

INSPECTION REPORT

PRIORY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Dunstable, Bedfordshire

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109647

Headteacher: Mr Keith Scotchford

Lead inspector: Mr Christopher Christofides

Dates of inspection: 9th - 11th November 2004

Inspection number: 268440

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 9 - 13
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 530
School address: Britain Street
Dunstable
Bedfordshire
Postcode: LU5 4JA
Telephone number: (01582) 661 158
Fax number: (01582) 472 359
Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr Paul Blackwell
governors:
Date of previous 14th June 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Priory Middle School is a larger than average middle school, deemed secondary, of 530 children aged nine to 13, in the centre of Dunstable, Bedfordshire. The school had 551 on roll at the time of the last inspection in June 1999. The school is oversubscribed, with 169 applications for 127 places last year. Four per cent of the pupils are eligible for free school meals which is below the average for middle schools. The school takes its pupils mainly from within its catchment area, the centre of Dunstable. There are four main Lower schools feeding into the Priory. Many more send a few pupils to the school. At the age of 13, pupils mainly transfer to Queensbury Upper School, a comprehensive in Dunstable. Since the last inspection the school has established new dyslexia provision, with a capacity of six, which currently has three pupils on roll. There are no children at the school who speak English as an additional language. Pupil mobility is low. Fewer than 30 children joined the school last year at a time other than usual time of admission. There are 74 pupils (15 per cent) on the register for special educational needs, which is below the national average. Of these, 17 are statemented which is above the national average. The headteacher has been in post since April 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7834	C Christofides	Lead inspector	Mathematics Citizenship
31758	E Tipper	Lay inspector	
33255	D Hollister	Team inspector	Physical education
33112	D Anderson	Team inspector	Geography History Religious education
32960	V Klimowicz	Team inspector	Science
15706	R Crocker	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Music
33184	R Prince	Team inspector	Art and design
32235	P Shephard	Team inspector	Design and technology
12121	J Mallinson	Team inspector	English
33145	D Holmes	Team inspector	Special educational needs
20412	D Shepherd	Team inspector	French

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
Barley House
Oakfield Grove
Clifton
Bristol
BS8 2BN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637 833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 5
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	6 - 8
Standards achieved in subjects	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	8 - 13
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	13 - 15
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS	16 - 29
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Priory Middle School provides a good quality education. The headteacher is good and governance is satisfactory. Standards throughout the school are at the national average. Teaching is good and pupils respond positively, make good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 8. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. **Priory Middle School is an adequately effective school and gives satisfactory value for money.**

The schools main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership of the headteacher is good.
- The quality of teaching is good.
- Pupils' overall progress and achievements are good.
- Good relationships, harmony and ethos.
- The provision in art and design and music and information and communication technology is very good.
- Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good.
- Links with parents are good.
- Pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The management of the recruitment, retention and workload of staff is unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient monitoring of pupils' performance data, reviewing patterns and taking action to raise standards.
- Staff performance management is currently ineffective in bringing about improvement.
- Provision in physical education is unsatisfactory.

The school's improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards have risen in line with national trends and pupils achieve well and make good progress throughout the school. Assessment is now more thorough, but outcomes are still not used effectively to meet individual needs, nor do they help pupils understand how they can improve. Strategic planning at all levels of management has improved, but taking effective action to bring about further improvements remains unsatisfactory.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2002	2003	2004	2004
English	D	B	C	E
mathematics	D	D	C	D
science	D	C	A	C

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 6.

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), citizenship and music. They achieve in line with expectations in science, history, geography, religious education and French. Pupils make good progress in most lessons. In physical education, pupils make unsatisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs

achieve in line with expectations. By Year 8, pupils reach above average standards in English, art and design, information and communication technology and music and average standards all other subjects. **Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good.** Their attitudes to school are good; they are willing learners, responding positively to their teachers. Attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching is good. There is very good teaching in art and design, ICT and music and good teaching in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography and citizenship. Teaching is at least satisfactory in science, history, religious education and French. Teaching is unsatisfactory in physical education. Most teachers have good subject knowledge and establish good relationships. The best lessons set high expectations and use effective methods. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Attainment is assessed regularly but the information gathered is not used effectively to set pupils targets and inform them how to improve. The curriculum is broad and balanced and satisfactory overall. There are good opportunities for enrichment. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory and adequately reflects the school's inclusive ethos. Pupils are well cared for and receive good support, advice and guidance. The school has good links with parents and this impacts positively on the pupils' achievements. Community links are satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The leadership provided by the headteacher is good, giving a clear educational direction for the school; his management is satisfactory. In general, the systems for planning improvements and monitoring quality are not effective enough to ensure consistency in the standards achieved in all subjects. The governors make a satisfactory contribution. They are supportive of the school's aims and general direction and manage the budget well. They know the school well and have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. However, they do not challenge and support the senior management of the school sufficiently to further raise standards.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are pleased with the school. They are happy with the progress their children make and the standards they achieve. They feel that their children are well cared for and any bullying is dealt with effectively. Pupils are very positive about their school and are very clear about its strengths and weaknesses. They believe they are well taught in most lessons and that teachers treat them fairly and with respect. The pupils have good attitudes to learning and this impacts on the progress they make and how well they achieve.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Implement a rigorous monitoring and evaluation programme of pupils' performance data, review patterns of performance and take appropriate action to raise standards.

- Improve the management of the recruitment, retention, deployment and workload of all staff to bring about further improvements in standards.
- Make better use of assessment to track pupils' progress, monitor curricular provision and use its outcomes to help pupils understand how they can do better.
- Provision in physical education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Standards are average overall. Achievement is good as pupils make good progress as they move through school. In art and design and information and communication technology (ICT), standards are above national expectations at the end of Year 8. In English, mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, physical education, religious education, music, French and citizenship, standards are at national expectations. Overall, pupils achieve well in relation to their prior attainment and capability due to good teaching. There is little difference between boys' and girls' performance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in art and design and ICT are above average.
- Standards in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, French, physical education, religious education and drama are at national expectations and have not changed significantly since the last inspection.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress throughout the school. Pupils achieve best in English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, ICT and music.
- Pupils underachieve in physical education.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.1 (26.5)	26.8 (27.0)
mathematics	26.4 (26.4)	26.8 (26.7)
science	28.1 (28.1)	28.6 (28.3)

There were 128 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

1. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is broadly average. The 2004 national test results show that, by the end of Year 6, pupils' standards in science were above the national average whilst those in English and mathematics were in line with the national average. In comparison with similar schools, results were below the average in mathematics and science and well below the average in English.
2. By the end of Year 8, standards in English are above the national average and those in mathematics and science are at the national average. Since the previous inspection, standards have been maintained in mathematics, science, French, design and technology, geography, history and religious education. Standards have improved in English, ICT, music and art and design. Overall improvement in standards since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Parents are generally pleased with the standards their children attain.
3. Pupils' achievements throughout the school are good. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, art and design, geography, ICT, design and technology, music and citizenship. Whilst the achievement of pupils has improved since the last inspection, factors that have contributed to this rise in achievement include better teaching, creating a better climate for learning, which has led to good attitudes and behaviour from the pupils and a willingness to learn. Nevertheless, this rise in achievement has not yet impacted in a rise in standards.
4. The progress of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Throughout the school, these pupils achieve in line with their capabilities. The achievement of pupils in the dyslexia unit is good because they are well taught. However, their achievement across the wider mainstream curriculum is unsatisfactory as they are not given sufficient opportunities to learn independently or in small groups, and consequently they are heavily reliant on the adult that supports them.
5. During the inspection there were no observable differences in the attainment and progress of boys and girls. Pupils of higher ability are not always appropriately challenged and some are not working at high enough levels in the National Curriculum programmes of study because they are not always given work that is appropriate to their needs.
6. The school has made satisfactory progress towards its Year 6 targets. In 2004, at Level 4 the school nearly met its English target, but fell well short of its mathematics target. At Level 5, it fell well short of its English target but exceeded its mathematics target.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have very positive attitudes and they behave well. Their personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments, are good. Most pupils are happy and want to come to school. Attendance is good and pupils are punctual in getting to school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils have very good attitudes overall which have positive effects on their learning.
- Behaviour is very good throughout the school.
- There are very good relationships between staff and pupils.

Commentary

7. Most pupils are happy to come to school because they enjoy their learning. They get plenty of opportunity to represent the school in sports and musical events. Most pupils behave well in lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Pupils are polite and respectful to visitors and eager to initiate conversation, because they are proud of their school. They look after the building and equipment very well and there is a notable absence of litter and graffiti. The school is a happy and harmonious community.
8. Pupils' behaviour is very good. The number of fixed term exclusions has been low and there have been no permanent exclusions during the last academic year. The school has very effective measures in place to ensure and develop good behaviour and there is very little inappropriate behaviour throughout the school. The lack of any racist behaviour is commendable. Pupils value the frequent use of praise by teachers in class.
9. The behaviour and attitudes of pupils with special educational needs are good in lessons and around the school. There are good relationships between pupils and adults and these contribute to the pupils' positive attitudes, confidence and self-esteem. In some lessons, pupils with special educational needs are positively encouraged, through careful support and targeting of questions, to contribute to class discussions and they are keen and eager to do so. The attitudes and confidence of pupils in the dyslexia unit are good as they are enabled to experience success and their efforts are constantly reinforced with constructive praise and encouragement. Pupils with special educational needs take an interest in school life and in the range of activities provided.
10. Attendance was broadly in line with national averages in the year ending in summer 2003/2004 and is likely to be above these in the year ending in summer 2004/2005. The school has an adequate range of measures in place including the "100 per cent attendance certificate". There has been no detailed analysis of the pattern of absences. The school does work closely with pupils whose attendance is below 85 per cent, in co-operation with the education welfare officer. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good. Registers are accurately marked, monitored effectively and meet statutory requirements.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.5	School data	0.0
National data	6.4	National data	0.3

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
530	20	0

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

11. Pupils' personal development is generally good. There is plenty of opportunity for pupils to become sociable and tolerant because the school fosters personal development very well. Teachers use praise to develop pupils' self-esteem and have high expectations of each individual's contribution to the school community. All pupils are valued equally, regardless of race, background or capability and are encouraged to think of others in the wider community through charity collections. Pupils have been raising money for the Red Cross and the Poppy Appeal. The motivation for, and interest in, raising money was increased by talks given by representatives of these two charities. Pupils' social development is very good because they have numerous opportunities to develop through team sport and music activities. Spiritual and moral development is good. This is embedded within the school through the personal, social and health education programme and teachers are very good role models. Cultural provision is well developed through art and design, design and technology, religious education and music which contribute to pupils' understanding of the diversity reflected in today's society.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching is **good** overall. Assessment is **satisfactory** and in need of further development. The curriculum is **satisfactory**. Support, advice and guidance are **good**. Links with the community are **satisfactory** and links with other schools are **good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good** throughout the school. Assessment of pupils' work is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan good lessons.
- The pupils' learning is good.
- The attitudes and behaviour of the pupils are very good.
- Teachers promote equality of opportunity for all.
- Teachers' expectations of pupils are not consistently high.
- Better use of assessment needs to be made, to track pupils' progress, monitor curricular provision and use outcomes to help pupils understand how they can do better.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 92 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	19 (21%)	39 (42%)	26 (28%)	8 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

12. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to give clear explanations and ask questions that check pupils' understanding. In art and design, information and communication technology and music, teaching is very good and pupils make good progress and attain well in these subjects. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography and citizenship. Teaching is unsatisfactory in physical education. In all subjects, pupils respond well and are interested in learning.
13. Teachers' planning and teaching methods are generally good. Teachers manage pupils well and relationships are very good. Most lessons are taught with confidence and teachers encourage and engage pupils in their learning. Overall, teachers' use of homework is good but it is not always used effectively to extend pupils' learning. Teacher expectations are satisfactory for meeting the needs of most pupils, but in some of the average lessons, teachers do not always challenge the more able effectively to extend their problem-solving, or their investigative and thinking skills. Parents and pupils believe that the teaching is good at the school.
14. Pupils work well, making good progress in their learning. They are keen to learn and participate fully in lessons. They produce some good quality work but are not always encouraged to be creative or take responsibility for their learning in all subjects. Teaching for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Teachers and assistants know their pupils well. In some lessons, there is insufficient appropriate work to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs, and pupils from the dyslexia unit do not have enough opportunities to record their work. Assessment for pupils with special educational needs is inconsistent and unsatisfactory overall. Pupils are not consistently given information on how well they have done, what they have achieved and what they need to do next. Work undertaken by pupils from the dyslexia unit in mainstream lessons is often completely recorded by the teaching assistant with no annotation and therefore there is no evidence of progress.
15. The gap between boys' and girls' achievement is much smaller than in most schools. This is partly because boys' achievement is raised by the ethos pervading much of the school which stresses mutual respect and values effort. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects aids pupils' motivation in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology, geography, history, religious education, music and French.
16. The primary and Key Stage 3 National Strategies have been introduced in many subjects to improve teaching and help pupils to focus on what they are expected to learn. The recommended methods have increased the pace of many lessons through splitting the lesson into three parts. In many subjects, however, the plenary sessions are not conducted effectively enough. The focus on further improving teaching and learning in the current school development plan is appropriate and a further commitment to curriculum development and innovation and engagement in national initiatives will improve the quality of teaching at the school that will impact on standards.
17. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly in all subjects. Records are kept and reported to parents periodically. The quality of assessment varies across subjects. It is good in mathematics, art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology and music, satisfactory in English, science, design and technology, geography, history, religious education and French and unsatisfactory in physical education. Overall, teachers are not using assessment data well enough to track pupils' progress or to guide their future planning. The school has correctly identified the use of assessment to improve learning as a major area for development.

18. Pupils have a general idea of how well they are doing. The provision of detailed advice on how to improve their work varies across subjects. In English, mathematics, art and design and music, pupils receive good feedback on what they need to do, but in some others, including science, history, geography, religious education and physical education, the feedback is not well targeted at promoting improvement. In spite of some of the relative weaknesses identified in teaching, the strengths seen far outweigh them. Teachers are very hardworking and professional, and clearly love their work. Classrooms are purposeful environments where pupils are well cared for.

The curriculum

The curriculum is broad and balanced and **satisfactory** overall. There are good opportunities for enrichment. Statutory requirements are met. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The accommodation and resources adequately meet the needs of the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good enrichment produced through extra-curricular activities and educational visits.
- Good courses in personal, social and health education.
- Participation in the arts is good.
- Participation in sport is good.
- There is insufficient curriculum development and innovation.

Commentary

19. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. Lesson planning is generally good and pupils have access to a wide range of activities that provide good skills development. The school has adopted the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Numeracy has been effectively implemented, with, for example, a more appropriate use of mental activities in lessons and an adequate use of mathematics in other subjects of the curriculum, such as science and design and technology. In literacy, some opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their reading and writing skills, both within English itself and across the range of curriculum subjects, such as history and geography, but generally the strategies have not so far had a significant impact on teaching and learning across the rest of the curriculum. Overall, the use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory.
20. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. In lessons, pupils are not aware of their targets and progress towards these targets is not monitored or recorded. Most pupils with statements have access to a broad and balanced curriculum although those in the dyslexia unit do not have full access the National Curriculum in English. Provision in the dyslexia unit is good and the accommodation provides a stimulating learning environment. There is insufficient guidance for class teachers on how to support pupils from the dyslexia unit effectively in mainstream lessons.
21. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, including football, netball, dance, chess, textiles club and music. It welcomes many visitors, including artists, as well as drama and music groups. A wide range of educational visits is arranged to places such as museums and theatres. There are also trips abroad. These activities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal and social development, as well as to their learning in various subjects. Pupils say that they enjoy their extra activities and look forward to them. Curriculum development and innovation could be further enhanced.

22. The overall provision in the foundation subjects is satisfactory. It is very good in art and design, music and ICT. It is good in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography and citizenship. However, in some work seen, some groups of pupils were presented with the same activities during lessons and the needs of different groups of pupils were not always met. The provision of a better variety of activities targeted to meet the needs of all in a class would further raise the achievement of the pupils and improve standards throughout the school.
23. Overall, the match of teachers to the curriculum is good. The use of support staff is satisfactory. Resources are adequate to support learning in all subjects. The accommodation is very well cared for and enhances the pupils' learning. Improvements are planned to further enhance the accommodation and there are plans for remodelling many areas of the school. Good display was seen throughout the school, with outstanding practice seen in the art room. The library is well run, adequately resourced and pupils make appropriate use of it to enhance their learning.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes **good** provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils and provides them with **good** support, advice and guidance. It actively seeks and acts on the views of pupils.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils are well cared for but the school's systems for providing personal and academic support, advice and guidance are not rigorous enough.
- The school is a safe and healthy environment.
- There are very good arrangements for pupils joining the school in Year 5.
- Pupil surveys and the school council are enabling pupils to become involved in influencing the life of the school.
- The arrangements for risk assessment are not rigorous enough.

Commentary

24. Most pupils develop trusting relationships with staff within the school and are well cared for as a result. They are also supported by a counsellor and a mentor, who visit the school for a combined three days each week, and representatives of the behaviour support service who all work with pupils who are not achieving as well as they might. However, their work is not effectively co-ordinated. Limitations in the use made of assessment and individual target setting to respond to individual needs mean that pupils are not always given clear guidance as to how they can improve their work.
25. The school treats the health and safety of its pupils as a priority. The site agent is the main person responsible for ensuring the school is hazard-free and for alerting the headteacher to any problems as they arise. The school produces risk assessments for educational visits and has appointed a member of staff to co-ordinate them. Risk assessments are also carried out for specific activities within subjects but nobody has overall responsibility for this and, consequently, it is not clear that everything has been appropriately considered. Whilst the school was seen to be a safe place in which to work and play during the inspection, administrative controls in this area are

not effective enough. There is an appropriate system for child protection run by a fully trained deputy headteacher.

26. Pupils with special educational needs are given supportive and constructive feedback to improve. There is limited, and only recent, use of data to track and analyse the progress of these pupils. Where practice is good, pupils are given feedback on how well they have done. In other areas of the curriculum, pupils receive little or no feedback. For pupils in the dyslexia unit, assessment is good but in the main school there is no tracking of their progress. In mainstream lessons these pupil have limited resources and there is limited feedback or marking of their work. In some cases all recording in pupils' books is done by the supporting adults with no annotation. As a result there is no evidence of progress. The intensive one to one support they receive in lessons does not allow them sufficient opportunity to work independently.
27. Parents of prospective pupils are introduced to the school at an open evening in the autumn term. Around 400 attended such a session during the inspection at which staff and pupil volunteers presented the school in a very positive light. Later in the year, the head of Year 5 visits the four main feeder Lower schools. These visits are used to develop personal profiles of the pupils and to enable class groupings to be formed. The pupils then visit the school for half a day in the summer term followed by a parent's briefing. This very good system of induction is much appreciated by parents with 90 per cent of those answering the pre-inspection questionnaire expressing their satisfaction of the way their children are helped to settle into the school.
28. The long-established school council is appreciated by the pupils as a means by which they can influence their life within the school. For example, water dispensers were recently introduced following a recommendation by the council. A recent survey has also been carried out on behaviour and bullying, which has been well received by pupils, and the school is already making changes to its procedures as a result.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a **good** relationship with its parents and carers. Links with the community are **satisfactory** and are **good** with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents make a good contribution to their pupils' learning at school and at home.
- There are very good relationships with the Upper school to which most of the school's pupils transfer.
- Parents are not kept sufficiently informed about their children's progress.
- Links with the local community are under-developed.

Commentary

29. Parents are very supportive of their children and do much to encourage them in their education. Parents would welcome, however, more information on what their children are studying and advice on how to help them. The school is beginning to address this well through the 'Teaching and Learning' section in the newsletters and leaflets such as 'How to Help with ICT'. The parent teacher association, run by a dedicated team,

organises a range of fundraising and social events. In recent years, they have helped provide the school with computer equipment, the garden area and a refurbished library and have just presented the school with a new minibus.

30. The prospectus, governor's annual report and regular newsletters provide parents with detailed information concerning the school's activities, pupils' achievements and past and future events. The annual pupil progress reports also enable them to understand how well their children are achieving in individual subjects. Many parents are complimentary about these but less than one-half of those who answered the pre-inspection questionnaire felt they were well informed about their children's progress. This reflects the limited amount of information they are given on what their children need to do to address their weaknesses.
31. The school has good relationships with parents, with them feeling comfortable about approaching it. However, only just over one-half feel the school seeks their views. The headteacher is keen to stress the 'open door' policy of the school, which is printed on every newsletter, but clearly needs to find further ways of making a significant number of parents feel more involved in the life of the school.
32. Parents of pupils in the dyslexia unit have regular and effective contact with the teacher in charge. Termly meetings are held with parents to review the pupils' progress on their individual education plans (IEPs). Comments in diaries are positive and mostly in relation to attitudes but there are no formalised systems for collating parental responses. For pupils with special educational needs in the main school, parental feedback from annual reviews is generally positive and helpful. However, there are no systems for recording parental views throughout the year, apart from home-school diaries, which are not effectively analysed.
33. There are some good links with members of the local community, such as the visits from representatives of the Red Cross and British Legion, witnessed during the inspection to coincide with Remembrance Day. Some local groups also use the school facilities outside school hours. In certain subjects, notably English, music and history, there are some valuable links. History re-enactment groups work with pupils as part of local history week and pupils participate in the Dunstable Tudor Day celebrations in period costume. Meanwhile, the school band performs at concerts locally and also goes on tour. However, there is no member of staff responsible for this aspect of school life and consequently there is no planned approach to increase the involvement of the community in the life of the school. The involvement of members of the local business community and representatives of various cultures resident in neighbouring towns is limited.
34. A very good working relationship has been built up with the school's main receiving upper school. The head of Year 8 meets the Year 9 counterpart two or three times per year to plan the transfer of pupils. There is a detailed sharing of personal and academic information and the schools' special educational needs co-ordinators also meet to discuss individual requirements. Year 8 pupils work on 'bridging projects', which are completed in Year 9 at their new school. The upper school is very complimentary of the support it receives from The Priory and the preparation it gives its pupils for their next stage in education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **satisfactory overall**. The leadership provided by the headteacher is **good**, giving a clear direction for the school. His management is satisfactory. The leadership provided by other key staff is satisfactory. In general, systems for planning improvements and monitoring quality are not effective enough to ensure consistency in the standards achieved in all subjects. Governors support the school's aims and general direction and adequately manage the budget. They know the school well and have an adequate understanding of the schools strengths and weaknesses. Overall the governance of the school is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leaders inspire, motivate and influence staff and pupils.
- The leaders in the school provide good role models for other staff and pupils.
- Leaders create effective teams.
- The management of the recruitment, retention, deployment and workload of staff is unsatisfactory.
- There is insufficient monitoring of pupils' performance data, reviewing patterns and taking action to raise standards.
- Staff performance management is currently ineffective.

Commentary

35. Overall, the leadership and management of the school by the headteacher and governors are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership, communicating a sense of purpose and direction. His management is satisfactory. At present, the delegation of responsibilities at senior management level is beginning to shape the direction of the school. Nevertheless, the strategic role of the heads of department is currently underdeveloped, especially in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and its impact on learning and standards. There was an adequate response to the issues raised in the last report. Assessment is now more thorough, but it is still not used effectively to meet individual needs nor does it help pupils understand how they can improve. Strategic Planning at all levels of management has improved. The school's self-evaluation and the monitoring of its performance data are yet to impact. They are currently unsatisfactory.
36. The school has a good set of aims and values that have had an impact on improving many aspects of teaching and learning since the last inspection. The commitment given to the school by the governing body, headteacher, senior staff and all other members of staff, parents and pupils has also improved since the last inspection.
37. The governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities well; they are more effective now than at the time of the last inspection. They have a grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but their role in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance is underdeveloped. The governors' annual report to parents contains all the information required by law. Regular governors' meetings take place. In addition to these, various working parties and committees also meet. The governors receive information from the headteacher at these meetings on a range of issues, including the school improvement plan. Governors make regular visits to the school and are beginning to contribute to the formulation of the school improvement plan.
38. The school's evaluation of its own performance is unsatisfactory. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching and learning are not systematic enough and do not lead to an identification of strengths and weaknesses that will in time raise standards. Many departments are well managed, though there is some inconsistency of practice because the expectations of subject leaders are not clear enough and oversight by senior management is too informal.

There are insufficient guidelines for planning, target setting and monitoring by subject leaders; senior managers are not effective enough and appropriate written reports, outlining outcomes and effective action to be taken, are not produced. The new school improvement plan is an effective working document but it has not yet impacted on improving standards. The school is now ready to carry out a thorough analysis of its performance in order to build on the improved achievement of the pupils and to raise standards.

39. The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is good. There is a mix of experienced and new colleagues, with a wide range of curriculum expertise. There is a high level of commitment from both full- and part-time members of staff. The teaching assistants provide adequate support to pupils with special educational needs. Teachers know their pupils well. The school secretary and other administrative staff enhance the smooth running of the school. The caretaking and cleaning staff support the school ethos and maintain the buildings to a very good standard.
40. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a significant teaching timetable and has not had the capacity to monitor the progress and quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs effectively. As a result, the school has limited knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in these areas and there has been little opportunity to provide training and development to mainstream staff and teaching assistants. Until very recently, there has been very limited monitoring or analysis of performance data for pupils with special educational needs. The teacher in charge of the dyslexia unit has also undertaken limited monitoring of mainstream teaching and learning for pupils who attend the unit.
41. Arrangements for the continued professional development of staff are adequate. The induction of new members of staff and newly-qualified teachers is satisfactory. The school's strategy for performance management is unsatisfactory because not all staff have had an appraisal in the last year.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,390,081
Total expenditure	1,448,135
Expenditure per pupil	2,061

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-54,930
Balance carried forward to the next year	-37,907

42. The school's administration systems are satisfactory overall. The budget is managed efficiently by the governors, who are well supported by the headteacher and his administrative officer. Financial planning is adequate in supporting educational priorities. The finance committee works effectively and reports regularly to the full governing body meetings. The deficit budget over the last few years has been written off in this financial year (2004-2005). Specific grants and additional funding made available to the school are adequately deployed although specific grants for special educational needs are not always effectively deployed. The school follows best value principles satisfactorily, though governors have not been briefed on the full implications of these principles.
43. Taking into account the full range of criteria, the standards achieved by the pupils, the quality of provision, the leadership and its ethos, the school is judged to be giving satisfactory value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 2 AND 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers teach well and care strongly about their pupils' progress.
- Pupils write imaginative poetry.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, particularly drama club and theatre visits.
- Pupils have too little opportunity to think for themselves, and discuss.
- Insufficient use of information and communication technology.

Commentary

44. Pupils enter the school with average attainment. National tests at the end of Year 6 show attainment varies from year to year but is generally in line with the average. However, in Years 7 and 8, particularly the latter, standards are above average. Girls' standards are slightly higher than boys. Standards in 2003 were better than those for maths and similar to those in science. Compared with similar schools, results in English were in line in 2003, but well below in 2004.
45. These results were confirmed by observation of lessons and scrutiny of work. Pupils write neatly, with literacy skills which are in line with the average, and improve over time. The quantity of extended work is moderate, but of good quality. Pupils use dictionaries to widen vocabulary and improve spelling. Poetry, displayed on walls or read out in assembly, is fresh and deeply felt. Pupils analyse characters in novels and argue about the moral dilemmas such characters face.
46. Pupils are articulate but do not generally have enough opportunity to discuss, or give oral presentations. Pupils read sufficiently, borrowing two or three books a fortnight, but they seldom keep a record of what they have read. The library is used effectively in English lessons. Pupils read aloud fluently but often without expression.
47. Achievement is good, particularly in Year 8. Nearly all pupils make progress that is at least satisfactory, and often good, but they should be encouraged to think more, read more, and talk more. Some are too dependent on the teacher. Pupils with special education needs make good progress, particularly when closely supported by teaching assistants. Gifted and talented pupils are seldom given extension work.
48. Teaching is good in all years, with some that is very good. Non-specialists know enough to cope well with the curriculum. All plan and prepare very well. Marking is usually helpful, pointing out how the pupil can improve, and often correcting every mistake. Pupils should make greater use of these corrections, ideally through the

use of word-processing for re-drafting. Teachers provide much praise, encouragement and support, so pupils respond enthusiastically and behave very well.

49. However, there is some lack of challenge. All teachers allow too little time for pupils to be active learners. There is very little group work, so pupils have little opportunity to learn from each other. When they do work in pairs, the effect is highly productive.
50. Assessment is satisfactory. Teachers all possess information about their pupils' prior attainment, but they only tell pupils what standards they have reached at the end of term. Targets are therefore less effective than they might be. There are visits to theatres, often over-subscribed, and drama is a popular out-of-school activity, leading to successful performance of plays such as *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'*, but drama is given very little time in the curriculum.
51. Leadership and management are good. The newly-appointed head of department has re-written the schemes of work so there is now more consistency and continuity in what is taught. She has already engendered an effective team spirit among her colleagues. All teachers now feel they can contribute to departmental policy. She needs to make her voice heard in such matters as the development of the library, the school's literacy programme, arrangements for setting in Year 6, and the use of individual targets for pupils.
52. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Teaching is now better in all years, with improved results in Year 8. Staff morale is higher. However, some weaknesses remain, notably in providing for the higher attainers, for greater use of information and communication technology, and for more precise setting of targets.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

53. Standards are average. There has been some staff training in summer 2003, with a following meeting for five heads of department, where good practice could be cascaded to all staff. However there is no clear policy to guide staff and ensure a common approach. Co-ordination needs to be clearly defined, to rouse the whole school to an awareness of the importance of literacy in all subjects. Nevertheless, some good practice was seen, particularly in art and design, science and citizenship. Pupils are articulate, but need more opportunities to practise their speaking, both in small groups and in addressing an audience. They need to debate more, and challenge each other. The library is now a pleasant space, with a welcoming atmosphere, but it is underused by departments bringing pupils in for lessons. The supply of books is adequate but many are old. There is only one computer. Borrowing rates are satisfactory and higher in the younger years. There needs to be more direction about how the library could contribute more to pupils' reading for pleasure and research.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision in Years 5 and 6 is good.
- Teachers are good role models.
- Standards in listening are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good in Years 5 and 6.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8. There is not enough use of information and communication technology, and not enough attention is given to reading and writing skills.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

54. French is taught to all pupils. Standards are average overall, but standards in listening are higher than in the other skills because teachers make good use of French in lessons. In Years 5 and 6, the focus on speaking and listening provides opportunities for pupils of all capabilities to develop a sound foundation for work in later years. In Years 7 and 8, pupils start to develop a grammatical understanding of the language and more able pupils can manipulate it in short written tasks with the help of writing frames. Average-attaining pupils show good understanding of spoken French and are able to respond appropriately. Pupils of lower ability can repeat phrases, speaking with good accents, and answer simple questions about themselves. Pupils of all abilities make satisfactory progress and there is no difference in the progress of boys and girls.
55. All the French teaching is undertaken by specialist teachers. The quality of teaching is good in Years 5 and 6 because teachers have good language skills, plan their lessons well and are adept at enthusing pupils. As a result, learning is good. Achievement overall is only satisfactory because pupils do not have enough guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils are keen to learn and participate well in oral pair work throughout. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 and 8, with good features. Progress is limited because not enough time is spent developing reading and writing, and using information and communication technology. This results in a lack of balance in addressing the four attainment targets of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Many ideas from the National Languages Strategy are used to help pupils learn. The range of resources is limited in some lessons and the lack of variety leads to some loss of concentration towards the end. This is particularly the case in Years 7 and 8 with pupils at both ends of the ability spectrum, where work is not matched closely to their needs.
56. The head of department provides clear direction and there is a commitment to continue to raise standards. The areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection have not been fully addressed but there is now good capacity for improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good.

- The teaching is good.
- The pupils' attitudes to mathematics are good.
- The pupils achieve well throughout the school.
- Standards are rising but they are still at nationally expected levels.
- Limited use of information and communication technology.

Commentary

57. Standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 8 are at the national average. Standards achieved by pupils in the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 in 2003 were below the national average and those of similar schools. Unvalidated data indicate an improvement in results for 2004 and they are in line with the national average and with those of similar schools. Pupils throughout the school make good progress and achieve well. Boys perform better than girls. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well and make good progress.
58. The school has adopted the National Numeracy Strategy well and all areas of the mathematics curriculum are taught well.
59. The quality of teaching is good overall. Where teaching is good, there is secure subject knowledge, teaching is enthusiastic, and the focus of the lessons is shared with the pupils. Mathematical vocabulary is used effectively by teachers. Teachers ask challenging questions. Work is differentiated to meet the needs of all the pupils. Comments in pupils' books indicate what has been achieved during the lesson. Support from teaching assistants is appropriately targeted.
60. Where teaching is only satisfactory, there is insufficient interaction to enable the pupils to answer questions and the plenary part of the lesson is underdeveloped. Insufficient time is given to encourage the pupils to reflect on their learning or use what they have learned in different ways. Expectations are not always high enough for the average and less able pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6.
61. In Year 6, pupils learn to solve problems in the most appropriate way, selecting calculating aids to aid computation. They choose the most appropriate method to carry out calculations: relying only on mental skills, using jottings or using a calculator. They use and apply mathematics well to solve problems and to investigate mathematical problems. Year 7 pupils are able to relate fractions to division and then apply this knowledge to adding and subtracting simple fractions, cancelling and making them proper fractions. Year 8 pupils were working on equivalent fractions and applying these, adding fractions with different denominators.
62. Attitudes and behaviour were good or better in all lessons seen. The pupils enjoy their lessons, especially the mental mathematics at the beginning of the session. The pupils respond positively to the good pace of this part of the lesson. In Year 6, pupils show involvement and concentration in their work. In Year 7, the pupils are beginning to support each other in their group work. They are very well motivated and take their own learning forward.
63. Resources are well used. Calculators are used appropriately and more use is made of practical equipment, than at the time of the last inspection. The use of computers is limited.

64. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has clarity of vision and a sense of purpose to inspire all who teach mathematics. Planning is good and provides effective guidance for continuity and progression throughout the school. Good assessment arrangements help teachers plan effectively for the next stages in learning, ensuring that pupils make good progress. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning are good.
65. Since the last inspection, teaching and learning and standards have been maintained and strengthened. The leadership and management of the subject have improved and pupils are achieving well. There is evidence that the pupils use and apply their mathematical knowledge effectively. Nevertheless, whilst standards have improved and are now at the national average, there is capacity within the department for standards to rise further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

66. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory. In several subjects, pupils' numeracy and data-handling skills are used adequately and consolidated well. In science, for example, they applied their numeracy skills adequately to measure accurately in an experiment on alkaline solutions. In art and design, pupils apply their mathematical skills to make symmetrical patterns. In history, they have a good sense of ordering chronological events by date. However, there is no overall plan to ensure that pupils have the skills they need to access work in other subjects or that opportunities to improve their numeracy skills are not missed.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use their subject knowledge to develop pupils' understanding through good questioning techniques.
- The head of department is making a positive contribution to moving the department forward.
- Progress in Year 5 and Year 6 is better than in other year groups.
- Teachers and pupils have limited access to information and communication technology and this is limiting the capacity to deliver the science curriculum.
- Higher- and lower-attaining pupils are insufficiently provided for in Year 7 and Year 8.

Commentary

67. Standards in the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 in 2003 were in line with the national average and well below the average for similar schools. The results were below those in English, with little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Standards have risen in line with national trends, with an increased number of pupils attaining Level 5.
68. Achievement is satisfactory as pupils make adequate progress. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 achieve more highly than in other year groups. In Year 7 and Year 8 teaching is not sufficiently matched to the needs of different ability groups. Pupils' books show similar work for all abilities. Many lower attaining pupils have support in lessons and for some there are modified work sheets provided, such as in a lesson on the pH of soils. In Year 5, a teaching assistant constantly challenged lower ability pupils to provide their own solutions when considering the phases of the moon but in most lessons there is little opportunity for these

pupils to work with others or on their own. Higher ability pupils are challenged by homework that extends their learning. Boys and girls work equally well in lessons.

69. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and good or very good in a quarter of lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Teaching is good or better when lessons are taught by subject specialists. All teachers check what pupils already know and understand at the start of the lesson and share with pupils what they intend to teach but this is not linked to National Curriculum standards. Everyday examples of science capture the interest of pupils. Speaking and listening is a strength, with some teachers able to develop the speaking skills of all pupils by probing questions that seek explanations. Pupils are confident to respond but there are few opportunities to write their own explanations. Opportunities are taken to check nouns and adjectives, such as 'alkali' and 'alkaline' and the use of imprecise language is corrected. There is some use of key words but little use is made of spelling logs for science beyond Year 5. In a lesson on metals, pupils worked safely together to test for hydrogen. Where teachers are less confident, they demonstrate practical work or set equipment up for pupils, losing opportunities for pupils to develop practical skills. Teachers are developing the scientific enquiry skills of pupils, such as careful observation, planning and concluding skills.
70. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently-appointed head of department leads with enthusiasm and by example. Training on new initiatives is being used to help teachers in their planning of lessons together in year group teams and this is a strength. Provision is being made to include links to other curriculum areas such as mathematics and information and communication technology, which are underdeveloped. End-of-unit testing is linked to the National Curriculum and pupils are aware of their attainment. Nevertheless, this information is not used effectively to meet the needs of pupils or set them short-term targets. Pupils have been working on an environmental area to extend the science curriculum provision. The science accommodation is next to a space used for physical education. Access from the preparation room to other rooms can be restricted at these times for safety reasons.
71. A lack of information and communication technology resources, such as data loggers, is limiting opportunities for pupils to progress and fulfil their potential. Creative use was made of limited resources in a Year 5 lesson where the pictures and computer modelling of the progression of the moon created excitement and enjoyment that ensured learning. Library boxes are used to supplement the limited range of science texts in the library.
72. Standards have improved since the last inspection and are now at the national average. Boys no longer dominate lessons. Provision remains satisfactory but there is a capacity to improve under the leadership of the recently-appointed head of department.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning throughout the school.
- Standards above average.
- Strong and effective leadership with a shared willingness to succeed.
- Some accommodation currently lacks an appropriate learning environment.
- More activities are needed for higher-attaining pupils.

Commentary

73. Attainment on entry to the school is variable but improves significantly when finding things out, developing ideas and making things happen in ICT. Standards in Year 6 are above expectation due to good coverage, the use of spreadsheets and sequencing information. This represents good progress. Attainment by Year 8 is already above the national average, which also represents good progress.
74. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 achieve very well in understanding what a budget is, how a spreadsheet can help and what formulae are needed. In Year 6, pupils predict further use and manipulate information for appropriate audiences. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well because of the match of the work to their needs and the support given by learning support assistants and the subject technician.
75. Achievement in Year 7, in the use of presentation and desktop publishing software, is effective in developing ideas and reviewing, modifying and evaluating work because pupils understand the idea of linked network resources. The design and modelling of graphic shapes is a good feature of the work in all years. Most Year 8 pupils are on course to achieve very good standards in 2005 and work together in the "Internet Café" and at lunchtime to prepare work for lessons.
76. Teaching and learning are very good overall with well-structured and engaging lessons. In Year 5, learning is very good in a whole-class starter activity on numeracy, mental maths and drafting work. The subject technician supports pupils very well in helping with network issues and explaining features of application software. The use of an electronic diary of pupils' progress is effective. Pupils examine spreadsheet data with confidence. In Year 7, pupils investigate new concepts such as inserting objects, at levels which are above expectation. Pupils amend and combine features with ease and the review of the lesson, using a network feature to share work individually and as a group, focuses on what the pupils need to do to improve. In Year 8, the advanced activity of writing web pages using a computer language is well managed by the pupils. Assessment is good and an effective pupil self-assessment and recording system is in place.
77. The range of extra-curricular activities before and after school is limited. Computers are available in the library, in the computer room and in other classrooms but other classroom resources are not used sufficiently. Information and communication technology is not firmly embedded in other subjects in the curriculum except in music, art and design and design and technology. During the inspection, very little use of the computers in the library or in classrooms was seen.
78. Leadership and management are excellent. The development plan is challenging but not complacent about the goals to which the school aspires. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant improvement in standards and the progress of pupils and an increase in the use of information and communication technology in some areas of the curriculum and in the supply of new resources. Some weaknesses still exist in the accommodation for information and communication technology. The department is in a very good position to move forward.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

79. Provision for information and communication technology across the curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. During the inspection very few computers were available or being used in lessons to provide research opportunities, to access library resources, or to assist in teaching and learning. Pupils use their computing skills effectively in music, information and communication technology, art and design, mathematics and English. All subject leaders have CD-Rom-based support materials and guidance provided by the subject leader. The use of information and communication technology in French, physical education and the dyslexia unit is unsatisfactory. In music, pupils make excellent progress through the use of information and communication technology. By Year 8, the use of samplers, sequencers and electronic instruments promote high standards. Most subjects do not regularly access the Internet or networked resources frequently enough to support basic skills.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and good teaching.
- Good relationships, attitudes and behaviour.
- Good variety of tasks and investigations.
- Assessment is not used effectively to check pupils' progress.

Commentary

80. Standards are at the national average throughout the school. The more able pupils attain well above average standards. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and attain standards in line with their capabilities. Achievement is good overall. Achievement is better when lessons have pace and challenge and pupils are clear about what they have to complete before the end of the lesson.
81. Year 6 pupils were able to organise a survey of journeys to school. They collected and represented evidence, prioritised, justified decisions and drew conclusions. Good use was made of differentiated materials and pupils with special educational needs were well supported. Year 7 pupils used story cards to link cause and effect in relation to adverse weather conditions and the effects these can have on communities. Good use was made of a recorded weather report which raised issues and motivated the pupils. Year 8 pupils were invited to solve a mystery as to why 30,000 Euros were on offer as an incentive for people to relocate. The discussion led to relocation in Italy and pupils investigated and discussed the advantages and disadvantages of living near an active volcano. Homework tasks were used effectively to support learning.
82. Since the last inspection, good progress has been made in the use of information and communication technology to support learning. However, less progress has been made by teachers in using assessment to inform pupils about the next stage in their learning and assessment is unsatisfactory overall.
83. Teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching methods are often imaginative and lead to a high level of interest. Schemes of work are good and lesson planning is thorough. However,

learning objectives are often too narrow and do not adequately relate to the learning opportunities in the lesson. As a result, the plenary is often limited and factual. Good questioning techniques engage pupils of all capabilities. There is a good balance between pupils working in pairs, groups and independently on their own tasks. Books are regularly marked; comments are generally supportive but are not always helpful. Pupils are not always made aware of what they need to do to improve, or how they can work at a higher level.

84. The head of department provides good leadership and management. The schemes of work are regularly improved and updated and resources are effectively deployed. The non-specialist teachers are provided with well structured teaching units and short-term plans but opportunities both to monitor their teaching and share good practice are limited.

History

Provision in History is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is good.
- Relationships are good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to the subject.
- Assessment is not used effectively to improve pupils' learning.
- Improve the subject knowledge of non-specialists.

Commentary

85. Standards are at the national average throughout the school. Pupils achieve in line with expectations. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve in line with their capabilities. Achievement is less satisfactory when tasks are mechanical and mundane, based on recall of basic factual knowledge without addressing understanding, interpretation or investigation.
86. Pupils in Year 5 have satisfactory levels of historical understanding and are able to interpret evidence from an Egyptian wall painting; they are able to make deductions and justify their views. Pupils in Year 7 are put in the position of being a Norman knight and make decisions about where to build a castle to defend the land given by William the Conqueror. Pupils reflect on the impact of being invaded. Since the last inspection, information and communication technology is used more effectively to support pupils' learning. Pupils' progress, however, is still hampered by non-specialist teaching and lack of time to observe and share good practice.
87. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Lessons are well prepared but lesson objectives are narrow and plans are not always followed. The use of questioning is good overall and subject knowledge is sound. However, non-specialist teachers do not always have the confidence, skills and knowledge to challenge pupils effectively. Pupils are very willing and join in all activities; relationships are good. Organisation of work varies; in most lessons, pupils work in pairs and independently on their own tasks, whilst in others, teaching is more didactic and discussion is not encouraged. Books are well marked. The use of teaching assistants is variable. In some lessons they are well deployed, whilst in others they are poorly managed and do not provide effective support. However, less progress has been made by teachers in using assessment to inform pupils about the next stage in their learning and assessment is unsatisfactory overall.
88. The head of department provides good leadership and is an effective role model. The scheme of work has been improved since the last inspection and there are better resources, especially

in the use of information and communication technology. All teachers are provided with well-structured teaching units and short-term plans. There are very few opportunities to monitor teaching and share good practice.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Schemes of work are comprehensive.
- The pupils' good behaviour and attitudes to the subject.
- Improve the subject knowledge of non-specialists.
- Assessment is not used effectively to improve pupils' learning.

Commentary

89. Standards throughout the school are in line with expectations of the locally-agreed syllabus, as is pupil achievement. Achievement is better when lessons have pace and pupils are challenged appropriately. In Year 5, pupils make progress in their knowledge and understanding of Hindu beliefs and the significance of sacred writing in the Hindu Scriptures. Pupils engage in some interesting reflection about parables in Christian faith and compare with the Hindu story, 'The Blind Man and the Elephant.' Their knowledge and understanding of religious concepts is deepened by a study of symbolism. Pupils understand why symbols are important and most are able to talk about the beliefs that they represent.
90. In Year 6, pupils make progress in knowledge and understanding of world religions by researching the "Festival of Sukkoth". The importance of tradition, reverence and symbolism is further developed through discussion about Remembrance Day and the two minutes silence observed throughout the school. Year 7 pupils study death and explore their own memories about bereavement. Pupils show sensitivity and understanding for each other's loss and connect the loss of a loved one with an event, a photograph or an object that holds the memory. Year 8 find out more about Sikhism, discuss how world religions have much in common and understand the power and significance of symbolism.
91. Since the last inspection, progress has been made in the use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning and is now satisfactory.
92. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Schemes of work are comprehensive. The use of questioning is good overall and pupils understand what they are required to do. Teachers seek to make the learning interesting but non-specialist teachers' lack of subject knowledge often limits the challenge for pupils to work at higher levels. Classroom organisation is good. Relationships are good, there is sensitivity to the needs of individual children and there is an effective learning environment. Books are well marked. Assessment is being developed through the Bedfordshire agreed syllabus and this is beginning to inform pupils about what they need to do to improve. End-of-unit projects are more clearly referenced to National Curriculum levels. Resources are good and include a range of religious artefacts. Less progress has been made by teachers in using assessment to inform pupils about the next stage in their learning and assessment is unsatisfactory overall.
93. The recently-appointed head of department leads with commitment and enthusiasm. He is well supported by a specialist religious education teacher. Schemes of work are in line with the Bedfordshire agreed syllabus.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Relationships with pupils are good.
- Quality of design and finish in textiles is very good.
- There is little use of computer-aided design and manufacture in Year 8.
- There is not a sufficient range of resources in resistant materials.

Commentary

94. Achievement is good overall and standards by the end of Year 6 and Year 8 are in line with expectations. There is no significant difference in the attainment of girls and boys, an improvement since the last inspection. Design work is now better. Although pupils are taught textiles, food and resistant materials in rotation, there is consistency in the teaching of the design process. The use of information and communication technology has improved but still requires further development in the area of computer-aided manufacture.
95. Achievement is good in resistant materials, food and textiles. Pupils have a good understanding of how to design and plan their work through to making their final products. Pupils' work shows evidence of good standards of communication when producing design ideas. For example, Year 8 pupils paid close attention to detail when drawing ideas for making a board game. Throughout the school, achievement is in line with national expectations for pupils of all levels of ability. Pupils with special educational needs are effectively supported and given good guidance and achieve well in most lessons. Many good examples of attention to detail were seen. In textiles, pupils produced well-designed cushion covers that had a high quality of finish. In resistant materials, pupils had taken great care to solder electronic components to a printed circuit board. Pupils responded positively to well-planned lessons that had good pace and a variety of learning activities.
96. Teaching and learning are good overall. Resources are always well planned and readily available for pupils. Lessons always start promptly and pupils become quickly engaged in their learning. Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that Year 8 pupils understand health and safety issues when sanding and shaping medium density fibreboard. Pupils listen well and are eager to answer questions. The provision for developing literacy skills is satisfactory overall and good in some lessons. For example, Year 7 pupils were able to discuss and consider alternative methods of fixing materials together in a textiles lesson. In an electronics-based lesson, pupils used correct terminology when describing the stages of making an educational toy. Pupils respond well to the teachers' high expectations regarding standards of behaviour.

97. Evaluation of finished products was a strength. There was some reference made to the use of computer-aided design and manufacture in textiles but pupils are not given the opportunity to use computers to assist their design and manufacture in resistant materials. The use of computer control, linked to pupils' projects, was not observed but is included in the scheme of work. Pupils enjoy the subject and are keen to participate. They work co-operatively and responsibly in the practical environment, giving each other support and help when required.
98. The subject is very well led and managed. Accommodation is of a good standard in food and textiles. Some improvements have been made in the resistant materials room since the previous inspection. Health and safety are a high priority for all staff. Pupils' work is levelled and moderated by the team of teachers at the end of each academic year. Marking of pupils' work has improved, so that all pupils know at what national curriculum level they have achieved at the end of each unit of work. The newly-appointed head of department has rewritten the schemes of work, which are exemplary.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weakness

- Very good teaching.
- Standards are above average at the end of Year 8.
- Achievement is good.
- Very good leadership and excellent management.
- A very good climate for learning.
- Visual display for Years 7 and 8 is excellent.
- Support for new and inexperienced staff teaching Years 5 and 6 is very good.
- The use of information and communication technology is underdeveloped.

Commentary

99. Standards at the end of Year 6 are at national expectations. All pupils are given the opportunity to work independently and in groups, developing both co-operation skills and critical analysis of their work. Homework is not linked closely enough to pupils' progress. Pupils make adequate progress and achieve in line with expectations.
100. Standards by the end of Year 8 are above expectations because of very good teaching. In lessons, pupils critically research the lives and ideas of artists, practise drawing skills, make diagrams and annotate sketches which they incorporate into finished paintings and sculptures. The planning of the skills needed for independent working by the teacher, coupled with a well-designed and highly attractive working environment, promotes a very good climate for learning. As a result, achievement is good.

Example of outstanding practice

High quality display actively promotes equality of opportunity. In an expanded art room, with high ceiling and windows on both sides, every inch of space has been utilised to create a stunning, high quality art environment. The celebration of pupils' work has been mixed with examples of the work of artists studied, including arts and crafts from around the world. Large floor-to-ceiling hangings, giant kites, oversized plants and award-winning pupil sculpture all harmonise to create a magical working environment. Boys in particular enjoy the dramatic contrasts in size seen in the display and, in lessons, without prompting will talk with other pupils about art which relates to their work in hand. All pupils are able to seek guidance and review their work against examples by other artists they see on display. Wall displays change to guide pupils recording personal reflections in their sketch books. A spectacular working environment that captivates all learners.

101. Teaching is good in all years, with some that is very good. Teachers plan and prepare very well. Marking is usually helpful, pointing out how the pupil can improve, and often correcting every mistake. Teachers provide much praise, encouragement and support, so pupils respond enthusiastically and behave very well. They keep accurate records of pupil achievement and all pupils' learning needs are known. Self-assessment is used by all pupils, becoming increasingly more detailed and critical in Years 7 and 8.
102. Leadership is very good and management often excellent. The support for new and inexperienced staff teaching Years 5 and 6 is very good. Clear photographic records of pupil work supports explanations. Preparation of resources is of a very high quality. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Planning is more effective and the work of established artists is now integral to the work of all years. In Years 7 and 8, pupils do not have sufficient planned opportunities to use information and communication technology as a research tool and also to develop skills which would allow them to manipulate and experiment with images and text.

Music

Overall the provision for music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weakness

- Very good teaching.
- Good standards of achievement.
- The number of pupils playing instruments is well above the average.
- Singing is not sufficiently embedded in some class activities.
- The accommodation remains a barrier to further improvements in music.

Commentary

103. Standards in Year 6 are at expectation. Pupils cover a wide range of activities, including composing and the use of music notations. A clear lesson structure is used but activities using the voice are not always present to support ongoing musical skills in all areas of study. Attainment in Year 7 is above average, especially in developing ideas, reviewing and modifying work. In Year 8, most pupils are able to memorise the pattern of semitones and tones in a major scale. The use of information and communication technology helps to sustain all pupils at national expectation. This represents good progress.

104. Pupils achieve well, for example in Year 6, in the relationship between sound and symbol and the use of musical shapes and rhythmic patterns. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well when using music as a non-verbal language. Sequencing instructions and counting games support numeracy. The use of information and communication technology is well above expectation for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and pupils use a sequencer to refine and present information and model ideas. In Years 7 and 8, recorded performances show that some "*Dance Remix*" compositions are already at a very high standard. In instrumental lessons provided by visiting teachers, some recent beginners in Year 8 achieve above expectations. In Year 7, the work of pupils in composing, rehearsing, and performing to the class is also above expectations. Following high-quality experiences in the classroom, pupils leave the school with a very good understanding of musical concepts and performing as member of a group.
105. Teaching is very good, versatile and sometimes inspirational. As a result, learning is very good. Teachers refer to ways in which pupils can improve their work in working towards targets, which are based on national curriculum levels. When activities are matched to live performances, brisk progress is made. Learning is satisfactory when the pace is slower and when the task lacks challenge. In a Year 7, lesson all pupils were actively engaged with the concept of musical instrument digital interface (MIDI). Pupils absorb complex and often abstract concepts because of the use of music technology in the form of sequencers and samplers. The results have immediate effect and pupils work together constructively in groups.
106. In Years 7 and 8, most pupils benefit from hearing the sound of semitones and tones using scales in composing. An archive of taped work shows pupils' strengths and weaknesses. The current process of assessing pupils' work is well matched to the programme of study and informs planning. A flute lesson has effective 'short cuts' for pupils to improve their performance in examinations.
107. The range of extra-curricular music activities is good. The number of pupils taking part in instrumental and vocal lessons is three times the national average. Other musical activities include choir, band, and brass groups. Many pupils participate in music centres, charity music events and school music groups regularly in the local community and on tour.
108. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in resources and staffing. The music room is a very good resource but is limited in space. The provision of resources is supported from concert activities but this has been mostly used in extra-curricular expansion. Music is well poised to move forward, thanks to the very good contribution of the current head of department.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision for physical education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.
- Extra-curricular provision is broad, providing many opportunities for pupils.

- Progress made by pupils in lessons is often limited.
- The quality of much of the teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

109. Standards are as expected at the end of Year 6 and Year 8. Although pupils' skills in some activities are at the appropriate national curriculum level, pupils' understanding and ability to evaluate are less well developed. Much of the work seen was broadly typical for pupils of the age range but the scope of the activities limited the level of challenge for most pupils. Achievement is unsatisfactory, although better in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6. Gains in knowledge and understanding in most lessons were limited. Achievement in gymnastics in Years 5 and 6 is good. Progress made by pupils is limited; many are not working as well as they can as they are rarely challenged.
110. Teaching is unsatisfactory overall, although some good teaching was seen. Lesson objectives were vague and had no explicit links to national curriculum requirements. There was no planned provision for pupils with different needs. Teaching activities are repeated without effective intervention to improve performance. Pupils' motivation and enterprise result in some learning gains. Pupils identified as having special educational needs are well integrated into lessons. Some opportunities for pupils to take responsibility were provided but these were inconsistent. Very few lessons start with any urgency. When pupils were engaged in their learning, they co-operated well, listened carefully and enjoyed being active.
111. The balance in Years 7 and 8 is better for girls than boys, as boys do not continue dance. Accommodation remains barely adequate. Extra-curricular provision is frequent, broad and inclusive. Each year group has representative teams and lunchtime and after-school clubs. Staff give generously of their time and are committed. Opportunities for pupils to join local sports clubs are publicised and encouraged. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory, particularly bearing in mind that many of the issues identified for action at the time of the last inspection are still outstanding.
112. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Planning at all levels is inadequate. Schemes of work do not provide support for effective learning. Raising achievement is not a focus. Monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is minimal.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHEC)

The school has a good programme for personal, social and health education, which is well managed. The course fulfils statutory requirements for sex education and teaches pupils effectively about the dangers of alcohol, smoking and drugs. Lessons seen were taught well overall. Standards are average by the end of Year 8.

Citizenship

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum planning is good and it fulfils National Curriculum requirements.
- Achievement is good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good.

Commentary

113. Overall, pupils reach average standards in citizenship by the end of Year 8. They are involved in their work and they remain on task and achieve adequate standards.
114. Citizenship is mainly taught within the personal, social, health and citizenship programme (PSHEC). The programme is comprehensive, including the development of personal responsibility, identifying the reason for rules, fund-raising and how to deal with incidents of bullying. In all lessons seen, the pupils were totally involved in the activities and responded positively to difficult questions and were able to analyse and give differing points of view and justify their answers. The schemes of work integrate aspects of citizenship within the main programme. This scheme of work meets new statutory National Curriculum requirements.
115. All pupils follow a course in citizenship. The Year 5 and 6 pupils follow a personal, social and health education programme that provides an effective introduction, preparing them well for their work in Years 7 and 8. The course is well structured and comprehensive. The guidance materials and other resources made available to teachers are good and enhance learning. Pupils make adequate progress and achieve average standards.
116. The quality of teaching seen was good overall. Teachers are well briefed and deliver the programme of work with commitment and enthusiasm. Subject knowledge is good and expectations are high. Teachers make satisfactory assessments of pupils' progress. Pupils with special education needs make appropriate progress in citizenship and lessons are inclusive and meet the needs of all.
117. Good leadership and co-ordination of the programme has enabled the introduction of the subject to enrich the school's PSHE programme, especially in Years 7 and 8.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

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

Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	3

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	3

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3

The leadership and management of the school	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
The effectiveness of management	4

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