

INSPECTION REPORT

PERTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Perton, Wolverhampton

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124437

Headteacher: Mr Kerin Jones

Lead inspector: Dr Kenneth C Thomas

Dates of inspection: 30 September – 2 October 2003

Inspection number: 260919

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 to 13 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	577
School address:	Gainsborough Drive Perton Wolverhampton
Postcode:	WV6 7NR
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Diane Renton
Date of previous inspection:	16 November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Perton Middle School is bigger than most other middle schools. The school serves a very stable population with decreasing numbers of families with young children. As a result, the school roll has fallen since the time of the last inspection. There are fewer pupils in Year 5 than in the other years and slightly more boys than girls in the school as a whole. Standards of attainment on entry in Year 5, although covering the full attainment range, are average overall. The pupil profile changes slightly at the end of Year 6 when about 20 pupils each year transfer to selective or independent secondary schools with sixth forms. Many of these pupils are amongst the school's highest attainers. These pupils are replaced by others transferring from primary schools in Wolverhampton. The attainment of these pupils is broadly average. The proportion of pupils on the school's register of special educational needs, although below average, has risen over the last four years. The proportion with statements is also below average. Most pupils with the highest level of need have moderate learning difficulties, specific learning difficulties (dyslexia), or emotional or behavioural difficulties. About nine per cent of pupils have other than white British backgrounds. These pupils have mainly Asian British or Caribbean British backgrounds. Although the proportion of pupils from homes where English is an additional language is above most schools, all are fluent in English. Other than English, the main language spoken is Gujerati. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3390	Kenneth Thomas	Lead inspector	
14214	Gillian Smith	Lay inspector	
10905	Alan Brewerton	Team inspector	Science
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	French
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	English Citizenship
20619	Jennifer Hazlewood	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
15051	Lynne Kauffman	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Music
11548	David Lee	Team inspector	Mathematics
19152	Richard Merryfield	Team inspector	History
30563	Jacqueline Pentlow	Team inspector	Physical education Religious education
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The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good and effective school and one that provides good value for money. The school is lively and forward looking. Pupils achieve well during their time at the school. Standards rise from broadly average on entry to be above national expectations, and in several subjects well above, by the end of Year 8. This is largely because good teaching succeeds in interesting and motivating pupils. Some teaching in English is not enabling pupils to achieve as well as they should. Effective leadership from the headteacher has ensured that development priorities are well focused on the action needed to take the school forward.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards at the end of Years 6 and 8 are above average overall. Standards in science and music are well above average because of outstanding subject leadership.
- Pupils achieve well in almost all subjects because teaching is good and their attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Achievement in English, although satisfactory, is adversely affected by inconsistent teaching and weaknesses in subject leadership in Years 7 and 8.
- The headteacher provides good leadership and the school is well managed. The positive ethos promotes very good relationships and racial harmony.
- Provision for citizenship education is unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in the planning of the subject.
- Not enough use is made of assessment information for setting individual targets for pupils and monitoring pupils' progress in some subjects.
- Staff provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The authorised absence of pupils is above average because of family holidays taken during term time.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since its last inspection in November 1998. Because of weaknesses in school leadership at that time not enough progress was made in the two years following the inspection. However, more rapid progress has been made since the appointment of the present headteacher. Systematic procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning have been introduced and the overall quality of teaching is better. Standards in English and mathematics have risen to above average. Effective use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects. Assessment and marking have improved overall, although there is still room for improvement in the use of assessment information. The school improvement plan is well structured and identifies relevant priorities for continued progress.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good. At the end of Year 6, standards are above average in English and mathematics and well above in science. Achievement is very good in mathematics by the end of Year 8 and standards are well above expectations. Achievement is not as good in English, although standards remain above average. Achievement is particularly good in science, religious

education and music because of very good teaching. Pupils also achieve well in ICT because teaching is good. All groups of pupils achieve equally well. Although girls attain higher standards than boys in most subjects the differences are generally less than the national difference.

Pupils' personal qualities – including their moral, spiritual, social and cultural development - are very good, as are their attitudes and behaviour. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory. Pupils participate in all that the school offers, including extra-curricular activities, with much enthusiasm.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Pupils achieve well in almost all subjects because **teaching is good** in all years. However, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in English slow pupils' progress in that subject. The curriculum is good and promotes equality of opportunity. Provision for citizenship education is unsatisfactory because it is not taught in a systematic and well co-ordinated way. Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good and pupils receive good support, advice and guidance. Links with first schools and the high school to which most pupils transfer are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher has identified a clear direction for the school. He is well supported by other members of the senior leadership team. Leadership elsewhere in the school is good, overall. Management is good. Good planning, underpinned by effective monitoring, is helping to take the school forward. The governing body works well to support and challenge the school.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Links with parents are good and parents are supportive of the school. Pupils are very positive about the school and value the time devoted by many staff to extra-curricular activities. They appreciate the way their views are sought and the seriousness with which they are taken.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the overall quality of teaching in English and leadership of the subject in Years 7 and 8.
- Ensure that the quality of provision for citizenship education matches that of other subjects.
- Ensure consistency between subjects in the use of assessment information to set individual targets for pupils and monitor pupils' progress.
- Continue to emphasise to parents the adverse effects on children's education of taking family holidays in term time.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is **good** in Years 5 and 6. As a result, pupils progress from standards that overall are average on entry to above average at the end of Year 6. They continue to **achieve well** in Years 7 and 8 and standards are **well above expectations** in several subjects by the end of Year 8.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well during their time in the school and make more rapid progress than expected based on their standards of attainment on entry.
- Overall standards of attainment are well above expectations in mathematics, science, art, music and religious education by the end of Year 8.
- Achievement is very good in science and music.
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in English.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	27.8 (28.5)	27.0 (27.0)
mathematics	27.7 (27.3)	26.7 (26.6)
science	29.9 (30.1)	28.3 (28.3)

There were 154 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Pupils enter the school with standards of attainment that are average overall. Pupils achieve well through Years 5 and 6 and results in the National Curriculum tests taken in the core subjects at the end of Year 6 are improving at the same rate as results nationally. The 2002 results (the latest year for which comparative information is available) were above average. There has been some variation in the trend between each subject. Science results rose to well above average in 1999 and have been maintained at that level since. Although results in mathematics fell slightly in 2000 they have risen to be above average in 2002. English results rose steadily to 2001, but fell back slightly in 2002, although they remain above average. Targets for Year 6 in 2003 were largely achieved and appropriate targets have been set for 2004.
2. Pupils make particularly good progress in science and achievement at the end of Year 6 and Year 8 is well above expectations. This is because teaching is very good and exceptionally good subject leadership ensures that the monitoring of pupils' progress towards their targets is particularly effective. Leadership of similar quality has a significant impact on achievement in music and standards are well above expectations by the end of Year 8. In mathematics, after making steady progress through Years 5 and 6, the benefits of good teaching and systematic monitoring are seen in the upper years where more rapid progress is made. As a result, pupils' achievement is very good by the end of Year 8. The good and very good progress made by pupils in mathematics and science respectively is not, however, matched by the progress made in English. Although pupils' achievement is broadly consistent with expectations at the end of Years 6 and 8, there are indications that it should be higher. This is because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and weaknesses in subject leadership in Years 7 and 8.

3. The school uses a variety of measures to monitor and analyse pupils' performance, including the results of the National Curriculum tests taken in the high school at the end of Year 9. The analysis of the 2003 results shows that all groups of pupils achieve equally well. Although girls attain higher standards than boys in English, the difference is less than that observed nationally. The performance of boys is not only better in English than that of boys nationally but also close to the national performance of girls. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls in mathematics and science. The achievements of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, those with English as an additional language and, in general, those with special educational needs are comparable with those of their peers. However, some pupils with special educational needs do not make the progress they should in a number of English lessons because the work is not well matched to their needs and this has an adverse effect on their overall achievement. The needs of the higher attaining pupils are recognised and they achieve well, although there is a need for greater challenge of such pupils in ICT, French and art.
4. Good standards of literacy enable the majority of pupils to make the most of their education. Standards of reading are good. Regular practice across a range of subjects leads to pupils becoming competent readers, able to understand texts and to identify different layers of meaning. Pupils communicate well and speak with confidence in groups of all sizes. Writing skills are above average and handwriting and presentation are good. Numeracy skills are above average. The national numeracy strategy is being implemented successfully in mathematics and numeracy skills are applied particularly well in science, design and technology, ICT and music. However, not enough attention is given to the application and systematic development of these skills in other subjects. Pupils achieve well in ICT so that standards are above expectations at the end of Years 6 and 8. This is directly linked to the substantial investment the school has made in ICT resources over recent years. Teachers are confident in the use of ICT and pupils are provided with many opportunities to apply and develop their ICT skills in almost all subjects.
5. In other subjects pupils enter the school with standards that are broadly average. Because of good teaching pupils achieve well and standards in almost all subjects are at or above national expectations by the end of Year 8. It is not possible to make a judgement on standards in citizenship because the subject is not at present taught and monitored in a systematic way. Consistent with the differences in performance observed nationally, the attainment of girls is above that of boys in most subjects. Pupils start learning French in Year 5, which is two years earlier than is statutorily required and by the end of Year 8 almost all pupils attain standards that are above those expected nationally. Pupils achieve particularly well in religious education and standards are well above the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus by the end of Year 8. Standards in music are strengths of the school. There is very large school orchestra, which performs in many concerts throughout the year. A high proportion of pupils have instrumental tuition. Standards in art are also strong by the end of Year 8. The school is successful in inter-school sporting events, reflecting the above average standards in physical education lessons and the many extra-curricular activities.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are **very good**. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**. Attendance has improved over the last year and is now **satisfactory**. Pupils' punctuality at the start of the day is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils like coming to school, enjoy taking part in the wide range of opportunities available, and behave very well during lessons.
- Pupils' personal development is underpinned by very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- Relationships are very good; the school manages incidents of bullying or harassment very effectively.
 - Some pupils lose too much time at school as a result of family holidays taken in term-time.
 - Although pupils are punctual at the start of the day, some pupils take too much time to move between lessons.
6. Most of the pupils arrive at school promptly in the morning and this helps them to make the most of their time at school. During the day, however, some pupils take too much time to move between lessons, particularly when they are in different buildings, and this delays the start of a number of lessons. Overall attendance rose during the most recent academic year and is now similar to the previous year's national average. Term time holidays, however, account for one fifth of all absences and this is very high. Such absences interrupt the pupils' education and those concerned miss the work undertaken by the rest of the class; this has an adverse impact on the progress of all pupils as teachers have to devote teaching time to help the absentees catch up.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.5	School data	0.1
National data	6.1	National data	0.3

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

7. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school. Their very good attitudes in lessons have a significant impact on their learning. Their eagerness to learn also contributes to the strong sense of community and very good relationships that are evident in the school. Pupils work well together, sharing equipment and supporting each other in small-group and paired work. Pupils enjoy their lessons and all the interesting activities that enrich their learning and provide a very good quality school life. Pupils try very hard to achieve their learning goals. They sustain concentration and respond very well when given appropriate challenges. Pupils are enterprising and regularly raise money for local and national charities. During discussions, pupils say that they find their lessons interesting and they enjoy most of their subjects. They also enjoy taking part in the many extra-curricular clubs and activities, and particularly in musical activities.
8. During lessons, pupils behave very well. All members of staff insist on high standards of behaviour and the overwhelming majority of pupils conform to these expectations. The number of fixed period exclusions is low compared to other schools. Although there was one permanent exclusion during the year preceding the inspection, this was the first for many years. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good and are characterised by mutual trust, respect and consideration. However, the analysis of the pupils' questionnaire showed that almost three out of four said they knew of incidents of bullying and racist abuse. The inspection team explored this issue in formal and informal discussions with many pupils during the period of the inspection. Pupils were generally surprised by the response to the questionnaire and said that such incidents are rare and when they do occur involve a very small number of pupils. The school attaches great urgency to such issues and deals with them immediately. Teachers encourage pupils to report any incidents of harassment and the system is working well. During discussions with inspectors, pupils from ethnic minority groups said that they felt well looked after and that any incidents involving racism were very much the exception, and handled effectively by staff.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	549	4	1
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	23	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	14	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	0	0

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

9. The school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well and the pupils put their understanding into practice. Assemblies and religious education make a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual awareness. Pupils are expected to consider their own views as well as show respect for the views of others. They develop an understanding of the traditions and values of other faiths, and an appreciation of cultural diversity is celebrated in virtually all subjects. There is a strong moral code that permeates the life of the school. Expectations of work and behaviour are high and are fully accepted by virtually all pupils. These values and pupils' social development are promoted very well through many aspects of school life. Pupils work and mix harmoniously and most understand the implications of their actions on others. The moral code in the school also enables the pupils to learn how to distinguish right from wrong. Pupils are developing into valued members of the school community and they carry out responsibilities conscientiously when undertaking roles such as representing the views of others on the school council.
10. The school has maintained the strengths in pupils' attitudes, values and personal development noted in the last inspection report.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching is good overall in all years. The curriculum is good and promotes equality of opportunity. However, provision for citizenship education is unsatisfactory because it is not taught in a systematic and well co-ordinated way. Staff provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**, both in Years 5 and 6 and in Years 7 and 8. Assessment of pupils' work is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress because teaching and learning are good.
- Teaching in science, music, art and religious education is very good and there are examples of excellence in teaching in music and religious education.
- Teachers have high expectations and most lessons are lively and interesting.
- There is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching in English and this is affecting pupils' progress in some lessons.

Commentary

11. The overall quality of teaching has improved slightly since the last inspection. There is more good teaching with occasional examples of excellence. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is about the same. The drive to improve the quality of teaching has been led by the headteacher who has given the systematic monitoring of teaching and learning a high priority. The outcome of this is greater consistency in teaching, which is good across the different year groups. In the vast majority of lessons, learning activities are carefully structured to challenge and interest pupils. The school is conscious of the need to promote race equality and teaching takes account of pupils' ethnic origins and individual beliefs, customs and traditions. As a result all groups of pupils achieve well.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 83 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (4%)	30 (36%)	35 (42%)	12 (14%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

12. Pupils' learning benefits from skilled teaching by a relatively stable teaching staff, many of whom have lengthy experience in the school. Teaching in the best lessons is characterised by very good subject expertise that is used well to provide clear explanations and high expectations of work and behaviour. In almost all lessons good progress is made because pupils rise well to learning tasks that extend them. Teaching of this quality was seen in all subjects, but most consistently in science, music and religious education. In science, pupils make rapid learning gains because a dedicated team of specialist teachers succeeds in capturing pupils' interest and enthusiasm for the subject. Because of inspiring and highly effective music teaching, pupils become engrossed in the subject and develop a contagious enthusiasm for performance, both in lessons and through the many extra-curricular opportunities provided. The best religious education lessons have a pace and liveliness that encourage pupils to express their views and to challenge each other's thinking. The school is now beginning to implement strategies to share this very good practice more widely in the school. Homework is set regularly and used effectively to consolidate and extend pupils' learning.
13. Common features in the few unsatisfactory lessons in English and French, and occasional features in some lessons that were otherwise satisfactory, are a lack of challenge and unclear learning objectives. These lessons comprise a series of activities that do not build in a systematic way towards the achievement of learning goals. Because of this pupils are uncertain what the learning objectives are. The pace of these lessons is too slow because the activities are not well matched to the pupils' attainment levels. When this occurs pupils

become disinterested and not enough progress is made. They begin to waste time on activities not related to the lesson and a disproportionate amount of teacher time is spent on managing behaviour.

14. The National Key Stage 3 strategy has been implemented effectively and evidence of the use of the strategy to structure lessons is seen in all subjects. Good progress has been made in the teaching and use of ICT since the last inspection. Teachers have developed the expertise necessary to ensure that ICT is used effectively to support teaching and learning in almost all subjects.
15. Overall, teaching is good for pupils who have special educational needs. It is very good when special needs teachers work with pupils individually in the special educational needs department and it is good when teaching assistants support them in mainstream classrooms. Teaching assistants are well deployed to make use of their own strengths and pupils gain particular benefit from the support they receive in art and music. Individual education plans (IEPs) are well constructed and provide clear information of pupils' needs, provision, strategies and targets. However, teachers do not always have pupils' IEPs to hand and many IEPs do not have targets specific to different subjects. Because of this, activities are not well matched to the needs of pupils in some lessons and learning progress is slowed as a result. The learning needs of gifted and talented pupils are catered for within the planning for higher attaining pupils. In most subjects this is good with appropriate extension work and other activities. However, there is a need for a higher level of challenge in some ICT, French and art lessons.
16. Strategies for assessing pupils' progress have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory overall. The assistant headteacher with responsibility for assessment is establishing a comprehensive database, and detailed analyses of pupils' performance in National Curriculum and standardised tests are carried out. This information is presented to subject leaders who are beginning to make use of it in the planning of teaching and learning. Best practice in the use of assessment information is seen in science, mathematics, art, music and religious education. In these subjects teachers make full use of analyses of performance by teaching group, gender, ethnicity and prior attainment. These analyses enable teachers to set pupils targets for improvement and to plan lessons. The school improvement plan has identified assessment as a priority so that the best practice will be adopted in all subjects and systematically used to raise achievement further. Pupils' work is marked regularly in most subjects and pupils are made aware of how well they are doing. In most subjects pupils are aware of the level at which they are currently working. Teachers make effective use of questioning in lessons to check pupils' understanding.

The curriculum

The school provides a **good** curriculum, which is considerably enriched by a **very good** programme of extra-curricular activities. The school is **well staffed** and has a **good** level of learning resources. The accommodation is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad and well balanced, and provides equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- There is very good curriculum enrichment through a range of extra-curricular activities and visits.
- Good provision for personal, social and health education contributes significantly to pupils' personal development.
- Provision for citizenship education, whilst meeting statutory requirements overall, is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

17. All statutory requirements are met and the curriculum caters well for the needs of all groups of pupils. Pupils benefit in Years 7 and 8 from the early start to learning French in Year 5. In Years 7 and 8, aspects of citizenship are taught in various subjects, but this is not planned in a structured and coherent way and not well linked to the subject's Programmes of Study. Some progress has been made to rectify this weakness by a newly appointed assistant headteacher with responsibility for pastoral matters. The school manages innovation well. The new national Key Stage 3 strategy has been embraced in all curriculum areas and has a positive impact on standards. The literacy and numeracy hours are well established and the three-part lesson structure has been uniformly adopted.
18. The governing body understands and supports curriculum development, and has responded well to issues raised at the previous inspection. The length of the school day has been increased to meet national requirements. Shortcomings in the provision for ICT have been rectified by effective appointments and added investment in resources. These are having a positive impact on standards in the subject and on its use across the curriculum. Effective monitoring of the school's work by the headteacher, through observing lessons, and by his assistants, through meetings with subject leaders, ensure that the curriculum is kept under review.
19. There is a well-structured programme for pupils' personal, social and health education, with appropriate focus on personal relationships, self-knowledge and study skills, as well as on issues such as sex, alcohol, drug education, bullying and racism. Much of the content of this programme lends itself to the teaching of citizenship and it is through this programme that the statutory requirement is met.
20. Pyramid links with first schools and the high school are effective in ensuring smooth transfer to the next stage of education. Strong features include shared schemes of work and transition tasks at the end of Year 8, which are completed and marked when pupils transfer to the high school.
21. The school meets the statutory requirements with regard to pupils' statements of special educational need. The Code of Practice is implemented effectively and pupils with special educational needs have equal access to all areas of the curriculum, including extra-curricular activities. Provision for pupils with special educational needs generally is based on the need to raise standards of literacy and numeracy as soon as possible, and curriculum arrangements are effective and reflect this priority. Pupils' progress is carefully monitored and reviews of individual education plans and statements are conducted according to requirements.
22. One of the strengths of the school is its provision of extra-curricular activities and out-of-school learning. This provision is well organized and provides a very good range of activities outside the normal school day. Many of these activities are well suited to the needs of gifted and talented pupils. The recently refurbished ICT suites are heavily used at lunchtimes. The musical activities are very popular, with considerable numbers of pupils involved in various bands and the school orchestra. For example, over 100 pupils participate in the school choir. Participation in sport is equally as high. There are teams in all the major sports. High attaining pupils in mathematics have the opportunity to engage in challenges organised by the University of Leeds. In addition there are trips abroad, to the theatre and other local places of interest.
23. The overall match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is good, although there is some variation between subjects. In science, a teaching team of graduate specialists is having a positive impact on pupils' progress. Non-teaching staff make a significant

contribution to the effective functioning of the school, particularly in art, design and technology,

and ICT. Teaching assistants have a good knowledge of the pupils they support and make a positive contribution to pupils' learning.

24. The school accommodation is satisfactory overall. There are strengths in many areas. The library is well stocked and provides a bright and cheerful learning area. New computer rooms provide very good teaching areas and are well equipped with up-to-date computers. The accommodation for art and mathematics is also very good. However, there are not enough science laboratories. The design and technology teaching rooms are too small for the size of the teaching groups and this restricts the circulation of pupils and ready access to tools and materials. School office and administrative space is severely constricted. There are interactive whiteboards in many classrooms and these are well used, for example to highlight and summarise key learning points in lessons.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. The school provides its pupils with **good** personal support, advice and guidance and involves them **very well** in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- This school looks after its pupils very well; health and safety and child protection procedures are comprehensive and very effective.
 - Well-planned and thoughtful induction procedures help new pupils to settle quickly.
 - The school actively seeks pupils' views and tries to accommodate their suggestions and preferences.
25. Pupils are very well looked after during the school day, they feel safe at school because they are well known to their teachers. Child protection and health and safety procedures are well understood by the relevant members of staff. The school liaises well with a range of external agencies, including social services, educational psychology and health, in order to provide effective support for pupils who are experiencing difficulties. A recent innovation is the use of learning mentors to provide additional support to Year 8 pupils who are not progressing as well as they should. Early indications are that this initiative is proving to be effective and the pupils concerned feel they benefit from the support they receive.
26. Very good liaison and transfer arrangements with the first schools and high school ensure a smooth transition when pupils enter the school in Year 5 and when they leave the school at the end of Year 8. Pupils who are reaching the end of Year 7 visit the contributing first schools and get to know the Year 4 pupils before they transfer. Once they arrive at the start of the school year, the new Year 8 pupils help during registration and also provide lunchtime 'drop-in' sessions for anyone who wants to discuss a problem or seek reassurance. Pupils speak warmly of the support they receive and this makes a positive contribution to their progress in the early years. Equally effective support is provided for the 20 or so pupils who join the school at the start of Year 7. Relationships between pupils and adults are very good and pupils say that their teachers are kind and very approachable. Inspectors agree with these positive comments. Rewards for good achievement are celebrated in year assemblies and these motivate pupils well.
27. Very good personal care is supported by the effective use of marking to provide pupils with clear guidance on how they can improve their work. In several subjects, for example science and mathematics, assessment information is used to identify quickly any underachievement so that specific individual guidance and support can be provided. However, there is a need to ensure more uniform practice across all subjects, especially in English.
28. Pupils who are talented in music, art or sport are given very good opportunities to extend themselves. A newly appointed assistant headteacher is in the process of revising the school's

procedures for identifying gifted and talented pupils and will co-ordinate provision across the curriculum.

29. The school council is very well regarded both by pupils and teachers, and recommendations from the council have brought about several improvements. For example, additional bins have been provided to reduce litter in the playground and lunchtime menus have been amended to promote healthy eating.
30. The strengths in care, support and guidance noted in the last report have been maintained. The use of assessment to support pupils' progress has improved and further improvement is planned.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's links with parents are **good**. Links with the local community and other schools are also **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school actively seeks parents' views and acts upon them whenever possible.
- Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are strong.
- Parents provide good support for extra-curricular activities, for example, in sport and music.
- Close liaison with other schools enriches the curriculum and broadens the range of social and educational opportunities for pupils and staff.
- Comments in pupils' annual reports are sometimes too general and include little information about what pupils can and cannot do.

Commentary

31. The school is keen to increase parents' involvement in their children's education and strives to keep them informed about school matters. Regular newsletters provide much interesting information about day-to-day events and parents are given a breakdown of what their children will be studying in each subject, term by term. The school actively seeks parents' opinions and provides regular questionnaires in order to gauge their views on various issues. Whenever feasible, parents' suggestions and preferences are acted upon and incorporated into plans for the future. Links with parents of pupils who have special educational needs are especially close and this constructive liaison helps to ensure that these pupils make good progress in their work. A significant minority of parents, however, take family holidays during the school term. By withdrawing their children in this way, parents are not only disadvantaging their own children but also other pupils in the class as teachers inevitably have to spend time helping absentees to catch up with the work done while they were away.
32. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and comments made at the pre-inspection meeting with parents show that the majority of parents have positive views of the school. Around one in six replied to the questionnaire and six attended the pre-inspection meeting. Nearly all confirm that their children like school and are making good progress. They consider that school has high expectations and is helping their children become more mature and responsible. Parents are very positive about the quality of teaching and with pupils' attitudes and behaviour. They feel comfortable about approaching school with suggestions, questions or concerns. They also believe that the leadership and management of the school are good. Parents showed very little dissatisfaction with the school through the questionnaire. Some parents were dissatisfied with the information provided about their child's progress. Inspectors agree with these concerns. Written comments in annual reports are not always specific to the subject and do not always provide a clear idea of what pupils can and cannot do. However, the science reports are exemplary in this respect. There is no formal parent-

school association, although parents provide a good deal of practical support whenever there are trips or productions.

33. Links with the local community are good. Pupils regularly take part in local events and raise funds for several charities, including the local hospice. Because there are few local businesses the school's links with commerce are very limited.
34. The school works closely with contributory first schools and the main receiving high school. Members of staff sometimes share training and help each other to develop certain policies, such as the new behaviour and anti-bullying policies. These good links promote consistency within the pyramid of schools and help to ensure a smooth transition when the time comes for pupils to move on. Induction procedures are good and pupils who arrived at the start of Year 5 and 7 say that they received a warm welcome and rapidly made new friends.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **good**. The headteacher provides **good** leadership and is well supported by other members of the senior leadership team. Leadership elsewhere in the school is **good**. Management is **good**. Good planning, underpinned by effective monitoring, is helping to take the school forward. Governance of the school is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The effective action taken by the headteacher to identify and prioritise key areas for improvement.
 - The school improvement plan is well focused and manageable and is well linked to financial planning.
 - The increase in teaching time resulting from extending the school day is having a positive effect upon standards.
 - Most of the key issues from the last inspection have been dealt with effectively, but improvements in the use of assessment so that pupils are clear about what they are achieving has yet to be fully implemented.
35. The headteacher in post at the time of the last inspection had only recently been appointed and after five terms left the school. During this period the school lacked direction and staff morale was adversely affected. Although the staff worked hard to maintain the quality of education the school provides, there was little progress on any of the weaknesses identified in the inspection report. The situation was first stabilised by the deputy headteacher, who provided good leadership during a short period of acting headship, and then, under the effective leadership provided by the present headteacher, the school moved forward more rapidly.
 36. On taking up the appointment the headteacher very quickly set about identifying the school's strengths and areas in which improvement was needed. He developed a very clear vision of what needed to be done in order to restore a sense of purpose to the school and to ensure that there was a sharp focus on continued improvement. The school improvement plan provides a clear agenda for raising achievement and improving the quality of education the school provides for all groups of pupils. He has developed a climate for change and has the confidence of pupils, parents, governors and staff. He is clear how standards can rise. For example, after proper consultation with staff, parents and governors, the amount of teaching time has been extended to meet government recommendations and this is having a positive impact upon standards, particularly those of literacy and numeracy. Effective leadership, coupled with good financial planning are helping to maintain staffing levels in a climate of falling pupil numbers because of local demographic trends. The determination of the

headteacher to raise achievement is also seen in his rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning. Because of this the head has a clear picture of the areas of strength and the areas to which additional support needs to be provided.

37. The quality of subject leadership and management is good. There is a commitment to self-evaluation as a means to improvement. This, coupled with clarity of vision and good strategic planning, is leading to further improvements in standards. In science, for example, a strong sense of teamwork and the sharing of ideas and good practice is making a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. However, because there is not enough sharing of good practice in English in Years 7 and 8, pupils are not achieving as well as they ought. The senior leadership team of the head, deputy and assistant head has been extended and strengthened by the appointment of two additional assistant headteachers. The roles of these assistant heads include monitoring the work of subject leaders to ensure greater consistency in the identification and sharing of good practice both within and between subjects, and in the use of assessment information to guide the planning of teaching and learning. Both of these have been identified correctly as improvement priorities.
38. The chair of governors provides perceptive leadership to the governing body. Governors are committed and very supportive of the school and carry out their statutory duties well. The governing body is well advanced in formulating its new instrument of government and as a result it has taken the opportunity to restructure committees and to clarify roles and responsibilities. Governors are committed to the school's drive to raise standards and fully endorse the principle of ensuring that the school provides for the needs of all groups of pupils. They fully support the headteacher and the recently enlarged leadership team, and set challenging targets. The finance committee has carefully considered the impact of falling rolls on budget income. As a consequence they have targeted expenditure according to priorities in the school improvement plan. The governing body has undertaken detailed analyses of service level agreements in order to achieve best value for the school. Governors are provided with a good range of information and have participated in an evaluation of school effectiveness. As a result the governing body has a clear picture of the school's strengths and of where improvement is needed.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,549,903
Total expenditure	1,495,293
Expenditure per pupil	2,392

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	60,000
Balance carried forward to the next	114,610

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment in the statutory tests at the end of Year 6 rose significantly after the 1998 inspection and is above average.
- Standards of oracy and literacy are above average and promote pupils' learning across the curriculum.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are good and contribute positively to their learning.
- The quality of teaching is inconsistent which means that pupils receive different experiences of English.
- The recently appointed co-ordinator for Years 5 and 6 is bringing new energy and direction to the department but there are weaknesses in the leadership of Years 7 and 8.

Commentary

39. Standards of attainment have risen to be above average at the end of Year 6 and Year 8, after being relatively stable for some years. Girls' attainment in English is better than that of the boys, although the difference between them in the Year 6 statutory tests is less than it is nationally.
40. Achievement based on pupils' prior attainment is as expected but there are indications that pupils could do better than this if all received the same quality of teaching. The great majority of pupils express at length their ideas and opinions in oral work and are able to develop their learning through effective talk. Many pupils read widely, and the use of reading journals has promoted reading for pleasure. In lessons, most pupils in Years 5 and 6 are able to identify the main features of a text, and many pupils in Years 7 and 8 can talk objectively about the ways in which writers achieve their effects. Pupils are able to carry over these skills into their own writing, which, although the school has correctly identified as needing further improvement, is still above average. Presentation remains a strength of pupils' work, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Standards of spelling and punctuation are reasonably accurate and some of the work seen by higher attaining pupils who left the school in July was of an exceptional standard.
41. Some pupils with special educational needs underachieve in occasional lessons. This is partly because they are withdrawn from some English lessons for targeted support and find it difficult to keep up when they join their normal class. In addition, in some lessons taught by non-specialist teachers, they work from worksheets that do not always stretch them or help them to meet the learning objectives set for them.
42. The quality of teaching and learning in the subject is satisfactory, although during the inspection some good and very good teaching was observed. The best lessons in all years share a clear sense of purpose and direction. Pace is brisk and learning objectives are used, both to show pupils what they are to learn and to assess progress and learning at the end of the lesson. Teachers convey their good subject knowledge with energy and enthusiasm and their use of open-ended questions encourages pupils to think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning. Teaching was unsatisfactory in two lessons. In these lessons expectations were not high enough, the pace was slow, and neither teachers nor

pupils were clear about what was to be learned. Some non-specialist teachers are not secure with the teaching of the finer points of punctuation and grammar and this leads to some confusion for their pupils.

43. Recent changes in the management structure of the department have led to the separation of the leadership of Years 5 and 6 from that of Years 7 and 8. Leadership of the first two years is energetic and the co-ordinator is bringing new impetus to the teaching of literacy. She has identified priorities for development and is leading the improvements in teaching by a creative use of the additional time allowed for monitoring and evaluating the work of her team. There are, however, some weaknesses remaining in the leadership of Years 7 and 8. Although there are fewer non-specialists teaching in these years than in the first two years, there is an urgent need for better exemplars of good teaching and classroom practice from the co-ordinator than currently exists. These weaknesses have led to unsatisfactory improvement overall since the 1998 inspection even though standards of attainment have improved. The quality of teaching is still only satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and has fallen from good to satisfactory overall in Years 7 and 8. Marking is still not used sufficiently consistently to show pupils how to improve.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

44. Pupils' levels of literacy are good and enhance their learning across the curriculum. Most pupils are able to use Standard English and speak with some confidence in the class situation. They have an awareness of formal and informal language and when each is appropriate. Reading skills are good and pupils are able to read with understanding and reflect on the texts they encounter in lessons. Writing skills are above average and handwriting and presentation are good. Some staff training on literacy across the curriculum has taken place and most subject teachers are aware of the contribution they can make to the development of pupils' standards of literacy. For example, in history, pupils are given good guidance about *how to* write and in many subjects talk is used effectively to enrich pupils' learning.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are improving. They are above average by the end of Year 8.
- In Years 7 and 8, all pupils achieve well.
- Much teaching is good. In Years 7 and 8, expectations are high, and pupils learn well because lively, well-planned lessons interest them.
- Good leadership and management focus on raising standards further in a well-organised subject.
- Pupils are aware of their progress and what to do to improve.
- In Years 5 and 6, work is not always well matched to capabilities, so that some pupils, especially higher attainers, do not benefit as much as they should from the early introduction to the subject.

Commentary

45. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above national expectations. Pupils acquire vocabulary in a limited range of topics. Speaking and listening skills are best developed because these activities dominate lessons. In general, all pupils do similar work, so that an opportunity is lost to accelerate the learning of higher attaining pupils. Overall, however, pupils achieve as well as could be expected. They begin to understand the mechanics of language, and pronunciation is often good. By the end of Year 8, higher attaining pupils speak and write at reasonable length on more complex topics such as their daily routine, using past tenses and reflexive verbs accurately. Average attainers also learn past tenses and apply these in sentence work and briefer creative tasks. Lower attainers, including pupils with special educational needs, write descriptively and give opinions. The listening skills of all pupils continue to develop well

because they hear French consistently in lessons. Reading skills are satisfactory, but pupils do not have regular opportunities for independent reading. Over these two years, pupils' achievement exceeds national expectations across the board. Girls do better than boys, but less so than nationally.

46. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers show their high expectations by using French consistently to conduct all lessons. Consequently, pupils are attentive and their listening and pronunciation skills improve. Teachers plan and resource lessons effectively so that pupils have fun as they learn. They use games, songs, pair and group work to provide opportunities for pupils to use French for themselves. Pupils' own good attitudes and behaviour contribute to their learning. In Year 7, a three part lesson on the school timetable was used effectively so that pupils understood objectives, participated in a wide range of timed activities and left the room knowing exactly what they had learned. Activities involve all pupils and questions are targeted so that all groups make contributions. Good marking and verbal feedback give pupils a clear picture of their progress and how to set themselves targets to reach the next level. Different course books are used in Years 7 and 8, so that pupils learn language at a rate that suits them, yet challenges them. In Years 5 and 6 this level of planning is not sufficiently developed, so that there are differences in the rate of achievement.
47. Leadership and management are good. A strong awareness of national initiatives and requirements underpins a clear focus on further raising standards. Good monitoring arrangements enable the subject co-ordinator to provide effective support to the professional development of colleagues. Assessment procedures are advanced, and a start has been made to using data to influence schemes of work. Planning for improvement is sound and linked to the school's priorities. However, planning needs to include strategies to improve boys' performance, reading opportunities and the application of ICT to language learning. Links with the high school are strong and shape learning content. Improving standards, good teaching and the quality of monitoring and assessment mean that there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 6 are above average.
 - Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 8 is well above expectations.
 - Good and often very good teaching succeeds in motivating pupils.
 - Teachers do not make enough use of assessment information in planning their lessons.
 - Numeracy skills are not applied and developed in a systematic way in many subjects.
48. Results in the National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils in 2002 were above average. The 2003 results were below those of 2002, although still above the national average. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. Standards at the end of Year 8, as seen during the inspection, are well above expectations, with boys and girls achieving similar standards. Some higher attaining pupils are already achieving standards above those expected at the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs or from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve similar standards to their peers. Overall the standards in mathematics have risen since the last inspection and above the trend nationally.
 49. Pupils' achievement is good because learning is interesting and teaching engages and captures their interest. The work in pupils' books depicts a consistent rate of progress that is not always reflected in the test results at the end of Year 6. In Years 5 and 6, achievement is largely consistent with expectations based on standards on entry in Year 5. However, pupils build a firm knowledge base in these years and develop a good understanding of the manipulation of number through regular practice. Because of this pupils make more rapid

progress through Years 7 and 8 so that achievement is very good by the time pupils transfer to the high school. Pupils manipulate and are able to convert fractions, decimals and percentages with confidence. Higher attaining pupils are stretched across all the aspects of mathematics. Pupils are able to calculate the area of standard shapes confidently and to use their knowledge to find areas of more complex ones. In Year 7 higher attaining pupils make significant progress in the understanding of linear equations and graphs because they are challenged and extended by very good teaching.

50. In all years teachers follow the guidance and good practice outlined in the various national strategies for mathematics. A particular strength of many lessons is the wide range of warm-up activities used. These focus on improving mental arithmetic through mathematical games, the use of mini whiteboards to display answers and timed tests, all of which contribute to the very good progress pupils are making.
51. Teaching is never less than good and often very good. Lessons are lively, begin promptly and are well planned. Teachers use their subject knowledge to engage pupils and ensure that lessons move at a brisk pace. Relationships and pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. The high expectations of teachers ensure that pupils are focused and their interest is maintained. The frequent and effective use of interactive whiteboards, graphical calculators and ICT enhance learning. In one Year 8 lesson pupils successfully used a computer programme, similar to that used in a retail shop, to calculate different proportions of a given quantity. These pupils were competent in the use of ICT and as a result were able to move on at a brisk pace. Teachers mark work regularly, marking is accurate and encouraging, but sometimes lacks guidance on how to improve. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported generally and effective use is made of teaching assistants to help and encourage those who need additional support.
52. Leadership of the subject is very strong and management is very good. There is a clear vision for the development of the department with a focus on raising standards. Teachers are well supported and have good professional development opportunities. Procedures are in place for monitoring and evaluating the work of the department to identify what works well and where improvements are needed. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

53. The national numeracy strategy has been implemented well within mathematics, but few other departments have systematically planned development of numeracy in their subjects. There is very good practice in science and design and technology, and good use is made of number skills in the teaching of ICT and music. In the latter pupils link their understanding of fractions to different rhythms and notes. There is a need for more use to be made of pupils' numerical skills in other areas of the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average at the end of both Year 6 and Year 8.
- Teaching is very good.
- Achievement is very good.
- Assessment is very good and used very well in guiding both teaching and curriculum planning.
- Further improvement is required in investigative science particularly in planning and evaluating investigations.

Commentary

54. Standards of work throughout the school are well above average overall and are being improved because teaching is very good and leadership and management within the department are outstanding. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.
55. In 2002, whilst test results for pupils at the end of Year 6 were well above average overall, the number of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 was well above average. Boys' and girls' results were similar. Science results were better than those for English and mathematics. When measured against prior attainment these results were much better than expected. Teaching by science specialists enables pupils in Years 5 and 6 to achieve very well. Since the last inspection, results have improved at a similar rate to results nationally, but at a higher level. Results for 2003 were slightly better than those for 2002. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 achieve very well. At this early stage in Year 8 pupils are attaining standards that are well above expectations. Overall, pupils make very good progress and achievement is well above expectations.
56. As a result of very good teaching, pupils make very good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in science. For example, by the end of Year 6, pupils understand that pitch is a measure of how high or low a sound is and how animals are adapted to suit their habitats. Lower attaining pupils are less confident. They are, for example, less confident in their understanding of adaptations but still recognise how habitats vary. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 are able to determine the density of substances and calculate the speed of objects. The standards of literacy and numeracy throughout the school in science are very good.
57. Teaching is very good. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Pupils learn very well as a result. The principal features of teaching were the use of very good subject knowledge by teachers, their high expectations of pupils, very good well-focused planning and a range of methods that maintained interest and engendered learning. Homework was set which extended or consolidated classwork. Assessment is very good. Very good use is made of assessment to monitor the progress of pupils, to identify underachievers, adjust teaching and guide curriculum planning. Day-to-day marking, whilst being thorough overall and giving good advice upon how pupils could improve, does not always provide targets for future work. The identification of appropriate learning objectives, coupled with very good support for pupils' learning, enables pupils throughout the school, including those with special educational needs, to make very good progress in improving their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. Pupils are inspired to work hard and at a good pace.
58. Leadership and management in the science department are outstanding. The head of science is dedicated, hard working and inspirational. She receives very good support from a team of well-qualified and experienced teachers. The subject leader has a very clear vision of what is needed to improve and the action required to carry out improvements. Educational direction is clear and very well focused on improving standards, particularly those in investigative science. As a result, there is evidence of new initiatives that are likely to lead to further improvements. Improvement planning is well focused and manageable. Resources, in terms of books and equipment, are adequate, and there is now good access to ICT as a teaching and learning tool. The number of rooms in the department is barely adequate for a school of this size. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection and the capacity for improvement is very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new head of department has a strong commitment to continued improvement in the subject.
- Standards are rising because of the good quality of teaching, the new ICT curriculum and the introduction of discrete lessons.
- Investment in new equipment and technical support has increased pupils' access to computers.
- There is a need to provide more challenging tasks for the highest attaining pupils.

Commentary

59. Standards in ICT are above expectations at the end of Year 6 and Year 8. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were in line with expectations. Pupils are now provided with regular opportunities to consolidate and apply their skills in other subjects.
60. Pupils achieve well because they have very positive attitudes to ICT and their behaviour is very good. This ensures that they make the best use of time in lessons. In Year 5, pupils use presentation software very well. Their writing is enhanced by the use of relevant images from clipart and the digital camera. In Year 6 pupils control the mouse effectively to draw designs on screen and develop the skills necessary to place and re-size images. In Year 7, pupils develop good word processing and editing skills. They also begin to develop efficient methods for researching information on the Internet. This makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills. In Year 8, pupils are able to construct a website.
61. The quality of teaching is good. Pupils benefit from knowledgeable teachers who have high expectations of work and behaviour. Teachers provide a good range of learning activities and these capture the interest and involvement of all pupils. Pupils work together in a variety of learning activities and these make a good contribution to the development of their ability to make progress without relying on the teacher. Work is marked regularly and pupils are provided with clear guidance on how to improve. Pupils' performance is monitored well and effective support is provided for pupils with special educational needs. Effective use is made of extension activities to consolidate learning, but in order to raise standards further there is need to provide more challenging activities for the highest achievers.
62. Leadership and management of the subject are good and making a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection. The new head of department has a clear vision for the future development of the subject with an appropriate emphasis on the continued raising of standards. Discrete ICT lessons have been introduced for each year group and there has been a considerable investment in new equipment and teaching resources. These resources are being used well and are having a positive impact on standards. Staff and pupils benefit from very good technical support.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

63. The use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum continues to improve. All teachers have received specialist training and most subjects include the use of ICT to support teaching and learning in their schemes of work. Most subjects take advantage of the increased number of computers in the school and the ICT rooms are used regularly. Some subjects have their own clusters of computers and these are used well to enhance learning. The school is a centre of excellence for the use of ICT in religious education. Interactive whiteboards have been installed in some subjects and are used well to stimulate pupils' interest and involvement but they are not available in English and ICT.

HUMANITIES

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
 - Pupils learn well because teaching is good
 - The subject is very well led and managed.
 - Not enough use is made of audio and visual aids in lessons.
64. On entry to the school pupils' standards of attainment in geography are broadly in line with expectations. However, by the end of Year 6 standards are above average and at the end of Year 8 they are above national expectations. This amount of progress represents good achievement across Years 5 to 8. The rates of progress and achievement of boys and girls are similar. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic groups is comparable with that of their peers.
65. The very good standard of enquiry work from Year 5 shows that pupils benefit from the effective use of fieldwork. Pupils' written work benefits from their above average literacy skills and the effective use of ICT to enhance presentation. Their extended studies prepare them well for examination coursework in the high school. Pupils develop basic geographical skills through work with maps and plans in Year 5. Worksheets and writing frames encourage extended and imaginative writing on topics such as 'a postcard from Barrow' in Year 6 and investigative work on Jamaica in Year 8. Pupils are given opportunities to think independently and reach accurate conclusions, as seen in work on settlement location in Year 7. Pupils demonstrate the ability to understand more complex ideas in work on hierarchies and widen their knowledge of geographical patterns and processes in work on climate and river systems. Pupils with special needs and higher attainers are properly identified and provided with appropriate materials to enable them to progress well.
66. The quality of teaching overall is good and sometimes very good. Lessons are well-planned and delivered with pace and high expectation. There is plenty of good humour and constant reinforcement of information through good questioning and checking of work including homework. Lessons involve all pupils and their levels of interest and concentration are high. Pupils work well together in pairs and groups. Particular strengths are seen in the high level of challenge offered, the development of skills and the good use of National Curriculum levels in the evaluation of work. Not enough use is made of audio-visual and other aids to illustrate teaching points.
67. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject leaders' clear vision for the development of the subject together with good organisational skills contribute to pupils' achievement. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. An effective teaching team has helped to raise standards and has the capacity to raise standards further.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Pupils learn well because of their very good attitudes and high quality teaching.
- The subject is very well managed and led.

- Pupils have a good knowledge of selected events but find it difficult to fit this in to the 'longer run' of history.
 - Grades used in day-to-day marking are not always consistent with the comments offered.
68. Pupils' attainment on entry in history is close to average. Pupils make good progress throughout the school and standards are above average at the end of Year 6 and above national expectations at the end of Year 8. These standards represent good achievement when standards on entry are taken into account.
69. Strengths in pupils' work include handling source materials, investigative work and extended writing. Pupils display a clear understanding of differing interpretations of historical events or characters such as King John or Oliver Cromwell but many find it difficult to explain how these fit in to the longer historical time-span. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported and achieve well. There are no significant differences in overall standards between boys and girls but lower attaining pupils have only a limited grasp of some aspects of history. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good throughout the school and make a significant contribution to the quality of lessons. Pupils respond positively to one another and their teachers, and co-operate well in paired and group work. They take care and pride in the presentation of their work and support each other's independent learning well.
70. The overall quality of teaching is good and often very good. This makes a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. Three-part lessons, which follow the Key Stage 3 strategy, are planned in great detail and materials are carefully selected for their accessibility to a wide attainment range. Teachers have high expectations and use questioning skilfully to monitor and probe pupils' understanding. They pay great attention to improving pupils' already good standards of literacy. Lessons are briskly paced and ICT is very well used to support learning. Teachers mark books regularly and include much supportive and diagnostic comment. However, more consistent use of attainment grades that relate to national levels would give pupils a clearer understanding of their progress.
71. The subject is very well managed and led. The subject co-ordinator is energetic and very hard working and has a clear focus on raising attainment by developing pupils' historical skills. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching is helping to raise standards.
- Very good subject leadership and management provide good support to the teaching team and ensure consistency in the quality of teaching.
- The very good use of ICT encourages independent learning.
- Boys do not attain as well as girls in lessons.

Commentary

72. Pupils join the school with knowledge; skills and understanding that are broadly in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. They come from several schools, some of which do not follow the same syllabus. Teacher assessments, confirmed by observations during the inspection, show that standards at the end of Year 6 are above expectations. At the end of Year 8 standards are well above expectations. The standard of boys' work in lessons are slightly below those of girls. The standards reached at the end of Year 6 represent good achievement and at the end of Year 8 they represent very good achievement when standards on entry are taken into account.

73. The very good teaching is challenging and has a pace and vitality that stimulate pupils' interest and encourage them to express their views. Pupils are able to give reasons for their answers and to apply their knowledge in a way that shows understanding of issues. Teachers' good planning and subject knowledge are used well to devise different ways of approaching topics. This helps to motivate and enthuse pupils. In the best lessons additional resource materials are used effectively to support pupils with weaker literacy skills. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the teachers' constructive comments provide pupils with the information needed to improve. Very good teacher-pupil relationships ensure that the pupils feel confident in expressing personal views. The very effective use of ICT encourages independent learning. The well-structured assessment and monitoring system is used effectively to identify any pupils who are underachieving so that additional support can be provided. The teaching of the subject in several classrooms inhibits teaching because there is a lack of subject-specific display work for classes to share. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good and there are harmonious relationships in the classroom. This contributes to the very good progress pupils are making. The curriculum has been enhanced by a number of visits to places of worship and some speakers.
74. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear vision for improvement and the strong support for staff ensures consistency. The subject makes a very good contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Since the last inspection all the positive aspects have been maintained and embedded, standards are continuing to rise and all the areas highlighted for improvement have been dealt with. This represents very good improvement.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist teaching and resources, together with effective technical support, have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
 - Pupils' finished products and the displays of their work around the school are of very good quality.
 - There are weaknesses in basic techniques in designing.
 - The specialist rooms are too small for the size of teaching groups.
75. Standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly in line with expectations. Pupils establish sound working techniques and develop an understanding of relevant health and safety issues and the conventions of dealing with food, textiles and resistant materials. By the end of Year 8 standards are above expectations both in the theory of designing and in making. When standards on entry are taken into account, achievement is good.
76. Teachers give close attention to detail in Years 5 and 6 and this helps pupils to understand the need to work hard to ensure the best possible finish their products. This provides a sound base for their later work in Years 7 and 8. Pupils are given good guidance on what they need to do in order to improve and this makes a significant contribution to their achievement. They are able to plan their work and suggest a sequence of actions for their products. However, some pupils have difficulty in suggesting alternatives if initial attempts at making fail. In particular, some lower attaining pupils find designing particularly difficult because of writing difficulties. However, many shine when making products. Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds enjoy the subject and their achievement is consistent with that of their peers.

77. Teaching and learning are good overall, with some very good teaching in Years 7 and 8, where there is more specialist teaching and use of tools and equipment. However, the design of the specialist rooms restricts teaching and learning strategies. Because the rooms are too small for the size of the teaching it is difficult for the teacher and pupils to move around. Teachers plan for these situations as best they can but there is an adverse impact especially when pupils are designing or need independent access to equipment and machinery. This has a negative effect on standards. Teachers make good use of ICT to support designing and research and pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are applied and developed in the design process. The effective use of group work enables pupils to compare making techniques and problem solving approaches. Teachers make effective use of assessment to ensure that pupils understand the standards of their work in terms of National Curriculum levels and to provide them with targets for improvement. However, more use could be made of group review at the end of lessons to discuss alternative and more dynamic design solutions.
78. Leadership and management of the department are good. Teachers meet regularly to discuss pupils' progress and to share ideas. Good procedures for monitoring teaching and learning have been established. Technicians are skilled and support teaching and learning effectively, particularly in the area of computer aided design. Good improvement planning has ensured that the main areas for improvement identified in the last report have been tackled, although provision for gifted and talented pupils is still in the planning stage.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and high expectations extend pupils' personal techniques and appreciation of art.
 - High quality display celebrates pupils' work and enhances the learning environment.
 - Effective assessment procedures are well linked to National Curriculum levels.
 - The very good use of ICT enhances pupils' work and extends their learning experiences.
 - Pupils do not have enough opportunities to analyse each other's work.
79. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above expectations. Standards at the end of Year 8 are well above expectations. There is no significant difference in the standards attained by boys and girls or by different groups of pupils.
80. Pupils achieve well in Years 5 and 6 because teachers build well on pupils' first school experience and sketchbooks are introduced effectively. The enthusiastic exploration of ideas derived from classroom artefacts, displays and the effective use of computers enriches pupil's access to visual information. The use of line, tone, texture and colour is evident in pupils' sketchbooks and final pieces in these years. Pupils achieve very well in Years 7 and 8 because the effective use of assessment and well-recorded personal evaluations ensure that work builds in an incremental way on their previous learning. However, not enough opportunities are provided for pupils to learn by making reflective assessments of other pupils' work. Pupils extend their knowledge of materials and techniques and share ideas and meaning. They develop good observational skills and occasional visits to galleries and museums supplement school based resources. These enable pupils to develop an understanding of the influences of particular artists and of the artistic traditions of different cultures. This is particularly important for minority ethnic pupils who see their personal backgrounds valued. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs receive good support and their achievement is consistent with that of their peers. However, there is a need to provide more enrichment opportunities for the highest attaining pupils.

81. The quality of teaching is very good and directly linked to the very good progress pupils make by the time they leave school. The skills, knowledge and flair of teachers enrich pupils' learning experiences. Learning activities provide many opportunities for pupils to use a wide range of materials and to work with two and three-dimensional pieces. Teachers are committed, have high expectations and provide good support to pupils. Pupils' attitudes are very good and they respond well to planned group work. Teachers make effective use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning and, in particular, make very good use of PowerPoint presentations to introduce historical, spiritual and cultural themes in lessons.
82. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Firm and effective leadership has shaped and raised the profile of the subject in the school. Weaknesses identified in the last report have been tackled and improvement since that time is good. Non-specialist teachers are given very good support and make a good contribution to work in the subject. They share the drive of the subject co-ordinator to share ideas and good practice and to continue to raise standards. The department makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Music

Provision in music is **outstanding**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good and occasionally excellent teaching inspires and motivates pupils.
- Very effective use is made of assessment to raise standards.
- A large number of pupils participate enthusiastically in the wide range of extra-curricular musical activities.
- There is a positive approach to providing musical experiences for all pupils.

Commentary

83. Standards at the end of Year 6 are above expectations; by the end of Year 8 standards are well above expectations. Through Years 5 and 6 pupils develop vocal techniques and understand musical expression as they sing in unison. Through Years 7 and 8, the quality of free composition improves as pupils apply the knowledge and understanding gained through listening to the work of famous composers. The standards reached by the end of Year 8 represent high achievement when standards on entry are taken into account. Pupils become able to communicate and share ideas and feelings about music. Listening skills are honed and pupils make very good use of musical vocabulary to express emotions and feelings from pieces they listen to in class. This makes a very good contribution to the development of pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. This is particularly so for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds because elements of their cultural heritage and traditions are recognised and valued in the music listened to and instruments used. The achievement of lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs is comparable to that of their peers. Extra-curricular music is a real strength of the school and provides excellent opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to excel.
84. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good with some excellent lessons. One of the strong features of teaching is the obvious pleasure that both the specialist teacher and non-specialists have in teaching the subject. Pupils respond well to their teachers' enthusiasm and become highly motivated. Pupils make very good progress in learning because teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan activities that stimulate and interest them. The use of assessment was highlighted as a weakness in the last inspection. This issue has been tackled very successfully and excellent use is now made of assessment to guide lesson teaching, and to identify those pupils in need of additional support. This is making a significant contribution to pupils' progress and achievement.

85. The leadership and management of the subject are outstanding and have a positive effect on the whole ethos of the school. The contributions of peripatetic teachers are very well managed and over 200 pupils benefit from additional instrumental lessons. All pupils entered for externally graded examinations in the last school year were successful. Participation rates in the wide range of extra-curricular activities are high and both pupils and many staff are enthusiastically engaged in the school choir, orchestra and other musical groups. The subject leader has developed a strong teaching team and has a clear vision for the future development of the subject. All of the weaknesses identified in the last report have been eradicated and improvement since that time has been very good. The subject is well placed to continue to improve.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very good standards in games lessons.
- Good teaching provides a good learning environment for pupils of all levels of ability.
- The range and quality of extra-curricular activities available enhances the experience on offer to the pupils.
- Assessment criteria are not shared with the pupils so they are unaware of what is needed to raise their work to the next level.

Commentary

86. Standards at the end of Year 6 are, overall, above national expectations. The skills of girls are just above the national expectations and skills in boys' games are above. Standards at the end of Year 8 are securely above the standards expected at this age, with boys' standards in games being well above. All pupils understand the effects that exercise has on the body and the reason for a general warm-up. However, this understanding is not always translated into practice and so stretches were not seen in warm-ups taken by pupils. Standards in extra-curricular activities are well above average.
87. Boys enter school with physical skills slightly above national expectations and girls with skills broadly in line with expectations and so achievement at the end of Year 6 is good. Good progress is maintained through the upper years and so achievement is again good by the end of Year 8. The achievement of all groups of pupils is comparable when standards on entry are taken into account.
88. The overall quality of teaching is good in all years and this leads to good learning. Class management is based on very good teacher-pupil relationships and pupils respond well to teachers' high expectations and the level of challenge offered in lessons. Pupils are keen to participate in lessons, they arrive on time and bring the appropriate kit. Because of this, the best use is made of lesson time. In all lessons pupils work very well in pairs and groups. The very good relationships create a positive environment in which pupils of all attainment levels feel confident in trying out new ideas. However, not enough use is made of peer evaluation as a means of helping pupils to improve performance. Because assessment criteria are not always shared with pupils they are often not aware of their attainment in terms of National Curriculum levels and what is required to raise their work to the next level.
89. The leadership and management of the subject are good and there is a clear vision for further improvement. The subject is taught by an enthusiastic team and staff provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities that considerably enhance pupils' achievement opportunities. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection and the department now has a good base to improve further.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

90. Although there has been a statutory requirement to teach citizenship in Years 7 and 8 since September 2002 the school has only just appointed a co-ordinator to manage the introduction of the subject. However, there are already many elements of the citizenship curriculum occurring. For instance, pupils recognise that the way the school council is organised enables them all to have their say in what happens.
91. Currently, there is a wide range of responses from departments to the school's decision to teach the subject through and across the curriculum. Some subjects, such as geography, history and personal, social and health education, have begun to embed elements of the citizenship programmes of study into their schemes of work while some others pay only lip service to the contribution they could make. The newly appointed co-ordinator is rapidly bringing a sense of order and direction to this patchy situation and is drawing up an action plan which will enable the school both to build on good practice already happening and address the gaps in the provision.

Personal, social and health education

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

92. The schemes of work for personal, social and health education provide a good range of activities to improve pupils' awareness of their own physical, intellectual and emotional development, and their interdependence with others in the society in which they live. A well co-ordinated programme tackles important issues such as bullying, putting oneself in another's place, democracy and bias in the media, whilst making pupils think about more routine but equally relevant matters such as the ideal conditions for doing homework. The subject makes a good contribution to improving standards in literacy and oracy, as well as contributing significantly to pupils' personal development.
93. In the lessons observed, good teaching ensured that pupils made gains in knowledge and understanding, and enjoyed participating in a range of activities. Teachers follow lesson plans from the schemes of work, but bring a personal touch to their input. They ask probing questions, making pupils think, and use individual, pair and group work effectively so that pupils express their own opinions and learn to value those of others. Relationships are always good, as teachers show skill in involving all pupils, often through an injection of humour. Pupils show themselves capable of perceptive and incisive contributions to discussion.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

