

INSPECTION REPORT

ST NICHOLAS PRIORY C OF E VC MIDDLE SCHOOL

Great Yarmouth

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121093

Headteacher: M Adams

Lead inspector: D Watson

Dates of inspection: 12th - 14th January 2004

Inspection number: 263995

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 primary
School category: Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils: 8 - 12
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 383

School address: St Nicholas Road
Great Yarmouth

Postcode: NR30 1NL

Telephone number: (01493) 843 552
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: L Gooch

Date of previous inspection: 27th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Nicholas Priory Church of England Voluntary Controlled Middle School is of average size for a school of this type. It is situated in the centre of Great Yarmouth and draws its pupils from the immediate area, which has high levels of deprivation. The economic circumstances of many families are well below average and 31.5 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals. There are 383 pupils on roll. There are broadly the same numbers of boys and girls, although this can vary greatly from year group to year group. The school is ethnically diverse. The largest ethnic group is of pupils of a White British heritage, who make up 89 per cent of the school population. Many pupils from other ethnic groups are competent in English and only 0.5 per cent of pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (34.1 per cent) is well above the national average. Many have moderate learning difficulties or social, emotional and behavioural disabilities. There are 11 pupils with a statement of special educational need. This is above the national average. Attainment on entry is well below that expected. There are few high-attaining pupils. Attitudes to learning of many pupils are weak and their behaviour is often challenging. Since the last inspection the numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals and of those with special educational needs, have increased, a new headteacher has been appointed and the school has moved from two buildings into a refurbished one. There have been further challenges, the most significant being the recruitment and retention of staff. Staff turnover and staff absences have been high. Many staff are relatively inexperienced and are new to their posts, some of which are being held on a temporary basis. The school is part of an Education Action Zone.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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1112	P Oldfield	Lay inspector	
15011	M Wallace	Team inspector	Science Art and design Design and technology Music Physical education
21159	R Derwas	Team inspector	English Special educational needs English as an additional language
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St Nicholas Priory C of E VC Middle School provides a satisfactory standard of education. The quality of education it provides is sound. As a result, most pupils achieve satisfactorily and many develop appropriate attitudes and standards of behaviour. The school provides **satisfactory value for money.**

The school's main strengths and weaknesses:

- A very high turnover of staff has adversely affected pupils' achievement and school improvement.
- Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science because of good teaching.
- Standards in English, mathematics, science, religious education (RE) and information and communication technology (ICT) are too low.
- Levels of attendance are well below the national average.
- In identifying the barriers to raising achievement the school has worked well with outside agencies in their attempts to overcome them.
- The school improvement plan is neither comprehensive nor strategic enough to provide a clear sense of direction for the work of the school.
- Due to good levels of care and supervision pupils are educated in a nurturing, safe and healthy environment.
- Pupils with specific learning needs achieve well because of good levels of support.
- Through good provision for pupils' personal and social development the school is effective in improving their attitudes to learning and their behaviour.
- Assessment does not sufficiently inform teachers of how individual pupils learn or should be taught.
- In spite of the school's good efforts not all parents and carers are sufficiently supportive of attempts to raise achievement and attendance levels.

Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Because the school has faced many challenges in the last few years, namely staff absence and difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, there has been only limited success in addressing the issues identified in the last inspection. The overall quality of education, namely the quality of teaching and learning and the leadership and management of the school, has fallen from being good to satisfactory. As a consequence of this many pupils made unsatisfactory progress. However, there are now clear signs of improvement. Pupils are making better progress, there is a significant proportion of good teaching and the school's leadership is being effective in addressing the many issues that hinder it from raising achievement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Attainment on entry is well below that expected, in relation to their prior attainment as measured when they started school at the start of Year 4; although some pupils made satisfactory progress, many others did not. At the end of Year 6 standards in the 2003 tests were well below the national average in English and very low in mathematics and science. They were in the lowest five per cent nationally in mathematics and science. When compared to those in similar schools results were well below average. However, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is well above average. Over the last few years results at the school have stayed broadly the same, even though the needs of many pupils have increased. Because of this the results have not kept up with the upward trend in national performance.

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

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average; E - very low. Similar schools are those with similar percentages of pupils eligible for free school meals.*

Current standards in Year 6 are higher than those of last year. In relation to their prior attainment, pupils in Year 6 are achieving well in English, mathematics and science, but standards remain below those expected. Pupils in Year 7 have made good progress. They have built well upon their results in the 2003 national tests, but standards remain below the expected level in all three subjects. Boys and girls attain equally well. Pupils from different ethnic minorities attain as well as other pupils and achieve well. Pupils learning English as an additional language achieve well. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well in relation to their individual targets.

In their personal, social and health education (PSHE), including citizenship, pupils do well throughout the school. For most pupils, standards in Years 6 and 7 are close to those expected. By the end of Years 6 and 7 pupils achieve satisfactorily in design and technology and art and design, but standards are below those expected. In ICT pupils by the end of Year 6 achieve satisfactorily and attain below the expected level, but they do better in Year 7 and standards are close to the expected level. By the end of Year 6, standards in RE are below those expected in the locally agreed syllabus and pupils achieve satisfactorily, but by the end of Year 7 they are in line and pupils do well.

Overall, the attitudes to school and the behaviour of many pupils are **satisfactory**. Attendance is **unsatisfactory** although punctuality is **satisfactory**. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although there are some good elements. The teaching of English, mathematics and science is good, which is why pupils achieve well. Good use is also made of teaching assistants, who help many pupils to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding, especially those with learning difficulties. There is good teaching in every year group, but the proportion increases as pupils move through the school and is greatest in Year 7. By maintaining a good pace teachers are effective in encouraging and engaging pupils in their learning, thus overcoming pupils' weak attitudes to learning. However, much of the teaching lacks any real excitement or energy. Teachers insist on good behaviour. Lessons therefore proceed in an orderly way and pupils learn. Overall assessment procedures are satisfactory, but the information gained does not sufficiently change the way teachers decide how individual pupils learn or should be taught.

The school provides a satisfactorily broad curriculum which meets the needs of all its pupils. There is good provision for pupils with learning difficulties and for all pupils' personal, social and health education. Opportunities for enrichment are satisfactory. Accommodation and resources are good.

Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good** and support pupils' learning well. All pupils have equal access to good support, advice and guidance, based on good overall monitoring. The involvement of pupils in the school's work through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **very good**.

Links with parents are **satisfactory**. The school provides a good range of information about school life and opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's education. However, some parents are not supportive of the school's efforts to raise their children's achievement. Links with the local community, other schools and outside agencies are **good**.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The leadership of the headteacher is satisfactory. He enables others, particularly the senior management team, to encourage school improvement. The headteacher and other key staff have a sense of purpose and high aspirations, but their effectiveness has been hampered by changes in staffing. The management of the school is satisfactory. There are many good, but new, procedures and the school improvement plan does not provide a clear vision. Governance is good. It fulfils all of its statutory duties.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils are satisfied with what the school provides.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Provide greater stability of staffing within the school.
- Provide the school with a clear sense of direction aimed at sustaining school improvement.
- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science across the school.
- Raise standards in religious education and ICT by the end of Year 6.
- Raise levels of attendance.
- Ensure that assessment information is used in all subjects to inform how individual pupils are taught and learn.
- Engage more parents in the education of their children.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

Standards achieved in areas of learning and subjects

Pupils start school with very low levels of attainment and although standards remain low, pupils do well to get to the level they do. Their **achievement is satisfactory** and in Year 6 current **standards are below those expected**. In the past achievement has been unsatisfactory and this has resulted in the very low standards in the 2003 national tests for pupils in Year 6. Pupils do well in Year 7 and standards are below those expected.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very high turnover of staff has adversely affected pupils' achievement.
- Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science because of good teaching.
- Standards in English, mathematics, science, RE and ICT are below the expected level.
- Pupils with specific learning needs achieve well because of good levels of support.

Commentary

National test results

1. In the 2003 national tests in English, mathematics and science for pupils at the end of Year 6 the overall standard was very low. They were in the bottom five per cent nationally. In relation to those in similar schools, results were well below average, although St Nicholas' has a far higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties than other schools. Last year the school devoted a great deal of time and effort to raising standards. The results of this were evident in the slightly improved English results, but results in mathematics and science dropped. Those pupils who sat the national tests in 2003 had experienced a very troubled education at the school because of the difficulties caused by staff absence and recruitment. Because of this they lacked the skills and knowledge to attain higher standards.
2. In the last three years boys have done better than girls.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	23.6 (23.2)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	23.2 (24.3)	26.8 (26.7)
science	25.3 (26.6)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 95 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Attainment on entry

3. On the evidence of the tests that pupils take when they start school in Year 4, attainment is well below that expected. Literacy skills are particularly weak, as is the personal development of a significant number of pupils.

Trends over time

4. In recent years the national trend in pupil performance has been an improving one. At St Nicholas, however, although there has been a slight improvement in results (although they remain low) since 1998 (when the school was last inspected), the overall trend has not reflected the national pattern. Pupil performance has declined, especially in the last couple of years, because of the cumulative effects of the challenges faced by the school.

Pupil progress across the school and the school's efforts to improve it

5. In relation to their prior attainment, judged by the results attained at the end of Year 2, pupils made poor progress. However, when compared with the results of tests taken at the start of Year 4, school data demonstrates that some of these pupils made good progress, although many others did not. These pupils bore the brunt of the difficult times that the school has faced in recent years. During this time the school attempted to improve the quality of education provided but was frequently frustrated by staff absences and the continual change in staffing. As a consequence the progress of many pupils was unsatisfactory.
6. In 2002 the school recognised that standards were not good enough and pupils did not achieve as well as they could. The school attributed much of this to frequent changes in teachers, the attitudes and behaviour of many pupils, the increasing number of pupils with learning difficulties at the school and the low aspirations of some parents. Each of these barriers to raising achievement has been tackled, but not always successfully. This is because the constant change in staffing caused by staff absence, promotion and staff moving from the area, has continually conspired against the school's efforts to improve. Now, however, the school is having more success in raising standards. A more stable workforce and the power of a dynamic senior management team are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
7. The impact of the school's efforts to raise standards is becoming evident in the performance of pupils currently in Years 6 and 7. The strategies that the school has adopted, however, are having more impact on pupils lower down who have not suffered the prolonged difficulties that the school faced and are also benefiting from many of the strategies now in place. School-based data predict that the standards that these pupils attain will be higher than those of recent years. There is the start of an upward trend.

Standards in Year 6

8. Standards for pupils in the current Year 6 in English, mathematics and science have improved on the test results of 2003. Pupils often achieve well in lessons, even though standards in English, mathematics and science are below those expected. Parents, in their response to the questionnaire said that their children achieve well. This is because the quality of education they are receiving, especially their teaching, is now more effective.

Subject	Attainment	Achievement
PSHE - including citizenship	Close to the expected level	Good
Design and technology	Below the expected level	Satisfactory
Art and design	Below the expected level	Satisfactory
ICT	Below the expected level	Satisfactory
RE	Below the expected level	Satisfactory

Standards in Year 7

9. Because of good teaching, pupils in Year 7 have built well upon the standards they achieved in the 2003 national tests. Current standards in Year 7 in English, mathematics and science are below the expected level.

Subject	Attainment	Achievement
PSHE - including citizenship	Close to the expected level	Good
Design and technology	Below the expected level	Satisfactory
Art and design	Below the expected level	Satisfactory
ICT	Close to the expected level	Good
RE	Below the expected level	Satisfactory

10. Pupils' weak literacy skills hinder their learning in other subjects. They do not have enough opportunities to develop and extend their numeracy or ICT skills in other subjects.
11. During the inspection there was no noticeable difference in attainment between boys and girls. Inspection evidence indicates that pupils from different ethnic minorities achieve well; they attain similar standards to other pupils at the school. Pupils learning English as an additional language achieve well. Pupils with learning disabilities achieve well in relation to their individual targets.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' personal development is good. **Their spiritual development is very good, their moral and social development is good and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory**, although a significant number of pupils still show challenging behaviour, which is dealt with well by the school. **Pupils' attendance rates are well below the national average.** Punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Not all parents fully support the school's efforts to raise attendance.
- Some pupils display poor attitudes to work.
- The majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and take an active part in what the school offers.
- There is good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' confidence and self-esteem are well developed.
- There are good systems in place to ensure that the school deals well with any form of harassment.

Commentary

12. The caring environment promoted by the school is central to its ethos. It has at its centre a support structure in which all pupils are valued and treated equally. As a result the majority of pupils are keen to come to school and learn.
13. The attitude of the majority of pupils is satisfactory, as is their behaviour in and out of class. This is because all adults at the school work hard at applying the school's behaviour policy and engaging pupils in their work through interesting and well-structured lessons. There is also a good range of devices that the school uses to reward academic and personal achievement. For example, pupils can earn lunchtime credits that allow them to 'buy' learning materials from the school shop. A high priority is given to improving pupils' self-esteem. Teachers constantly praise and encourage pupils. This was very evident in the assemblies taken by the headteacher, who frequently emphasized the importance of high aspirations and the value of every pupil. The spiritual dimension of these assemblies was very good. This is helping raise pupils' self-esteem so that they believe they can achieve well.
14. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong due to good moral and social development. The school's moral and social message is successfully reinforced by a prolific range of displays that cover rules, as well as expectations. Messages include: "You can change your attitude" and "It's your temper, keep it!". These requirements are well met by most pupils, but those whose actions require greater supervision are well controlled by adults in the school. Assemblies seen during inspection week contained much social and moral comment. They focused on developing good relationships and good social behaviour; for example, reminding pupils that blowing your nose is preferable to constant sniffing. Racist incidents are very well reported and recorded. In an attempt to reduce their number the school has successfully organised 'cultural awareness' days. The much smaller number of recent incidents reflects the strong stance taken by the school and its effectiveness in dealing with this issue.

15. As part of the school's good provision for improving pupils' social development, they are actively encouraged to contribute to the life of the school. There is a very active school council that has brought about changes at the school. In addition to this, pupils are appointed to a 'Special Eyes' programme. This assists support staff in dealing with boisterous behaviour and any possible forms of harassment. Through the 'Challenge Education' ¹ initiative pupils are reminded about what they need to do to be a 'quality audience': be attentive and quiet.
16. Parents and pupils indicated before the inspection that some pupils still display unacceptable behaviour in class, which is true. Those pupils who exhibit anti-social behaviour disrupt their own learning and that of others. In the last reporting year the level of fixed exclusions was unacceptably high. The school recognised this. The headteacher, with the support of the Educational Action Zone, therefore successfully established 'F10'. This is a class that pupils in danger of being excluded are sent to for fixed periods of time. Here there is a particularly strong emphasis on pupils' personal development. There has been a considerable reduction in the number of exclusions this year. The high incidence of pupils being reintegrated into their classes to resume a more productive academic education is testimony to the success of 'F10'.

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	342	19	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	1	0

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

17. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. Because of the school's efforts to make them more aware of their own cultures as well as others through subjects such as art and RE, pupils are appropriately aware of the differences between and similarities shared by people from different ethnic groups.
18. Attendance levels are unsatisfactory, being well below the national average at 91.5 per cent. In a good response to a key issue in the last report the school has developed strategies to encourage attendance, including 'highest class of the week'. However, some parents do not support the school in its efforts to improve attendance and this restricts the progress and learning their children could enjoy. Despite the school's good efforts, attendance levels are as low as they were at the time of the last inspection and this adversely affects the school's efforts to raise standards.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.0	School data	0.6
National data	6.0	National data	0.3

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

¹ Challenge Education is an Education Action Zone (EAZ) initiative. It supports teaching and learning in raising standards through an emphasis on developing social skills, independence and communication.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory. The school provides a satisfactorily broad curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. Accommodation and resources are good. Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good and support pupils' learning well. All pupils have access to good support, advice and guidance which are based on good overall monitoring. Links with parents are satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is **satisfactory** and as a result pupils make satisfactory gains in their learning. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but the information gained is not always used well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science because of good teaching.
- Much of the teaching is satisfactory, but often lacks excitement.
- Good use is made of teaching assistants, who help many pupils, especially those with learning difficulties, to acquire skills, knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers are effective in encouraging and engaging pupils in their learning, thus overcoming weak attitudes and behaviour.
- Assessment is not used enough to help teachers decide how individual pupils learn or should be taught.

Commentary

19. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory. Most of the teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory. This was supported by the analysis of pupils' work. However, good teaching was observed in every year group and parental comments indicate a belief that teaching is often good. The proportion of good teaching increases the older the pupils become. The highest proportion of good teaching was in Year 7. This accounts for the good progress that many pupils make towards the end of their education at the school. Just over half the teaching observed in English, mathematics and science was good and in consequence pupils achieve well.
20. In spite of the school's efforts to improve teaching and make it more consistent across the school (a key issue from the last inspection), the quality of teaching has deteriorated since the last inspection, when it was judged to be good. The quality of teaching is not consistent across the school and this hinders the school's efforts to raise achievement. The inconsistencies in teaching are due to the fact that many of the staff currently at the school are either new to the school or in the second year of their teaching career.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 34 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	0 (0%)	16 (47%)	17 (50%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

21. Teachers have good subject knowledge and professional expertise in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Lessons are planned thoroughly, with careful attention paid

to ensuring that the wide range of pupils' needs is met. Pupils, therefore, build well on their prior learning.

22. There are particularly strong elements of teaching that are exhibited across the school. All adults carefully nurture all pupils so that they are confident and are always included in every stage of the lesson. This inclusiveness is greatly supported by the deployment of the teaching assistants. Relationships are very good because of the teachers' caring attitudes. This encourages pupils to persevere when they are faced with difficulties. Teachers across the school also employ the school's behaviour policy well. This consistent approach gives the pupils a clear set of boundaries. The insistence of high standards of behaviour ensures that lessons are orderly so that all pupils can learn.
23. In an attempt to encourage and engage pupils, teachers resort to a good range of strategies and instil a sense of curiosity and enthusiasm. Many of these are based on well-structured lessons that have a good pace. This lively pace is often complemented by a good range of questions aimed at pupils of different abilities and also seeks to recapture the interest of those pupils whose attention has wavered. In most cases this is enough to keep most pupils attentive and productive so that they achieve satisfactorily. Teachers are careful to ensure that all pupils have equal access and opportunity in lessons. Teachers interact with boys and girls in the same way. Boys therefore participate fully in lessons, something that they did not do during the last inspection. The school has therefore made good progress in addressing a key issue from the last report.
24. Teachers introduce the good lessons in a lively and engaging manner and start the main activity quickly. Time is therefore used well and pupils are interested and productive. In these lessons teachers also managed to combine imagination and humour. The atmosphere is, therefore, more relaxed and pupils are more engaged and productive. In the pupils' questionnaires they indicated that lessons were not always interesting or fun.
25. The teaching of pupils with learning difficulties is good. Teachers and teaching assistants liaise well, planning activities that are related to short-term targets in individual education plans. Numerous well-qualified and experienced teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. There is also a good level of support for pupils learning English as an additional language. To make this support more effective these pupils are put into specific classes in a year group. The work of teaching assistants and the external specialist who visits the school is therefore highly focused and relevant.
26. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and both their written and verbal comments provide encouragement to pupils. This is an improvement since the last report, when there was no consistent approach to marking. However, teachers do not always provide guidance on how to improve. The sharing of targets in English and mathematics ensures that pupils are involved in their own learning and know how to improve. These good procedures are not used in science or in ICT.
27. In English and mathematics there are good procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring their progress. Although in these two subjects the school has responded well to a weakness identified in the last report, assessment in many other subjects remains rudimentary. In English and mathematics progress is carefully tracked so that a pupil who is not making sufficient progress is given the appropriate challenge or support. This is not the case in other subjects. Due to a lack of robust assessments in science and ICT, for example, pupils are often given the same task and do not always therefore receive the most appropriate challenge. Information gained through checking work is not fully used by teachers to identify how different pupils learn and therefore plan the best way to teach them.
28. Pupils with learning difficulties are assessed well. Their needs are carefully identified and regularly reviewed. Thus individual education plans are relevant to their changing needs. Pupils learning English as an additional language have their progress in acquiring English carefully

monitored and supported by the use of external agencies. Therefore all these pupils achieve well even though the standards they attain are lower than other pupils at the school.

The curriculum

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of its pupils. There is satisfactory provision for out-of-class activities that enrich pupils' learning. Accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils and staff benefit from a recently remodelled, well-equipped school.
- There are good structures in place to ensure that all pupils have equality of access and opportunity.
- Pupils with learning difficulties are well provided for throughout the school.
- There are good programmes in place to support personal, social and health education.
- An initiative known as 'Challenging Education' promotes the school's commitment to improving standards.
- There is a good ratio of adults to pupils.

Commentary

29. The school has appropriate policies in place for all subjects. The curriculum is systematically reviewed with teacher and governor involvement. There are aspects of the curriculum that are innovative. In 'Challenging Education' a central aim is to engage pupils in their own learning by developing their thinking skills through providing challenges and stimulating questions. The leadership of the school has made this curriculum approach a priority. It is seen as a way of overcoming pupils' weak attitudes and low attainment; two significant barriers to raising achievement. In accordance with identifying this as a priority, many staff have been trained in how to deliver it. However, it has not been fully embraced by all staff, partly because of the high number of relatively new staff. Where it is being applied pupils are more engaged and interested in their work so that their achievement is often good. It is because of this that standards are improving.
30. The school provides well for pupils with learning difficulties through good support and appropriate resources. Work is planned to ensure that they learn well. The school established two groups to help pupils overcome their anti-social behaviour in an attempt to improve the achievement of all and to involve them in the opportunities provided. Group 'F10' is one example of this and another was set up this year in Year 4. As a result of these groups many pupils have returned to the class ready to learn and be involved. Pupils learning English as an additional language are well supported by staff and by external agencies. The school identifies gifted and talented pupils and provides accordingly for them. For example, a particularly able mathematician in Year 5 studies mathematics in a Year 6 class.
31. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and is supported by well-structured programmes for drugs awareness and sex education. The school nurse holds an informal surgery and lessons known as 'Circle Time' are regularly planned to talk about issues that affect pupils. This range of structured activities promotes pupils' self-esteem and helps pupils achieve better in their work.
32. There is an appropriate variety of out-of-class activities. Pupils are enthusiastic about the activities in which they can become involved. Some clubs, for instance, the dance club, are oversubscribed. Many activities such as choir, drama and dance, including an artist in residence, make a good contribution to pupils' participation in the arts. By offering all these clubs the school is helping overcome some pupils' negative views of school and education.

33. There is a good ratio of adults to pupils. Because of this, classes for teaching literacy and numeracy are relatively small. Staff with specific knowledge or expertise are used well to teach subjects such as science. The adult-pupil ratio is very good, providing a close level of supervision which supports many pupils both academically and socially. This is having a positive effect on raising achievement.
34. There are purpose-built specialist rooms for subjects such as art and design. These are used well to raise standards. However, the library is barely adequate and is underused for supporting pupils' learning and this adversely affects the development of their reading skills and study skills. Facilities for the disabled, including a lift and stair lifts, allow access throughout the school. Although the school fulfils the requirements for physical education the outside play space is limited and there is no grass or field within easy walking distance. The combination of good staffing levels, accommodation and resources gives pupils a good basis on which to progress in their learning.

Care, guidance and support

The provision for pupils' well-being, health and safety is very good. There are effective measures in place to support and guide all pupils. They are closely involved in the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Procedures to ensure pupils' care and welfare are very good.
- All pupils have good access to advice and guidance on their personal development and academic studies.
- Arrangements for seeking, valuing and acting upon pupils' views are very good.

Commentary

35. Before the inspection a few parents indicated that the school was not a safe place. The inspection found that arrangements for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are very good. A senior teacher has overall responsibility for child protection and deals with such issues very well. First-aiders have been appropriately trained and minor accidents are dealt with in an efficient and kindly way. All appropriate testing and risk assessments have been undertaken to ensure that the school is a safe and secure place.
36. All pupils have access to good support in their academic work. They have individual targets. Teachers regularly explain to them what they need to do to reach a higher standard. This is supporting the school well in its efforts to raise standards. Individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties are precise and related to their particular needs. These are often shared with them to help them to focus their energies on improving their work. Similarly, the progress of pupils learning English as an additional language is carefully tracked in strategies developed for each one.
37. Developments through the EAZ have brought positive benefits to many pupils. They enhance the access that pupils have to support, advice and guidance, especially in terms of personal development. A well-organised and supportive withdrawal group for pupils exhibiting anti-social behaviour has proven successful. There is also a full-time counsellor at the school and all adults are involved in a pastoral care programme. Because of these opportunities and the high levels of care displayed by all adults, relationships between them and pupils are very good. In their response to the questionnaire, pupils rated highly the fact that they felt there was an adult in the school they could go to if worried. All these good structures are supporting the school in raising standards by ensuring that all pupils have the appropriate attitudes and behaviour so that they can study to the best of their abilities.

38. The school values and respects the opinions of its pupils. A large number have applied to support staff at lunchtimes, as part of an exciting 'Special Eyes' programme. The active school council gathers information from all classes and has made a number of very positive suggestions, willingly accepted by the school. Because the school welcomes and supports these views, pupils are confident and feel able to be involved. This contributes greatly to their self-esteem and confidence. This in turn encourages them to learn and enjoy school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **satisfactory partnership with parents**. There are **good links with the community and other educational support groups**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The low aspirations of some parents are a barrier to raising achievement.
- The school provides good information for parents about pupils' lives at school.
- Parents feel welcome and supported.
- There are strong links with other schools through the EAZ.
- Parents' views of the school are not regularly sought.

Commentary

39. The school has a satisfactory partnership with the great majority of parents. Generally they are happy with the work of the school. Because they are confident that the school helps their children they support the provision of regular homework and support the work of the Friends' Association. Although parents indicated in their response to the questionnaire that they are not well informed about their children's progress, the inspection did not find this to be the case. The school organises a good range of events for parents to attend and provides good information in the form of documents and newsletters. Reports on pupil progress are also of good quality. There are also regular formal and informal meetings between staff and parents. Family learning classes have also been organised by the school and are well attended as parents seek to be supportive of their children's needs and the school's efforts to raise achievement. A few parents, however, in spite of the school's efforts, do not fully respond to endeavours to involve them in their children's learning. This, therefore, continues to hamper the school in its efforts to raise standards. Parents stated in their responses to the questionnaire that the school does not regularly seek their views and this is indeed the case.
40. There are strong links with the local community, particularly the business community. The school has circulated most local businesses to seek their support, a little of which has been forthcoming. It has been involved in the Community Partnership Fair held on the adjacent Market Place and in artwork in the local public library. Links with the parish are very good. Staff visit the school to support regular weekly assemblies and are a very welcome part of school life.
41. There are good links with the EAZ and, through it, other local schools. In its efforts to improve the quality of education the school gratefully accepts the support and guidance of the EAZ. It also offers 'one-stop support' to pupils and their families. This is a scheme whereby many external agencies work closely together to support identified pupils and their families. There are therefore good links with many external agencies. The school has harnessed the energies of all these agencies well to overcome some of the barriers to raising achievement, such as parental aspirations and pupils' weak attitudes and behaviour. The link with the local secondary school, to which most pupils transfer, is strong. Teachers from this school visit St Nicholas, give valuable advice and support and prepare pupils for transfer by offering design and technology and numeracy lessons.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the quality of **leadership and management is satisfactory**. Governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff mobility has often worked against many of the initiatives planned to raise pupil achievement.
- The headteacher has high aspirations for all pupils.
- The school improvement plan is not comprehensive or sufficiently strategic to provide a clear sense of direction for the work of the school.
- The headteacher is effective at developing others and empowering them.
- A strong senior management team is a powerful force for change.
- Governance of the school is good.
- Some of the new and inexperienced subject co-ordinators do not monitor their subjects in depth.

Commentary

42. The leadership of the school by the headteacher is satisfactory, although there are some good elements in the leadership of other key staff. The headteacher understands many of the barriers that the school has to raising pupil achievement. A priority has been to address the weak attitudes and behaviour of many pupils. As these have now improved, the focus is aimed at raising standards, although many barriers to this still exist. To overcome these he has attempted several strategies, many of which are centred on his conviction that the needs of all pupils should be met at the school by using its resources and the support of outside agencies to the best possible advantage. As a consequence several initiatives have been started. Group F10, for example, has been successful at reducing exclusions and improving behaviour. Strategies have also been put in place to improve the quality of teaching. However, staff turnover has at times conspired against these well-conceived plans and has therefore often reduced the effectiveness of the leadership in introducing and sustaining school improvement.
43. The headteacher provides calm and steady leadership during difficult times. He acknowledges that the school was in a very weak condition but it is now improving. Much of this is due to close collaboration with EAZ and the local education authority. The headteacher has developed a strong agent of change within the school through training and support for others, especially the senior management team. This is particularly important as there have been a succession of acting deputy heads in recent years. The current management team is energetic and innovative. It has given responsibility to all levels of leadership and takes decisive steps that are improving communication. This is making all teachers accountable for pupil achievement and improving the quality of teaching and learning. These strong leaders provide good role models that underpin the well structured, and much appreciated, induction systems for new staff.
44. Although there are strengths within the management of the school, for example the co-ordination of mathematics and ICT, the management of many subject leaders is only satisfactory. This is because many are new and inexperienced. They do not have a deep understanding of their subjects' strengths or weaknesses and neither do they monitor their subjects in depth by judging the quality of teaching and learning or by using assessment and test data. This is why pupil achievement is so often satisfactory in these subjects. They are, however, committed to improvement, but there is no clear, long-term vision for the school. The school improvement plan and many of the subject plans focus on the short term and do not give any clear indication of how pupil achievement is to be raised over a period of a few years.
45. The school has used its available resources appropriately to further its educational aims. All financial decisions are made with a view to their effect on pupils. For example the decision to employ more well-qualified and experienced support staff was based on the success they had

in raising pupil achievement in the past. The school has accumulated a large sum of money which can be carried forward through prudent house-keeping. The school is also planning for the future when it becomes a junior school. Financial procedures are secure and most of the principles of best value are applied, although parents are not widely consulted.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,002,045
Total expenditure	1,002,045
Expenditure per pupil	2,616

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	92,081
Balance carried forward to the next	101, 594

46. The governing body is effective in supporting the headteacher and the work of the school. Governors use a wide range of opportunities to monitor the work of the school. They ask challenging questions of the headteacher and senior management team and therefore have a good understanding of why it has been so difficult to raise achievement. They have been fully supportive of many of the strategies introduced and provide good guidance for the school both financially and in terms of its future direction. However, their good efforts have often been thwarted by staff turnover and the low aspirations of some parents which have hindered the school's efforts to raise achievement. The governors fulfil all their statutory requirements.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING AND SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3

ENGLISH

Provision for English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below those expected in both Years 6 and 7.
- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching.
- Teaching assistants effectively support pupils.
- Procedures for assessment and target setting are good.
- Teachers' marking does not give pupils a clear enough picture of how to improve.

Commentary

47. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 6 pupil attainment was well below the national average. This was better than the year before and reflects the school's focus on raising standards in English. Standards in 2003 are also slightly higher than those achieved in the national tests or in 1998, when the school was last inspected, but standards have not kept up with the upward national trend. This is due to the difficulties that the school has faced in the last few years, most notably problems in recruiting and retaining staff and an increase in the number of pupils with learning difficulties.
48. Standards in Year 6 are better than those achieved in the 2003 national tests and are now only just below the expected level, although there are a few pupils working at the higher Level 5. Pupils are achieving well because there has been less staff movement this year and the teaching of English is good. In Year 7, pupils are achieving well but standards remain below those expected. There was no noticeable difference between the achievements of boys and girls. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well in relation to their individual targets. Pupils learning English as an additional language also achieve well.
49. Although standards in speaking and listening are below those expected for pupils in Years 6 and 7, pupils achieve well because of good teaching. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of pupils' ability to listen. Many teachers continually refer to the importance of a 'quality audience' and as a result listening skills are improving. Pupils' confidence to speak clearly develops during their time at school. On entry they have limited vocabulary and knowledge of words and consequently struggle with fluency and understanding. Due to teachers frequently asking good questions and encouraging pupils to discuss in pairs, by Year 6 and into Year 7 pupils are able to offer thoughtful ideas in discussions.
50. On entry to the school, pupils' standards of reading are well below those expected. By the end of Years 6 and 7 the standard of reading has improved but remains below the expected level. Pupils achieve well because teachers provide opportunities for reading together and individually. All pupils are encouraged to read at home. There is a good range of strategies to help them know and use key words and to develop methods of tackling unfamiliar words. Pupils' efforts to achieve their reading targets are carefully monitored through a comprehensive recording system. By Years 6 and 7 higher-attaining pupils are developing the confidence to read with fluency and enjoyment. However, the small school library is underused and does not support the development of reading or research skills.
51. Through an analysis of pupils' work and results in tests the school has recognised the need to focus on improving writing in order to raise standards. In this it has had some success.

Standards in Years 6 and 7 are below the expected level. Teachers provide pupils with opportunities for a range of writing for different purposes and audiences, using ICT as appropriate. However, the quality of writing is inhibited by weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and knowledge of vocabulary. The school has added a teacher to each year group to support the teaching of literacy. There is also an extra weekly English lesson to help raise standards. Pupils' work is marked consistently by teachers and comments are encouraging but do not always indicate the next step to be taken in learning.

52. Overall teaching is good, particularly in Year 7. As a result pupils achieve well. All teachers show commitment to praise and encouragement and have high expectations of behaviour, insisting on suitable responses. This results in ordered class environments and pupils who are interested in lessons. In the best lessons good use of short, sharp questioning techniques, thoughtful tasks and timed responses encourages a learning focus that challenges all ability levels. Teaching assistants relate well to pupils and through skilful encouragement and support enable all pupils to feel valued. The use of worksheets for homework enhances learning.
53. Overall subject leadership is satisfactory. Both co-ordinators are skilled practitioners. However, the understanding of the subject's strengths and weaknesses, especially in Years 4 to 6, is not deep enough and insufficient attention has been given to identifying what makes good or better teaching and promoting this around the school. The management of English is satisfactory. There are good systems in place to monitor the progress of pupils, but there is insufficient rigour in monitoring so that the quality of teaching remains inconsistent and this adversely affects pupils' achievement.
54. Improvement since the last inspection has been insufficient. Steps have been taken to raise standards but have often failed to lead to the intended outcome because of the rapid change in staffing that the school has faced in recent years.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills in other subjects such as history and geography. Writing is displayed to good effect in and around the school. Quality is emphasised through the 'Challenging Education' programme with questions such as 'What am I best at?' and 'What can I learn from others?'

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' standards in Year 6 and Year 7 are below those expected for their age.
- Pupils' achievement is good because of the overall good teaching; achievement in Year 7 is consistently good.
- Assessment data is used well to raise pupil achievement.
- The use of ICT in mathematics and of mathematics in other subjects is underdeveloped.

Commentary

56. The school has been working hard to raise standards. Standards in the national tests for pupils in Year 6 following the last inspection in 1998 were low compared to the national average. Standards in 2003 were higher, but the trend in pupils' performance has not kept pace with the national trend. In recent years it has fallen due to the school's difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff and to low pupil and parent aspirations. During this time many pupils made unsatisfactory progress.

57. However, the recent focus on teaching and learning and a more stable staff is beginning to have a positive impact on pupil achievement. Pupils achieve well in lessons because of good overall teaching. Achievement in Year 7 is consistently good.
58. Standards in the current Year 6 are higher than those demonstrated in the 2003 tests and pupils achieve well. However, standards in Year 6 and Year 7 are still below those expected for pupils of this age. Pupils are confident when talking about data, shapes and their properties. However, their mental recall of number facts is too slow and adversely affects their confidence in solving problems associated with number. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well with the support of their teachers and teaching assistants. Boys and girls make similar progress.
59. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good overall; in Year 7 they are consistently good. They are greatly assisted by the close levels of supervision made possible through good adult-pupil ratios at the school. Teachers adapt the National Numeracy Strategy well for their lessons. There is an appropriate emphasis on teaching strategies for performing calculations. Pupils of all ages use these well to support their written work. Teachers use good methods, good resources and support staff well in all parts of the lesson. Pupils are therefore attentive and eager to take part, feel confident and understand what they are doing. Teaching assistants are used well to support groups of pupils in all parts of the lesson so that all are included and achieve well.
60. In slightly less successful lessons, or parts of lessons, teachers did not insist on pupils' attention or ensure that all pupils were sufficiently engaged. Some teachers did not use their own time effectively whilst pupils were working independently and tasks were mundane rather than exciting. The overall impact was to lower some pupils' achievement.
61. The use of assessment is good. Pupils' work is checked regularly in lessons and the information gained is used to adapt subsequent plans. A range of tests is used to organise pupils into sets and target groups and for booster lessons. Their performance is analysed to identify targets for year groups. This has had a positive effect on pupils' progress, particularly in Year 6. Marking is satisfactory overall. Teachers indicate what pupils know, but there is not enough emphasis on identifying what individual pupils need to do to improve their work.
62. The subject is led well. The current co-ordinator has been instrumental in identifying weaknesses and taking action to raise standards. Monitoring is well developed. Other teachers are seen teaching and plans, pupils' work and test results are carefully scrutinised. The use of ICT in mathematics is underdeveloped.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. Opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects are underdeveloped.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in science, especially in Year 7, because of good teaching.
- Standards are below those expected in Years 6 and 7.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Assessment is not always used well.
- Resources and accommodation are good.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT.

Commentary

64. In the 2003 national tests pupils in Year 6 attained standards that were well below the national average. In 1998, when the school was last inspected, the standard was lower than that achieved in 2003. There has been an improvement in pupils' attainment at the school, but it has not been enough to reflect the national upward trend. This reflects a difficult period in the school's history when there were many changes to the staff and an increase in the number of pupils with learning difficulties. During this time pupils were making unsatisfactory progress.
65. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are currently higher in Year 6 than those achieved in 2003. In both Years 6 and 7 standards are below those typical for pupils of a similar age. Pupils achieve well due to more settled staffing and improved monitoring of the curriculum and of teaching and learning. Pupils with learning difficulties achieve well because of the good support they receive. Similarly pupils learning English as an additional language achieve well because of the attention teachers give to the development of scientific language in all pupils. During the inspection there was no significant difference between the work of boys and girls.
66. Pupils' ability to plan and write their own investigations is a strength in this subject. Pupils do not always have a clear, systematic understanding of scientific procedures or consistently consider these aspects when investigating. Many pupils in Years 6 and 7 cannot clearly explain the significance of a fair test. Low-level literacy skills often impede comprehension and written work and scientific explanations are rarely given for test results
67. Overall teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach the subject confidently. They and the teaching assistants have a good relationship with the pupils, who are consequently managed well. Most lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. Pupils in Years 6 and 7 have a sound understanding of potential dangers when handling science equipment such as Bunsen burners, because safety is constantly reinforced. Teachers encourage pupils to use scientific vocabulary and as a result more-able pupils in Year 6 use scientific words such as 'evaporation' and 'particles'.
68. There are sound procedures for assessing pupils' attainment, but they are not consistently used across the school to adapt tasks to individual needs. Therefore pupils do not always achieve as well as they could. ICT is not used very much to help them learn in science. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills; for example, when writing up their own investigations. Opportunities for them to use their mathematical skills are not as well developed. They often show their results in tabular form, but the range of graphs used for analysis is limited.
69. Resources and accommodation are good. The school benefits from a science room which is well used, as are the specialist teachers in each year. The leadership and management of science are both satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a clear plan for developing the subject but has only been responsible for it for a few weeks and has not had time to make an impact on teaching and learning.
70. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in addressing the issues for action identified in the report; using investigation and encouraging pupils to think and plan their own investigations.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Old and unreliable hardware has hindered pupils' achievements.
- Good leadership is overcoming the obstacles to raising pupil achievement.

- Due to some good teaching and frequent access to computers pupils achieve well.
- ICT is not used sufficiently in other subjects of the curriculum.
- Pupils do not always know what they should do to improve.

Commentary

71. Although, overall, the teaching of ICT is satisfactory, it has some good features. As pupils move up through the school teaching improves and is good in Years 6 and 7. In nearly all lessons teachers have high expectations of behaviour and use well the school's procedures for maintaining discipline. Most pupils respond well to this and lessons are orderly affairs in which they learn. Teachers' planning is also good. It builds well on pupils' previous learning and identifies the specific skills that they are to acquire. As a consequence pupils make good gains in the development of their skills. Teachers are now benefiting from using the new and more reliable computer systems. As a consequence, teachers are more confident in teaching the subject and pupils not only have more opportunities to practise their skills but also appreciate the reliability of the new network. Teachers include all pupils by asking them specific questions that are matched to their needs. Pupils with learning difficulties are therefore well included, as are more-able pupils. This is particularly true in Years 6 and 7. In the good lessons teachers have a good knowledge of how to teach and use this to employ a good range of activities that generate a good pace to maintain pupils' interest. On some occasions this is complemented by a sense of fun and humour that lifts pupils' enjoyment and productivity. However, in lessons which are only satisfactory, the pace of learning is slower as teachers spend too long explaining activities and pupils become restless and inattentive.
72. In lessons teachers provide good direct assistance for pupils. This often encourages and directs pupils' efforts. They are also closely involved in assessing their own level of skill, but teachers do not have a clear overview of pupils' abilities and pupils do not know what they need to do to improve. One consequence of this is that teachers do not plan different activities for pupils of different abilities.
73. As a result of this good teaching pupils achieve well by the end of Year 6. However, because of difficulties with hardware and disrupted learning caused by staff turnover, pupils have gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Pupils' standards of attainment in Year 6 are below the expected level for their age. Pupils are adept at creating their own multimedia presentations, changing backgrounds and fonts and adding appropriate animation and graphics from the Internet. Because of consistently good teaching in Year 7 and more frequent access to computers, pupils achieve well and standards are close to those expected. They are skilled at using the Internet to exchange information. In developing, reviewing and modifying their own work and that of others, they are sensitive to the needs of their audience. They use many basic tools well. However, pupils in Years 6 and 7 are not proficient in using computers to make things happen and in Year 7 they do not know about spreadsheets.
74. Improvements since the last inspection have been unsatisfactory; standards have fallen and hardware has deteriorated. However, recent improvements have been significant. The two co-ordinators have a good shared vision of how the subject should develop and what they need to do. Because of this there has been a significant improvement in the quality of the computers which has overcome the major barrier to raising pupil achievement. The management of the subject, although only satisfactory overall, has some strengths. This is because both co-ordinators are good role models who support and train their colleagues well. However, neither of them is fully or directly involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and dealing with the lack of a long-term development plan.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

75. The use of ICT across the curriculum is **unsatisfactory**. There are insufficient links between ICT and most subjects in Years 3 to 6, but in Year 7 it is used far more widely.

HUMANITIES

History and Geography

76. History and geography were not a focus for the inspection and therefore there is insufficient evidence to inform a judgement on the overall quality of provision. These subjects are part of the school's curriculum and sufficient time is devoted to teaching them. Displays relating to both subjects are a feature of all year groups.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of good teaching pupils in Year 7 achieve well.
- Standards in Year 6 are below average.
- In some year groups the lack of opportunities to record work hinders pupils' achievement.
- The medium-term plans do not explicitly demonstrate the development of skills and knowledge across the school.
- There are no formal assessment procedures to assess pupils' attainment or progress.

Commentary

77. Pupils in Year 7 make good progress and achieve in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. Teaching in Year 7 is good. Teachers plan a good range of stimulating activities that meet the needs of the differing abilities in the class. For example, in their study of Islam, pupils made charts, drawings, ideas webs and lists and retold stories. Pupils discussed the merits of giving to charities and made comparisons with Christianity. The study culminated in an outline for a film about Islam. Such an activity supported the use of pupils literacy skills well.
78. Standards in Year 6 are below those expected in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils' weak literacy skills hinder their ability to record their work; standards demonstrated in discussion are higher than in pupils' books. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils discussed what they would expect to see in a Christian place of worship and contrasted this with what they knew of a Buddhist temple. In Years 3 to 6 pupils achieve satisfactorily as a result of sound teaching. However, the methods of recording pupils' work are often limited. Lessons lack an element of imagination and fun. Pupils are not therefore fully engaged in their work and, although productive, do not exert themselves greatly. Although teachers often plan work for pupils of different abilities, this is often done on the basis of their literacy skills as there is no formal assessment or recording of their attainment and progress.
79. Although medium-term plans broadly follow the locally agreed syllabus, there is insufficient attention paid to the development of knowledge and understanding as pupils move from year to year. Their progress is therefore slow.
80. Leadership of religious education is satisfactory. A new co-ordinator has been appointed this academic year. In her short time in post an action plan has been drawn up and she has correctly identified areas for improvement. The role of the co-ordinator in monitoring the subject is at an early stage of development. Staff changes have led to limited progress since the last inspection and improvement is unsatisfactory.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

81. No lessons in music and physical education were observed. There is insufficient evidence to make overall judgements on pupils' standards or achievements.

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology (DT) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Skills and standards of making are not well developed.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.
- Good accommodation and staffing support pupils' learning.
- ICT is insufficiently used to enhance teaching and learning.

Commentary

82. Standards in design and technology have fallen since the last inspection. They were well above the expected level in both Years 6 and 7 but are now below. A turbulent period of staffing has resulted in this drop, but overall provision is still satisfactory and pupils therefore achieve satisfactorily in all aspects of the subject in relation to their attainment on entry. Those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language make steady progress.
83. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Good accommodation, the use of specialist teachers and good adult-pupil ratios support pupils' learning well. Pupils have the opportunity to use their skills in well-equipped rooms for both design and technology and food technology. Close supervision also ensures that lessons are conducted safely and, due to good interaction between pupils and adults, pupils develop a sound understanding of the "design and make" process. All adults work hard to include all pupils in each stage of a lesson and often praise them and encourage them to try harder. The range of practical activities often engages pupils' interest well so that they apply themselves appropriately to their work. Because of this pupils in Years 6 and 7 demonstrate the expected level of skill and understanding when researching and evaluating commercial products, such as a slipper. They use this information satisfactorily when making their own designs, but 'making' skills are below those expected. Poor writing skills often limit pupils' ability to record clear evaluative statements and give reasons for them. Teachers' expectations of the quality of work produced are not always high enough and at times pupils do not achieve as much as they could
84. Teachers do not use assessment to change their lesson plans satisfactorily. As they are not fully aware of pupils' prior attainment all pupils are given the same challenge and task. ICT is insufficiently used to enhance teaching and learning.
85. Learning is well supported by extra-curricular activities. The Young Engineers' Club is well led and pupils work on challenging tasks such as designing a windmill using solar energy. Good input from the visiting specialist teacher from the local secondary school encourages Year 7 pupils to design their own questionnaire to identify individual preferences.
86. The co-ordinator has recently been appointed and has not had sufficient time to make an impact on standards.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 6 and 7 are below those expected.
- Because of good teaching pupils achieve well in Years 4 and 5.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory.

- Good community links and use of the local area enhance the provision.
- An art club enriches the art curriculum.
- Displays of art around the school are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

87. Standards have fallen since the last inspection, when they were judged to be above the expected level. A period of significant change and difficulty at the school has resulted in standards in both Years 6 and 7 being below the expected level. This is because pupils have gaps in their skills and knowledge due to a lack of continuous learning.
88. Overall, in relation to their prior attainment, pupils achieve well. It is best in Years 4 and 5 where the newly appointed co-ordinator is making the most impact. She uses her specialist knowledge well to inspire others and to plan interesting activities. Pupils' achievement across the school is well supported by a specialist art room and good adult-pupil ratios.
89. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. Key elements within this good teaching are the expectation and challenge teachers offer. They constantly encourage pupils to try hard and achieve their best. There is also an insistence on high standards of behaviour which ensures that lessons are orderly and all pupils have the opportunity to learn. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and how to teach it. They give an appropriate focus to the development of skills and a range of interesting activities that engage all pupils. In a Year 7 visit to the local church good teaching ensured that pupils were well prepared and organised. They chose specific objects to sketch and used appropriate skills, but many sketches lacked detail or sophistication.
90. Because teachers follow the national guidelines on the teaching of art and design pupils are provided with an appropriate range of media to develop their ideas. They have sketchbooks, but they are not consistently used to promote the development of different skills and techniques or to produce a useful record of individual pupils' progress. Their appreciation of art is less than expected. Pupils in Years 6 and 7 are unable to talk about or identify any professional artists or their particular styles and characteristics.
91. Assessment and its use to adapt lesson plans are unsatisfactory. Work is not planned to match pupils' abilities and the practice of teaching pupils in house groups means that teachers are less knowledgeable about individuals.
92. Overall, the leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator's own enthusiasm and experience are reflected in her development plan for the subject. Since her recent appointment she has made an impact in Years 4 and 5, but this has not extended into Years 6 and 7. The management of art and design is satisfactory as the subject has not been robustly monitored. In many areas the co-ordinator promotes her subject well. There are good links with the local community; the school provides artwork for the local church and market. Visiting artists work with pupils and this enriches the curriculum. There is a good, well-attended art club. However, pupils' artwork is not well displayed.

Music

93. During assembly the quality of pupils' singing was of a standard typical for their ages. A scrutiny of music books and discussion with pupils indicate that there are opportunities for them to create, perform and appreciate music. A choir and instrumental tuition enhance the curriculum. The choir is very well attended. Leadership and management of music are satisfactory. The coordinator has only recently taken over responsibility for the subject. There are good opportunities for pupils to take part in school and local community events such as end-of-term concerts and singing in the local church.

Physical education (PE)

94. A scrutiny of displays around the school and discussion with pupils indicate that there are appropriate opportunities for pupils to experience all areas of the subject. Good links with the local secondary school ensure that pupils in Years 4 and 5 have the opportunity to swim. Photographic evidence shows that Year 7 experience outdoor adventure activities including camping during the weekly residential visit. The weekly dance club is popular and well attended. Pupils benefit from working with professional dance artists who occasionally visit the school. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular provision to enhance physical education.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for pupils' personal and social education permeates all aspects of school life.
- Pupils' concept of citizenship is well developed by many innovative approaches that the school has adopted.
- Pupils make good progress as a result of good teaching and regular reinforcement.
- The role of the co-ordinator in managing and monitoring the subject is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

95. Through good provision for pupils' personal and social development, the school improves their attitudes to learning and their behaviour. They demonstrate average standards and make good progress as a result of good teaching and regular reinforcement. The school offers a well-balanced programme for all pupils based on the subject's national guidelines. Appropriate emphasis is placed upon the study of other cultures. Assemblies, guidance and other support systems further enhance provision. Younger pupils learn about the importance of friendships, working together and healthy living. As pupils mature, teachers deal with more sensitive matters such as sex and drugs. Pupils have the additional benefit of a counsellor and a nurse for private consultation following these studies.
96. The school's good provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship underpins its ethos. It permeates the culture of the school and the development of pupils' self-esteem and self-confidence is paramount in all of the school's work. Respect for one another, being part of a community, appropriate behaviour and building good relationships are regularly reinforced throughout the school. Being chosen as a member of the school council or of the 'Special Eye' volunteers adds considerably to pupils' understanding of citizenship and living in a community.
97. The two co-ordinators have a clear vision for their subject, but systems are informal. The programme of work is relatively new and has yet to have a full impact on raising standards. The role of the co-ordinator in managing and monitoring the subject is unsatisfactory. Monitoring of the delivery of this subject has been minimal. There are no assessment procedures linked directly to this subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	4
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	5
Value for money provided by the school	4

Overall standards achieved	5
Pupils' achievement	4

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	4
Attendance	6
Attitudes	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	4
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	4
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	4
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	4
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

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

