

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **HORRINGER COURT MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Bury St Edmunds

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124806

Headteacher: Dr V Farthing

Lead inspector: Mr Alastair Mathews

Dates of inspection: 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> May 2004

Inspection number: 260088

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	9 - 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	409
School address:	Glastonbury Road Bury St Edmunds Suffolk
Postcode:	IP33 2EX
Telephone number:	(01284) 755 626
Fax number:	(01284) 704 494
E-mail address:	admin@horringercourtmiddle.suffolk.sch.uk
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Sarah Thomas
Date of previous inspection:	28 <sup>th</sup> September to 2 <sup>nd</sup> October 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Horringer Court Middle School is the same size as most other middle schools. With 409 pupils on roll, it caters for pupils aged nine - 13. It is well regarded by the local community, who make considerable use of the school's facilities. Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, some of which are disadvantaged, with lower than average income levels. Their attainment on entry is close to the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of white-British origin. In addition, there are a very small number of pupils from a variety of minority ethnic heritages. No pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. Three pupils are in public care and none are from traveller families. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is now just above the national average and the proportion with a statement is well above average because the school acts as an area support centre for the local education authority. The range of needs includes moderate learning, emotional and behavioural, specific difficulties and autism. The school is accredited by the department for education and skills as a Training School (initial teacher training) and is a partner school with the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. It was awarded Investor in People status in March 2004 and the Sportsmark in May 2004.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2448	Mr A Mathews	Lead inspector	Religious education
14404	Mr A Rolfe	Lay inspector	
12408	Mr A Frith	Team inspector	French
28199	Mr P Lawley	Team inspector	English
20457	Mr B Fletcher	Team inspector	Mathematics
16786	Mr S Hodge	Team inspector	Science
31192	Mr J Stewart	Team inspector	Geography Physical education
18261	Mr T Hill	Team inspector	Art Special educational needs
13122	Mrs S Matthews	Team inspector	History Citizenship Personal, social and health education
1782	Mr A Lyons	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology
31673	Mr J Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Horringer Court Middle School is an effective school**, with many very good features. As a result of good teaching, standards are above national expectations in many subjects. Pupils achieve well in nearly all subjects and particularly well in history. As a result of the excellent leadership of the new headteacher, the overall high expectations and the trust and very good relationships evident between pupils and staff, pupils develop as confident learners and as responsible and caring young people. The school provides good value for money.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- By Year 8, standards are above national expectations in nearly all subjects and at expected levels in music. They are below national expectations in design and technology because of shortcomings in curriculum coverage and in some teaching.
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school in nearly all subjects, but some potentially higher attaining pupils need more challenge in some lessons in science, design and technology, French in Year 6, history, music and religious education.
- The excellent leadership of the new headteacher, with the very strong support of the leadership team, provides a clear sense of direction to the school's work, especially in improving learning and achievement.
- Educational links with other schools and the school's contribution to wider partnerships, particularly for teacher training, are excellent.
- The very good range and quality of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities enhance the curriculum and pupils' experiences.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good and the school is very inclusive.
- Pupils are very well cared for and they are supported and advised well.
- The way teachers are introduced to the school and their ongoing training are excellent, but a few need to develop further their skills of behaviour management.
- Pupils do not always listen to each other well enough, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Accommodation is satisfactory, but some deficiencies prevent even higher standards being achieved, for example, in science.

The school has made satisfactory progress overall since its last inspection in 1998. It has responded well to the key issues in the last inspection report. Teaching has improved and is now good in the areas previously found weak, but there is still a little unsatisfactory teaching. Policy on homework has been revised and is now checked more carefully. Staff training needs now are linked to the information gained from observing lessons.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Pupils achieve well throughout the school in nearly all subjects.** Pupils' achievement in history is very good. There is no significant difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils. The

results obtained by pupils in Year 6 in national tests in 2003 were below average when compared with the results in all schools and with those in similar schools. This is explained to some extent by pupils' below average performance in reading in their national tests at the end of Year 2 and their below average attainment prior to entry to the school two years later and by the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group, although some pupils did less well than they should in 2003. Standards of work of the current Year 6 pupils are average overall but above average in English, history and music. In the current Year 8, the pupils' final year in this school, standards are above average in nearly all subjects, but are average in music. They are below average in design and technology because of shortcomings in curriculum coverage in Years 7 and 8 and in some teaching.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good.** Their attitudes are good and they behave well. Attendance is above average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good** and has many very good features. **Teaching is good overall**, which enables pupils to learn well and it is often very good and sometimes excellent. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils well; it is enriched by a wide range of visits and by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. The school cares very well for its pupils and provides good support and guidance. Pupils' views are sought and valued. The school's partnership with parents is good and staff work hard to develop it further. There are very strong links with the local community and with other schools in the area.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management of the school are very good.** The excellent leadership of the new headteacher provides a clear sense of direction to the school's work. She is very well supported by her senior leadership team. The school's positive and inclusive ethos ensures that all pupils are valued and encouraged to learn, achieve and succeed. The governing body oversees the school very well and has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. The school regularly reviews how well pupils are doing in order to improve their learning and achievement.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents overall are very satisfied with the school, although a minority feel that they are not sufficiently informed about the school's homework provision and pupils' behaviour and are not satisfied with the information they receive about their children's progress. Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents. They also judge that homework is used well, overall behaviour is good, apart from that of a small minority of pupils who on occasions behave badly and that information for parents is very good. Pupils are also very satisfied with school life and have many opportunities to express their views, which are valued and acted upon.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Provide more challenge for some potentially higher attaining pupils in all lessons in science, design and technology, French in Year 6, history, music and religious education.
- Develop pupils' skills of listening to each other, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Use the very best practice to extend some teachers' skills of managing behaviour.
- Improve curriculum planning and content in design and technology so that more of the programme of study for Key Stage 3 is covered.
- Where possible, improve accommodation to further improve standards, for example, in science.





## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve **well** throughout the school in nearly all subjects. Standards by the end of Year 6 are **at nationally expected levels overall** but above them in English, history and music. By the end of Year 8 standards are above national expectations in nearly all subjects, but at nationally expected levels in music and below them in design and technology. Different groups of pupils achieve as well as one another.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement during their time at school is good overall.
- Pupils in Year 6 achieved satisfactorily in the national tests in 2003 when account is taken of their attainment prior to entry to the school, but some pupils underachieved.
- Pupils achieve particularly well throughout the school in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and in many other subjects.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve at least as well as their peers because they are very well supported and their needs are well known.
- Pupils identified as gifted and talented achieve very well when additional provision is made for them.

#### Commentary

1. In the national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2003, the results were just below national average levels in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. This dip in achievement against previous years is explained to some extent by the below average results of these pupils in reading in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and their below average attainment prior to entry to the school two years later and by the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the year group, but some pupils underachieved in 2003. When compared with the results in similar schools, the results in English and mathematics were average at the nationally expected levels but below average for the higher Level 5. In science, they were below average for the nationally expected levels but average for Level 5. The school's results over the past five years have improved in line with the national trend, although there have been some small variations between the subjects. Performance, as shown by pupils' average points scores, was, overall, below the levels of the previous two years in 2003, although the average points score in science rose slightly in 2003 from its level in 2002. The school met its targets for nationally expected levels in 2003 but did not meet its challenging targets for the higher Level 5 in 2003. Targets have been adjusted upwards since the arrival of the new headteacher.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.2 (27.1)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.5 (26.8)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.3 (28.1)	28.6 (28.3)

*There were 121 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. The school analyses data very carefully in order to monitor trends and to initiate action to address areas of underperformance, including any groups of pupils who do not perform as expected. This has led, for example, to a focus on improving boys' writing. There is little

difference between the performance of boys and girls over time and both are close to the national median for their age group.

3. Pupils' attainment in the tests at the end of Year 2 is close to the national average but below average in reading. Assessments made prior to entry to the school suggest some are still below average at that stage. In Years 5 and 6, pupils make good progress and achieve satisfactorily in all subjects and well in English, science, geography, information and communication technology (ICT), art, music, physical education and in personal, social and health education and citizenship. They achieve particularly well in history. By Year 6, standards are at nationally expected levels in mathematics and science as well as in design and technology, ICT, art, geography, physical education and religious education. In English, history and music, standards are above these levels.
4. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 7 and 8 and achieve well in English, mathematics and science. They also achieve well in geography, ICT, French, art and design, music, physical education, religious education and citizenship. They achieve very well in history. There is little difference between the achievements of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve at least as well as their peers because they are very well supported and their needs are well known. Those who are identified as gifted and talented also achieve as well as their peers, but they achieve very well when additional provision is made for them, as in mathematics and physical education and in extra-curricular clubs. By Year 8, standards are above nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science. These above average standards were also reflected in the results obtained by former pupils from the school in their national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003. Standards are also above national expectations by Year 8 in ICT, French, history, geography, art and design, physical education, citizenship and religious education and at nationally expected levels in music. They are below these levels in design and technology because of shortcomings in curriculum coverage in Years 7 and 8 and in some teaching.
5. Pupils achieve well because of the good quality of much of the teaching and because the curriculum overall is well planned to meet their needs. Many subject leaders monitor and evaluate the work in their subjects very effectively in order to ensure consistency of approach throughout the school. Good systems for managing information on the assessment of pupils help teachers to plan work that is, for the most part, appropriately challenging for different groups of pupils. In addition, the inclusive ethos of the school and its strong commitment to enabling all pupils to gain success ensure that pupils develop positive attitudes to learning and to work. Pupils with special educational needs often make more progress than their peers when teaching assistants and subject teachers work closely together in supporting them. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well overall as a result of the good teaching in the school and very well when suitable additional provision is made for them. In some lessons, potentially higher attaining pupils receive insufficient challenge and work is not matched sufficiently to their individual capabilities and therefore they do not achieve at the levels of which they are capable.
6. Pupils' literacy skills are good and enable them to make good progress in most subjects. Standards of writing and speaking are better than standards of listening. A clear policy exists for teaching numeracy in other subjects and its use contributes significantly to pupils' overall competence in mathematics. Pupils have good knowledge, skills and understanding of ICT as a result of their specialist lessons and use them well, where possible, to improve their achievement in a range of other subjects.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good** and relationships are **very good**. Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, are **very good**. Attendance is **above average** and punctuality is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's very good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural learning makes a strong contribution to their personal development.
- Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour make a positive contribution to their learning.
- Pupils enjoy school; they have very good relationships in the school community.
- Attendance is good and above the national average.

## **Commentary**

7. Pupils' good attitudes to work make a positive contribution to their learning. In discussion, virtually all pupils say they enjoy coming to school and are able to identify favourite subjects. A significant number of pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school. The majority are very interested in what they are doing and take an active part in all aspects of lessons. For example, in a Year 8 science lesson where pupils were studying the refraction of light, they responded enthusiastically to the task, worked well and maintained their concentration throughout the lesson. They enjoyed sharing ideas and supporting each other and therefore made very good progress. Most pupils take a pride in their work and are willing and able to talk about it.
8. The behaviour of almost all pupils is good. In the majority of lessons seen, behaviour was good and in some it was very good and this has a positive impact on learning. Both before and after school and at breaks and lunchtimes, pupils relate well together. Pupils with special educational needs generally show good attitudes to work and behave well in lessons and around the school. Nevertheless, in a small number of lessons, behaviour is unsatisfactory and it disrupts the learning of others. This is sometimes linked to teachers' inconsistent application of the school's behaviour management strategies. Pupils treat the school's accommodation and equipment with care and respect and there is no evidence of pupil generated vandalism and little or no litter around the school.
9. Both parents and pupils confirm that bullying is an occasional problem but the school has good anti-bullying procedures to enable them to react quickly and positively to known instances of bullying. There are very few recorded racist incidents, but the school treats these seriously and takes appropriate action to maintain racial harmony. The number of pupils excluded in the last academic year was relatively high but there were no permanent exclusions. Evidence from the school's records suggests that the use of exclusion is appropriate.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	392	32	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	10	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	0	0

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

10. Overall, the school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development. Collective worship, which includes time for prayer and thoughtful reflection, enables them to develop self-knowledge and spiritual awareness well. This is enhanced by work in religious education, art, science and geography. In personal, social and health education, pupils are encouraged to explore their feelings and emotions and their relationships with friends and family. As a result, they gain a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and they are aware of the school's code of conduct which encourages them to be responsible for their own actions and to consider the impact of their actions on others. Pupils are encouraged to help one another and to show consideration for others. For example, older pupils act as "buddies" for younger pupils and in Year 8 have a club whose members take an active interest in a nearby residential home for the elderly.
11. Relationships between staff and pupils and the pupils themselves are very good. Staff present very good role models, openly valuing pupils' opinions and ideas, thus promoting their self-esteem. There are many opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in pairs and small groups and the school council encourages them to participate in decisions that affect the school community. Through these and many other activities, pupils are developing well as responsible members of a community. Although the local area does not have a strong multi-cultural character there are good opportunities to study other cultures in most subjects. Mediterranean, Asian and other foods are included on the lunchtime menu as a themed cultural experience and pupils' appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions is good.

## Attendance

12. The overall level of attendance is above national levels, but unauthorised absence is higher than average. The school tracks closely the small minority of pupils who have poor attendance records and makes first day contact with parents if their children are absent and the school has not been notified. However, despite the school's efforts, too many pupils take holidays in school time, which results in them missing important parts of their education. Punctuality in general is good, but a small group of pupils arrive late regularly due to late buses.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.8	School data	0.4
National data	6.0	National data	0.3

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good** and has many **very good** features. Teaching is good overall and enables pupils to learn well. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the learning needs of pupils well. The very good provision for extra-curricular activities extends and enhances pupils' interests and experiences well. The care, guidance and support pupils receive are very strong, as are links with other schools, particularly for transfer and induction. The school's contribution to wider partnerships, particularly for teacher training, is excellent. The school works very hard to develop its partnership with parents, which is good.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **good overall** and, as a result, most pupils learn well. The assessment of pupils' work and progress is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall good quality of the teaching enables pupils to learn well.
- Lessons are clearly planned with a good variety of activities to engage and motivate pupils.
- Pupils work well together and learn independently in mathematics, history, music, citizenship and religious education.
- Marking and assessment procedures have been established well across the school and are very well developed in English, history and religious education.
- Peer and self-assessment are also being developed particularly effectively in English.
- In a small number of lessons, pupils' behaviour is not always well managed, which inhibits their learning.

### Commentary

13. The table below indicates the quality of teaching across the school. The teaching is consistently good in all year groups and, other than a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 and 8, does not vary significantly, although the best quality teaching is in Year 8. All the teaching seen in Years 5 and 6 was satisfactory or better. Both parents and pupils are very positive about the teaching in the school. Since the last inspection, the school has improved the proportion of its good, very good and excellent teaching, which reflects well on its systems for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of teaching in helping pupils to learn.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 83 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (6%)	14 (17%)	42 (50%)	18 (22%)	4 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages.

14. There are a number of common strengths in the teaching that underpin the good quality of pupils' learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge; they plan their lessons well and generally provide pupils with a good range of interesting, varied and challenging activities to

enable them to learn effectively - for example, in a science lesson where pupils in groups experimented on light passing through perspex blocks. In a few lessons, for example, in art and in religious education, tasks do not always engage pupils sufficiently. Teachers identify clear learning intentions for lessons and, in most cases, they review them effectively at the end of each lesson to check what learning has taken place. Most teachers are very good at using a range of methods and resources. However, pupils have insufficient opportunities to work on computers in, for example, mathematics, history, French and music. Teachers challenge pupils well and demand much of them, which promotes good achievement, although occasionally pupils are not always extended sufficiently, for example, in science, where homework does not challenge their understanding enough. Teachers generally expect pupils to behave well and manage this skilfully, but in a small number of lessons, pupils' behaviour is not always well managed, which inhibits their learning.

15. Overall, pupils apply themselves well to their work and show good application and concentration. As a result, they acquire new knowledge and skills effectively - for example through research work on the slave trade in history. A variety of teaching approaches maintains pupils' interest well, as in a lesson on different ways of using e-mail in ICT. Opportunities for discussion and pair and group work in many lessons enable pupils to share their thinking, develop their ideas and to extend their learning, as for example in lessons on saving endangered species and on local democracy in citizenship. In a Year 7 athletics lesson, learning was especially good because the teacher provided pupils with the opportunity to work independently, in pairs, to evaluate the performance of their partner and to suggest ways to improve their knowledge of triple jump technique. Pupils collaborate well with one another. For example, in a religious education lesson they were able to organise themselves quickly into a time line for the life of Jesus at the front of the class. They cooperate well together in friendship groups, for example, in music to develop accompaniment, as well as working well on their own, when required.
16. There are many examples of very good and sometimes excellent teaching. Some excellent teaching occurs in mathematics, science, French, geography and art and design. Some very good teaching also occurs in most of these subjects, as well as in lessons in English, design and technology, history, physical education, citizenship and in religious education.
17. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good overall. Subject teachers have very good information on the pupils in their classes and clear guidance on their needs provided by their individual education plans. Best practice is seen where the teacher and teaching assistant work closely together in planning, preparing and recording their work. Where resources and teaching methods have been adapted for their subject and aligned with the targets in the individual education plan, this leads to good learning. Teaching assistants carefully record the individual pupil's progress against targets set for them. Targets are well set out and are derived from information in the statements of special educational need, the annual reviews and from the very good information drawn from primary school data, subsequent testing and observations over time.
18. Assessment is good and much improved since the last inspection because development in this area is a high priority in the school. The systems for the collection and management of information are good and liaison with partner schools is very effective. A comprehensive range of data is available to teachers and it is easily accessible. The school has a clear whole school policy on the marking of pupils' work and on using the information in setting targets for them. Pupils gain marks for effort and for attainment and test data is used in setting targets. There is a clear expectation that work will be marked regularly and that pupils should understand what the marks mean.
19. Pupils' work is marked regularly and consistently and usually gives clear indications of the grades and levels being achieved. Pupils have an explanation of the system displayed in their books and from discussions with them, they show they can explain their grades and that they know how to improve. There is some peer and self- assessment which sharpens pupils'

understanding of assessment criteria and what they need to do to improve; this has been developed well in English. The analysis of test results and other data is very good and assessment is clearly related to National Curriculum attainment targets. Assessment is effective in the majority of subjects but is unsatisfactory in some aspects of design and technology and is still being refined in some others, although it is very well developed in English, history and religious education. Information is being used to ensure a close match between pupils' attainment and the tasks and resources provided in most lessons but sufficient challenge for pupils with potentially high attainment is not always assured.

## The curriculum

The school provides a **good** curriculum for its pupils, which meets their needs **well**. Statutory requirements are met. The curriculum is broad and balanced and the provision meets the learning needs of all pupils very effectively. There is a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Staffing and learning resources are well matched to the curriculum and accommodation is satisfactory overall.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good opportunities exist for learning outside the school day.
- The provision for personal, social and health education is very good.
- The provision made for pupils with special educational needs is very good.
- The programme of study in design and technology is too restricted in Years 7 and 8.

## Commentary

20. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Educational provision in nearly all subjects is of a high quality but curriculum planning and content in design and technology in Years 7 and 8 needs improvement so that it covers more of the statutory programme of study for Key Stage 3. Good consideration has been given to extending the learning opportunities available to pupils through the curriculum. French is taught in Year 6 (and planned to be extended into Year 5) and good opportunities to study environmental issues are provided in science lessons. The personal, social and health education programme is very effective and is taught to all pupils as a separate lesson each week. The grouping arrangements in English, mathematics and science are making a positive contribution to raising standards.
21. Good arrangements exist for the progression of pupils into and out of the school. Very effective links with the feeder primary schools have been established and help to ensure good continuity of learning, especially in English and mathematics. Very good liaison arrangements with the upper schools allow pupils to transfer with minimum disruption to their educational progress. Pupils are prepared well for the later stages of education and good provision is made for careers education and for learning about the world of work.
22. The school has successfully managed the introduction of new initiatives. National strategies to improve teaching and learning are being used well to raise standards across the curriculum. The programme for citizenship education is very good and has been developed in close co-operation with the upper schools and the other middle schools in the area. It is meeting pupils' needs very effectively.
23. The curriculum meets the requirements of pupils with special educational needs very well. The curriculum for these pupils is essentially the same as that for all other pupils as they are, for the most part, fully included in lessons. The grouping arrangements in English and mathematics from Year 5 onwards and in French and science from Year 7 are helpful in enabling a focus on pupils who have difficulties with learning or who need to be challenged to perform in line with their particular abilities. Teaching assistants are the backbone of that provision and where they work closely with the subject teacher, pupils achieve at least as well

as others in their classes and sometimes better. This is because pupils' individual needs are assessed thoroughly.

24. Individual education plans are very informative and of a high standard and are managed effectively. The social skills provision offers a very effective course in social skills and behaviour management for those pupils whose behaviour is alienating them from their peers, or is putting them at risk of exclusion. The overall very good provision of support results in pupils with special educational needs making good progress during their time at the school. Overall, the provision for gifted and talented pupils is good. The school has developed a policy for gifted and talented pupils and established a register of these pupils. A good range of suitable additional learning experiences is provided for them and their progress is regularly monitored.
25. Good use is made of outside speakers within lessons to extend pupils' awareness of current issues. These include talks by community police in personal, social and health education and people of different faiths in religious education. Educational visits are regularly organised to local historical and geographical sites, to literary events and to places of worship.
26. The school offers a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Well-supported interest groups, arts and sporting activities are supplemented by lunchtime clubs in, for example, computing, science, handwriting, gardening, artwork and Latin. While most activities are open to all, teachers also take special care to ensure that individual pupils are encouraged to participate in activities they will find useful, enjoyable or supportive.
27. Music is promoted very well through a variety of choral and instrumental groups. Visiting theatre companies and performance artists provide valuable exposure to professional performers. Pupils participate beneficially in external events such as public speaking competitions and mock trial work with help from the local magistrate's court. Sporting activities are very popular with pupils, providing opportunities to play competitive team sports as well as to enjoy non-competitive forms of exercise, in addition to the normal curriculum. Linked activities with the local senior citizens' home enhance pupils' social development.
28. There is a good match of teachers' qualifications and experience to the needs of the curriculum. A particular strength is that specialist teachers do the majority of the teaching in Years 5 and 6. A satisfactory number of learning support staff make a good contribution to pupils' achievements. However, there are insufficient technicians in design and technology and in art.
29. Accommodation is satisfactory overall and pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from specialist rooms in science, ICT, design and technology, art and music. Facilities for physical education are very good. The size of some rooms has an adverse impact on group work in, for example, English and history and there is a need for an additional laboratory in science. Further minor works are needed in some areas of the building. The school, including outside spaces such as the wildlife area, is very well maintained and enhanced by very good quality display. The school buildings and grounds have been adapted for partially sighted pupils and are accessible to those in wheelchairs; and a sensory garden has been established in a central area of the school.
30. Resources for teaching and learning are good and improving and meet the demands of the curriculum. Pupils have good access to computers in specialist suites but a shortage of new technology elsewhere limits learning in mathematics, French, history, art, music and religious education.

### **Care, guidance and support**

This is a caring school that provides a safe environment in which pupils feel happy and secure. **Very good** procedures ensure pupils' care, welfare and health and safety. Support, advice and guidance



are **good** and **very good** induction arrangements enable pupils to settle quickly into their new environment. The school seeks and values pupils' views of its work.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good procedures for health and safety and child protection provide a safe and secure working environment.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive.
- The school makes good use of assessment information to guide pupils' future learning.
- The school actively seeks and values pupils' views of the school.
- There are very good arrangements for the induction of children into the school.

### **Commentary**

31. The school provides a safe working environment for staff and pupils. The health and safety policy meets statutory requirements and is implemented by the headteacher. Procedures for general risk assessments are in place and inspections are carried out on a regular basis and there are good procedures relating to educational visits. First aid provision is good and good records of accidents and injuries are maintained. The school has very good procedures for child protection; staff receive appropriate training on child protection procedures on an annual basis and attend case conferences as required.
32. The school has a very good pastoral system which supports all pupils very well. Form tutors and year leaders know their pupils well and are responsive to their needs; pupils feel confident to approach their teachers for advice. Pupils are also well supported academically. Good records are maintained of their academic progress and assessment information is used well to provide them with individual targets for improvement, all of which contributes to their overall good achievement. Pastoral support is further enhanced by an advice clinic provided by the school nurse and by individual support programmes provided for pupils who are identified as having academic or behavioural problems. These arrangements have a positive impact on the pupils' learning. Pupils in Year 8 have a good programme of careers education and guidance and have access to a Connexions personal adviser.
33. The school actively seeks pupils' views of the school mainly through the school council, pupil questionnaires and suggestion boxes and makes very good use of pupils' contributions and suggestions. This ensures not only that pupils feel valued and fully part of the school, but also contributes to their understanding of citizenship and the part they play in a community. The school puts a high value on pupils' views and takes them into consideration when reviewing policies and procedures.
34. There are very good arrangements for the induction of children into the school. The school works closely with the main feeder schools to ensure a smooth transition and parents are given information and advice on how they can help to prepare their children for life at the new school. Opportunities to visit the school and meet with teachers prior to admission and the school's "buddy" system enable pupils to settle quickly into their new environment.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has developed a **strong** partnership with parents, which supports their children's progress. Links with the wider community make a **very good** contribution to pupils' learning. Educational links with other schools and the contribution made by the school to wider partnerships are **excellent** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The contribution made to school-based teacher training, including educational links with other schools, is excellent overall.
- Parents receive very good information from the school.
- Parental involvement in their children's learning is good.
- The school's good links with the wider community enhance pupils' learning.
- Transfer arrangements between schools are very good.

## Commentary

35. The quality of information given to parents is very good. The school brochure and the annual governors' report provide a wide range of information and meet statutory requirements. Parents also receive booklets designed to help them assist in their children's learning. Regular newsletters and letters about specific events aim to ensure that parents know about what their children are studying and are kept up to date. Well attended parents' evenings and many other opportunities for parents to meet with teachers allow them to discuss their children's progress. Pupils' annual reports are of very good quality and, along with termly rapid check reports on pupils' effort and behaviour, give clear guidance on pupils' attainment and progress and identify targets for improvement. The school seeks parents' views through questionnaires and acts on their responses. For example, a recent survey of parental views resulted in a complete revision of the format of pupils' annual reports.
36. The school works very hard to develop a good partnership with parents and to deal effectively with any complaints or concerns. An active parent teacher association organises social and fund-raising events; significant amounts of money have been raised to finance additional learning resources, including computer equipment for the library and the provision of an adventure playground.
37. The school's links with the community are good and make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. A range of visitors to the school enhance pupils' learning in, for example, drama, art and design, music and religious education. Visits to a local museum and library support pupils' learning in art and design and design and technology; local field trips support pupils' learning in history and geography; and links with the local parish church support religious education and pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Links with local sports clubs provide cricket, rugby and football coaching in physical education. The school is used extensively outside school hours by a wide range of community groups and this has helped to establish the school in the heart of the community.
38. The school's links with other educational establishments and its contribution to wider partnerships are excellent overall. Very strong links have been established with local upper schools, including staff links in sport and technology and very good arrangements for transition include effective liaison between subject teachers, units of work that provide a bridge in teaching between schools and the efficient transfer of information relating to pupils' academic and social skills. The school's work as a training school has been developed into a very good model of partnership in school-based teacher training. Very good links exist with other middle schools in the local area and beyond and the leadership team actively participates in and leads local education authority and other management groups.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent and she is very strongly supported by the senior leadership group. Governance is very good and governors now have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The leadership of other key staff is good and the overall effectiveness of management is very good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Through their hard work, commitment and complementary talents, the headteacher and her

leadership team are building very effective teams within the school.

- Governors have a clear understanding of the schools' strengths and weaknesses and are prepared both to support and challenge in order to bring about improvement.
- The school's systems and structures promote the link between performance management and school improvement, while ensuring that all staff feel involved in decisions.
- The school makes an excellent contribution to initial teacher education and to the induction and continuing professional development of its staff.

## Commentary

39. The headteacher's role in creating a positive climate for change has been a critical factor in the improvements that have come about since her appointment. She has established a clear vision for the school, based on academic achievement and generated a positive image in the community. In all this, she is very strongly supported by the leadership team, who provide organisational skills as well as curricular knowledge and an understanding of how to motivate people. They have drive, ambition and an ability to inspire staff. By involving governors and staff in improving the school's procedures, they have created a strong sense of teamwork. All staff, including support and teaching staff, as well as pupils, are aware of the school's priorities and committed to them. Staff demonstrate mutual support and commitment to the school's ideals and fully support the head and leadership group. Particular praise is directed towards the headteacher, who is regarded as an "enthusiastic driving force".
40. Governors have shaped the direction of the school by appointing a head intent on improving its academic reputation, while maintaining its ability to care for young people and nurture talent regardless of prior attainment. In this, they have been successful and, together with the headteacher, they are creating an inclusive school, which provides opportunity for all. Their knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses has improved because the head has opened new channels of information and encouraged them to visit the school often and ask searching questions. In this way, they acquire knowledge from staff and pupils as well as from documentation and the leadership group.
41. Governors are always involved in the appointment of staff and are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, as well as the ways in which the school is working to strengthen the capability of its staff. They have rightly identified pupil behaviour as an area for development and are aware that this challenge is limited to dealing with a small minority of the school's pupils. Governors represent a range of experience, including the management of school finances and this helps the school.
42. Staff have a very positive regard for the procedures the school has put in place for the management of their performance. They see themselves as helping with monitoring and particularly appreciate the way in which their own performance targets are linked to the school improvement plan. Self-evaluation is a strength. Performance data are scrupulously analysed and compared with other relevant national and local data; the school regularly reviews its own procedures and practices to improve its performance and consults regularly with parents and pupils. Staff can see in detail how their own development contributes to the vision they have generated for the whole school. The senior leadership group required all staff to contribute to the construction of the improvement plan. They found them keen to aim very high and often had to suggest that initiatives were a little too ambitious.
43. Staff are inclined to work extremely hard, but management of workload is a strength of the school and many jobs which are connected only indirectly with teaching have been transferred to non-teaching staff in recent months. The headteacher has attached considerable importance to the development of non-teaching staff, encouraging some to gain additional qualifications as their role within the school widens. There are examples of very good leadership and management in many areas of the school. Assessment systems are led and managed very effectively and most other areas are well led and managed. In the very few

situations where leadership is unsatisfactory, the school has taken steps to support and deal with the issues involved.

44. The school's contribution to initial teacher education is a significant strength. Long-standing links with the Cambridge Faculty of Education mean that trainee teachers play a prominent role within the school and they receive excellent support. Moreover, staff from the school deliver training at the faculty and are members of the steering committee for initial teacher training. This brings many benefits, including the chance for staff to compare their own practice with current research and with that of new practitioners and other schools. It also means that most of the school's training needs are met from within their own resources, adding to the financial benefits of working in this way. Another significant benefit to the school is an advantage in recruiting from the pool of new teachers emerging from training, many of whom already have experience of the school from within. The induction of new teachers is excellent. It is systematic, based on clear policy and all new staff, including the headteacher when she joined, have a "buddy" chosen from within the existing staff.

**Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003**

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,462,748	Balance from previous year	96,473
Total expenditure	1,544,792	Balance carried forward to the next	14,429
Expenditure per pupil	3,146		

45. The school manages its resources very well and uses its funding to benefit the pupils currently at the school, especially those with special educational needs. The present headteacher inherited some high costs but has worked hard to bring the budget into balance. As a result, resources are being used carefully to support the school's priorities but, nevertheless, some more funding has been put into improving buildings and learning resources this financial year. Additional grants and fund raising are used very well to support specific projects, such as the improvement of the school entrance and offices. There are good systems to ensure that finances are managed well on a daily basis. Governors have a good understanding of the principles of best value and together with the headteacher, they have made sure that all expenditure is carefully assessed, for example by comparing it with that of similar institutions. The school gives good value for money.

**THE AREA SUPPORT CENTRE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

**What is the effectiveness of the area support centre?**

Provision for pupils with special educational needs through the area support centre is **very effective**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils supported through the area support centre achieve as well as their peers because of the focus that is placed on them through the provision.
- The provision made by the area support centre is of good quality.
- Leadership of the area support centre is very good and the provision is managed very well.

**Commentary**

46. The area support centre is a specialised provision that is funded directly by the local education authority to support additional pupils with legal statements of special needs within and beyond the immediate catchment area. It has 12 pupils on roll at present but it is being phased out

from September 2005, at which point the school will be able to determine more independently the future direction of its overall provision for special educational needs. There remain some uncertainties as to the future of local provision for special educational needs, but the school is determined to remain an example of good and inclusive practice within the local education authority. The pupils who are currently supported through the area support centre benefit from well focused support and are able to overcome the barriers to learning that they face and to achieve their potential. These pupils achieve as well as their peers because the provision is well matched to their needs.

47. The very good quality area support centre provision is delivered within the school's overall provision for special educational needs. Pupils referred to it are supported by qualified and experienced teaching assistants who manage their individual education plans and monitor their progress in lessons. Teachers are well aware of the pupils' needs, using information and guidance supplied by the co-ordinator for special educational needs and the teaching assistants give very good support as appropriate. Annual reviews of pupils' statements are held in line with national recommendations and parents are fully involved and kept informed of the progress of their child. The area support centre is very well led by an experienced and well-informed co-ordinator, who is hard working, enthusiastic and an excellent team leader and who provides clear guidance and a very good role model for her colleagues and others. The very good management of the provision includes the close monitoring of practice through very good records of pupils' progress and close liaison with parents and with the many visiting specialists whose advice is needed in particular cases. There are sufficient resources of good quality to support the provision.

# **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' achievement in English is good in Years 5 to 8.
- Good teaching and learning make good use of national initiatives in planning lessons.
- Very good marking helps pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Good management ensures that teaching methods are shared and good monitoring systems are in place and regularly reviewed.
- The listening skills of middle and lower attaining pupils are underdeveloped in Years 5 and 6 because teaching methods are not sufficiently geared to developing these skills.

#### **Commentary**

48. In the national tests taken at age 11, standards over the last three years, if taken together, are in line with the national average. Nevertheless, the most recent results slipped to below average against a national trend that was almost constant. These results represent lower achievement than that found in similar schools. Girls do better than boys, in line with the national pattern. In the work seen in the inspection, standards have improved and are above national average levels by Year 6 and Year 8.
49. In Years 5 and 6 pupils achieve well. By Year 6, teachers make sure that higher attaining boys and girls discuss ideas sensibly while taking decisions about their work cooperatively and independently. Middle and lower attaining pupils explain their thinking clearly. At the same time, they do not take part in discussions fully enough or extend their thoughts by listening attentively to each other. This is because teachers do not plan to develop their listening skills rigorously enough. Standards of reading are good. Pupils understand the main events of the fiction they read and analyse thoroughly the various elements of non-fiction texts because teachers give them the confidence and skills to reflect systematically and express their own opinions on what they read. In response to the well-planned tasks set them, pupils produce a good range of types of writing such as autobiography, descriptions, play scripts and newspaper articles. They sum up well conflicting arguments in controversial matters such as foxhunting or the complex moral issues surrounding asylum seekers. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well where tasks are well matched to challenge them and at the same time to support their confidence.
50. By Year 8, standards are above average. Pupils build well on their skills of discussion and analysis of ideas in groups and pairs, in response to well-focused teacher questioning and tasks that interest them. Whether detecting and applying patterns in spelling rules or deciding on which items to carry in a survival exercise, pupils apply their minds with independence and enthusiasm and learn well from each other. They read a range of self-selected fiction with obvious enthusiasm and interest, understanding and explaining clearly the main events in novels. Stimulated by good teacher subject knowledge, they acquire a secure understanding of the background, distinctive language and basic features of more difficult works such as The Prologue to Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales'. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 and 8 is good. They rise well to the ambitious and consistent demands made on them by teachers in classes and in homework assignments. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in lessons, where the work is well designed to test and interest them.

51. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers plan lessons well, building judiciously on the benefits of the National Strategy for Literacy. They deploy an engaging mix of methods and materials which stimulate pupils' interest and curiosity. They keep higher attaining pupils working hard with a subtle mixture of high expectations and regular coaching and prompting as they work to ensure that they do their best. Pupils' writing benefits from good teaching which extends and challenges their ability to think and organise their ideas so that they communicate well to the reader. Pupils with special educational needs learn well because teacher expectations and work set are well designed to extend their basic skills in spelling and sentence construction and support their understanding of what they read. Pupils benefit particularly from the marking of their written assignments. Very helpful and sensitive teacher comments are well directed so that individuals know precisely how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve.
52. The subject is led well. There is an ambition and vision for it which unites teachers in their efforts. Good management is reflected in the way teachers share good methods and check pupils' progress regularly with a well-co-ordinated approach. Good systems are in place to check on the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance and these are analysed carefully. As a result, teaching methods undergo a constant process of improvement and results are rising. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory, as good standards have been sustained by good teaching.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

53. Standards of language and literacy across the curriculum are good. Reading for information and pleasure is well promoted in regular sessions throughout the school. A well-managed and attractive library area features special events and activities which enthuse and encourage pupils to engage productively with the world of books. Standards of writing and speaking are better than standards of listening. In French and history, discussion is used well to extend understanding and confidence, but in mathematics, for example, discussion for many pupils is too limited to promote full understanding to consolidate and develop ideas. In art and English, despite ample opportunities for discussion, younger pupils do not listen carefully enough to the contributions of each other because teachers have yet to insist that pupils concentrate and learn from each other's contributions and ideas.
54. Writing is well extended in history where pupils write diaries, letters, journals and discursive pieces to extend their comprehension and to engage with historical ideas. In science, higher attaining pupils use extended writing to develop ideas, but lack opportunities to develop their understanding of subject specialist words which are displayed but not referred to frequently enough to make sure they understand them securely. English teachers are effective in ensuring that basic skills are consolidated while extending the pupils' vocabulary in well structured writing assignments and speaking activities.

### **French**

Provision in French is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement in French in Years 7 and 8 is good and the highest attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve very well.
- Lessons are well managed and pupils' attitudes are good.
- Teachers conduct some lessons in French, but this practice is still too inconsistent.
- Pupils do not use computers enough to support their learning.
- Pupils benefit from learning French in Year 6, which they would not always do, but higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough at this stage.

## Commentary

55. Assessments made by teachers indicate that attainment by the end of Year 8 is above the level expected nationally, with more than half of the pupils at or above nationally expected levels. From the lessons seen it is clear that boys achieve as well as girls. The achievement of average and low attaining pupils is satisfactory in Year 6 but those able to learn quickly do not achieve as much as they should. By Year 6, pupils know basic vocabulary relating to their name, age, pets, hobbies and where they live, combined with some elementary grammatical structures so that they can speak and write simply about themselves and understand other people speaking about themselves. By Year 8, pupils can use a range of structures, including past and future tenses and connectives, enabling some pupils to exceed national expectations. Pupils of all levels of attainment achieve well during Years 7 and 8, broadening their knowledge of vocabulary and structure and developing their ability to compose complex sentences accurately. French makes a good contribution to pupils' overall literacy skills.
56. Teaching and learning in French are good. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they use a variety of teaching strategies. In Year 6, however, there is not enough challenge for pupils who learn quickly because teachers miss opportunities to tailor work in lessons to individual needs. When placed in groups matched to their attainment in Years 7 and 8, the progress of these pupils quickens. In some lessons, teachers speak French most of the time, but this practice is not consistent, particularly in the middle ability groups, so that some pupils have little chance to communicate in French. However, in one lesson in Year 8, the teacher provided several opportunities for pupils to circulate, so that they developed good social skills and respect for each other, at the same time as communicating keenly in spoken French.
57. Pupils produce work using word processors, but do not make enough use of the grammar and spelling checks and make too little use of computers generally. Teachers mark work conscientiously and thoroughly and most pupils know how well they are doing, but only a minority can describe what they need to do to improve. Relationships are good and teachers ensure that all pupils benefit from learning French, including those with special educational needs, who learn and achieve well in lessons.
58. French is led well. The recently appointed subject leader has a clear vision for the subject's development and has started to build on existing strengths through the fostering of good teamwork. Although they do not have enough opportunity to observe each other teach, good management ensures that teachers share good practice in other ways. Assessment procedures are developing well; teachers know how well pupils are doing, but do not yet analyse this in enough detail. For example, there is no routine for comparing the progress of different groups, such as boys and girls or higher attaining pupils and those with special needs. Priorities for development are appropriate, except that the use of spoken French in lessons is not included. Despite considerable staffing changes since the last inspection, the strengths of provision in the subject have been maintained and improvement has been satisfactory.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching and high expectations lead to good learning and achievement throughout the school.
- Very good leadership and management ensure a strong shared commitment to good practice and to raising standards.
- The curriculum for all years is well planned, including problem-solving and challenging investigative projects.
- Too little use is made of ICT to support and enhance learning.

## Commentary



59. The national test results for Year 6 in 2003 show a level of performance below the average for all schools and for similar schools, but the work seen during the inspection indicates that the previously rising trend in results has been fully restored. The pattern of results over five years shows little difference in the performance of boys and girls. The test results are similar to those in English and science.
60. In the work seen during the inspection, pupils in Year 6 were attaining national expectations. Pupils make good progress and achieve well as a result of good teaching that includes good opportunities to understand mathematics by solving problems. Pupils in Year 8 continue to progress well and, in the highest attaining group, attain standards that are well above national expectations. Pupils are very well prepared for transfer to the upper school, where results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are above average. In all years, pupils are arranged in groups based upon prior attainment and this allows a close match between the work set and the pupils' needs. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well against their individual targets, because they are given good support by classroom assistants.
61. By Year 6, most pupils have a sound grasp of the four rules of number and know the names and properties of two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils know how to find the perimeters and areas of shapes in metric measure. They are able to correctly draw the reflection of a shape in a mirror line. A comparison of daily temperatures in west and south-coast holiday resorts illustrated on a straight line graph provided both a good opportunity for practical mathematics and a clear guide to the holiday maker seeking the sun. By Year 8, building very securely on prior knowledge, pupils learn about probability in an experiment with coins and dice and acquire good predictive skills. The highest attaining set produced outstanding work in a computer-based project that was designed to provide advice to a local council on reducing the road accident rate. This project helped to consolidate pupils' problem-solving skills.
62. The quality of teaching is good overall. All lessons are well planned and assessment is well used to establish the starting point of the lesson and to determine what the pupils know. Most lessons begin with a mental starter that sharpens pupils' reactions and as a result they tackle the subsequent work with enthusiasm. Keywords are displayed in most rooms, but pupils need more practice in giving answers in mathematical language. Although pupils are arranged in groups by attainment, work in smaller groups in class is insufficiently used at present.
63. Good resources are available but are not always put to maximum use. This is particularly the case with computers, which do not yet have an established place in teachers' lesson planning. However, in an excellent lesson within the computer-based project in Year 8, pupils were required to use high quality thinking skills and to work collaboratively to sift, interpret and illustrate key data. The teacher skilfully intervened to emphasise key points and to move pupils to the next level of understanding. Pupils were engrossed in their work and generated the atmosphere of a mathematics workshop. Classes overall are well managed and relationships are good, which leads to good learning in most lessons. Clear management strategies are in place to ensure prompt remedial action for occasional misbehaviour.
64. The subject is very well led by example and management is also very good. Very good use is made of pupils' performance data to help plan the way ahead and to ensure the maintenance of good standards. Pupils are set appropriate targets and have a good knowledge of the levels at which they are working. Teachers share common goals and expectations and work well as a team. This provides a positive climate for learning and ensures that teaching is more consistent and standards more secure. Good improvement has been made since the previous inspection.

## **Mathematics across the curriculum**

65. A clear policy for teaching numeracy in other subjects is in place and its use contributes significantly to pupils' overall competence in mathematics. For example, in history, pupils chart historical events on a timeline and, in geography, pupils use their knowledge of co-ordinates to read maps and pinpoint locations. In art, pupils competently draw geometric shapes and demonstrate good knowledge of perspective. In science, pupils accurately measure materials needed for experiments and record their results in tables and graphs. In ICT, despite the lack of regular practice in the mathematics classroom, pupils can competently interrogate a database and produce a wide variety of charts and graphs.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well during the time they are at the school.
- The very good leadership of the department has brought about good improvements.
- More able pupils are not sufficiently challenged in some lessons.
- Effective teaching is helping pupils develop good investigational skills.
- Most pupils concentrate well in lessons and work hard, but some do not listen well.

### **Commentary**

66. Standards in the Year 6 tests in 2003 were below the national average. The percentage of pupils reaching national expectations was below average while the percentage achieving the higher levels was average and in line with results in similar schools. Girls' attainment was slightly higher than that of boys. Standards in 2003 declined when compared with the national trend, although a greater proportion of pupils reached the higher level.
67. From work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 8 are above average. Many pupils have a good comprehension of scientific concepts which they use well. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 make particularly good progress, with a significant number attaining well above average. This is a result of the teacher's very high expectations and the good opportunities pupils are given to think ideas through for themselves. While achievement is good in both Years 7 and 8, attainment is generally lower in Year 7, since a greater proportion of pupils have weaknesses in their knowledge and understanding. This matches their results in the previous year's tests.
68. Standards overall in Year 6 are in line with the national average and higher than those attained by pupils in the previous year. Most pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of scientific ideas, while a significant number are working at levels above average because teaching is developing their skills and understanding well. Teachers in Year 5 pay particularly good attention to developing pupils' literacy and organisational skills, but this sometimes leads to higher attaining pupils being given tasks with insufficient scientific challenge. As a result, these pupils make less progress than might be expected. However, achievement is mainly good in both Years 5 and 6 because pupils have a good understanding of scientific methods and extend their knowledge effectively.
69. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school as a result of good provision and well planned support. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls, although a few boys display a rather casual attitude which reduces their progress at times. Most pupils co-operate well in lessons and work hard. However, a small but significant number of pupils have poor listening skills and are easily distracted. While this occasionally slows the pace in lessons, teachers are adept at minimising any disruption to other pupils' learning.

70. Teaching is good overall. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and some teaching was very good or excellent. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan and organise a wide variety of stimulating activities that actively involve pupils. As a result learning is good. However, the focus on making the work exciting occasionally allows insufficient time for pupils to consolidate previous work. In particular, summary sessions at the end of lessons often fail to strengthen learning sufficiently. Homework is set regularly, but does not always provide enough challenge to pupils' understanding. Marking is effective and provides pupils with a good awareness of how well they are doing. However, targets for improvement are too general and insufficiently linked to National Curriculum levels. Pupils throughout the school have satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills which they use well to increase their scientific insight. Many use specialist vocabulary with confidence and most have satisfactory skills in drawing and interpreting graphs. Pupils use ICT well to research information and present project work.
71. The subject leader's very good, purposeful leadership and high aspirations are helping to raise standards very effectively. Staff work well together as a team, with the less experienced and non-specialist teachers receiving very good support and guidance. The management of the subject is very good. Well-considered changes have been introduced, which are improving the quality of work in lessons considerably. Pupils' investigational skills have improved as a result of a greater emphasis on enquiry work and pupils work more confidently on their own. Monitoring is now wide ranging and used very well to identify strengths and weaknesses. Outcomes are evaluated very openly and appropriate development points have been identified. Accommodation for science is still inadequate, as the lack of an additional laboratory prevents even higher standards being achieved, but overall, there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils attain above national expectations by Year 8 and achieve well throughout the school.
- Good teaching enables learning to be good and good progress to be made.
- Good leadership has raised the profile of ICT both as a subject and within the other subjects of the school.
- Facilities and equipment have improved but ventilation in the computer rooms is poor.

### **Commentary**

72. Standards of attainment at the end of Year 6 are at national average levels and by Year 8 standards are above national expectations. Pupils achieve well in both Years 5 and 6 and Years 7 and 8. Boys and girls achieve similarly. By the end of their time at the school they can plan and make quality presentations using a wide range of programs and select materials suitable for their audience.
73. The quality of teaching is good in both key stages. Teaching is well planned and organised. Every pupil learns about word processing, desktop publishing, databases, spreadsheets, controlling devices, presentation and other programs, in a planned manner in an ICT lesson every week. Teachers use appropriate and challenging materials well matched to the pupils' prior attainment. Lessons have a crisp pace and are enthusiastically taught, with appropriate challenge. The teaching builds systematically on the range of pupils' prior experience that they gain from their different first schools, so that pupils consolidate their foundational knowledge.
74. Teachers are skilful at managing behaviour and ensure that all pupils learn well. Lower attaining pupils and pupils with special educational needs are given additional help and support and materials are developed to match their specific needs, including special programs in their other lessons to further develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Extension tasks have been

developed to stretch and challenge the most able and more are planned. Teachers constantly monitor the work of the pupils and support them very effectively.

75. As a result of the good teaching, pupils learn well in both key stages and gain very good experience of using computers. They build well on previously gained knowledge and steadily acquire and consolidate their skills. Pupils are well motivated and co-operative. They demonstrate confidence in their work and enjoy using computers for a range of activities both inside and outside lessons.
76. The management of ICT is very good. ICT is well established both as a tool for learning and to support teacher's administration, particularly in the production of reports. Leadership is good because teachers seek help and advice from the subject leader who is able to help them extend their use of ICT in their lessons. Accommodation is satisfactory, but the specialist rooms get hot and there is inadequate ventilation and although there are fans, rooms easily become soporific. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the weaknesses found then have been fully addressed.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

77. Pupils gain appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding through their ICT lessons and use these well to produce work of a good standard in a range of other subjects across the curriculum. Teachers' ICT skills are being developed systematically. More machines are being made available and there is a good development plan for their use. The specialist accommodation and resources are good and there is an adequate number of computers although some are now quite old and will need replacement. There is a trolley containing laptops so that ICT can be used in nearly every room of the school, although currently some of the batteries need replacing. ICT is now used more effectively as a tool for learning than at the last inspection, although not every subject is yet making full use of this valuable resource to support pupils' learning.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are at national average levels by Year 6 and are above average by the end of Year 8. Achievement is good in all years.
- There is some excellent teaching, but the quality of the present teaching is varied.
- There is a clear vision for improvement in the subject and management is good but leadership is currently held on a temporary basis.
- In some lessons, pupils' current achievement is unsatisfactory due to their poor behaviour.

#### **Commentary**

78. Assessments made by teachers indicate that standards are average by the end of Year 6 and above average by the end of Year 8. Pupils enter the school with varied experiences in geography and achieve well in Years 5 and 6 so that standards are at national average levels by the end of Year 6. Year 5 pupils have good knowledge of map symbols and can use four figure grid references accurately. Work in books shows that they make good progress and use a good range of recording methods when looking at settlements, land use, climate and locational studies in the UK and Africa. Higher attaining pupils in Year 6 have very good standards of literacy and present arguments and opinions very well.
79. Pupils continue to achieve well in Years 7 and 8. The standards seen confirm teacher assessments that they are above average. The quality and range of their work in books is

good. They have good knowledge of physical and human processes and varied world locations showing, in some cases, excellent standards when presenting arguments and opinions. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers.

80. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but varies in individual lessons from excellent to unsatisfactory. At present two permanent teachers are on long-term medical leave and the majority of teaching seen was by a temporary teacher who is new to the school. Pupils' work shows that teaching in the recent past has been good. Marking is of variable quality but when it is very well done it enables pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve. Lessons are well planned with progressive and varied activities that are very well resourced. Resources are, generally, well used but, on one occasion, the opportunity to follow up a very informative video effectively was not taken. Objectives are shared so that pupils know what they are about to learn.
81. In an excellent lesson in Year 5 the teaching, by a permanent and very knowledgeable member of staff, was dynamic. Pupils were engaged by the enjoyable, progressive and challenging tasks that enabled them to gain very good knowledge of grid references. Tasks were suitable for all groups and higher attaining pupils were given more challenging work. Learning is satisfactory overall. However, when teaching is less than satisfactory, pupils' learning and achievement are adversely affected by their poor attitudes and behaviour which are not managed effectively.
82. Leadership is good and there is a clear vision for improvement even though the permanent subject leader is presently absent. Comprehensive schemes of work and well prepared resources offer good support to teachers when planning lessons. The curriculum is managed well and opportunities for developing literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are provided. However, good achievement will only be sustained if some weaknesses in the present teaching are addressed. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall; it is evident in the range and quality of resources and textbooks now in use.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are consistently above national expectations in Years 6 and 8.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Very good teaching promotes good standards and very good achievement overall, although there is not always sufficient challenge for the highest attaining pupils.
- Curriculum planning is very effective and literacy skills and citizenship are developed very well. Pupils' knowledge of local history is a strength.
- Links with other schools to ensure continuity and progression are strong.
- The use of ICT in the subject is insufficiently developed.

### Commentary

83. Standards in Years 6 and 8 are consistently above national expectations particularly in skills and in knowledge and understanding. Pupils achieve very well in all years because of the quality of teaching and because in most lessons attitudes and behaviour are good. In Year 6 pupils can write about aspects of Victorian life and understand the reasons why children were employed in textile mills. They also understand that historical fiction is not always factually correct. Because of the range of teaching activities most Year 8 pupils have good research and investigation skills and they can write and talk about history topics well. Pupils have a particularly good knowledge of local history because wherever possible teachers use local examples of change over time. Higher attaining pupils understand that sources of evidence

about the slave trade can be biased and all pupils understand the reasons why so many captives did not survive the middle passage.

84. Learning is very good because of the very effective teaching that enables pupils to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils work hard, take responsibility for their own learning and enjoy the activities planned for them. All of the lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory or better and some had excellent features, particularly in the way that pupils were encouraged to think and investigate for themselves and take part in role -plays that illustrated key areas, such as the feudal system. A lack of space limits the range of activities and the use of group work in some classrooms. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs are supported well but the highest attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the provision of higher level work in class.
85. Carefully planned homework tasks provide opportunities for extensive research, for example in the Year 7 castles topic. Homework links very well with class work and discussion, reading and the range of written tasks ensure very effective support for literacy. From Year 5, pupils are carefully taught to appreciate the difference between fact and opinion. They find out about the monarch and Parliament in a way that helps their understanding of citizenship. Research skills, especially the comparison of different sources of evidence, are well developed and pupils benefit from visits to museums and historical sites. Computers and numerical information are used well but at present there is insufficient development of information and communication technology to promote learning in history.
86. The management of teaching and learning is very good because of support for non-specialist teachers, the good development of resources and the very well developed assessment procedures. The subject is very effectively led. Assessment procedures are used very well in planning lessons and setting tasks. Planning is very good and liaison with partner schools is very effective. Standards have remained high and improvement has been good in teaching, assessment and resources since the last inspection.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are at or above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and sometimes good and very good.
- The assessment of pupils' work is very good and is being further developed.
- In some lessons work is not challenging enough for high attaining pupils.
- The monitoring of the way the subject is being taught and overall leadership and management are good.
- The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

## **Commentary**

87. By Year 6, standards are in line with expectations in the Suffolk locally agreed syllabus. Pupils develop well their knowledge and understanding of themselves and of some key ideas in religions and achieve satisfactorily in Years 5 and 6. In class, they can recall clearly the order of events in order to create a time line of Jesus' life. In their written work, they respond well to the prompts given in useful worksheets and write fluently about Christian and Muslim festivals. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall, but sometimes higher attaining pupils could be challenged to think more deeply about the material being studied.

88. Standards by Year 8 are at or above the levels expected in the agreed syllabus. Pupils achieve well, increasing their understanding of religious ideas, events and practices and refining their ability to talk and write about them through Years 7 and 8. In class, pupils show a good knowledge of the main artefacts and symbols of world religions and they write well about their own opinions and beliefs. In their books, both writing and drawing on aspects of Christianity and Judaism are of good quality. The achievement of both the highest and the lowest attaining pupils is good, although higher attaining pupils could be challenged more. Those of average attainment sometimes achieve less well as a result of being easily distracted from the task in hand.
89. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and sometimes good or better. Lessons are well planned and contain a good range of tasks in which pupils can be actively engaged. Occasionally, tasks are not well chosen and the material in them does not motivate pupils of all levels of attainment. The management of the misbehaviour of a minority of pupils is effective. Different exercises and the support of teaching assistants are used effectively to increase the learning of pupils with special educational needs. Homework is used satisfactorily in Years 7 and 8 to extend and consolidate learning. Progress in acquiring knowledge, skills and attitudes, including English language and literacy skills, is satisfactory overall and pupils work together well in pairs and in groups. The assessment of pupils' work is very good and is being further developed in line with national guidelines. Learning in the subject is inhibited by the lack of ready access to computers in lessons.
90. The leadership of the subject is good, with a clear sense of purpose and direction and effective development of the teams who teach it. The curriculum, which follows closely the local education authority's advice, is appropriate and well managed and the development of assessment is a strength. Teachers' and pupils' work is monitored very well although there is no classroom observation as yet by the subject leader. Since the last inspection, improvement has been good, as can be seen in the way standards have been maintained and improved, teachers plan and work together and assessment has been developed.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils experience a broad curriculum and a wide range of materials in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils learn well from some expert teaching in the subject, but some teaching is unsatisfactory.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8 because planning is poor and not enough of the programme of study for Key Stage 3 is covered.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory overall.
- Resources in some areas are insufficient to meet national requirements in Years 7 and 8.

#### **Commentary**

91. Standards by Year 6 are broadly in line with national expectations. In Years 7 and 8, not enough of the increasing rigour and range of experiences required by the statutory programme of study are included, so by the end of Year 8 standards are below national expectations. Pupils' making skills vary; they are satisfactory in food but weaker in other areas of the subject. Design skills are insufficiently developed, as they were at the time of the last inspection. Too often drawings and sketches lack the detail of sizes, materials and methods of production. Drawing skills are underdeveloped and there is no strategy for systematically improving standards of communication.

92. Achievement in Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory but in Years 7 and 8 it is unsatisfactory overall. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs make satisfactory progress towards the targets set for them when support is given by the teacher. Higher attaining pupils are able only in part to fulfil their potential because the work is insufficiently challenging and does not build technological understanding or competence. There is little difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
93. Teaching is satisfactory overall. In the earlier years it is good overall and when pupils are taught by a specialist, learning is good. In Years 5 and 6, teachers plan lessons in line with the National Curriculum and provide a broad experience of the subject for pupils. In a lesson in Year 5, where pupils were making puzzles with resistant materials, the teacher prepared them very well for their first use of machine tools and used her expertise to challenge them to make work of quality. Stimulated by this very good teaching, the pupils' interest was fired; they watched and listened carefully to the teacher's demonstration and worked hard to produce the best result they could by the end of the lesson.
94. However, some of the teaching, particularly for older pupils, is less successful; here the pace of lessons and the challenge they provide are sometimes insufficient. There are examples of pupils' behaviour and learning being managed well, but in other lessons, poor pupils' behaviour impacts adversely on learning. In Years 7 and 8, teaching concentrates on getting the pupils through three different activities and materials in each year. As insufficient attention is given in some lessons to producing a clear specification of what the product should do and of how and where it is going to be used, the criteria for a successful conclusion are not clear enough to judge success and evaluate the outcomes at the end. In addition, the links between the activities are too often missing and pupils do not see the underlying principles that unite them. Teachers insufficiently share information with each other to ensure effective transfer of knowledge and skills between modules.
95. Learning is also satisfactory overall. Pupils generally co-operate well with each other on practical tasks, but poor behaviour sometimes interferes with their learning. Although there is a good structure available for assessment, arrangements for recording pupils' design and technology capability are inconsistently applied at present.
96. In Years 5 and 6 pupils enjoy specialist accommodation which is not available for these year groups in all schools and this aids their learning. However, the food technology room is smaller and more cramped than it would normally be in a secondary school, and this can negatively affect the quality of learning in food technology in Years 7 and 8. Extraction is also poor. Areas like computer aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM), control using electronics and pneumatics, structures and forces and the use of modern smart materials are all missing from the curriculum in Years 7 and 8, with a consequent negative impact on learning and standards. Resources in some areas are insufficient to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum in Years 7 and 8.
97. Leadership of the subject is unsatisfactory. The relatively large team of specialists and non-specialists lacks clear direction and co-ordination. The management of design and technology is also unsatisfactory. The curriculum needs urgent review to make it more coherent and better matched to the national requirements. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.



## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### Art and design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Some very good and occasionally excellent teaching leads to high achievement.
- Pupils achieve well throughout their time at school and the standard of their work steadily rises.
- There are some weaknesses in the way the subject is led and managed.
- Pupils learn well as a result of the good teaching they experience.
- The behaviour of a small number of pupils in some lessons slows learning and interferes with the work of the majority.
- The lack of resources and skills for the teaching of computer art impedes the development of digital art.

### Commentary

98. In the work seen during the inspection, standards improve from Year 5 to Year 8, by which time they are above national expectations. The experience pupils have of the subject in their previous schools is variable and the majority of pupils enter the school at a level below the national average. Pupils steadily build on their art skills and knowledge, as they explore the creative opportunities available to them. In Years 5 and 6, most pupils can grasp the essentials of facial proportion with the assistance of a worksheet. They can create areas of varying monotone hues when seeking to replicate the techniques of the impressionists. Achievement overall is good and is supported by a useful evaluation session at the end of lessons. In Years 7 and 8, pupils know about the origins of lettering in religious texts and higher attaining girls can produce very neat medieval scripts, noting the flourishes that spring from the basic letter. Pupils continue to progress well in their understanding and development of skills and achievement in Years 7 and 8 is good overall, but can be unsatisfactory in lessons which have shortcomings in teaching.
99. The quality of teaching is good overall. There is some very good and occasionally excellent teaching, through which pupils achieve well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and plan lesson topics carefully which interest and engage pupils, making good use of the work of established artists to illustrate techniques. They explain instructions very clearly and challenge pupils through their positive feedback and comments on their work whilst moving around the class. Some teaching is unable to create a sufficiently positive learning climate that would enable pupils to meet the high expectations inherent in the topic and also exhibits shortcomings in managing time and pupils' behaviour. The positive attitudes of the majority of pupils ensure that most lessons remain enjoyable and productive.
100. Pupils listen carefully and learn well from demonstrations, becoming absorbed in their attempts to follow the skills of famous painters. Higher attaining pupils explore brush marks very successfully and learn about the control of line and colour. Work on medieval scripts develops pupils' observational skills and motivates them to work hard and talk confidently about what they are doing. Sometimes critical thinking skills are underdeveloped in lessons, although they are better developed in some pupils' sketchbooks. The work of girls is often more careful than that of boys, who easily act as if they were not good at drawing. In the occasional lesson, unsatisfactory behaviour is not challenged effectively by the teacher and both teaching and learning deteriorate to an unsatisfactory level.
101. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory but does not provide a sufficiently effective steer to the teaching team. The very good knowledge of the subject leader and his experience in the industrial field of design have been used well to develop the curriculum, in particular, in fine art.

However, whilst management overall is satisfactory, other aspects of the organisation of the subject need development, especially guidance about and the monitoring of teaching and learning. Whilst computer art, using software on the work of William Morris, has been introduced well, there are limited opportunities for pupils to explore the innovative field of digital art, because the resources for computer work are not of a sufficiently high standard. Improvement since the previous inspection has been only satisfactory. Achievement has improved and teaching has remained good, but some of the shortcomings reported on then still remain.

## Music

Provision in music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in all years as a result of good teaching.
- Good leadership is focused on raising standards.
- Work needs to be better matched to the prior attainment of all pupils.
- Computers are underused to support and extend musical experiences.

### Commentary

102. Attainment in Years 5 and 6 benefits from specialist teaching which is not always available to children of this age and thus standards by the end of Year 6 are above national expectations. By Year 8, standards are only in line with national expectations mainly due to staffing changes prior to the appointment of a permanent subject leader earlier this year. Achievement is good in all years as a result of the recent consistent and good quality teaching. Pupils in Year 5 can sing expressively and with confidence in parts and learn new rounds very quickly, using different dynamic ranges, often unaccompanied. In Year 7, pupils demonstrated effective rhythmic call and response work with the teacher before working on their own arrangements of 'What shall we do with the drunken sailor?' in groups. Keyboard skills are less secure in Years 7 and 8. Boys and girls achieve well in music, as do pupils with special educational needs, both in Years 5 and 6 and in Years 7 and 8.
103. The quality of teaching is good and is characterised by good planning and pace, insistence on high standards of behaviour and the effective use of time. The school's behaviour and conduct code is effectively and consistently applied. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and a target given. Good attention is given to keywords in music but pupils lack opportunities to make music using computers. Pupil's attitudes in music are good; they work effectively in pairs, for example, in tuning percussion; in groups, when composing rhythms or working out their accompaniment; and as whole classes. As a result, learning is good overall. Occasionally work is insufficiently consolidated and the lesson moves on before the pupils have fully mastered the topic being studied.
104. The recently appointed subject leader has a clear vision of how to raise standards and make music accessible for all pupils and leadership of the subject is now good. Documentation is comprehensive; forward planning and the prioritising of targets are particularly effective. However, short-term planning does not yet identify lesson objectives clearly enough nor link them sufficiently to National Curriculum programmes of study and assessment outcomes and some work is insufficiently adapted to suit and challenge pupils of all abilities.
105. The subject is also managed well. Pupils enjoy a wide offer of extra-curricular musical opportunities ranging from choir and orchestra to rock groups and recorder groups. Many take advantage of the instrumental lessons offered by the peripatetic music service. These activities greatly enhance the cultural life of the school. Improvement since the last inspection has been only satisfactory as pupils still lack opportunities for working with computers in music and the accommodation constrains effective group work.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very good with a clear vision for improvement.
- Teaching is good enabling pupils to acquire new skills and knowledge and achieve well.
- Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good.
- Accommodation is very good, especially for Years 5 and 6.
- Too limited a range of teaching methods is in use in some lessons.

### Commentary

106. Pupils enter the school with varied previous experiences and below average standards, overall. Assessments made by teachers indicate that standards by the end of Years 6 and 8 are above average. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in all years and there is no difference between the performance of boys and girls.
107. Standards seen during the inspection were average in Years 5 and 6. Pupils know how to warm-up and stretch and can use appropriate anatomical vocabulary. They gain knowledge of the principles of throwing and basic high jumping techniques. The majority of pupils are well co-ordinated and show good physical and problem solving skills when completing an indoor adventure circuit.
108. Standards seen in Years 7 and 8 confirm teachers' assessments that standards are above average by the end of Year 8. Pupils achieve very well when learning jumping skills in athletics and make very good progress when using evaluating skills to improve their performance and that of others. Talented pupils have very good opportunities to compete in fixtures and competitions and gain success at local and regional levels.
109. Teaching and learning are good, overall and this ensures that pupils gain new skills and knowledge as a result of very good teacher knowledge. The majority of lessons are taught by a specialist, which is a major factor in the good progress made by pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6. Teaching is most effective when a range of teaching styles is used and pupils learn well through studying the principles behind performance in athletics, gaining skills as well as greater understanding of the techniques. In a Year 7 athletics lesson, learning was especially good because the teacher provided pupils with the opportunity to work independently, in pairs, to evaluate the performance of their partner and to suggest ways to improve their knowledge of triple jump technique. However, in a minority of lessons, teaching is too instructional, when good evaluation and questioning could have involved the pupils more in gaining understanding and not just the acquisition of a simple technique.
110. Pupils display good attitudes and behaviour because they are well managed and are clear about expectations and what they are about to learn. They work well together and show good physical efforts because they are interested in the activities. For example, in a Year 6 indoor lesson, pupils worked well together in small groups and enjoyed the challenge of solving adventure problems. They showed good physical effort and shared space and equipment well, especially considering that the space is tight, when performing potentially dangerous activities. Good use was made of ICT when pupils used the Internet to research during a wet weather session.
111. Leadership is very good; there is a clear vision for improvement and very clear and knowledgeable direction for the subject. Non-specialist teachers receive good training and very comprehensive schemes of work from which to plan lessons. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now broad and balanced. The range and take up for extra-curricular activities is very good. Management of the subject is therefore also very good.

Accommodation and resources are very good, especially for pupils in Years 5 and 6. The school has recently been awarded the Sportsmark, reflecting the good quality of its provision. Improvement overall since the last inspection is good.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

112. Provision in **personal, social and health education** (PSHE) was sampled during the inspection. Attainment in the subject is above national expectations by Year 6 and by Year 8. Achievement is good and sometimes very good due to good teaching and very good leadership and management of the provision. Pupils with special educational needs are well known and supported and achieve as well as their peers. A comprehensive scheme of work integrates the statutory elements of sex and relationship education, drugs education, careers education and guidance and citizenship into a programme which also contains other units, such as one on personal identity. Very good management ensures that the whole staff contributes effectively to the planning for personal, social and health education and citizenship. In addition to those elements that are taught across the curriculum, pupils have one lesson every week dedicated to the subject, taught generally by form tutors in Years 5 and 6 and by specialist teachers in Years 7 and 8.
113. Teaching is good and sometimes very good. The lessons seen were well planned with a varied range of activities which interested and engaged the pupils, such as a lesson on physical and emotional changes during human growth. Relationships between teachers and pupils were very good and the management of behaviour in the context of the sensitive and emotional lesson content was expert. This was also the case, for example, when pupils were asked to recount to each other difficulties they had experienced in making friends. Pupils learn new skills, such as measuring and comparing human characteristics and are familiar with and can use well various techniques for reflection and discussion in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. The subject contributes very well to the development of pupils' English language and literacy skills, especially their speaking and listening.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have an above average understanding by Year 8 of what it means to be a good citizen.
- Teaching is good and homework and written work support learning very well.
- The development of citizenship across the curriculum and the wider community is very good.
- Leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for future development.
- The subject is very well managed; assessment procedures are well developed and links with upper schools are very good.

### **Commentary**

114. Standards in citizenship are above national expectations in Year 8. Pupils have good levels of knowledge about becoming informed citizens and they are developing good skills of enquiry and communication. They achieve very well because of the high quality of planning and good teaching in both PSHE and in citizenship and because of the very well managed continuity and progression from work in Years 5 and 6. Year 7 pupils are able to discuss and write about a range of ecological issues and aspects of local democracy. Displays show that higher attaining Year 8 pupils have a good understanding about complex issues such as animal rights, sacrifice for one's country and the democratic process.
115. Teaching is good. Teachers have good knowledge, manage pupils well and encourage lively debates. There is a clear focus on developing communication skills particularly through

discussion. In the lessons observed, planning was very effective, teachers were well prepared and resources were used well. Learning is good because of the range of activities in lessons, the valuable contribution from the local community and the enthusiasm and interest of pupils. In Year 8, individual higher attaining pupils take real interest in the aspects of lessons related to citizenship.

116. The school provides very clear messages and models for pupils concerning their rights and duties in the wider world. It contributes to a range of charities and local and wider community links are very good. Each class has representatives on the school council who meet and discuss issues such as the possibility of introducing healthy options to the tuck shop. Pupils participate in mock trials and elections and a wide range of residential and other visits. A display on a year in the life of the school provides a very clear illustration of the importance of citizenship within the wider school ethos.
117. Leadership is very good and provides a clear vision for future development. The citizenship programme is making a valuable contribution to raising standards in all aspects of school life. Very good management ensures that the whole staff contributes effectively to the planning for citizenship and PSHE. Planning documents show that aspects of citizenship should be taught in all subjects and also included within the weekly PSHE/citizenship lessons. These also provide effective careers education in Year 8.
118. Assessment procedures are being developed well and, although they are not yet fully in place, there are very effective links with the upper schools to enable meaningful assessment to take place in Year 9. Most teachers are confident in planning and teaching citizenship although some would benefit from extra training, support and guidance.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

### *Inspection judgement*

### *Grade*

<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	2

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