of others. Pupils listen closely, sometimes for extended periods, and deduce meaning from explanations. This contributes to learning in all subjects.
44. Pupils read fluently and with expression by the end of Year 6. They read widely, but higher-attaining pupils do not read enough challenging literature, particularly from classic children's books. By the end of Year 8, pupils master increasingly difficult texts, and standards are above average. They can recount what they have read in detail, their understanding goes beyond a literal interpretation of the text and they can express their own opinions on the author's style and treatment of character. Library provision for English is satisfactory, but there are not enough challenging books to enable the library to make a good contribution to reading for pleasure. There is a satisfactory contribution to reading skills from other subjects, with good work in history.
45. Pupils in Year 6 write at length and can adapt their writing for different purposes, but much of their writing, particularly among the girls, has basic errors in spelling and punctuation. Overall, standards by the end of Year 8 are above average, and higher-attaining pupils write to a very high standard. Pupils with special educational needs write well, and girls improve to reach above average standards. Extended writing is well organised and accurate across a range of styles and forms of writing. The quality of their analytical work is impressive. For example, pupils working on Juliet's soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* could trace her fluctuating emotions from the structure of the verse and the use of language, and wrote fluently about dramatic technique. There is a very good contribution to writing from other subjects in Years 7 and 8, particularly in history and design and technology.
46. Teaching is good overall, and very good in Years 7 and 8. Teachers know their subject thoroughly and plan well to meet the needs of all pupils, with very good additional teaching for pupils with

special educational needs, both in lessons and in withdrawal groups. Teachers create a very positive climate for learning in classrooms by building strong relationships with pupils. Visually arresting display material and teaching prompts are used as learning aids and to enliven classrooms. Pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm. Teachers are making good use of homework to extend the independent working skills of all pupils, and use assessment very well to keep pupils in touch with their progress and with what they need to do to improve. Teaching meets the needs of the highest-attaining pupils very well in Years 7 and 8 with very effective extension work. Well-chosen texts extend pupils' thinking and provide very good opportunities for reflection, for example on the lives of older people. In most lessons, teachers use questions very effectively, but, in a few lessons, questions can be answered too briefly for the work to contribute to speaking and listening skills. ICT is used well to help pupils to draft and edit their writing, and there is some imaginative desk-top publishing, with good magazine layouts.

47. Leadership and management are good, with very good features, and the head of department has accomplished a great deal in a short time. Schemes of work have been rewritten, and new and rigorous systems for assessing and evaluating progress set up, including good involvement of pupils in assessing their own work. These systems are used very well to plan work, identify under-achievement and to set targets. Good support for newly-qualified teachers enables them to begin their career by teaching to a good, and sometimes very good standard. The department is very well placed to improve its work further.

MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **good**.

Strengths

- Teaching is good, and sometimes very good, in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils have a very good attitude to learning, and take pride in their work.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good.
- Pupils' achievements are good in Years 7 and 8.

Areas for improvement

- The head of department has too little scope to use her good management skills.
- Standards in national tests in Year 6 are below average, and lower than they should be.
- The use of computers has improved, but requires further development.
- Teaching in some lessons does not concentrate sufficiently on making pupils think.

48. Standards in Year 8 are above average, and pupils go on to reach high standards in national tests in Year 9 in their secondary schools. This is the result of good overall provision in mathematics, based on hard work and conscientious teaching across the school. There are, nevertheless, significant differences in the quality of teaching and learning between Years 5 and 6 and Years 7 and 8. . In Years 5 and 6, teaching is thorough, but too narrow in its scope. The quality of teaching and learning has also been adversely affected in recent years by changes of staffing, some of which have involved the replacement of experienced teachers by less experienced ones. In Years 7 and 8, good, and sometimes very good teaching, enables pupils to make good progress and prepares them well for secondary school.
49. On entry to the school, pupils' standards in mathematics are average. In the 2002 national tests in Year 6, however, standards were below average, and there was a further fall in 2003. Boys performed better than girls. The trend in the last four years has been for boys' standards to improve, but girls' overall standards have dropped. In work seen during the inspection, standards were broadly average in Years 5 and 6, and above average in Years 7 and 8. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress in Years 5 and 6, and good progress in Years 7 and 8. Overall, achievement is unsatisfactory in Year 6, but good by the end of Year 8. When the school was last inspected, standards were above average in Year 6, and average in Year 8. While standards have fallen in Year 6, they have improved to above average in Year 8. Teaching has also

improved in Years 7 and 8, although it still has some weaknesses in Years 5 and 6. Taking all of these factors into account, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

50. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 are grouped according to the standards they have reached in their first schools, and teachers use information from first schools to set work at the correct level. By Year 6, pupils have reached broadly average standards in the work they have undertaken, including number work, and there are some strengths. For example, higher attaining pupils use the terms 'square' and 'square root' very confidently, understand why the square root of 5 is not a whole number, and solve simple equations. However, most pupils cannot apply their knowledge of fractions effectively. For example, they struggled to work out the value of three-quarters of 1000. Analysis of their work over the year also showed too little evidence of practical and investigative work, leading to below average standards in the application of mathematical knowledge and skills.
51. By Year 8, there is a significant improvement. All pupils are confident with their work. They handle numbers fluently and accurately, and reach particularly good standards in algebra. Lower-attaining pupils use algebra confidently, solving equations and gathering like terms and calculating their total value without using a calculator. Higher-attaining pupils during the inspection enjoyed the challenge of number sequences. They could identify the rule for each sequence, and developed this into an algebraic equation. There are, however, still some weaknesses in pupils' use and application of mathematics. There is a good contribution to numerical skills and data handling in ICT, science and geography. There is a significant improvement in standards between Year 6 and Year 8, due chiefly to the increased proportion of teaching carried out by specialists, and to pupils' very good attitudes to their work.
52. Teaching during the inspection was satisfactory in Years 5 and 6. It was good, and very good in individual lessons, in Years 7 and 8. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly, make good use of question and answer sessions, and use praise judiciously to encourage all pupils to take part. Teachers understand the national initiative for the development of numeracy and literacy skills. Pupils' numeracy skills are good, and particularly well developed during lesson starter activities. Where the teaching is very good, the level of challenge is very well planned to extend all pupils, and teachers generate a dynamic learning partnership that brings success and satisfaction to all involved. Teaching in these lessons makes very effective use of the specialist knowledge, skills and understanding of the head of department.
53. Teachers in Years 5 and 6 ensure that pupils work hard and consistently, but give too few opportunities for pupils to think for themselves, and to use their initiative. Pupils often complete many questions, and often get them all correct; while this helps their confidence, it also means that some could have moved on to more demanding work. There is little use of ICT in lessons, by teachers or pupils, although ICT is used well to teach number work in using the additional learning support system. Homework is set regularly, but is usually the same for all pupils in the class. Most work is marked regularly, and includes constructive comments about how pupils can improve. There are, however, gaps in marking and guidance in some classes. Teachers use display very well to promote interest in mathematics, but there are far too few mathematical books in the library.
54. The above average standards reached in Year 8 reflect good leadership and management by the head of department. She knows the subject very well, and has developed a detailed scheme of work for each topic. Links with other schools are very good, providing very good continuity for pupils and contributing to high standards in national tests in Year 9. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very well organised, leading to good number skills by Year 8. The school makes good use of external advice, and there is good support to individual teachers, including newly-qualified teachers. On the other hand, specialist teachers are not always deployed to best advantage. The head of department, in particular, spends much of her time teaching other subjects, and she has too little time to monitor the teaching of the large number of non-specialist teachers teaching mathematics.

SCIENCE

Overall the quality of provision in science is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are above average by the end of Year 8, and are improving.
- Achievement is good by Year 8, and very good for pupils with special educational needs.
- Relationships are very good, and pupils respond positively to teaching.
- Very good leadership and good management have led to good improvement over the last two years.

Areas for improvement

- More challenge is needed in some lessons, particularly for higher-attaining pupils.
- Some of the benefits of good assessment procedures are lost because the information is not used consistently enough to plan work, particularly in Years 5 and 6.

55. Pupils in Year 6 reached average standards in national tests in 2002, and results improved significantly in 2003, when they exceeded the school's targets. The overall standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly average in Year 6, and above average in Year 8. This represents good achievement given pupils' average standards on entry to the school. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well by Year 8, and former St Bede's pupils achieve high standards in national tests in Year 9, after one year in their secondary school. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in standards in Year 8. Resources have improved, and non-specialist teachers are more confident in teaching beyond the outline provided in the scheme of work.
56. By Year 6, all pupils develop sound understanding of experimental and investigative science, and of scientific process, though they understand life processes better than physical processes. For example, pupils' understanding of the effect of forces is less secure than their knowledge of the life-cycle of plants. Higher-attaining pupils can identify the impact of habitat on the number and variety of organisms and classify substances from their properties. By Year 8, almost half of the pupils are working at a higher level than that expected for their age, and few pupils are working below the expected level. Standards are consistent across the whole of the science National Curriculum. Pupils use word equations for chemical reactions and explain reflection and refraction of light. Standards in investigative skills are equally good. Pupils predict the outcome of experiments, using their scientific knowledge, and repeat results to secure greater accuracy and evaluate their findings.
57. The quality of teaching in almost all lessons ranges from satisfactory to excellent, and is good overall. Most lessons are well structured and closely linked to the National Curriculum programme of study. Teachers share learning goals with pupils, and encourage them to assess their learning at the end of lessons. Teachers manage pupils and resources well, so lessons are orderly, practical work is conducted safely, and pupils co-operate well. Pupils respond positively to teachers and relationships are very good. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported by teaching assistants, and resources and technology are well adapted to their needs. They make very good progress. In the best lessons, a stimulating variety of activities keeps pupils actively engaged and ensures very good pace. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on the rock cycle, a check of what pupils already knew led the teacher to set more demanding learning goals for the lesson. A short video clip stimulated an excellent discussion about how permanent rocks were, and a visually inspiring multimedia display engaged pupils. They enjoyed completing and extending concepts maps. Extension activities led the higher attaining pupils to explore ideas from the GCSE syllabus, and a final session challenged all pupils to explain technical vocabulary using simple language only. Their understanding was excellent.
58. The good scheme of work, and support from the science co-ordinator, enables non-specialist teachers to teach to a satisfactory standard in Years 5 and 6, but work in these lessons does not meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those capable of very high standards. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, pupils spent half the time classifying plastic animals using their own criteria and the remainder copying information about

vertebrate groups. The activities lacked challenge, the interest and momentum stimulated at the start of the lesson were lost and pupils learned very little.

59. Literacy, numeracy and ICT are well integrated into teaching. For example, Year 7 pupils designed a key to place on the school intranet using hyperlinks. Technical vocabulary is introduced, defined and consolidated using games and puzzles. Excellent software helps pupils to develop skills in data handling and graph plotting.
60. Leadership of the subject is very good, and it is well managed. In two years, the head of science has established a convincing curriculum for science, rewritten schemes of work using national guidance, improved resources and built the confidence of non-specialists. Pupils' books are regularly monitored and feedback provided to teachers. This has led to consistently satisfactory teaching in Years 5 and 6 and higher standards. In Years 7 and 8, common assessments are annual rather than termly. Teachers' assessments are good but there is little monitoring of progress across the subject. Achievements of different groups are not systematically analysed against their starting points, so that this evidence is not available to frame priorities for further improvement.

ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **very good**.

Strengths

- Pupils reach high standards using a wide range of media and artistic techniques.
- Innovative leadership and teaching raise pupils' sights and extend their view of the world.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have a very effective working partnership.
- Art and design makes an outstanding contribution to numeracy, literacy and ICT skills.
- Pupils' work, from lessons and the art club, beautifies many areas of the school.

Areas for improvement

- Pupils need more opportunities for visits to galleries and exhibitions.
- A small number of pupils misbehave in lessons.
- Pupils need more opportunities to assess their own work.

61. Standards are above average in Year 6 and well above average in Year 8. This represents very good achievement for all groups of pupils, including pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, those with special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils. Boys and girls reach very similar standards. Provision at the time of the last inspection was good, and there has been very good improvement.
62. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 build well on the skills they have learned in their first schools. By the end of Year 6, they have developed confidence to explore and try out ideas. They experiment effectively with a wide range of materials such as paint, pastels and paper sculpture to enrich their designs. Very good research inspires successful designs, which are recorded and modified in pupils' sketchbooks. Year 6 pupils, for example, discovered headdresses from different cultures and times, such as an African harvest mask and a native North American chieftain's war bonnet that gave them ideas that sparked their imagination. Many annotated their designs to explain the materials and techniques they were going to use. Observational drawings develop well using nature and still life. Some pupils found proportion a difficult concept but used guides and templates to start their ideas. Pupils have many opportunities to compare ideas and designs with other pupils, and to say what they feel about the work - how it might be modified and improved. Pupils take care over storing their work.
63. At the end of Year 8 pupils have developed sophistication in the use of their sketchbooks and their understanding of line, form, colour and texture. They learn to convey emotion and feelings through their artwork. Pupils discussed the influence of artists such as Georgina O'Keeffe, Van Gogh and Monet with confidence. The influence of these artists could be seen in the many very good

displays in the art areas. Pupils work individually and in groups to produce exciting two and three-dimensional work in both small and large scale, for example the many large-scale cardboard sculptures of human form around the school. Year 8's final project before moving to the high school is 'pop art'. Pupils enjoyed the wide range of resources available to help them interpret and replicate the skill and techniques of pop artists such as Roy Liechtenstein. They shared views to refine and modify their own work which was then consolidated by whole class evaluation. Lack of natural light in the area restricts the impact of teacher demonstration and pupils' work.

64. Overall, teaching and learning in art are very good, with some outstanding specialist teaching. Art teachers share their personal passion as artists with the pupils they teach, which inspires high standards in art. Teachers use a very good range of teaching styles and room layout to promote interest and effective partnership with pupils. Very effective integration of teaching assistants into planning and teaching ensures lower-attaining pupils have the support they need to achieve their potential. However, a small number of Year 8 boys did not behave properly during the inspection, and this held up learning. Homework is used well to stimulate creativity and to widen understanding. Very good teacher assessment tracks progress but self-assessment lacks a National Curriculum guide for pupils to use to motivate and challenge their individual performance. A lack of visits to galleries and exhibitions restricts the development of first-hand art appreciation.
65. Basic skills are used very well in art. Very good numeracy skills include working with scale, using geometric shapes, developing proportion and creative layout. Outstanding mathematics work designing clay tiles for a religious building such as a mosque highlights accuracy reached when designing. Very good research, recording and annotation ensures technical terms and scan-reading for information gives practice to literacy skills developed in English and improves understanding in art. Good ICT work using programmes such as 'Dazzle' encourages pupils to work with mark making in a creative way. For example, pupils learn how to repeat and rotate patterns. However, access to ICT in lessons is restricted. Many pupils develop an interest in photography through looking at well-composed and professionally printed photographs taken by the technician. Pupils have good access to digital cameras.
66. Management is very good. It is inspired and demanding and has built effectively on the school's past success. Resources are of good quality. A thriving art club has provided displays and sculptures for many parts of the school, including beautiful illustrations of Bible stories for the chapel.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teaching of high quality throughout the department leads to very good achievement.
- Provision for food technology is excellent.
- The department makes a very good contribution to literacy skills.
- Curriculum planning, resources and assessment are outstanding.
- Excellent leadership and management give clarity and coherence to the subject.

Areas for improvement

- There is restricted access to computers, particularly in work with resistant materials.
- Designing skills in resistant materials work could be improved further.

67. Standards are above average in Year 6, and well above average in Year 8. Pupils join the school with broadly average standards in the subject. They do well to reach above average standards in Year 6, despite limited teaching time, and their achievement by Year 8 is very good. Pupils with special educational needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds, including pupils with English as an additional language, make very good progress by Year 8, and the best of these pupils' work is of an exceptional standard for their age. Standards in food technology are often well up to the standard expected at GCSE.

68. Pupils in Year 6 have good understanding of the process of designing and making. The school's excellent design sheets enable them to plan projects well, with clear aims, to carry them through and to evaluate them to a good standard. There is a strong creative element to their work, which includes some exquisite patchwork cushions, produced to a high degree of accuracy and containing a wide variety of construction techniques. The work of lower-attaining pupils is of broadly average standard. They have good design skills, but do not always take enough care over written work. Standards in Year 6 benefit from good links with art and design. During the inspection, these included outstanding design work, with very effective use of the Internet.
69. By Year 8, pupils have very well-developed practical skills. In textiles technology, for example, they use a wide range of construction techniques and apply surface decoration such as embroidery and appliqué to a high standard. The range and quality of food technology products are outstanding as a result of the very careful attention to every aspect of the process of designing, making and evaluation. The best Year 8 work is highly detailed and imaginative, reaching a standard normally seen at the highest grades in GCSE. Examples during the inspection included a range of vegetable dips garnished with coriander, with careful consideration given to the combination of colours, tastes and textures. In other areas of the subject, making skills are much better than designing, and this sometimes leads to a superficial approach to design in work with resistant materials.
70. The quality of teaching is very good overall; it is excellent in food technology, where it enables pupils to develop a particularly broad range of skills and understanding, leading to high levels of understanding of nutritional issues, and to dishes presented to a professional standard. Teachers have high levels of knowledge, enthusiasm and interest. They expect all pupils to work very hard and to reach high standards. Teachers make very effective use of concrete examples to help pupils focus their ideas, and ensure that both functional and aesthetic issues are fully considered. A container for "a precious gift" had to be strong as well as attractive, and pupils designing an alternative lunchtime menu had to balance the nutritional needs of young people with the demand for attractive and tasty snacks. Pupils are expected to justify their decisions and present their solution to the group. Activities capture the interest and involvement of all pupils, and those with special educational needs make very good progress. Pupils are fully aware of the high quality of teaching they receive, and of the work that goes into it. Their co-operation is excellent; several pupils during the inspection willingly gave up most of their lunchtime to help the teacher set up the afternoon lesson.
71. Pupils' work is regularly assessed, using a very clear framework and constructive feedback is used to help pupils improve. The best of this work is excellent, involving pupils in detailed analysis of their own strengths and weaknesses, and very closely graded in relation to the National Curriculum. A minority of targets do not give younger pupils clear enough guidance on how to improve their work. Overall, the assessment system is very good, and has contributed much to the recent improvement in the department.
72. The department makes a very good contribution to the development of literacy skills. Key words are displayed in the main teaching rooms and accuracy in spelling; punctuation and grammar are emphasised through teaching. Speaking and listening are actively encouraged and opportunities for extended writing are developed through detailed evaluations, particularly in food technology. Numeracy skills are developed well through such activities as accurate weighing in food technology, measuring in textiles and resistant materials and through the use of the analysis of questionnaires and surveys.
73. Leadership and management are excellent. The head of department provides a clear vision and direction for design and technology education, and evaluates the work of the department sensitively and rigorously. The development plan is clear and effective, and the format of planning and evaluation sheets for pupils ensures a consistent balance in teaching throughout the department. There is effective support for new teachers. Accommodation and resources are good, but the open-plan design of the classrooms sometimes hinders learning when the (legitimate) noise from one class's practical work disturbs other pupils' concentration. Teachers in some

lessons, particularly in work with resistant materials, have too little access to ICT. Teaching and learning during the last inspection were good, and they are now very good. Standards in Year 8 have risen significantly. The head of department, who retires immediately following the inspection, leaves the department very well equipped to maintain the high standard of its work.

GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **good**.

- Good teaching leads to above average standards and good achievement by Year 8.
- Teachers use varied methods to engage pupils' interest, including good use of ICT.
- Pupils respond positively to teachers' challenges and skilful management.
- The subject makes a good contribution to citizenship and personal development.

Areas for improvement

- Assessment and target setting are not used consistently enough.
- Teaching and learning are monitored well in Years 7 and 8, but not in Years 5 and 6.

74. Pupils join the school with broadly average standards, and the pattern of achievement is similar in Year 6. This is satisfactory. By the end of Year 8, standards are above average, and overall achievement is good. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, as do those who are gifted and talented. Geography has made good progress since the last inspection.
75. By the end of Year 6, pupils understand some processes that change the physical environment, such as the role of rivers in widening valleys. Higher-attaining pupils annotate diagrams fully to show the stages of river development. Pupils appreciate how people change the environment, and judge whether they improve or damage it. They use photographs to assess the changes to Redditch over time. Pupils begin to recognise that countries develop at different rates. They use their knowledge of England to compare life in less economically developed countries such as St Lucia.
76. By Year 8 pupils understand landscape processes, such as 'freeze-thaw' to describe how ice shatters rock, and describe them confidently, using appropriate subject terms. They interpret numerical data, such as the relationship of birth and death rates in population size, accurately. Higher-attaining pupils show considerable initiative in applying their learning skills independently. A pupil in Year 8, for example, used his knowledge and understanding of weathering and erosion to explain landscape features of the Lot valley in France as a homework investigation. Lower-attaining pupils, however, are less consistent in their use of language, fallshort on explanation, and tend to miss out labels on diagrams.
77. The overall quality of teaching is good, and it was very good in a third of lessons during the inspection. Teachers use a good variety of methods such as group discussion, video-film, role-play, and fieldwork, to stimulate learning. For example, pupils in a high attaining class in Year 8 used power-point presentations very successfully. Using information from a visit to Aston Villa Football Club, they prepared talks for "potential sponsors". Pupils asked penetrating questions, such as: "What is the club's policy towards buying goods from Third World countries?" "We investigate the work conditions and support fair trade" was the prompt reply. Teachers match tasks carefully for pupils with special educational needs and use support assistants judiciously. Further work to extend pupils who work quickly is available in most lessons. Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour reflect skilful management by teachers. Lessons have thoughtful planning but in practice the final part is often not given enough time to consolidate learning, especially in Year 5. Pupils' receive helpful guidance through regularly marked classwork and homework, but setting targets for improvement is inconsistent, and usually not related to National Curriculum levels.

78. Teachers give good opportunities for pupils to use and develop numeracy and ICT skills. The subject makes a good contribution to most pupils' literacy skills, but this is not always followed through in work with lower-attaining pupils. Library provision for geography is very limited.
79. Leadership and management are good, and have benefited from close co-operation between the head of department and the headteacher. Much has been done to up-date policies. Assessment procedures are adequate, but information from assessment is not used systematically to guide pupils on improving their work. There has also been some effective monitoring of teaching, but more is needed to ensure that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are fully challenged.

HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **very good**.

Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to very good long-term achievement.
- Teachers work hard to improve pupils' literacy skills, and standards in writing are good.
- Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by their teachers.
- Assessment procedures are very good.
- Pupils enjoy their lessons and want to work hard.
- Subject leadership is very good. Teachers are committed and reflective.

Areas for improvement

- Marking could provide clearer guidance on improving work in Years 5 and 6.

80. Standards are above average in Year 6 and well above average in Year 8. This represents very good achievement among all groups of pupils from the broadly average standards they reach on joining the school. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language make very good progress because of the support they receive, particularly with literacy skills. Gifted and talented pupils learn very well because of the scope they are offered for individual research. Standards and the quality of teaching have shown very good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in Years 7 and 8.
81. Pupils in Year 6 have a good grasp of the principles of time-lines and basic chronology. Their knowledge and understanding of historical events, people and concepts is above average. They are developing skills of observation and analysis, which they apply to a range of types of historical evidence. Pupils have learnt to research. They work effectively, for example, on Egyptian and Tudor projects. By Year 8, pupils have very good understanding of topics they have studied, including the American civil rights movement. They work with a wide range of sources of historical information to generate accurate description and explanation. They have a very good understanding of cause and consequence although most are not yet able to group types of causes or rank causes and consequences in order of importance. Writing skills by Year 8 are good, particularly for higher-attaining pupils, whose writing explores complex issues in depth. Average and lower-attaining pupils work hard to improve their written expression and are becoming more confident in handling written answers. Pupils in all years regularly word process their work and make use of the Internet as a research tool.
82. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, particularly in Years 7 and 8, where all lessons are taught by a specialist. Teachers' expectations of behaviour are always high, and pupils respond with a lively sense of historical curiosity and hard work. Although homework in Years 5 and 6 is voluntary, for example, pupils told inspectors that everyone did it, and complained if none was set. Work is suitably challenging. Teachers make very good use of resources and display to engage pupils' interest, and to help them to understand the feelings of people in the historical topics they study. In a Year 8 lesson on civil rights, for example, pupils listened to a song about Lincoln, Luther King and Kennedy, and watched a video clip of Rosa Parkes talking about her experience of refusing to give up her seat for a white passenger. Teachers provide very effective support to pupils with special educational needs. In a Year 5 lesson, for example, less

able pupils worked hard on the reasons why the Spanish Armada was sent and why it failed. At the end of the lesson they were the focus of the class discussion, and this boosted their confidence. Marking is thorough and makes very good use of National Curriculum levels. Guidance to pupils in Years 7 and 8, and targets for improving their work, are excellent. Marking in Years 5 and 6 encourages pupils, but does not provide enough guidance.

83. This is a very well-managed department. The subject co-ordinator has a clear view of the priorities for the subject and an effective understanding of how to achieve her goals. There are good links with the local Catholic high school. The co-ordinator, for example, receives information about her pupils' achievements in history at the end of Year 9. Resources are good and the co-ordinator effectively enhances her initial allocation of funding through skilled bidding. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' cultural development, for example through a local history study on the needle industry in Redditch. A regular programme of visits and visitors enhances the curriculum. Pupils in Year 6, for example, participate in Victorian Day. Teachers are committed and work well as a team. During the week of the inspection, pupils in Year 8 were given very good opportunities to reflect on the human spirit by looking at Martin Luther King's response to discrimination and hatred.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in ICT is **very good**.

Strengths

- Teachers and pupils use ICT confidently and skilfully.
- Teaching and learning are good, and outstanding in individual lessons.
- Excellent technical support makes an exceptional contribution to teaching and learning.
- Nationally designed units of work are used very well.
- Resources are of exceptional quality, though there are not enough for all subjects.

Areas for improvement

- The school has been unable to appoint a specialist co-ordinator.
- Teachers in some subjects have too little access to ICT.

84. Pupils reach above average standards in Year 6, and well above average standards in Year 8. Standards in Year 8 are boosted by good and sometimes very good use of ICT in other subjects, though teachers do not yet have enough access to computers to provide this level of support in all subjects. There is no difference between boys' and girls' achievements, or in the achievements of pupils from different ethnic groups. Throughout the school, pupils with special educational needs, and lower-attaining pupils, make very good progress as a result of very effective support from teaching assistants and software that is well-chosen to meet their needs. Gifted and talented pupils also do very well, both in lessons and in additional work with the technician, outside lesson time. Overall, the present standards represent good achievement on the part of all pupils, and good improvement since the last inspection.
85. By the end of Year 6 pupils love using computers. They have confidence to switch between the two school computer areas and also incorporate their work from home. Many pupils referred to parents' skill and interest in ICT, which they explained contributes to their knowledge. Year 5's high level understanding of using computers for problem solving, including very effective work in pairs, made them practise and discuss controlling movement on the computer programme. Teamwork, plus probing teacher questions challenged their thinking enabling them to record their solution to the problem and instil good habits for future work. Year 6 continue to be enthusiasts. Word-processing, manipulating images and researching on the Internet were actively used in the literacy-based lesson to produce an accurate fact file on their favourite author. Pupils also use spreadsheets and measure outcomes of experiments in science. There is no opportunity for pupils to enhance their communication skills through the use of e-mail.

86. In Years 7 and 8, work well independently, and they thrive on a rich diet of innovative use of ICT. A litter project, by Year 7 pupils, made very good use of digital movie images to record and edit opinions from other pupils about litter in the school, and possible solutions. Fun in the project enriched the learning, and the project contributed to citizenship by raised awareness of litter and responsibility. In a similar way, multimedia presentations in geography helped pupils understand the importance of planning, animation and the impact of multi-media. Pupils persevere effectively in the use of control systems, spreadsheets and databases. Not all have access to e-mail, however, and there is too little use of ICT in mathematics, modern languages and music because teachers in these subjects do not have easy access to computers.
87. Teachers are all committed to the use of ICT and, overall, teaching and learning are good. Although many teachers are non-specialist, all have developed good personal skills by using laptops. Lessons are lively, well planned and target specific needs among all groups of pupils. Very good links with the teacher assistants and excellent technical support help motivation, so that pupils meet and often exceed their targets. Teachers involve pupils actively in their learning through reporting back, evaluating work against criteria and helping each other. These styles of teaching consolidate learning and extend understanding. Very good assessment is tracking pupils' progress across their units of work and self-assessment is being introduced. High expectations of behaviour, standards of work and very good teacher demonstration set the benchmark standards for all to reach.
88. Good planning and monitoring of literacy ensures pupils use and understand correct terminology such as 'search engines', 'input' and 'output'. Pupils learn to draft and edit their work, which enriches pride in their presentation, particularly in design and technology and science. Despite the limited access to ICT in mathematics lessons, there is a very good contribution to number work through a specialised system of computer-based learning.
89. Very good interim management by a dedicated senior member of staff has ensured standards have been maintained, but further innovation has been held up by the school's failure to recruit a specialist co-ordinator. Resources are exceptional and the ICT technician is outstanding in his monitoring of the subject equipment and his support of teachers and pupils. Strategic planning by the previous manager has led to a flexible and responsive network across the school, and it is capable of extension to all subjects.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern foreign languages is **satisfactory**.

Strengths:

- Pupils write accurately and fluently and have a good grasp of basic grammar.
- Teaching makes good use of pair and group work.
- A very well planned study trip to France boosts learning in Year 7.
- Pupils' attitudes to language learning are very good.

Areas for improvement:

- Pupils need more opportunities to speak French in class.
- There is very little use of ICT.
- Homework is not used effectively.
- Pupils do not have the opportunity to study more than one language.

90. Pupils begin to learn French in Year 7. Standards at the end of Year 8 are average, and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in lessons, but their progress is limited because they miss many French lessons for literacy support. Higher attaining pupils also achieve well, especially in writing. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good, especially in Year 7. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

91. Pupils write well and present their written work with care. By the end of Year 8, higher attaining and average pupils write fluently and accurately about past and future events, using a wide vocabulary. All pupils have a sound grasp of basic grammar. However, their speaking and listening skills are underdeveloped, because they have too few opportunities to practise them in lessons. Opportunities for reading for pleasure are also few, and pupils' reading skills are therefore limited.
92. Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and clearly presented, so that pupils quickly pick up new material. One teacher's skilful use of ICT to present new language had a clearly beneficial effect on the interest and motivation of Year 7 classes. Marking is regular and thorough, with occasional helpful comments on how to improve, although uncompleted work is sometimes not followed up. Pair and group work are well used, and give pupils opportunities to develop independent learning skills and confidence. Pupils compile with great care a personal reference booklet containing key grammar, structures and vocabulary. This booklet is an effective tool for teaching and learning.
93. However, teachers do not speak enough French in class, and many opportunities for pupils to practise oral skills are missed. In one exceptional Year 7 lesson, where the teacher used the language almost exclusively, pupils responded to the challenge at the end of a very hot day, spoke a lot of French and made very good and rapid progress. In some other lessons, a lack of variety leads to flagging interest. Teachers rarely modify the learning tasks for different groups of pupils. Homework is not well used to consolidate and extend learning in class. Written homework is rare, and too often no homework is set.
94. Most teachers have not yet begun to use ICT to support learning, and the school library does not serve the needs of language learners, as it has neither books nor software for French. However, the modern languages department makes an effective contribution to pupils' literacy through the study of grammar and structures and its emphasis on accuracy. Attractive displays in the French room and throughout the school provide a favourable atmosphere for language learning and raise the profile of foreign languages and cultures in the school.
95. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Assessment is well organised and regular; results are analysed by gender and group and used to set pupils' targets. Pupils' work is monitored twice per term by the head of department. However, there is too little monitoring of teaching within the department, and sharing good practice is therefore difficult. The department's handbook sets out a range of coherent policies, but the development plan lacks detail, especially for learning goals. Extra-curricular provision is good. Pupils have the opportunity to perform playlets at the school's annual French morning and at a local language festival. Over 100 Year 7 pupils each year enjoy a very well-planned and effective five-day study trip to France.

MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **good**, and has some outstanding features.

Strengths

- Standards are above average throughout the school.
- Teaching is always good, and often challenging and inspiring.
- There are instances of exceptional performances by many pupils.
- Pupils apply themselves very well in their work.

Areas for Improvement

- Pupils need to use notation more effectively to extend their compositions.
- The department has too little access to ICT.
- Accommodation is barely adequate and makes teaching difficult.

96. Standards at the end of Years 6 and 8 are above average, and well above average for higher-attaining pupils in Year 8. Standards among pupils joining the school are average, so this represents good achievement, and very good achievement among higher-attaining pupils. There is

little difference in the standards reached by boys and girls; however, in practical situations, boys often perform and express opinions more confidently. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, and provision for music now has many outstanding features.

97. All pupils compose and perform music well. They can maintain individual parts when singing, often unaccompanied and in three parts, and also when using instruments. Year 6 pupils maintain ostinato patterns and include musical elements such as dynamics and tempo in their work. More competent pupils use dotted and syncopated rhythms, which extend and develop their musical skills. For example, pupils managed to perform melodic ostinati and chords based on the Dorian Mode showing clear understanding of structure. They are able to create interesting and inventive patterns, which they combined with others to perform within an ensemble. However, pupils are less skilled in evaluating their own work and other music, and do not have opportunities to use ICT in lessons.
98. Pupils listen carefully to each other to ensure that individual parts complement and fit together. Year 7 and 8 pupils can talk knowledgeably about chords and melodic work, including passing notes. They are able to produce structured pieces, for example using different syllables in words to create variation pieces using vocal sounds. More competent pupils in Year 8 perform accurately and are able to illustrate and discuss musical concepts with confidence and make decisions during rehearsal. Despite the cramped and stuffy accommodation, the positive attitudes and application of the pupils to their work ensures that achievement in lessons is often good. At present, pupils usually rely on their aural skills when performing. There is a need to make more use of an appropriate variety of notations in order to help record more extended compositions.
99. Teaching is always good, and is at times exceptionally challenging, with constant high expectations set for pupils. This can result in exceptional performances. For example, Year 5 pupils were selecting sounds to create music for different planets. By showing sensitivity and good knowledge when combining instruments, they performed ethereal sounds which conveyed a sense of weightlessness found in space. Demonstrations are of high quality and the best possible musical standards are expected in each lesson. Probing questioning by the teacher encourages pupils to think carefully about their work and to apply previous learning to new situations. This was evident in a Year 7 class where pupils used their knowledge of passing notes, gained while singing, within their own melodic compositions. Lessons are planned to integrate activities and ensure that skills are developed systematically. Regular recordings give immediate feedback and opportunities for pupils to reflect and evaluate their work. Pupils are encouraged to describe their work orally and are given appropriate word banks to help literacy and especially help pupils in Years 5 and 6. However there is limited opportunity for them to produce written evaluations on a regular basis.
100. Management is good, despite the disparate nature of the current accommodation which makes it difficult for the head of department to meet and monitor the work of the peripatetic staff. Resources are generally adequate, although there are insufficient computers and software. Assessment and monitoring of standards and progress are very good, with clear procedures in place and a thorough knowledge of individual potential. However there is a need for pupils to set their own targets after evaluating their work.
101. There are many opportunities of high quality for pupils to develop musically through extra-curricular activities, instrumental lessons and workshops. These enhances their understanding of music from other cultures, for example, through the recent successful African drumming sessions. More pupils than at the previous inspection receive instrumental lessons and standards of performance are high.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards are above average in Year 6 and Year 8.

- Well-planned teaching enables all groups of pupils to learn well.
- There are very good opportunities for learning outside lessons.
- Relationships are very good, and pupils have positive attitudes to work.
- The subject leader has a strong commitment to improvement and success.

Areas for improvement

- Planning could be more closely linked to work in students' first schools.
- Facilities are only just adequate, and pitches are poorly drained.
- Boys and girls have too few opportunities to work together.

102. Most pupils have reached broadly average standards when they join the school and their above average standards in Year 6 and Year 8 represent good achievement. There is no significant difference in the standards reached by boys and girls. In all years, pupils with special educational needs achieve well, and there are individual examples of outstanding achievement. High-attaining pupils, including the gifted and talented, do very well in a range of sports at district, county and sometimes national levels. There have been good improvements in teaching and in standards since the last inspection.
103. By the end of Year 6, most pupils understand basic fitness principles, show good safety awareness and use individual and team skills effectively in games. High-attaining pupils use very good tactical awareness and refined skills to outmanoeuvre opponents consistently. Their work in cricket and tennis shows good technique and shot placement. The standards of a small minority are below average. Their main barriers to progress are poor hand-eye co-ordination and lack of spatial awareness.
104. Most pupils by the end of Year 8 have good independent learning skills; for instance, in an athletics lesson, pupils organised their own relay teams, evaluated performance and planned improvements. They show good skills and tactical awareness in tennis. Higher-attaining pupils, including the talented, show refined technique and understand how to improve performance. They perform very successfully in the wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular sport. The standards of a small minority are below average. They understand basic technique and rules, but lack the necessary spatial and tactical awareness to make progress in game situations.
105. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. Teachers are knowledgeable, and manage pupils very well. Many lessons contain a range of activities enabling pupils to build on previous learning. Work is planned to suit all pupils, and those with special educational needs make good progress. In a Year 8 tennis lesson, lower-attaining pupils, including two with cerebral palsy, made excellent progress, because of modified tasks, simplified instructions and clear demonstrations. The learning of higher-attaining pupils, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and the extensive extra-curricular sports programme. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their positive attitudes and very good relationships, though there is a slight barrier to learning in some sports because boys and girls do not work together. In the minority of lessons in which teaching and learning were satisfactory rather than good, the teacher set too rigid a framework for pupils, and they had too few opportunities to show initiative and to explore their own ideas. Pupils show good numerical skills. Teachers provide many opportunities for them to record and measure performance and use scoring systems.
106. The subject makes good provision for pupils to develop their ICT skills. Video camcorders and digital cameras are used to analyse performance, and pupils confidently use laptop computers to record athletics' performances. Most pupils show satisfactory levels of literacy. Listening skills are good and pupils are confident in oral work; however, their technical vocabulary is limited, due to teachers' lack of emphasis on key words.
107. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has a strong commitment to improvement and success. Good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve standards. Although there is no clear baseline assessment in Year 5, other aspects of assessment are good, and it is used well for target setting and to monitor pupils' progress. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Indoor facilities are limited due to the lack of a multi-purpose sports hall, and poor drainage to the playing fields, sometimes makes them unusable. The school has plans to link learning more closely with work pupils have done in their first schools.

CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **good**.

Strengths

- Standards in Year 8 are above average and pupils' achievement is good.
- There is a strong programme of events and activities to enrich the citizenship curriculum.
- Leadership and management by the subject co-ordinator are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Informal monitoring of teaching and learning needs to develop into a more formal system.

108. Standards in Year 8 are above those expected nationally. Pupils' written and oral work shows that they are interested in the subject. They are developing a keen sense of responsibility, an understanding of what the subject entails and are becoming informed citizens. Achievement is good. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as other pupils, and pupils with particular interests in the subject have good scope for extending them through the school's opportunities to take responsibility, and in many subjects.
109. Provision is based on the school's Christian values, derived from its Catholic heritage. Teachers emphasise the values of service at home, in the community and in the world outside. Assemblies are used very well to reinforce and develop ideas such as tolerance, care of the environment and peace, and pupils have good opportunities to pursue these themes in depth in work in several subjects. The school council provides a very good opportunity to develop skills of participation and to consider responsible action. Pupils value the chance to put forward suggestions for school improvement through their class representatives and already they have seen improvements in their school environment, evident, for example, in their recent purchase, using their own budget, of new litter bins for the school field.
110. Very little direct teaching of citizenship could be seen during the week of the inspection. However, evidence from lesson observation and from looking at pupils' work and talking to them about it suggests that teaching is good overall. Pupils in Year 8, for example, have a clear understanding of the laws relating to illegal drugs, and examine issues of injustice and discrimination through a study of the Black civil rights movement in 1960s America. One pupil was asked to research whether discrimination still exists in America today. The school's plans and scheme of work provide teachers with very detailed and clear guidance and support.
111. The subject co-ordinator's very good leadership and direction has ensured a very positive start to the introduction and development of the subject. Thorough foundations were laid in the run-up to the official introduction of citizenship into Years 7 and 8 at the beginning of this school year. The citizenship curriculum is very well planned with distinct modules in PHSE (personal, health and social education) and support from other subjects. Schemes of work show very clearly how and when the various strands of citizenship will be covered. Detailed lesson plans are also provided for teachers. Much thought has been given to assessment procedures so that feedback to pupils and reporting to parents is based on valid information, but these are still being worked on. A considerable amount of informal monitoring of teaching and learning takes place: this now needs to develop into a more formal structure.