

INSPECTION REPORT

MEADOWDALE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Bedlington, Northumberland

LEA area: Northumberland

Unique reference number: 122338

Headteacher: Mr F Forster

Lead inspector: Dr Kenneth C Thomas

Dates of inspection: 13 – 15 September 2004

Inspection number: 268419

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;	492
School address:	Hazelmere Avenue Bedlington Northumberland
Postcode:	NE22 6 HA
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr E Tallantyre
Date of previous inspection:	17 May 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Meadowdale Middle School is a school for boys and girls situated in Bedlington, Northumberland. The school is oversubscribed and with 487 pupils on roll it is bigger than most middle schools. Very few pupils enter or leave the school at times other than the usual times of admission or transfer. Standards of attainment on entry in Year 5, although covering the full attainment range, are below average overall. The proportion of pupils on the school's list of special educational needs is below average as is the proportion of pupils with statements. Most pupils with the highest level of need have moderate learning difficulties. Very few pupils have other than white British backgrounds and although some of these pupils are from homes where English is an additional language, all are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is above average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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10832	Alan Grant	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology
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21785	Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	Mathematics
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school with several excellent features. The school provides a very good quality of education for all pupils. The excellent leadership of the headteacher, with very strong support from other key staff, ensures that all groups of pupils achieve very well by the time they leave school. Standards are above average at the end of Years 6 and 8. Teaching and learning are very good. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher provides a clear sense of purpose and ensures that all pupils experience the best possible education the school can provide.
- Much good, very good and occasionally excellent teaching, together with the very effective use of assessment, leads to very good achievement by the end of Year 8.
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour are underpinned by very effective support and guidance. These, together with much support from parents, contribute significantly to the school's success.
- Provision for pupils' social development and opportunities for pupils to express their views through elected representatives are excellent.
- The learning environment is enhanced by excellent displays of pupils' work in corridors and classrooms, and outstanding provision in art.
- Pupils derive great benefit from the school's excellent range of enrichment activities.
- The accommodation is inadequate and has an adverse impact on several aspects of educational provision.

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection. Standards in English, mathematics and science have risen. Pupils' achievement is very good. There is now more good and very good teaching. The main key issues identified in the last inspection report related to school planning, the marking of pupils' work and to the quality of provision in information and communication technology (ICT). All of these issues have been tackled successfully.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2001	2002	2003	2003
English	C	D	A	A
mathematics	B	D	C	C
science	C	D	C	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 very good. The 2003 results in the National Curriculum tests, taken at the end of Year 6, were well above average in English and average in mathematics and science. These results do not accurately reflect standards in the three subjects. Inspection evidence shows standards in English to be above national expectations, rather than well above, while standards in mathematics and science are above rather than in line with national expectations. Achievement in all three subjects is very good. Pupils achieve well or very well in other subjects and current standards are mostly above national expectations by the end of Year 8.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. **Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual and moral development, is also very good. Pupils' social development is excellent. Their cultural development is good** Attendance and punctuality are good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8. Examples of very good teaching are seen in all years and there are examples of excellent teaching in several subjects. Very good planning and teamwork and the very good use of assessment underpin the quality of teaching. The quality of the curriculum is good. The school makes excellent provision to enrich pupils' learning outside lessons. Pupils are provided with very good care, support and guidance. Parents are very committed and closely involved in their children's education. Very good links with other schools and the community enhance provision.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are very good. The leadership provided by the headteacher is outstanding and that of other key staff very good. The school makes very effective use of evaluation information to identify strengths and tackle weaknesses. Governance of the school is very good and with the exception of a daily act of collective worship, all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the school. They express no major concerns and are particularly pleased with the quality of education and care the school provides. Pupils are equally positive. They are very proud of their school and greatly appreciate and enjoy all that it has to offer them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to press for improvements to the accommodation.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well during their time in the school and make more rapid progress than expected based on their standards of attainment on entry.
- Achievement and standards are particularly good in art.
- Careful attention to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills underpins pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' good progress in French is not sustained through Years 7 and 8.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	29.2 (26.1)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	27.0 (26.3)	26.8 (26.7)
science	29.2 (28.4)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 117 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. As a middle school with pupils from Years 5 to 8, the only formal test results available are those taken by pupils at the end of Year 6. Pupils enter the school with standards of attainment that, although covering the full attainment range, are below average overall. Pupils achieve well through Years 5 and 6 and results in the National Curriculum tests taken in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 are improving at the same rate as results nationally. The 2003 results (the latest year for which comparative information is available) were, overall, above average. Results in English were well above average, while those in mathematics and science were average. In comparison both with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances and with schools in which pupils attained similar standards at the end of Year 5, results in English were well above average, results in science were above average and those in mathematics were average. Inspection evidence shows that the test results do not accurately reflect standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. The overall standard of work seen in lessons and in pupils' books is above national expectations in all three subjects rather than well above in English and in line with national expectations in mathematics and science.
2. Higher attaining pupils performed particularly well in the tests (in relation to the national average) in English and science. However, National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) value-added analyses show that there were no significant differences in the achievement of pupils across the attainment range. Girls generally outperform boys in English, but the difference is less than that observed nationally. The performance of boys and girls in mathematics and science is broadly similar. The unconfirmed results for 2004 show the percentage of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 or above in English and mathematics to be slightly below the 2003 percentage, while the percentages in science were very similar.

Nevertheless, targets for the end of Year 6 are carefully set and were achieved in 2004. Appropriately challenging targets have been set for 2005.

3. Pupils achieve very well in Years 7 and 8, and optional tests administered at the end of Year 8 in 2004 showed the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 or above in English and mathematics to be above the 2003 end of Year 9 national average. The school, in partnership with the local high schools, tracks its pupils to the end of Year 9 tests. This information confirms the standards achieved at Meadowdale and shows that the overall performance of former pupils in the end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests is above average. Inspection evidence shows that standards and achievement in English, science and mathematics are matched in most other subjects. Pupils achieve particularly well in art and standards are well above expectations in all years. Only in French, where the good progress made in Year 6 is not sustained through Years 7 and 8, is achievement satisfactory rather than good or very good.
4. Among the factors contributing to pupils' very good achievement by the end of Year 8 are:
 - An exceptionally supportive school ethos in which there is a constant emphasis on achievement in all aspects of pupils' personal development.
 - Outstanding school leadership that promotes equality and values the contributions of the whole school community.
 - Very good teaching with high expectations.
 - The promotion of a set of values, principles and beliefs to inform pupils' perspectives on life and guide their behaviour.
 - Strong parental support.
5. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those identified as being gifted and talented is comparable to that of their peers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual and moral development, is also very good. Pupils' social development is excellent. Their cultural development is good. Attendance and punctuality are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy coming to the school, are well motivated and participate in many activities.
- Excellent provision for pupils' social development promotes a strong spirit of fellowship in the school.
- Pupils' personal development is strengthened by very good provision for their spiritual and moral development and good provision for their cultural development.
- Pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour contribute to a very purposeful learning environment.
- Pupils have maximum opportunities to learn because they are in regular attendance.

Commentary

6. Pupils like their school. They feel secure and are keen to participate in all that the school has to offer them. This makes for a very happy school and one in which pupils are very willing to meet the high expectations of behaviour. As a result, behaviour is very good and this has a positive impact on learning. Any reduction in standards of behaviour is dealt with quickly and fairly. The number of fixed period exclusions is below average compared to other schools. Although there were three permanent exclusions during the year preceding the inspection, these were the first for several years. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good and are characterised by mutual trust, respect and consideration. Pupils report that there is very little bullying and that if any incidents do occur they are treated with great urgency and dealt with immediately. Teachers encourage pupils to report any incidents of harassment

and the system is working well. During discussions with inspectors, pupils from minority ethnic groups said that they felt secure and very well looked after.

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	476	17	3
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

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

7. The school is very successful in inspiring a distinctive learning culture and strong work ethic. In lessons, pupils display very good attitudes to learning. They listen to their teachers and are keen to respond to questions. Pupils quickly settle down at the start of lessons. They are generally confident and show a willingness to participate in discussion. Pupils respect the opinions expressed by others. They are polite, considerate and listen attentively to the views of others. Very good relationships between pupils and between pupils and adults emphasise the inclusive and caring ethos of the school. The school ensures that pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated. They work hard and take pride in their achievements. Their attitudes to learning and their relationships with peers and with staff, especially the learning support assistants (LSAs), are very good.

8. The school recognises the importance of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils and the impact these aspects have on their achievements, attitudes and personal development. School and year group assemblies promote the significance of respect, values, and beliefs, enabling pupils to share their thoughts, ideas and feelings. Assemblies have strong spiritual and moral themes and many include an act of collective worship. However, because of accommodation and timetable constraints it is not possible to hold assemblies on a daily basis and as a result the school does not fully comply with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Nevertheless, pupils' spiritual development is a strong feature of the school. The school gives a high priority to the moral development of its pupils. It provides effective opportunities in lessons to discuss moral issues. Pupils learn the value of truth, integrity and fair play. They are helped to develop understanding and concern for people in other parts of the world in lessons on development issues. Social development is excellent. This aspect of pupils' personal development is exceptionally well co-ordinated and results naturally from the many opportunities available within the school day to interact with both adults and other pupils in a calm and harmonious environment. Pupils develop an understanding of responsibility for the school community and citizenship through the election of eight boys and girls to the positions of house and sports captains in the school's four houses. Pupils also elect representatives to sit in the school parliament. Opportunities such as these are a great strength of the school and a significant contributory factor to the success that pupils achieve. Pupils' cultural development is good. They develop an understanding of the traditions and values of other faiths, and an appreciation of cultural diversity is celebrated in, for example, art, religious education, English, history and geography. To support pupils' cultural development,

there is a wide range of school visits as well as contributions to the curriculum by visitors into the school.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.6	School data	0.0
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.

9. Pupils' attendance is above the national average. The school has effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance, and works well with external agencies when individual support is necessary. The school actively discourages parents from taking holidays during term-time, although some still do so. Most pupils arrive at school promptly in the morning and this, together with their punctuality at the start of lessons, helps them to make the most of their time at school. However, the start of some lessons immediately after the lunch break is delayed because of the time it takes for pupils to move through the very small dining hall. This problem was exacerbated during the period of the inspection because of the unfamiliarity of the new Year 5 pupils with the school's lunchtime procedures.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning are good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8. Examples of very good teaching are seen in all years and there are examples of excellent teaching in several subjects. Very good planning and teamwork and the very good use of assessment underpin the quality of teaching. The quality of the curriculum is good. The school makes excellent provision to enrich pupils' learning outside lessons. Pupils are provided with very good care, support and guidance. Parents are very committed and closely involved in their children's education. Very good links with other schools and the community enhance provision.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8, where the impact of more specialist teaching is seen. Very good use is made of assessment to support pupils' learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good lesson planning together with high expectations contribute to very successful learning.
- Pupils know what they are expected to do and classroom relationships are very good.
- Teachers support and encourage their pupils very effectively and make very good use of resources.
- Learning support assistants make an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning, particularly to that of pupils with special educational needs.
- Assessment is very well used to monitor pupils' progress and set targets for improvement.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 68 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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7 (10%)	24 (35%)	28 (41%)	8 (12%)	1 (1%)	0	0
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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.

10. The quality of teaching has improved slightly since the last inspection. There are now more examples of excellent teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is very good in all subjects other than music and physical education, where it is good, and French where it is satisfactory. All teachers use introductions and plenary sessions effectively to outline learning objectives, review previous work and reinforce learning. Because lessons are carefully planned, with work well matched to pupils' attainment levels, all groups of pupils make similarly good progress. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively to provide clear and detailed explanations that consolidate and extend pupils' learning. Pupils' learning is also consolidated and extended through the effective use of homework. Through homework the school has secured the active involvement of many parents in their children's learning and makes a significant contribution to standards and achievement. A strong feature of teaching across the school is the increasing use of ICT to make lessons more interesting and to help pupils grasp difficult concepts. This aids pupils' understanding and helps to ensure that lessons proceed at a brisk pace.

Example of outstanding practice

The teacher selected highly effective methods and used time well for independent and collaborative work in this Year 5 art lesson on figure drawing.

Achievement was high in this lively and well-planned lesson, which benefited considerably from the high level of commitment of the pupils and the excellent relationships that produced a highly productive environment for learning. The teacher got the very best from the pupils, who in turn thoroughly enjoyed the lesson. Teaching was stimulating, enthusiastic and consistently challenging throughout the lesson, stemming from expert knowledge of how to teach and how pupils learn. After a highly effective introduction in which the teacher linked measurement to perspective, pupils made rapid progress in understanding proportion and estimation. The lesson made a significant contribution to the development of pupils' mathematical skills. Pupils responded well to the skilful and humorous manner of the teacher, and pupils with special educational needs benefited from the effective support of a learning support assistant. Because pupils were engrossed throughout the lesson, they made rapid gains in their knowledge and understanding.

11. Relationships are very good and a notable feature of much of the good, and very good teaching is the high degree of challenge structured into lessons. This stimulates pupils' interest and helps them to sustain their concentration. Because pupils respond well to the demands made on them, they grow in confidence and independence, and learning accelerates in Years 7 and 8. Examples of teaching of this quality were seen in all subjects, and particularly in some excellent lessons observed in English, mathematics, science, art and religious education. In the few lessons where the quality of teaching and learning fell below good, the pace of the lessons was slow because work was not well matched to pupils' attainment levels. In the one unsatisfactory lesson progress was impeded by unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour, and weaknesses in classroom management.

Excellent teaching led to excellent learning in a Year 6 religious education lesson

Through the use of a highly stimulating and thought-provoking question and answer session characterised by the teacher's clear awareness of the needs of the individual, the teacher enabled pupils to understand the relationship between freedom and accountability. Pupils generated their own questions extremely well and with complete confidence. The teacher's expert subject knowledge and ability to draw out very difficult ideas ensured that all pupils developed a clear understanding of the links between Calvin's views of God and determinism. This was reinforced through class discussion during which the teacher challenged individual pupils to explore their own ideas about free will and an omnipotent God. The excellent quality of the relationships between pupils and between pupils and the teacher, gave pupils the confidence to explore their own personal views. Pupils demonstrated higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. The high degree of challenge in the lesson enabled pupils to extend their understanding and develop clear and well-balanced arguments. This made a significant contribution to the excellent learning progress made in the lesson.

12. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and often very good. Resources are well used and activities carefully planned to make learning enjoyable. Pupils are very well motivated because their achievements are valued. Individual education plans have clear targets to pinpoint learning needs and guide planning. Teachers work very well in partnership with learning support assistants. They are fully involved in lesson planning and this enables them to lead small group activities in literacy and numeracy very effectively. The close support they give to individual pupils boosts their confidence and enables them to contribute to class discussions.
13. Very good use is made of assessment to guide pupils' progress and lesson planning. At the last inspection, the marking of pupils' work was found to be inconsistent, with insufficient guidance given on how the work could be improved. The school has responded well to this issue and the whole approach to assessment has been transformed. All teachers use a common system of marking which is rigorous and helpful. Success is celebrated and errors explained. Frequent testing, based on national standards, is used to build a common database that is used by heads of subjects to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and to compare the performance of pupils in different subjects. Because heads of year and form tutors use the information to monitor the performance of individuals and groups any underperformance is spotted early and appropriate action taken. Challenging targets are negotiated individually with pupils. They value this involvement, respond with maturity and strive to achieve their targets. A feature of the use of ongoing assessment in lessons is the increasing trust being placed in pupils to evaluate their own performances. This is leading to pupils having an increased awareness of the progress they are making and the early identification of the areas in which they need additional support from the teacher.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum, which is considerably enriched by an excellent range of enrichment activities. The school is very well staffed and has a very good level of learning resources. The accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of subjects provides well for pupils' aspirations and abilities.
- The school evaluates its strengths and weaknesses effectively to refine its provision.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good.
- The curriculum is considerably enriched through an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- Very good personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship education contribute significantly to pupils' personal development.
- Many of the teaching rooms are too small for the numbers of pupils in teaching groups.
- Several aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory for disabled pupils.

Commentary

14. Good curricular provision includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, with French taught from Year 6. Governors and the senior management team are very keen to extend the breadth of the curriculum to develop pupils' personal and social skills. They achieve this successfully through innovative arrangements for citizenship and PSHE, which contribute to the very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils and the very positive ethos of the school. In English, mathematics and science, the three-part lesson is well implemented, so that the Key Stage 3 National Strategy is helping to raise standards. The above average standards indicate the success of the management of the curriculum despite the restraints imposed by size of the school. An additional curricular emphasis is now being placed on the development of thinking skills and the use of assessment for learning, to further raise standards and enhance the quality of education the school provides. Provision for ICT, identified as a weakness in the last inspection report, has improved considerably and the provision and use of ICT are now having a positive impact on teaching and learning in all subjects. Curricular provision is excellent in art and very good in mathematics, citizenship and design and technology. Procedures for identifying gifted and talented pupils are very good. The school is now working towards improving special provision for these pupils. The length of the taught week falls below the recommended time of 25 hours for pupils in Years 7 and 8. However, inspectors found no evidence that this has an adverse impact on learning.
15. Very good curricular links with first schools and high schools in the Bedlingtonshire Partnership aid the smooth transition of pupils between phases and ensure continuity in their learning. The school makes very good use of the county's peripatetic music service, the benefits of which are demonstrated in the large number of pupils who have instrumental tuition and the good quality music in the school. School or year group assemblies take place on three mornings a week. These assemblies are of very good quality and make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. Assemblies provide a calm and thoughtful start to the day and include either an act of collective worship or a period of reflection. In assemblies pupils are encouraged to reflect on the nature of being and the world in which we live, and to think about the plight of those in less fortunate circumstances. Assemblies are also a time of celebration and pupils take obvious delight as individual and class achievement awards are presented.
16. There is equality of access and opportunity for all pupils, including the very few with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is based on the need to raise standards of literacy and numeracy as soon as possible. Curricular arrangements are effective and reflect this priority.
17. The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is very good. The high quality of support provided by the very effective team of learning support assistants is a strong feature of provision for pupils with special educational needs. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively with priority given to pupils with the most significant needs. There is no technical support for science, design and technology, art and ICT and teachers have to prepare and maintain materials and equipment in time they might otherwise use for lesson preparation and curricular development.
18. Excellent extra-curricular provision provides pupils with a very wide range of achievement opportunities and contributes significantly to their personal development. Enrichment activities are carefully planned to complement and extend classroom learning. The activities include residential visits to London and France, regular visits to museums and theatres, and a wide range of clubs, team activities, revision groups, drama and musical productions, and other special events. For example, the opportunity for pupils to question the local Member of Parliament made a strong contribution to pupils' understanding of the democratic process and to their education in citizenship. Pupils' understanding of their local community is enriched through contributions made by a local historian and through fieldwork in the area.

19. Resources are good and used very well to support teaching and learning. The school library provides a very good resource. It is attractive and well maintained by the school librarian. The school makes the best possible use of the accommodation. The premises are very secure and the work of a dedicated site manager and cleaning staff ensures that the school is maintained to a high level of cleanliness. This makes a significant contribution to the ethos of the school. Excellent displays of pupils' work and other achievements in classrooms and corridors provide a stimulating learning environment and reflect the vibrant nature of the school. However, although the accommodation has several attractive features and is used imaginatively, a number of inadequacies have an adverse impact on the quality of educational provision. This makes the overall quality of the accommodation unsatisfactory. The overriding feature is a building that is too small for the number of pupils on its roll. Many classrooms are overcrowded and the music room is too small to accommodate pupils, keyboards and more traditional instruments. Because the dining hall is too small to accommodate pupils during the lunch period, many pupils are unavoidably late for the start of afternoon lessons. Because there is only one science laboratory, many science lessons in Years 6 and 7 are taught in general classrooms. Access for disabled pupils is severely restricted and there is no medical room. A converted cupboard is the only space available to accommodate pupils who are feeling unwell. This is unsuitable. The school is very much aware of the inadequacies in the accommodation and continues to press for improvements.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. Pupils receive very good support, advice and guidance based on monitoring. Procedures for involving pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views are excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has very good pastoral systems to ensure that pupils are well cared for.
- The school provides a healthy and safe environment for pupils.
- The arrangements for settling pupils into the school in Year 5 and for transferring pupils to the high schools are very good.
- The arrangements for involving pupils and consulting them about school affairs are excellent.

Commentary

20. The school is a happy, friendly and well-ordered community, providing a safe and caring environment for all its pupils. The care and support the school provides have a very positive impact on pupils' achievement. This is supported by parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. All staff show a total commitment to the pupils and work together as a team in the best interest of all pupils in the school. Pupils feel safe at school because they are well known to their teachers and they establish very secure and trusting relationships with adults who work in the school. Child protection and health and safety procedures are very good and well understood by the relevant members of staff. The school participates in the 'Healthy Schools' initiative, promoting good health, self-confidence and the taking of personal responsibility for a healthy lifestyle. 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. The school has a very good tracking system for monitoring concerns before they become issues, and keeps staff updated and aware of their responsibilities.
21. Very good liaison and transfer arrangements with the first schools and the high schools 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 speak warmly of the support they receive and this makes a positive contribution to their progress and achievement in the early years. Topic work is often planned with the first schools and the high school in order to provide effective curricular continuity. Rewards for good academic achievement and good citizenship are celebrated in assemblies and these motivate pupils well.
22. The school is very effective in identifying and providing for pupils with special educational needs. Assessment procedures are systematically carried out and pupils' progress is carefully monitored. These arrangements ensure that pupils with special educational needs make very good progress in achieving their personal targets. The school is effective in meeting the needs of particularly gifted and talented pupils. The school makes good use of relevant test and assessment information to identify high achieving pupils both on entry to the school and following the National Curriculum tests in Year 6. These pupils benefit from an emphasis on innovative approaches to teaching and learning, involving thinking skills, accelerated and independent learning and the provision of master classes.
23. An unusual feature of the school is the excellent opportunities that exist for pupils to contribute to the life of the school. Pupils are seen as active partners in the school community and through the 'School Parliament' they are able to express their views and gain an understanding of the democratic process. Recommendations from the parliament have led to such changes as the introduction of picnic benches, the improvement of the hard play areas and the redevelopment of the school quad into a pleasant, open recreation area. The possible adoption of polo shirts as part of the school uniform is presently being discussed.

Through activities such as these pupils develop confidence in working with one another and learn to understand the points of view of others. This raises their self-esteem, enhances their self-confidence and promotes achievement.

24. The school has given careful thought to ways of ensuring the well being of all pupils and this is seen, for example, in the 'buddy' system that operates in Years 5 and 6. In these years pupils are given opportunities to act as 'buddies' to others and to ensure that no one feels isolated or distressed in the playground. The 'buddies' are clearly visible in their yellow bibs and make a significant contribution to the strong sense of a caring community that is so much part of the ethos of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, the community, and other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is held in high regard by parents. It works hard and effectively to involve parents in their children's learning.
- Parents demonstrate strong support for the school and their children's education.
- Very good links with the community enrich the quality of pupils' education.
- Very effective partnerships with other schools ensure that pupils are well prepared for transfer to high schools.
- Links with parents of pupils with special educational needs are good.

Commentary

25. The school recognises the importance of strong partnership with all parents and parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that they hold very favourable views of the school. Parents show a high level of support for the school. They are pleased that their children enjoy coming to school, behave well and make good progress. Parents also appreciate that the school is approachable if they have any suggestions or concerns and that expectations are high. The positive views of parents are confirmed by the inspection.
26. Parents are provided with clear information on their children's progress through detailed annual reports and through well attended parents' evenings held during the year. Parents also receive an informative prospectus, the governors' annual report for the school and newsletters. Parents are also encouraged to support their children's learning at home and details of what each class will be taught are provided at the start of each term. A pupil homework planner is used effectively to allow parents to monitor pupils' work and as a means of communication between home and school. During the school day, a number of parents provide direct support by, for example, supporting in classrooms.
27. The parents of pupils with special educational needs are kept very well informed of their progress and personal development. Parents of statemented pupils attend annual reviews and all parents receive regular updates on targets in their individual education plans.
28. Very good benefits arise from the school's community links. Educational visits and visitors to the school widen and enrich the curriculum as well as providing good first-hand experiences for pupils. Pupils have visited the offices of the local newspaper, as a literacy enrichment activity, and used professional technology to produce a school newspaper. Regular visits are made to local heritage museums and to field study centres. Pupils also give generous support to a number of national and international charities. This helps to raise their awareness of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. Members of the community and local businesses support the curriculum and pupils involve themselves in community events. The scout group uses the school premises and local sports clubs make use of the school's extensive grounds.

29. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. The Bedlingtonshire Partnership is very strong and transfer arrangements between schools are enhanced by very good relationships, joint transitional curricular planning, and procedures to ensure continuity of pupils' pastoral support. Work experience places are offered to high school pupils and placements are provided for student teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The leadership provided by the headteacher is outstanding and that of other key staff very good. The school makes very effective use of evaluation information to identify strengths and tackle weaknesses. Governance of the school is very good and with the exception of a daily act of collective worship, all statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are inspired by the outstanding leadership and high level of support offered by the headteacher.
- Very good leadership by all staff in key positions ensures that pupils are educated in a highly supportive environment and one that is based upon clear values and principles.
- Excellent subject leadership in art and mathematics is having a clear impact on standards and achievement.
- Governors work closely with the school and are very supportive.
- Very good planning and financial management help the school to achieve its educational priorities.
- The school does not comply with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of corporate worship.

Commentary

30. The headteacher provides the school with excellent leadership. He demonstrates a high commitment to the concept of middle schooling and a dedication to achieving the highest possible standards in all aspects of pupils' personal development. The high quality of leadership the headteacher provides is recognized and valued by staff, pupils and parents alike. His open style of leadership actively encourages innovation and the exploration of creative ways of promoting learning. All staff are able to engage in school policy formulation and decision-making. As a result, school management is very good and based on co-operation and teamwork with staff joining together to share ideas and make decisions. This spirit of mutual support and encouragement is very much part of the distinctive ethos of the school and permeates all aspects of school life. All members of staff provide very good role models and pupils are surrounded with clear and consistent values and principles from the time they first enter the school in Year 5. Pupils are provided with an unambiguous framework for their personal development, within which equality of opportunity, concern for the welfare of others and the good of the community are emphasised. As a result pupils feel secure, valued and respected. This great strength of the school stems from the exemplary leadership of the headteacher and is a significant contributory factor to the success that pupils achieve.
31. In pursuing the aims of the school, the headteacher receives strong support from his deputy and other senior staff. All test and examination results are carefully analysed and this information, together with that gathered through ongoing monitoring and evaluation, ensures that the school has a clear picture of pupils' progress and is able to build on strengths and tackle weaknesses. This is reflected in school and subject development plans, which are closely linked and provide well-considered guides for improvement. Almost all staff have leadership and management responsibilities for subjects or other school activities, and many staff have multiple roles and responsibilities. They work hard to be effective in their roles.

The very good collaboration between staff, which is such a strong feature of the school, helps

to ensure that teachers who have management responsibilities are well supported and able to carry out their roles effectively. Subject leadership in art and mathematics is exemplary.

32. Performance management is well established within the school and staff are enthusiastic about its effectiveness in bringing about improvement. Continuing professional development of staff is carefully devised in relation to the priorities of the school and the individual teacher. The school makes a good contribution to initial teacher training in spite of its small size. The strong teamwork evident in the school also includes the school office, site management, cleaning and catering staff.
33. Governors support the work of the school very well. The chair visits the school regularly and other governors visit the school as other commitments allow. Through these visits and regular reports from the headteacher, governors have a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and areas in which improvement is needed. Governors work closely with the school and fully endorse the principle of ensuring that the school provides for the needs of all groups of pupils. This principle is made explicit in the school's race equality and cultural diversity policy and evidenced in the inclusive nature of the school. The support of governors provides the headteacher and staff with a great deal of confidence in planning new developments. The governing body has made every effort to ensure that the school complies with the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Although school and year group assemblies are in full compliance, the school is in technical breach of the requirement because assemblies are not held on a daily basis. With this exception, governors carry out all of their statutory responsibilities.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,079,683	Balance from previous year	65,463
Total expenditure	1,082,831	Balance carried forward to the next	62,315
Expenditure per pupil	2,256		

34. The school uses its resources very well, to the benefit of pupils. Financial controls, in which governors are involved, are effective. Financial planning is rigorous and linked directly to the school improvement plan. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The school secretary provides senior managers with regular updates on spending so that there is a firm grasp on the school's finances and budgetary control. The school monitors its performance effectively in accordance with the principles of best value and gives very good value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in listening, reading and writing are above national expectations.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- There is a lack of pace in some lessons.

Commentary

35. The above average standards reported at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Girls' attainment in English is better than that of the boys although the difference between girls and boys is less than it is nationally. Standards of Year 6 work seen during the inspection, although above national expectations are slightly below the well above average standards indicated by the test results. Standards seen in Year 8 are also above national expectations. This means that pupils have a very good platform from which to move forward into Year 9. Overall, pupils' listening, reading and writing are all good, while speaking standards are satisfactory. The standards of literacy seen during the inspection contribute very well to pupils' learning in the other subjects across the curriculum.
36. As standards on entry to the school are below average overall, achievement is very good by the end of Year 8. This is because of very good teaching, the positive attitudes of pupils and the quality of the leadership and management of the subject. The achievement of girls and higher attaining pupils is particularly good and above that of middle attaining boys. Overall, very good progress is made in meeting the school's challenging targets for pupils of all abilities.
37. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. The best lessons in all years share a clear sense of purpose and direction. Lesson pace is generally brisk with learning objectives made clear at the start of lessons and then reviewed at the end, to assess progress and learning. Teachers usually convey their very good subject knowledge with energy and enthusiasm. Their use of open-ended questions encourages pupils to think for themselves and take responsibility for their own learning. Class routines are very well established. The National Literacy Strategy is very well established, especially in Years 5 and 6. Very good use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning, including the use of laptop computers in small group work. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Very effective use is made of role play to promote learning. This was seen, for example, in one excellent Year 8 lesson where every pupil made exceptional progress, in terms of their understanding of Shakespeare's *'Much Ado About Nothing'*, because they were totally absorbed in a wide range of role-play activities. This lesson provided an excellent preparation for an impending and much valued visit to the Globe Theatre in London. In this lesson pupils made rapid progress in response to high expectations, explicit learning objectives and challenging learning activities. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory, rather than good or better, the most common feature was that pupils' interest began to wane because the pace of the lesson was too slow.
38. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has identified the key priorities for development and is leading the improvements in teaching through example and the rigorous monitoring and evaluation of the work of the teaching team.

There is a sense of purpose and direction and high quality documentation to support target setting. Planning is underpinned by detailed reviews of standards and progress that provide clear information on strengths and weaknesses. Appropriate professional training opportunities are provided for teachers and these are well linked to school and subject development priorities. The assessment of pupils' work through marking and testing, especially in their writing, is thorough.

39. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Provision has improved and standards have risen. The potential for further improvement is also very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

40. Language and literacy are used well to promote learning in other subjects. Reading skills are good and pupils are able to read with understanding and reflect on the texts they encounter in lessons. Much attention is paid to the development of pupils' writing skills and these, and the presentation of work, are good. Staff training on literacy across the curriculum has taken place and subject teachers are aware of the contribution they can make to the development of pupils' standards of literacy. In mathematics teachers have a clear understanding of potential difficulties with specialist terminology and provide many opportunities for pupils to give extended answers. In science a very clear emphasis is placed on spelling and extended writing.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good use is made of the time allocated for Year 6 to give pupils an early start in the subject.
- Enthusiastic leadership provides a range of enrichment activities, which are beginning to improve attitudes to learning French.
- Progress is impeded in a few classes in Years 7 and 8 by pupils' inappropriate behaviour.
- Many pupils, especially girls, are reluctant to participate in oral classwork, adversely affecting standards in speaking.

Commentary

41. In Year 6, pupils show enthusiasm for a new subject because good teaching challenges them to use the language productively. They quickly communicate in sentences, going beyond the 'fun with words' routines sometimes found in pre-National Curriculum work. As a result, standards at the end of Year 6 exceed expectations and achievement is good. This impetus is not, however, sustained in Years 7 and 8. Standards are more in line with expectations and achievement is satisfactory. A few higher attaining pupils achieve above expectations in writing. In lengthy descriptions and other written accounts they express opinions and make use of tense variations. However, most pupils write more briefly and many fail to copy accurately. A lack of concentration in some lessons affects standards in listening and reading comprehension. Although boys often volunteer answers, girls are generally very quiet. Oral standards, especially pronunciation, are below expectations for most pupils.
42. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Year 6 and satisfactory in Years 7 and 8, where there was one unsatisfactory lesson. In all lessons, activities are conducted in French, providing a strong model and challenging pupils to listen. Unfortunately, because work is not well matched to the range of attainment levels and individual needs, too many pupils do not fully engage in the lesson and lose interest and concentration. This applies especially to lower attainers, including many with special educational needs. In the one unsatisfactory lesson this led to inappropriate behaviour, which affected the progress of other pupils. In some lessons,

expectations of behaviour are made clear and pupils progress well. However, strategies for managing behaviour are not always consistently applied and this contributes to pupils' inattentiveness in some lessons. Resources are used well to support learning. Increasing use is made of ICT, but the use tends to focus more on reinforcing vocabulary rather than extending language learning skills. Marking is very helpful in providing guidance for future improvement. Homework varies in its impact on learning, largely because pupils cannot take textbooks home.

43. The recently appointed head of department conveys much enthusiasm for the subject and provides good subject leadership. Pupils' learning opportunities are enriched through activities such as a French club, a school French day, and through theatre visits. A residential trip to France is being currently organised. Management is satisfactory. The school makes suitable arrangements to ensure that this single person department is not isolated. Development planning is improving. Very good procedures have been introduced for the tracking of pupils' progress, but their introduction has been too recent to have an impact on standards. Good classroom displays are used effectively to stimulate learning in lessons. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, with good capacity for further improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All groups of pupils are achieving very well; standards are above average and rising.
- Very good teaching is providing lessons that pupils enjoy and in which their learning is very effective.
- Excellent subject leadership and management are resulting in high morale in teachers and pupils, and in very effective procedures that underpin all aspects of the provision.
- The assessment of pupils' progress is very good.

Commentary

44. Results in the National Curriculum tests for Year 6 pupils in 2003 matched the national averages. In 2004 results were slightly better. There was no significant difference in the performance of boys and girls. The attainment of pupils starting Year 6, as seen during the inspection, is significantly higher than the 2004 end of Year 6 results. Analyses of pupils' work and test records indicate that by the end of Year 8, standards are above national expectations for the end of Year 9. In 2003, pupils from this school, in Year 9 at their high schools, attained results that were above the national averages. Results in 2004 were as good as in the previous year. Inspection evidence confirms the maintenance of these standards.
45. As pupils enter the school with below average attainment, this rapid and consistent improvement represents very good achievement. Pupils of all capabilities are consistently presented with challenging work, which they have the confidence and perseverance to tackle successfully. Higher attaining pupils, just into Year 6, already have a secure grasp of decimal numbers, can place them in order of magnitude and 'round' to a given decimal point. Year 8 pupils, of average attainment, are gradually mastering the concepts underlying 'two event' probability and are developing an understanding of how to use this knowledge to predict outcomes.
46. Teaching and learning are very good. All the lessons seen were good or better, most were very good and some were excellent. Lesson planning is based on effective assessment and a clear understanding of their strengths as learners. Time is not wasted on unnecessary practice of techniques that have been mastered. Teachers have high aspirations for their pupils and constantly challenge them to do better. Pupils rise to the challenge because of

excellent relationships, based on mutual trust and respect. Imaginative and innovative methods make many lessons exciting. For example, the skilled use of an interactive whiteboard, showing a computer generated moving image, had pupils entranced as they all gave instructions for a pointer to stop at a given measurement. The use of mini-whiteboards and other techniques ensure that all are engaged in answering questions and provide immediate feedback to the teacher on each pupil's understanding. All lessons start with a clear statement of what is to be learned and end with a judgement of its success. Pupils are actively involved in evaluating their own performance. This aids motivation and helps pupils identify the areas in which further help from the teacher is needed.

47. The head of department, ably supported by the second in department and constantly encouraged by senior management, has established a very strong ethos. All the staff responsible for teaching mathematics work as a mutually supportive team, sharing good practice and constantly striving for improvement. Excellent management is evident in all the major features of the provision:
- There is close monitoring of teaching and very effective support for non-specialist teachers.
 - High quality schemes of work, based on a full implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, provide an excellent basis for lesson planning.
 - Assessment of pupils' progress is rigorous, used to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and to set ambitious targets for individuals and groups of pupils. Pupils' personal involvement ensures that they have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.
 - There are very effective contributions to all cross-curricular aspects of education such as literacy.
 - Provision for pupils with special educational needs is particularly effective.
 - The use of ICT to enrich the learning of mathematics is unusually well developed.
48. From a strong position at the last inspection there has been good improvement. Standards have risen and achievement is better as a result of improved teaching. The assessment of pupils' work has been transformed and is now very good. There is good potential for further improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

49. Some pupils enter the school with very weak numeracy skills. Very good teaching in mathematics lessons ensures rapid improvement, so that most pupils quickly achieve the skills needed to manage the numerical parts of subjects such as science and design technology. A recently introduced school policy now underpins the approach to the use of mathematics across the curriculum. A full audit of the demands of the curriculum has been used to modify teaching in several subjects. A great deal of in-service training has ensured that all teachers use common terminology and calculation techniques, thus eliminating the possibility of confusion. Pupils' ability to use graphing and measuring techniques in many subjects is clearly improving. All teachers, particularly those of science, are now starting to make positive contributions to pupils' numeracy skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average at the end of Year 6 and well above at the end of Year 8.
- Teaching is good with some very good and outstanding features.
- Achievement is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8.
- The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are very good.

- Very good use is made of assessment to monitor pupils' progress and achievement.
- There are not enough laboratories for a school of this size.
- Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.

Commentary

50. In 2003, the National Curriculum test results for pupils at the end of Year 6 were average at Level 4, but above average at Level 5. Boys' and girls' results were similar. When compared with similar schools, results were above average. Teachers accurately assessed the attainment of pupils in Year 6. Achievement relative to attainment on entry to the school was better than expected. Although test results at the end of Year 6 in 2004 were not as good as those in 2003, results since the last inspection have improved at a rate above that observed nationally. The 2004 test results do not reflect the standard of work seen during the inspection, which was above national expectations.
51. Work seen during the inspection shows that, by the end of Year 8, standards are well above average for both boys and girls. Higher attaining pupils, for example, are able to represent chemical reactions by word equations and have a good, basic understanding of respiration. Lower attaining pupils, while having more limited knowledge of chemical reactions, can distinguish between elements, mixtures and compounds. Pupils, on the whole, make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts in Years 7 and 8. Hence achievement is very good.
52. Pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are making good gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in science. Standards, overall, are above average. Whilst the standards of pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are as expected, pupils in Years 7 and 8 are already achieving standards that are above average. Pupils, throughout the school, are achieving well and making good progress. The standards of literacy and numeracy are very good.
53. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. It is good in Years 5 and 6 and very good in Years 7 and 8, where the impact of more specialist teaching is seen. Nevertheless, there are examples of very good and excellent teaching in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' learning reflects the quality of teaching. The principal features of teaching are the use of good subject knowledge by both specialist and non-specialist teachers, high expectations that are communicated clearly to pupils, well-focused planning and a range of methods, which stimulates pupils and actively engages them in lessons. Homework is set regularly which extends or consolidates classwork.
54. Assessment is used very effectively to monitor the progress of pupils, to identify underachievers, adjust teaching and guide curricular planning. Although the marking of pupils' work is thorough and comments offer encouragement, the comments do not always provide enough guidance on how to improve. The identification of appropriate learning objectives coupled with good support for pupils' learning, enables all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress. Pupils clearly enjoy their work in lessons. Because they are fully engaged, they work hard and lessons proceed at a good pace.
55. Leadership and management in the science department are very good. The head of science provides a clear and well-focused direction for the subject. This is reflected in the department development plan, which provides a well-considered guide for improvement. Specialist and non-specialist teachers work well together, and are given excellent support by the team of LSAs. Resources, in terms of books and equipment, are good, but the department does not have enough sensors or data-logging equipment to enable experimental work to be followed by the use of computers. Because there are not enough laboratories for a school of this size a significant number of lessons have to be taught in ordinary classrooms and this has an adverse impact upon teaching and learning.

56. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and the capacity for further improvement is also good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very strong commitment of the subject leader to continued improvement.
- Very good teaching and learning that are driving up standards.
- The increasingly effective use of ICT to support teaching and learning in other subjects.
- Poor accommodation. Without the use of converted cupboards for teaching space the ICT room would not be able to accommodate the numbers of pupils it does.

Commentary

57. Standards in ICT lessons are well above national expectations at the end of Years 6 and 8. These high standards in the use of ICT to support teaching and learning have yet to be fully replicated across the whole curriculum. However, ICT lessons are now co-ordinated to develop skills that can be applied in all subjects. As a result, good use is made of pupils' ICT skills in other subjects and standards are rising.
58. Pupils' achievement is very good and they display positive attitudes towards the subject. Behaviour is generally very good. The range and diversity of the challenges with which pupils are presented ensure that the most productive use is made of the time available in lessons. In Year 6, pupils use software to write multimedia messages that includes both colourful images and associated animal sounds based upon well-known nursery rhymes. These messages are then e-mailed to their former teachers and friends in the local first school. In Year 7 pupils are developing a digital handbook for pupils new to the school. In producing the handbook, pupils are developing skills in the use of digital photography as well as the ability to synchronise a sound track to a displayed image.
59. Very good teaching and learning are underpinned by careful preparation and very good subject knowledge. Teachers have high expectations of work and behaviour and pupils respond eagerly to challenging lessons. Lessons have a good range of learning activities and these capture the interest and involvement of all pupils. Pupils work at a very good pace and as a result make very good progress. Work is marked regularly and pupils are provided with clear guidance on how to improve. Classroom management is very good and question and answer sessions are used very effectively to check pupils' understanding of the progress they are making.
60. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. The subject leader has a clear vision for the future development of the subject with an appropriate emphasis on the continued development of the use of ICT across the curriculum. Considerable investment in new equipment, teaching resources and training has been made since the last inspection. This investment is having a positive impact contributing significantly to the rise in standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

61. There have been substantial improvements in this area since the previous inspection and the use of ICT across the curriculum is good. Facilities and resources have been improved. All subjects take advantage of the increased number of computers in the school and the ICT room is used regularly. Interactive whiteboards have been installed in some areas and are

used well to stimulate pupils' interest and involvement. Pupils have access to a suite of computers and teachers regularly use laptop computers in other classrooms. As a result, pupils make good use of the skills they have gained in their separate ICT lessons.

HUMANITIES

62. **Geography** was sampled. Three lessons were seen in Year 7 and one in Year 8. A sample of pupils' work was scrutinised. Standards are above national expectations. Pupils make good progress in acquiring and using a range of geographical skills and vocabulary. Work is presented with care and diagrams are used effectively to illustrate and explain geographical features. Standards of literacy are above expectations. In the lessons observed teaching and learning were good or very good. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are very carefully planned with due regard to pupils' attainment levels. Positive attitudes and an enthusiasm for learning enable all pupils, including those with special educational needs, to achieve well. Learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and reviewed at the end to consolidate learning. Fieldwork plays an important part in the geography curriculum.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good so pupils learn very well.
- Very good relationships underpin pupils' progress and contribute to their achievement.
- Pupils' source analysis and evaluation skills require further improvement.
- Very good leadership is clearly focused on raising achievement.

Commentary

63. Work completed early in Year 5 indicates that pupils' attainment on entry in history is below national expectations. They make good progress through Years 5 and 6 to achieve standards that are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 6. This progress is sustained over the next two years, so that by the end of Year 8 standards are clearly above expectations. There is no consistent difference in the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of careful planning to cover the full attainment range and very good support from LSAs.
64. Much teaching focuses on the skills required in historical study and as a result there are clear strengths in analytical thinking and extended writing. The benefits of this are seen in pupils' formal assignments, which reflect a detailed knowledge and understanding of specific events. However, because of the particular emphasis on skills, pupils are not always able to place specific events accurately in the longer historical perspective. At present pupils are insufficiently critical in their use of sources because they only rarely question how provenance affects reliability. Most pupils read well with expression and understanding, articulate their views clearly and relate cause and consequence well in extended writing.
65. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development. They co-operate closely in pairs and groups and listen carefully to each other's views during discussion in lessons. Very few do not take an evident pride in the presentation of their work. Pupils in all years learn very well because they approach the subject with highly positive attitudes and are very well taught.
66. Teaching and learning are very good. Lesson planning is very detailed and classroom management strong, so that pupils' interest is effectively engaged and their understanding monitored. Learning activities are usually challenging, although occasionally a lack of

extension work means that higher attaining pupils are not always stretched as fully as they might be. Work is regularly marked and detailed guidance about the scope for improvement provided. However, errors in spelling and grammar persist and are too infrequently corrected by teachers.

67. History is well very well managed and led. The head of department carefully monitors and evaluates work in the subject and is striving to raise standards and achievement. This is reflected in the emphasis placed on developing thinking skills and the structuring of extended writing. Non-specialist teachers are well supported by revised schemes of work and teaching resources. Teaching, achievement, subject leadership and management have all improved since the last inspection, and there is good potential for further improvement.
68. **Religious education** was sampled. One lesson was seen in Year 6 and one in Year 8. A sample of pupils' work was scrutinised. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are above expectations at the end of Year 6 and Year 8. These standards represent good achievement when standards on entry are taken into account. Teaching in the Year 6 lesson observed was excellent. Challenging learning activities stimulated pupils' interest and encouraged them to express their views. Rapid progress was made and when questioned pupils were able to give reasons for their answers, and to apply their knowledge in a way that showed a very good understanding of religious symbolism. The Year 8 lesson, although satisfactory, was more pedestrian. Because the lesson lacked pace, pupils were not fully engaged and some lost interest as a result.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is high and standards are well above average.
- Pupils make rapid progress because teaching is very good and often excellent.
- Pupils' are actively engaged in learning and their attitudes and behaviour are excellent.
- Leadership and management are excellent and the subject makes a significant contribution to the ethos of the school.

Commentary

69. Standards at the end of Year 6 are well above national expectations. Pupils can observe, analyse and record through drawing and develop their drawings into paintings and sculptures using a range of materials and scales. Year 6 pupils use computers effectively to generate colourful and imaginative jungle scenes influenced by Henri Rousseau, while their drawings of fish demonstrate their very good ability to select and mix colours from observation. Sketchbooks are used to investigate and experiment with methods and composition. Standards at the end of Year 8 are also well above national expectations. Sketchbooks reflect pupils' competent drawing skills and their ability to experiment with tone, colour and form. They quickly identify paintings by artists such as Egon Schiele, Leonardo da Vinci and Lucien Freud. Relationships are excellent and pupils display a high regard for their teacher, the subject and the resources available to them.
70. Teaching and learning are very good and often excellent. Lessons are characterised by a busy, creative, atmosphere, with pupils reflecting on their own and their classmates' efforts. The teacher uses assessment very effectively to identify where intervention is needed and this ensures that lessons proceed at a good pace and that pupils are highly productive. Excellent use if made of LSAs both to support pupils with special needs and more generally in the

classroom. A high level of challenge is ever-present in exemplary lesson planning. Innovative activities such as a scheme involving colour mixing to reproduce a Stanley Spencer portrait or pupils drawing self-portraits in distorted tin foil constantly engage and extend pupils. The highly positive responses of pupils to very challenging learning activities, such as these, make a significant contribution to their achievement. Compelling demonstrations grasp pupils' attention and ensure that they are keen to begin work and develop their skills. Occasionally the shortage of time prevents pupils from discussing their own and their classmates' progress at the end of lessons. Pupils sustain concentration for long periods and demonstrate an increasing ability to work independently. Classroom management is very good and on the rare occasions when pupils find concentration difficult, expectations of behaviour are made very clear and pupils quickly conform.

71. The curriculum affords excellent opportunities to work in two and three dimensions and to make use of computers, specialist software and the digital camera. The department makes a significant contribution to the school's spiritual and cultural ethos through excellent displays of work in corridors and other public areas. Excellent use is made of assessment to monitor and guide pupils' progress. Very effective use is made of technology to maintain detailed records of pupils' work and progress. These records are passed to the high school at the time of transfer and help to ensure continuity of learning. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The head of department is ambitious for her pupils and her subject. Her development planning, teaching methods, schemes of work and use of assessment are exemplary. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection: standards have risen and achievement is high.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist teaching and resources have a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' finished products are of a very good quality.
- Attractive displays of pupils' work enhance the learning environment.
- Computer-aided design and manufacture need to be more fully integrated into the work of the department.

Commentary

72. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above expectations. Pupils establish sound working techniques, develop an understanding of the relevant health and safety issues, and the conventions for 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.
73. Pupils' achievement is very good and many gain high levels of personal success. The range and diversity of the challenges with which the pupils are presented ensure that they make the most productive use of the time available. Because pupils respond eagerly and work carefully, but at a good pace, they make good progress. This is seen, for example, when Year 5 pupils investigate structures before designing and making a picture frame. In Year 7 pupils are able to plan their work and suggest a sequence of actions to realise their designs. The confidence and enthusiasm that many pupils develop for this subject produce a very positive atmosphere that is highly conducive to purposeful learning.
74. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of resistant materials and food and fabric technologies. Pupils respond well to this depth of knowledge and become deeply engrossed in designing and making. Lesson preparation is very thorough and takes account of pupils' differing attainment levels. Teachers have high expectations and encourage pupils to avoid errors by self-checking their work. Pupils enjoy the variety of

teaching approaches and concentrate well throughout lessons. Effective use is made of question and answer sessions to check progress and understanding. Work is marked regularly and provides pupils with a very good understanding of how to improve. Teachers are beginning to introduce computer-aided design and manufacture to support designing and making, however, further work needs to be done to fully integrate these techniques into the work of the department.

75. Leadership and management of the department are very good and make a significant contribution to standards and achievement. Teachers meet regularly to monitor pupils' progress, to share ideas and plan future work. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and subject development plans indicate well-considered strategies for continued improvement.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new head of department is strongly committed to improving the subject.
- Good teaching and learning enable pupils to achieve well.
- The opportunities the school provides outside music lessons, including a variety of workshop experiences and clubs in music, are excellent.
- Not enough use is made of new technology.
- The music room is too small and this has an adverse effect on learning and standards.

Commentary

76. Teachers' assessments show standards at the end of Years 6 and 8 to be below national expectations; these assessments are confirmed by the inspection. The main reasons for this are that most pupils enter the school with fewer musical skills than expected; there has been some discontinuity in teaching and learning over the last few years because of staff changes; and the music room, although well used, is too small and this affects what and how pupils learn.
77. Nevertheless, pupils make good progress and achieve well. By the end of Year 8 they develop a basic music vocabulary, have a good knowledge of a range of musical styles and cultures and are able to use language creatively to describe the music they listen to, such as Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*. They are able to apply these skills in their own work and this represents an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs are provided with good support and achieve at the same rate as their peers. Those pupils identified as gifted and talented in music are provided with appropriate challenges and stretched to achieve their potential.
78. Teaching and learning are good and improved since the time of the last inspection. Lessons are well planned to include a range of imaginative activities that lead to a high level of interest; for example, in an African hand-drumming circle when the teacher demonstrated what the music would sound like when they have practised each skill well. Vocal techniques are taught well and as a result the quality of singing is good. Because the learning activities are interesting and demanding pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Only occasionally do a few boys lose concentration and when this occurs effective classroom management ensures that pupils soon return to the task in hand. Most pupils bring to their music lessons a generosity of spirit, which enables them to listen very well to other pupils and teachers. This was seen, for example, in a Year 6 lesson where pupils demonstrated empathy and understanding, as a visiting composer explained her feelings about the music she had composed following a harrowing visit to Africa.

79. Leadership of the subject is good and management satisfactory. The new head of department is well organised and has very good subject knowledge. Although systems for assessing pupils' work are secure and thorough, pupils do not yet think sufficiently about what they have learned and how they can improve. Apart from electronic keyboards there is no other music technology available in the department. The outstanding range of enrichment activities offered by the department considerably assists pupils' progress in music. Seven visiting instrumental teachers provide musical tuition for 120 pupils; this represents a quarter of the school roll. Composers and musicians lead regular workshops. There is a school choir and orchestra, recorder and keyboard clubs and an emerging rock band. All of these activities make a good contribution to standards. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress in lessons and achieve well.
- Pupils learn well because teaching is good and they have very good attitudes to learning.
- There are good procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress.
- Leadership and management are good.
- The limited indoor accommodation restricts the range of activity that can be offered.
- Not enough emphasis is placed on developing pupils' self-evaluation skills.

Commentary

80. During the inspection only games lessons were timetabled and at this point in the term all pupils are taught soccer. Only one lesson was observed in Year 7 and no lessons in Year 8 as they were timetabled outside the period of the inspection. Most observations were of lessons in Years 5 and 6. This sample is insufficient to make an overall judgement about standards in physical education. However, in the lessons seen pupils are achieving well and by the end of Year 6 standards in soccer are above expectations and achievement is good.
81. In soccer pupils show good co-ordination and control in performing skills. They generally apply these well in practices and small-sided games and have a sound understanding of attacking and defending play. When questioned they can give suggestions on how to improve. Pupils understand the effects of exercise on the body and why they need to warm-up when exercising and playing sport. However, they do not have enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own warm-up and preparation.
82. The quality of teaching is good and pupils have very good attitudes to learning. Consequently, they are learning well. Lessons are well organised; they start effectively with clear instructions and explanation about what is to be learned. Pupils respond enthusiastically and organise themselves quickly, as when finding a partner or when playing a small-sided soccer game. Activities such as modified games are well chosen although in some lessons further adaptation is needed for lower and higher attaining pupils. Pupils are supportive and encouraging of each other and this helps them achieve. Pupils' abilities to observe and evaluate the performance of skills and tactics are not as well developed as they should be because teachers do not give enough attention to this aspect. Good procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress are in place but teachers do not tell pupils specifically what they are expected to achieve in lessons. As a result pupils' own assessment of what they have achieved tend to be superficial.

83. Extra-curricular provision is good, although it is predominantly focused on the provision of games, with limited opportunity for dance or gymnastic activity. The good provision for soccer has been recognised by the award of the Football Association's 'Charter Mark' to the school.
84. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The head of department is enthusiastic, experienced and has a clear understanding of what improvements are needed. Non-specialist teachers are well supported with written lesson plans and teaching ideas. The subject is well resourced with excellent outdoor facilities. However, unsatisfactory indoor accommodation places restrictions on the range of games that can be taught, particularly for older pupils, and limits the range of gymnastic activities that can be undertaken safely.
85. Good progress has been made since the last inspection and there is good potential for further improvement.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

86. A wide-ranging **personal, social and health education** programme for each year group is taught through a range of whole-school activities including form time, assemblies and subjects. Key areas such as health and safety are dealt with thoroughly and revisited each year in an age-appropriate format. The school's ethos very effectively nurtures and reinforces many aspects of the programme including confidence, responsibility, and relationships. Each year's programme is well organised by a head of year. More recently, elements of citizenship have been integrated very well into the overall programme. A policy is in place but there is no whole-school curriculum overview. Very good use is made of outside agencies, including the local health authority, fire and police services. The 'buddy' system for younger pupils illustrates well the importance the school places on pupils' personal development. Buddies wear yellow bibs and provide a point of reference for pupils who are in any way upset or distressed. Consideration is being given to an extension of this for older pupils with the possibility of appropriate training. The curriculum is enriched considerably by school activities that provide pupils with a view of the wider world, for example by sending boxes of necessities to children abroad at Christmas time. The school has joined the healthy schools initiative thus providing further emphasis to the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
87. The school has incorporated **citizenship** into all aspects of its work and provision is very good. The development of good citizenship is made explicit in the life and work of the school. There is a citizenship charter in every classroom and a progress chart showing each pupil's achievements in relation to the school's 'top citizen' award. Pupils' achievements in citizenship are also celebrated in school assemblies and a citizenship diary is being developed for older pupils. The curriculum is very well planned for all year groups. There is a clear vision for the development of citizenship. It has been integrated very well into the curriculum, links closely with the PSHE programme, and is supported by detailed schemes of work. Links with subject areas are clearly identified. There is a Meadowdale school parliament, with elected members, which helps pupils to develop an understanding of representative democracy. For example, in one morning tutor period, Year 6 pupils were preparing for elections to the school parliament. Preparations were being made for the outgoing member to give a talk and for candidates to prepare their election manifestos. The discussion was mature, and pupils showed their awareness of contemporary issues with references to national politics. Citizenship is further made relevant through strong community links. For example, pupils were provided with the opportunity to question and discuss issues with their local Member of Parliament. This provided pupils with an increased understanding of the democratic process and the constituency work of MPs. The introduction of this new subject to the curriculum has been very well managed. The co-ordinator's excellent leadership is based on a high level of commitment both to the subject and to pupils' growth as responsible, active citizens. There is a clear vision for the future of the subject and the potential for further improvement is very good.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	2
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
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	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	1
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2

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