

INSPECTION REPORT

RYECROFT C of E (C) MIDDLE SCHOOL

Rocester, Uttoxeter

LEA area: Staffordshire

Unique reference number: 124450

Headteacher: Mr J S Gore

Lead inspector: R Hedge

Dates of inspection: 7 – 8 February 2005

Inspection number: 268447

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils:	9 - 13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	289

School address:	Denstone Road Rocester Uttoxeter Staffordshire
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Telephone number:	01889 590394
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Curtis

Date of previous inspection:	8.3.1999
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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is a mixed comprehensive middle school of 289 pupils, which is smaller than average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average because of local full employment. Standards on entry to the school were average for pupils at present in Years 7 and 8 and below average for those in Years 5 and 6. The proportion of pupils of minority ethnic heritage is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is below average and most of them have specific learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion for whom a statement of special educational needs is maintained is above average. Only a small number of pupils were admitted to or left the school other than at the usual times of transfer. The school has more pupils than at the time of the previous inspection.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2932	R Hedge	Lead inspector	Personal, health and social education (PHSE) Citizenship
9424	J Cassidy	Lay inspector	
30512	M Bailey	Team inspector	Science
30702	P Bowyer	Team inspector	Mathematics
4355	F Earle	Team inspector	History Religious education
11969	J Hardy	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
20287	D Harris	Team inspector	French
11044	J Hedge	Team inspector	English
27665	A Lees	Team inspector	Music
31129	J Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology
33002	J Woodhouse	Team inspector	Geography Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school giving good value for money. Standards on entry to Year 5 have been average until the last two years, since when they have been below average. Pupils achieve satisfactorily in their earlier years in the school and in Years 7 and 8 they achieve well. Standards are average at the end of Year 6 and by the end of Year 8 they are above average. The quality of teaching is good. Leadership and management are good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

1. Over their four years in the school pupils make good progress and achieve well, mainly because of good teaching. They do best in music. Only in geography in the earlier years is there underachievement. Achievement in Years 5 and 6 is not as good as in Years 7 and 8.
2. Data about pupils' progress, taken from test results as well as teachers' assessments, are analysed thoroughly but teachers do not use this information with sufficient rigour to support the learning of individual pupils or to identify general weaknesses and remedy them. Pupils' progress in ICT is not assessed or evaluated adequately.
3. Some heads of department are overloaded so they do not have enough time to monitor the work in their subjects or manage improvement.
4. The leadership of the governors and headteacher is good. The school is managed well. There is good capacity to improve.
5. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. Very good extra-curricular activities are provided for pupils. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to school, behave well and develop into mature young people. Attendance levels are very high.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection in March 1999. Most issues raised in the last report have been successfully tackled: planning is very much better, there has been some improvement in the monitoring of teaching and standards, assessment has improved - though there is still a way to go in using the information well - and homework has also improved. Standards are not as high in Years 5 and 6 as they were, but there is evidence that standards on entry to the school are not as high. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are still above average. Standards in ICT, art and design and technology are not as high. Fewer lessons were judged to be very well taught.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils achieve well over their four years in the school because teaching is good. At the end of Year 6 standards are average. Overall, Year 6 standards represent satisfactory achievement. The best achievement is in music, where standards are well above average. Girls do better than boys. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as they move through the school because of good teaching and support. In 2004 standards in national tests were well below those in schools whose pupils reached a similar standard in national tests two years earlier. In 2003 they were above average. Taking the last three years into account, standards in national tests have been average in comparison with similar schools.

Pupils make good progress in Years 7 and 8. At the end of Year 8 standards are above average and achievement is good. Pupils achieve well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Achievement in music is very good.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, develop very well in response to what the school provides. There is a rich programme of visits and extra-curricular activities and pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility in the school, all of which play a significant part in promoting moral, social and cultural development. Although there is a small number of pupils, mostly boys, who find it difficult to concentrate seriously in lessons unless teaching is strong, attitudes are very good and behaviour is generally good. The school is largely free of tension, of harassment or bullying. Attendance is very high and pupils are punctual to lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. There is very good teaching of music but geography teaching in Years 5 and 6 lacks focus and ambition. Pupils of all backgrounds and particular needs learn well. The school offers a sound curriculum and, for a small school, a particularly broad range of other activities and many opportunities for pupils to accept responsibility. There are good arrangements across subjects to provide for pupils with special educational needs, so that they learn and achieve well. There is very good care and support for pupils though assessment is not sufficiently used to diagnose the strengths and weaknesses in achievement so that improvements can be made. The school relates well to parents, other educational institutions and the community. All of these strengths play their part in establishing pupils' good achievement overall.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management overall are good. The leadership of the headteacher is good, and he is perceptive in identifying the school's strengths and weaknesses and planning for improvement. The impact of management is good, though, in spite of improvements over the last two years, there is still not enough consistency and rigour in procedures for using assessment data to identify underachievement and in checking on and improving the quality of teaching. Some heads of department are overloaded and find it almost impossible to discharge all their responsibilities. The governing body does good work in supporting the school and holding it to account.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils think well of the school and of what it provides. The school is held in high regard in its community and about a quarter of the pupils travel from beyond the immediate local area. Pupils particularly appreciate that teachers have high expectations of them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

1. Raise standards in Years 5 and 6 to the levels of the later years by:
 - ensuring that the analysis of assessment data is used to identify and rectify shortcomings in achievement.
 - ensuring that heads of department take clear responsibility for standards and the quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6, monitor lessons and co-ordinate strategies for improvement.
2. Improve the assessment of pupils' progress in ICT through careful recording and analysis, so that the effectiveness of provision can be evaluated and standards improved.
3. Raise standards and achievement in geography in Years 5 and 6 by introducing higher expectations of what pupils might achieve and a wider range of teaching strategies.
4. Ensure that heads of department are not overloaded and have more time to lead and manage their subjects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. The best achievement is in music. Girls do better than boys. Standards are above average by the time pupils leave the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- By Year 8 standards are above average, mainly because of good teaching and management.
- Achievement is not good enough in geography in Years 5 and 6.
- Standards are higher in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6.
- The highest standards and best achievement are in music.

Commentary

1. Standards as measured by national tests taken at the end of Year 6 were above average overall in 2003: they were well above average in English and science and average in mathematics. In 2004, however, results fell back in all three core subjects and were below average overall. Taken over the last three years, standards as measured in the tests have been average in English and mathematics and above average in science. These results were reflected in observations made by inspectors except in mathematics, where the standards observed were below average.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	26.2 (28.7)	26.9 (26.8)
mathematics	26.7 (27.4)	27.0 (26.8)
science	28.7 (30.2)	28.6 (28.6)

There were 71 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Results over the last three years represent satisfactory achievement. The school's extensive evidence, based on a range of tests, shows that standards on entry to the school have been average in recent years, though the standards of the current Years 5 and 6 were below average. Results in English and science in 2003 were average in comparison with schools whose pupils were at a similar level in tests they took two years earlier; results in mathematics were well below average. In 2004, the results in all three subjects were well below average in comparison with similar schools. In that year, though, there were 45 boys and 26 girls. Taken over the last three years, boys have reached average standards compared with boys nationally and girls have reached above average standards compared with girls nationally. Allowing for the rise and fall of different years, results since 2000 have improved in line with the national trend. Standards of literacy and numeracy are average. Inspectors' observations indicate that by the end of Year 6, achievement is very good in music, good in mathematics, science, history and physical education, unsatisfactory in geography and satisfactory in other subjects. In 2004 the school's results in national tests fell just short of the realistic targets that had been set.
3. Pupils make better progress in Years 7 and 8 because teaching is more sharply focused and is based on higher expectations and because of the greater impact of heads of department.

By Year 8, standards are above average in all three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. They are well above average in music, above average in history and average in other subjects. In art and design, ICT and design and technology they are below average, though achievement is satisfactory because of the relatively low standard at which they entered the school. In ICT, too little time is spent on the subject and assessment is not used effectively. In art and design and design and technology, pupils are held back by poor drawing skills.

4. Pupils with special educational needs make progress at the same rate as other pupils. Their achievement is good, especially where they receive extra support, as in mathematics, from teaching assistants.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

The provision for pupils' personal development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is excellent.
- The attitudes of pupils are very good.
- The social and moral development of pupils is very good.

Commentary

5. Good partnership between the school and parents ensures excellent levels of attendance. Pupils like school, enjoy lessons, are punctual and well behaved and their attitude is very good.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.2	School data	0.1
National data	6.0	National data	0.3

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

6. Behaviour overall is good. There is some low-level disruption in a minority of lessons when teachers' management of behaviour is not good enough. The poor behaviour of a small number of boys in the current Year 7 has been carefully monitored and robust action taken to improve the behaviour and attitude of these pupils. Last year, the behaviour of these pupils resulted in more fixed term exclusions than usual.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed-period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	279	22	0

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

7. The great majority of pupils are well behaved, responsible and responsive to the high expectations set for them. Positive steps have been taken to combat bullying and pupils have been active participants in drawing up the anti-bullying policy and in making sure that it works

in practice. The school council has played an important part in successfully dealing with bullying.

8. The personal development of pupils is very good, with particular strengths in social and moral development. There are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the life of the school, especially through the house system. Pupils respond very well to these opportunities and are developing mature and responsible attitudes. This is particularly evident among older pupils. The buddy system and class and school councils give pupils practical experience of the obligations and benefits of community life and in the democratic process of seeking support and making decisions. Social development is very good.
9. There is clear and consistent emphasis on respect for others and behaving in a morally responsible way. Moral development is very good. The code of conduct clearly sets out what is expected of all members of the school community. This is reinforced by the consistent application by teachers of sanctions and rewards. Pupils are being taught the difference between right and wrong. They are also encouraged to reflect on moral problems and ethical questions, for example, when discussing slavery in history and the Ten Commandments in religious education or drugs in PSHE. There is very strong emphasis on considering the needs of others and extremely good support for charities. Pupils have sent messages to the children of Beslan, have written to schoolchildren in Romania in connection with a charity appeal and responded with characteristic generosity to the tsunami disaster appeal. Imaginative work with Amnesty International and on fair trade issues gives practical expression to the school's intention to educate pupils for life in the "global village".
10. Spiritual development is good. Pupils are encouraged to explore their own values and beliefs and to respect the beliefs of others. In religious education they are encouraged to consider a range of religious beliefs. In music pupils learn to listen sensitively to one another's work and music in general and to collaborate. They are encouraged to reflect on the feelings of other people and to respect differences. They often respond with sensitivity when writing or performing, for example, in response to work on human rights and when working with visiting poets and dramatists.
11. Pupils' cultural development is good in response to the many opportunities for cultural enrichment. They have numerous opportunities to understand important features of their cultural heritage, as, for example, in history with a study of family history and in religious education where they learn about the contribution of Christianity and other faiths to modern cultural life. Their study of literature is enriched by theatre visits and visiting writers and in music there is a very good range of musical activities including recorder groups, choir and orchestra as well as instrumental lessons. A wide range of extra-curricular activities provides further opportunities to develop cultural awareness and interests. Visits to France and to museums and theatres enhance work in class. Links with the local newspaper and with the business partnership provide good opportunities for pupils to extend their cultural horizons, and music and drama productions allow many pupils to experience the pleasure of creative work. There has been good improvement in helping pupils to understand cultural diversity. In religious education they are introduced to a range of world faiths and visit the Manchester Jewish Museum and Lichfield cathedral. The school has also hosted workshops with an Afro-Caribbean poet and a local storyteller and dramatist.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Pupils do well because teaching overall is good, the curriculum provides a rich variety of experiences, there are good links with parents and the community. There are very good standards of care for pupils.

Teaching and learning

Over their four years in the school pupils learn and achieve well because teaching is good. The assessment of pupils' work is sound but results are not used effectively to promote achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning is at least good in almost six lessons out of ten, as a result of teaching which is good or better. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching.
- Learning is not good enough in geography in Years 5 and 6.
- Pupils' work is generally assessed satisfactorily but information drawn from assessment is not used effectively to promote progress and raise standards further.
- Teaching and learning are very good in music.
- There is less very good teaching in Years 5 and 6 than in Years 7 and 8.

Commentary

12. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. There is almost no unsatisfactory teaching. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching has fallen since the last inspection.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 54 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0%)	9 (17%)	21 (39%)	21 (39%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)

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

13. Pupils' good achievement over four years in the school and their good learning in class are mainly due to the quality of teaching they receive. Teachers in all departments relate well to pupils and work hard to meet their needs. Although the school has a number of pupils with challenging behaviour, in only a small number of lessons do pupils misbehave and hinder the progress of themselves and others. Most lessons are well planned to take into account pupils' needs and the demands of the curriculum.
14. In most lessons pupils with special educational needs learn well. In the best lessons teachers adapt work carefully to pupils' needs. In some Year 6 English, for example, there is close personalised marking and targets are set. There is generally good support from teaching assistants. In mathematics and English, for example, pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the extra help they receive, though in English assistants sometimes play too limited a part in the lesson. Assistants play a vital role in the provision for a small group of boys in Year 7 who find it difficult to concentrate and behave appropriately.
15. English teaching is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. Careful planning and lively lessons are based on confident subject knowledge. As a result pupils learn well, though in some Year 5 and 6 lessons the pace can be slow and pupils have too few opportunities to work independently. The National Literacy Strategy has made a positive impact, especially in Years 7 and 8.
16. Science teaching is good in all four years. Teachers know their subject and their pupils well. Expectations are high and pupils respond with enthusiasm and confidence. The national Key Stage 3 strategy has not been implemented with enough vigour, though. Objectives are not always reviewed at the ends of lessons so neither pupils nor staff are clear about what has been learned.
17. Mathematics teaching is better in Years 7 and 8 than Years 5 and 6 because of the greater impact of the head of department. As at the time of the last inspection, teaching of the younger pupils is over-dominated by the use of textbooks, which sometimes limits the progress of potentially high-attaining pupils. By contrast, older pupils learn better. The best teaching is imaginative and based on challenging questioning by the teacher.

18. Teaching and learning are very good in music. As a result, pupils' achievement levels are very good. Pupils are managed well and learn effectively because of the varied activities with which they are presented, the teacher's strong subject expertise and very good individual support.
19. Across the rest of the curriculum there is no subject or stage in which teaching is unsatisfactory except for geography in Years 5 and 6. Although teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in geography, in Years 5 and 6 the range of tasks pupils attempt is narrow and expectations of what they might achieve are too low. In all four years teaching and learning are good in history and physical education and satisfactory in the other subjects.
20. Teachers generally mark pupils' work carefully and make sound use of homework to help pupils to become more independent learners. The planning and use of homework to promote learning are particularly good in English in Years 7 and 8. Assessment is better than at the time of the last inspection and is now closely related to National Curriculum levels. The use of assessment data to analyse progress and suggest teaching strategies is not well enough embedded in the work of departments. Although there is good data collection and analysis at whole-school level, teachers do not yet use data routinely to track pupils' progress. The situation is worst in ICT where progress is not adequately recorded or tracked. Even in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science there is insufficient attention paid to using assessment data to identify weakness and strengths in learning in order to improve teaching and the curriculum.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. Enrichment through extra-curricular activities is very good. Staffing is good, with specialists in all subjects. Accommodation is satisfactory. Resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good enrichment activities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development
- The school makes effective use of specialist teachers, well supported by teacher assistants.
- There is a very good library that supports learning effectively.
- Carousel arrangements reduce the time available for some subjects.

Commentary

21. Pupils encounter a broad range of experiences across subjects and, because of the consistency of good teaching and good subject provision, their learning is effective. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. There is effective support across subjects for the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and this is particularly good in Years 7 and 8. Provision in ICT is satisfactory and its use to support learning in other subjects is good in history, geography and design and technology. Arrangements for some subjects are on a 'carousel' basis which means that time is reduced. For example, music, art and ICT are part of a rotation that allows pupils to experience the subjects for two-thirds of the year. In a similar arrangement religious education, personal and social education and physical education receive a limited amount of curriculum time. The arrangement allows greater emphasis on the core subjects, enabling some grouping by ability in mathematics, English and science. Pupils benefit from changes in the composition of their teaching groups and enjoy a greater social mix as a result of these arrangements. However, the restricted time for ICT does reduce pupils' attainment. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The learning needs of gifted and talented pupils are also catered for with appropriate extension work in the majority of subjects.
22. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities, which includes a full range of team sports. Pupils also make full use of ICT facilities, especially at lunchtimes. There is very good enrichment in music with recorder clubs, choirs and visits to concerts.

Pupils benefit from residential experience and many other curriculum-related activities, including visiting professionals in art and music. The school provides additional tuition for core subjects in the form of booster classes for pupils in Year 6 and intervention classes for Year 7.

23. There are very good links with local schools including joint, agreed curriculum planning, and common unit tests in science. These links help to provide good levels of information on pupils' progress and aid the transition to the next phase of their education.
24. The school is fortunate to have a good range of specialist teachers who are deployed to good effect. Teachers are well supported by good provision of teacher assistants. The number and quality of teacher assistants have enabled special provision to be made for a small group of pupils with challenging behaviour in Year 7, which has benefited all pupils.
25. Resources are good. In physical education good use is made of video to analyse performance. A good range of equipment is available in mathematics to aid learning.
26. Accommodation is satisfactory and meets the requirements of the curriculum but space is limited. The school has no satisfactory dedicated accommodation for pupils with special educational needs. The library, which is a very good facility, has to serve at certain times as a classroom. There are limited indoor areas for physical education. Spaces are clean and attractive and there are good, stimulating displays.

Care, guidance and support

Care, guidance and support are generally very good, but assessment information is not always analysed and used effectively enough to support pupils' progress, especially in Years 5 and 6.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is very good at seeking pupils' views and acting upon them.
- Teachers know pupils and their needs very well.
- Recent innovations have ensured that pupils' progress is tracked carefully, though the information is not always used effectively to drive up standards in subjects, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
- There are very good procedures aimed at ensuring that pupils make a smooth transition into the school in Year 5.

Commentary

27. Pupils and parents are clear that there are good standards of care and that the school is a secure and safe place. Class teachers in Years 5 and 6 and subject teachers in Years 7 and 8 know their pupils well and try hard to meet their needs. Child protection procedures meet requirements.
28. A number of boys in last year's Year 6 presented considerable problems because of their inability to behave appropriately in school, leading to a measure of disruption and some bullying but the school has put in place a number of robust measures to overcome the problems this year. As a result, many pupils are making better progress in Year 7 this year than they did in the past. The school has made good use of support from the local education authority in overcoming these problems and supporting the pupils experiencing difficulties.
29. Pupils are supported well in their learning. Marking of work is generally sound and often contains helpful advice on how to improve. The school analyses assessment data well, but findings are not always adequately reflected in action to secure improvement in standards. This is more true of Years 5 and 6, where the drive to raise standards is not sharp enough, than of Years 7 and 8.

30. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well. Teaching assistants are generally very effective. There is very good in-class extra support for them in mathematics, for example. Individual education plans for these pupils are very clear and are used well.
31. There are very good arrangements to ensure that pupils make a smooth transition into the school in Year 5. Pupils with special educational needs are identified early. The Year 5 co-ordinator visits feeder primary schools and data about pupils' attainment and progress are passed on. About a quarter of the school's intake comprises pupils from beyond the local area. These children are invited to Year 4 induction days along with those from other schools. There are parents' evenings for Year 4 pupils wishing to come to the school and new Year 5 pupils have "buddies" from higher years.
32. Given that there are no pupils beyond Year 8, the school is particularly good at seeking and acting on their views. The school council is a very successful forum for discussion of a wide range of issues, from bullying and behaviour to catering. Pupils' views are trenchantly expressed and are taken seriously.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Partnerships with parents and community are good; links with other schools are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents and pupils are supportive of the school.
- Surveys are used to gather the views of parents, pupils and staff.
- There are strong links with other schools.
- There is good community involvement.

Commentary

33. The school is popular with parents and draws pupils from well outside the local area. Parents are supportive of the school and enjoy good relationships with staff, of whom they speak positively. Surveys and individual contacts are used to obtain parents' views, which are considered carefully and often acted upon. Complaints are sympathetically and promptly dealt with. There is a very supportive parent and teacher association.
34. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities within the school and there is an impressive and very active school council that allows pupils from every class to influence decisions about their school. They have recently been involved in tackling inappropriate behaviour by pupils, improving school menus and discussing site improvements.
35. School newsletters are written in a readable style and circulated to parents, staff and governors. Pupils' progress is reported to parents, who can discuss reports with subject and form tutors at parents' evenings. Parents' meetings and school events are well attended. Pupils have homework planners that parents see and which can provide a means of communication between them and school.
36. Incoming pupils, and their parents, have a number of opportunities to sample aspects of life in the school before entry to Year 5, with excellent supporting documentation. The school has very good liaison and co-operation with other schools, with beneficial sharing of expertise, facilities, and common curriculum in some subjects. There are strong links with the high school, which provides resources and expertise to prepare pupils for and ease their transition into Year 9.
37. Links with the community are good; the school takes a full and active part in a wide range of cultural and social activities that enrich the educational experience for pupils. The school is

an active supporter of a wide range of charities and pupils regularly take part in fundraising on their behalf.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are both good. The governing body discharges its responsibilities well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Governors and the headteacher lead the school well.
- Management is good though some heads of department are overloaded and this reduces their effectiveness.
- Heads of department have too little impact on the work in Years 5 and 6.
- Financial management is very good.

Commentary

38. Governors play their full part in the life of the school. They know the school well and have a shrewd view of its strengths and weaknesses. They ensure that statutory requirements are met. They are committed to improvement and share a vision and sense of direction with the headteacher. In their scrutiny of the work of the school they successfully combine a supportive general stance with a properly critical attitude to plans and policies suggested by senior staff.
39. The headteacher exercises good leadership. There is a clear focus on meeting the various needs of all of the school's pupils and on securing improvement in the quality of provision. Teachers are motivated to work together on pupils' behalf. The school's development planning is very good. The development plan is properly focused on strategies to drive up standards and these are gradually bearing fruit, especially in Years 7 and 8, though the relatively new procedures are not fully embedded in practice across the whole of the work of the school.
40. Management is also good. Over the last two years policies to improve the effectiveness of the use of assessment data to identify weaknesses in provision have improved considerably, though, as yet, not all departments use the results of analysis of data effectively enough in their efforts to drive up standards. This is particularly true in Years 5 and 6, where the impact of heads of department is not strong enough. Some heads of department have responsibility for two subjects and find it difficult to exercise good leadership over both key stages across both subjects. Although there is monitoring of the quality of teaching and reviews of pupils' work, heads of department are not yet sufficiently involved in the process of scrutinising and driving up standards, particularly in Years 5 and 6.
41. Financial management is very good. Resources are directed according to educational priorities, such as meeting the needs of pupils with difficult behaviour. Best value is effectively achieved in the purchase of goods and services and governors are fully involved in planning and monitoring expenditure.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,026,223	Balance from previous year	128,070
Total expenditure	1083983	Balance carried forward to the next	10,000
Expenditure per pupil	3497		

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 2 and 3

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are interested and enjoy the good teaching in Years 7 and 8, but in Years 5 and 6 teaching is less secure and pupils do not learn as well.
- The planning of teaching is very good especially in Years 7 and 8.
- Overall leadership and management of the subject are very good; there have been some important recent developments particularly in assessment.

Commentary

42. Over the last three years standards in national tests at the end of Year 6 have generally been average, with a good year in 2003 and less good in 2004. In 2004 the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels of the test was below average suggesting that there were fewer higher attaining pupils than is usual. When measured against prior attainment standards were well below average in 2004 and average in 2003. Since 2000 there has been a steady if slight decline in standards with exception of the unusually good results in 2003. Girls do better than boys by more than the national gap. On a three-year rolling average girls are above and boys close to the national average.
43. The school has data indicating that the standards of pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 were below average when they entered the school. Achievement in Years 5 and 6 is satisfactory and standards by the end of Year 6 are broadly average. In Years 7 and 8 pupils' achievement is good because teaching is strong and standards in the current Year 8 are above average. The attainment of these pupils on entry to the school was average. Generally both higher and lower attaining pupils make progress at a similar rate to others, although higher attaining pupils in all years would benefit from more challenging opportunities in class. In lessons where there is additional support pupils with special educational needs are able to participate very well but sometimes teaching assistants are underused in lessons.
44. Overall teaching and learning are good. In Years 5 and 6 teaching is satisfactory; in Years 7 and 8 it is good. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The best lessons are very carefully planned and tasks are lively and creative as well as varied and well sequenced. Supporting materials are well designed. Teaching is based on confident and sound knowledge of the subject. Lessons are brisk and challenging. Pupils are clear about the objectives of the lesson and what is expected of them. Relationships are very positive and pupils find lessons enjoyable so learn well. Progress is satisfactory in all lessons but in some, particularly in Years 5 and 6, pace is slow and the progression of learning not well judged. Pupils are not given enough opportunity to work independently or to express their own ideas. The confident style of Years 7 and 8 is less apparent in Years 5 and 6 where sometimes teachers' anxiety leads to over-reaction in managing pupils. Although teachers know pupils well they do not always adapt materials sufficiently to cater for individual needs.
45. Overall leadership and management of the subject are very good. A clear sense of direction for the subject is apparent. Both the planning underpinning teaching programmes and future planning are well organised and detailed. Recent developments, including the National Literacy Strategy, have made a strong impact particularly in Years 7 and 8. There has been

very good progress with assessment so that, for example, pupils in all years now have individual sheets to enable tracking of progress against National Curriculum targets. Teachers have access to very detailed assessment data although so far they do not use it well enough to help pupils improve their attainment. Assessment - for example, common assessment tasks across year groups - is yet to be integrated into planning. Pupils' workbooks are checked in Years 5 and 6 and there has been some opportunity for teachers to observe each other in the classroom.

46. Very good corridor displays emphasise the subject's high profile in the school. Pupils in all years benefit from visits by writers, poets and theatre workshops; all have opportunities for drama. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 especially use ICT for research purposes but access to computers is not easy. Groups to improve the attainment of both higher and lower attaining pupils run after school.
47. Since the last inspection there has been some decline in standards on entry to the school and consequently standards of literacy are not as high as reported last time. Girls still outperform boys by a similar margin as at the last inspection despite the good efforts made recently to improve the attainment of boys. Teaching is not as strong in Years 5 and 6 as last time. There have been some important and effective developments in the leadership and management of the subject. These should now be focused to a greater extent on supporting teaching in Years 5 and 6.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

48. By the time pupils leave the school in Year 8 standards of literacy are above average and enable students to make good progress in their work. Pupils make very good use of initial planning and drafting and learn to make notes; their writing covers a range of styles and formats and improves steadily as they move through the school. They are good listeners but generally there are too few planned opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills. Reading is encouraged through a range of initiatives, for example, pupils have weekly reading targets, keep records of the books they read and there is a home/school partnership to promote pupils' reading. The library is very pleasant and well organised and is used by students to read at lunchtime. The development of pupils' literacy skills is taken seriously by most curriculum areas although there are few opportunities for extended writing in science and spelling is left uncorrected in art. Keywords are used well, for example, in geography and in design and technology. The impact of the literacy strategy is clear in the teaching of history. There is too little attention to correcting spelling in, for example, art.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standard of pupils' written work is above average and in this respect they are achieving well.
- Teaching of French, while satisfactory overall, gives pupils too little opportunity to hear and speak French.
- Most pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning French.
- The French classroom provides a very pleasant environment for learning.

Commentary

49. French is taught from Year 6. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 reach average standards in French and are achieving satisfactorily overall. The quality of their written work is above average because they spend much of their time on reading and writing exercises. Higher-attainers, for example, write accurately about their family and school life using a good variety of grammatical

structures and vocabulary. Pupils present their work very well and take pride in it. In this respect achievement is good, particularly among pupils of higher and middle attainment. In speaking and listening, however, standards are no better than average. Pupils have very English-sounding pronunciation. This is because they do not hear enough French in the classroom and are given too few opportunities to practise speaking it. A small group of boys with learning and behavioural difficulties in Year 7 achieve satisfactorily with close attention and very good support.

50. The learning of most pupils is satisfactory because teaching is orderly and well managed. Relationships between teachers and pupils are good. Marking of written work is thorough and helpful. Teachers set a very good example to pupils by treating them kindly and praising them for their efforts. Lessons generally start briskly and with clear explanations of what pupils will be learning. All this makes for a good context for learning and leads to good behaviour and positive attitudes in most cases.
51. These strengths of teaching, however, are partially offset by two factors. First, teachers do not use French enough in the classroom and as a result pupils are not adequately learning how to listen and understand in the language. Second, teachers do not use enough methods, such as colourful visuals or competitive activities, to coax pupils into using French actively. Because of this many pupils are not confident in speaking and are often slow to respond to teachers' instructions in French. Good up-to-date audio-visual equipment for this purpose is lacking in the department. Also, more use of ICT for all pupils would add variety and interest, especially for those in Year 7 who find it hard to concentrate during the sixty-minute lessons. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory.
52. Leadership and management of the French department are satisfactory. The department runs smoothly and is well organised. The well-established links that exist between the French department and those of other middle and high schools in the area ensure good continuity from one phase of education to the next. In contrast to the time of the last inspection, accommodation for French now has a positive effect on standards through the very high quality of display on the walls. Pupils benefit in many ways from the annual well-subscribed visit to northern France. However, the department is not fully up-to-date with modern teaching methods. Although there have been satisfactory improvements since the last inspection, one of the main areas for development mentioned in the report, namely the need to concentrate more on speaking and listening, remains to be tackled.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, especially in Years 7 and 8, enables pupils to achieve well.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are positive.
- There is not enough monitoring of teaching in order to spread best practice.
- Procedures for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress are not sharp enough.

Commentary

53. In 2004 the results of national tests taken at the end of Year 6 were average, with girls' results being slightly higher than boys' results. These results are in line with the trend over the last few years although the 2004 results were lower than the 2003 results. Over this time girls' results have been better than boys' results although the differences have been small. When compared to similar schools, the 2004 results were well below average. The attainment on entry to the school is now below average for pupils in Years 5 and 6. However, the attainment

on entry to the school in Year 5 for pupils in Years 7 and 8 was average. Standards are below average at the end of Year 6 but above average by Year 8.

54. The achievement of pupils over their four years in the school is good, with little difference between boys and girls. The greatest gains in learning occur in Years 7 and 8 where there are specialist mathematics teachers and pupils are grouped by attainment. Pupils with special educational needs are helped by the good provision of in-class support. Where deployed, teaching assistants are very effective. Gifted and talented pupils and pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils.
55. Teaching is good overall, although noticeably more effective in Years 7 and 8. In Years 5 and 6 there is sound teaching, with form teachers working well in teams to develop the subject. However, the content of bland textbooks dominates the planning and there is a need for imaginative resources to supplement the exercises. Extra resources would also help in allowing more opportunity for gifted and talented pupils to make faster progress. The best teaching is imaginative, stimulating and challenging. The best lessons occur in Years 7 and 8 where very effective question and answer sessions ensure that all pupils are fully involved with the lesson. This results in high levels of enthusiasm and engagement, and pupils' attitudes to the subject are strong. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are good. There is good use of a data projector connected to a laptop computer to illustrate the subject. The high challenge of most lessons in Years 7 and 8 enables all pupils to make good gains in long-term learning.
56. The mathematics department is well led and managed. The strongest feature is the organisation of the Year 7 and Year 8 work, with clear and accessible schemes of work and lesson plans. There is a good development plan for the subject. Some underachievement among a group of boys was identified and tackled effectively by means of extra "booster" lessons. Procedures to check on the quality of teaching are not sufficiently developed to spread best practice. There is insufficient liaison between the head of department and the Year 5 and Year 6 form teachers. The analysis of data in the form of examination results and progress tests is in the early stages of development but is not used to help set targets for pupils and to track their progress. Current targets do not refer to the subject and do not refer to National Curriculum levels. Keywords of the subject are displayed on some classroom walls although not enough reference is made to them in lessons.
57. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in pupils' numerical skills. Pupils' results in national examinations have risen since 1999, except in 2004. However, some issues raised in the last inspection have still to be addressed: there is still not enough contact between the head of department and other teachers and not enough use of targets for pupils. Overall, however, improvement has been satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. The last inspection report noted that numeracy across the school was developed inconsistently. Since then the school has run a training day to raise awareness of numeracy in other subjects. The impact of this is that numeracy has improved to a satisfactory level although more could still be done. In science pupils can construct and interpret simple graphs. In geography pupils can understand work on map scales and interpret appropriate graphs. In design and technology there is some work on spreadsheets that highlights simple numerical skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in science are above average.

- Good teaching and learning lead to good achievement.
- Good relationships and classroom management result in pupils having a positive attitude to science and they want to do well.
- Checks on the quality of teaching are not systematic enough to provide consistency and a sharing of good practice.
- The use of ICT to enhance the teaching of science is underdeveloped.
- Marking of written work does not give pupils sufficient information on how to improve their work.

Commentary

59. In 2003, results in the national test taken in Year 6 were well above average. Results declined in 2004 but were in line with the national average. Girls performed better than boys in relation to their respective national averages. Standards in Year 8 are above average. This means that pupils make good progress through the school.
60. The standard of work seen in Year 6 is above average. Achievement overall is good. Pupils can use physical ideas to explain shadow formation and know how to change the pitch of sounds. They can classify materials and use scientific terminology to describe changes of state. Higher attaining pupils can use models to explain the length of the day or year and can apply their knowledge to suggest how mixtures can be separated. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support and make the same progress as other pupils.
61. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 and 8 is good. Pupils have good investigative skills, which are developed in a systematic way. They are encouraged to make hypotheses and to evaluate results in scientific terms. Carefully structured, well-planned teaching enables all pupils to develop their understanding of scientific concepts, building on their previous knowledge. Pupils have a good knowledge of physical and chemical changes, the processes involved in digestion and respiration and the effects of forces. Higher attaining pupils understand the difference between heat and temperature and can apply their knowledge of the particulate nature of matter to explain changes of state.
62. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the age range. Teachers use their subject expertise to good effect in communicating scientific concepts clearly in language that pupils can understand easily. In the majority of lessons teachers manage their classes well and insist on high standards of work and behaviour. They are encouraging and supportive, boosting pupils' confidence. In the good lessons, teaching is enthusiastic, capturing pupils' interest well. Where pupils are challenged to think critically about their science, learning is enhanced. Pupils' positive attitudes and motivation contribute significantly to their good learning.
63. The new national teaching and learning initiative in Years 7 and 8 is underdeveloped. Opportunities are often missed to review the lesson objectives at the end of the lesson to give both teacher and pupils an assessment of what has been learned. ICT is not used enough to enhance learning. Pupils now know the standard of their work in terms of National Curriculum levels. More effective target-setting would give pupils standards to aim for and more constructive marking would show pupils how to improve their work.
64. The leadership and management of the science department are good. The head of department provides clear educational direction. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards have been maintained and a systematic programme for teaching scientific enquiry skills has been introduced to good effect. However, there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and few opportunities are provided for the use of a wide range of writing styles.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very good attitudes towards the subject and show respect for the learning environment.
- Time allocated to ICT lessons in all years is low. In Years 7 and 8 it is below the recommended amount to meet the requirements of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy.
- Assessment is unsatisfactory across all years.

Commentary

65. It was not possible to see much teaching during the inspection. Only Year 5 was being taught. Judgements are based on those observations, discussion with the teacher and pupils and scrutiny of pupils' electronic files. Standards on entry to Year 5 are below those expected for that age. There is too little evidence available to estimate standards at the end of Year 6. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 continue to develop their skills and knowledge of ICT and are competent users of technology. By the end of Year 8 most have reached the required level in communicating and handling information but not in controlling, modelling and measuring. Attainment across the subject in Year 8, on the basis of analysis of pupils' work, is below average. Standards are the same for all groups of pupils. Pupils with special educational needs reach a similar level to other groups and in some instances exceed expectations.
66. All groups of pupils achieve at a satisfactory rate. Girls show a greater level of commitment to tasks overall. Pupils regarded as more able are not always given sufficiently challenging work in order to develop at a better than average rate. In all years pupils are confident users of the technology. They access data from a variety of sources and handle and communicate information competently. The majority of pupils are familiar with the standard features of word processing, desktop publishing and spreadsheets. Whilst the most senior pupils recognise the usefulness of ICT, as with other years they do not fully consider the impact of technology on society.
67. Very little teaching was observed. Only lessons in Year 5 were being taught during the inspection. All the teaching seen was satisfactory. Teachers plan carefully and outline lesson requirements, making clear their expectations. Activities did not always allow learning objectives to be achieved. Although the pupils understood the tasks, information gathering and inputting took too long, giving insufficient time to focus on the lesson. Pupils are effectively managed and take a good level of responsibility for their learning. Pupils are very responsible and have very good attitudes towards the work. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are good. Teachers provide good one-to-one support, understand where particular help is needed and intervene appropriately.
68. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory. Pupils receive their entitlement albeit with a time allocation which is below that recommended especially in Years 7 and 8. There is a lack of continuity because pupils have ICT lessons for only two-thirds of the year. There is no systematic assessment process in place or effective tracking to monitor pupils' progress. Pupils produce almost no paper copies of work and receive no written feedback in order to help them establish how well they are doing or how to improve. Enhanced equipment levels have made a significant difference to the use of ICT across all subjects but work and outcomes are not co-ordinated or recorded. These shortcomings are known and are being addressed. However, the subject leader is also responsible for another major subject. The considerable demands on his time are reflected in the unsatisfactory nature of assessment in the subject. There have been significant improvements in the quality and quantity of equipment, and cross-curricular use is much improved. Overall improvement has been just satisfactory since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. The use of ICT across subjects is encouraged by the subject leader. The improvements in equipment levels and accommodation since the last inspection have made a significant difference to the use of ICT in other subjects. Some subjects still have difficulty in getting access to equipment, for example English, science and art. Most subject areas have access to small numbers of computers and the overall ratio of computers to pupils is better than average. Overall competence of teachers is good. A booking system operates effectively for the main computer room, and technician support from within the school and from the high school ensures that equipment is reliable. All subjects use ICT within their curriculum, but the quality of provision is variable. In some subjects, such design and technology, history, geography and physical education the use of ICT is good. In other subjects it is used but constrained by access to equipment - for example, in art. Despite the access problems and the limitations on time for discrete lessons pupils across all years are able to use the hardware with confidence. They have a satisfactory understanding of the standard programs used for handling and communicating information.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in Years 5 and 6 due to the narrow range of learning opportunities.
- Pupils know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.
- Lesson activities are well matched to the needs of pupils in Years 7 and 8.
- There are planned opportunities for pupils to use computers in lessons.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is not widespread enough to raise standards.

Commentary

70. At the end of Year 6, standards are below average. This represents unsatisfactory progress. Pupils can select information from resources given to them and are able to answer a range of questions. The description of geographical patterns and processes is poorly developed in Year 6. Standards are average at the end of Year 8 due to good achievement and progress. Pupils can select and use a variety of appropriate skills in using maps, graphs and diagrams. They can describe geographical patterns and processes and begin to explain them although their competence is not well developed.
71. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are better in Years 7 and 8 than in Years 5 and 6. In Years 5 and 6, a limited range of learning opportunities and low expectations result in unsatisfactory achievement. In Years 7 and 8, teaching methods are more varied and suited to the age and ability of pupils; this gives rise to good achievement. Pupils are given opportunities to use computers provided enough are available. Those pupils with special educational needs are well supported by teaching assistants. Teachers assess work regularly and pupils know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Class work is marked with useful comments from the teacher but the school's grading system is not always used.
72. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new head of department has already made some improvements such as providing more regular assessment opportunities and developing schemes of work. There is commitment to the use of information technology although the availability of computers is limited. Teaching and learning are not well developed

in Years 5 and 6. There is not enough tracking of pupils' progress in all year groups and lessons are not monitored regularly to check the quality of teaching.

73. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Pupils still make good progress in Years 7 and 8 but there has been a decline in standards in Years 5 and 6. The use of computers is better developed and there are now more fieldwork opportunities.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good management and leadership have resulted in good improvement in teaching and learning since the last inspection.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Pupils' positive attitudes contribute significantly to the quality of learning.
- In some lessons there is not enough variety of activity and conclusions are too hurried to reinforce effectively what has been learned.

Commentary

74. Standards in Year 6 are average. Those of higher attaining pupils are above average. Most pupils have sound subject knowledge, can take information from sources and describe important features of the period they study. They are weaker at explaining how aspects of the past may be interpreted in different ways. Overall, they are making good progress in their knowledge of the past and in using source material. Their achievement is good. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because of good support from teachers and appropriate work which gives them a sense of success. Higher attaining pupils achieve well because they are engaged in lessons, interested in what they do and often offer perceptive comments in class discussions. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
75. Standards in Year 8 are above average. This is because of good teaching which enables pupils to build well on the work done in earlier years. Pupils have good subject knowledge and can write clear and accurate narratives of past events. They are beginning to identify short and long-term causes but are weaker at independent selection and evaluation of sources. The standard of higher attaining pupils is well above average. They write well with a good grasp of factual detail. Pupils are making better-than-expected progress and their achievement is good. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good because teachers know their needs and set suitable tasks. The achievement of higher attaining pupils is good because lessons stimulate their interest and they are encouraged to produce good work, especially in written assignments. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.
76. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and most lessons are purposeful. Pupils are diligent and have a positive attitude towards the subject. This is a major factor in the overall good quality of learning. There are some weaker aspects of teaching. Conclusions are sometimes too hurried to reinforce properly what has been learned and the intended variety of activity set out in the scheme of work is not always evident in lessons. Overall, however, the quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. Assessment is thorough and pupils are given clear explanations of how they can improve. The marking of assessed units is very good.
77. Leadership and management are good. Clear objectives for improvement have been identified and improvement made to the quality of provision. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the monitoring of teaching, homework, artefacts and resources and the use of ICT.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Time allocation in Years 5 and 6 has increased since the last inspection though it is still below the recommendation of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 7 and 8.
- There is not enough good teaching.
- Assessment does not give enough guidance to pupils on how to improve.
- Lessons increase pupils' knowledge of cultural diversity.

Commentary

78. Standards in Year 6 are average, but are at the lower end of the levels set in the locally agreed syllabus. Pupils can express in simple terms what is of value to them but are weaker at explaining the meaning of religious symbols and in linking belief and practice. The standard of girls' written work is generally higher than boys' because they write in greater detail and take more care in presentation. The achievement of most pupils is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily because of the teacher's support in lessons. The achievement of higher attaining pupils is satisfactory.
79. Standards in Year 8 meet the expectations of the agreed syllabus. Most pupils are able to describe the beliefs and practices of the religions they study and explain the meaning of religious symbols. They are weaker at comparing religious beliefs and in making independent judgements. The written work of girls is better than boys because they are prepared to spend more time in gathering information and presenting it carefully. Achievement is satisfactory. Teacher support in class enables pupils with special educational needs to achieve satisfactorily. The achievement of higher attaining pupils is satisfactory.
80. Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons help pupils to extend their knowledge of religious beliefs and practices. They also help to raise their awareness of the religious diversity of society. There are some weaknesses in teaching. There is too little variety of activity, pupils whose attention wanders are not always brought back to task quickly and conclusions do not always reinforce what has been learned. Assessment is regular but does not give enough guidance to pupils on how to improve.
81. Time allocation in Years 7 and 8 is below the recommendation of the locally agreed syllabus. This means that pupils do not always have the richness and breadth of experience intended by the syllabus. Within these constraints the subject is making a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development by introducing them to world religions and through visits and links with the church.
82. Leadership is satisfactory. Teaching is monitored but targets for improvement have not been clearly identified. Management is good. Resources and ICT have been improved since the last inspection, there are good links with charities and other agencies and, within the time constraints noted, provision meets statutory requirements.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average.
- There is insufficient good or very good teaching and learning.
- Activities are well designed and lessons are well managed.
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils and attitudes are good.

Commentary

83. Standards are below average but pupils enter school with below average knowledge and understanding and the achievement of all pupils by the end of Year 6 and in Year 8 is satisfactory. The design process is at the heart of the pupils' work but their research and drawing skills as they develop and communicate their ideas are below average and slow their progress. They use tools, including computer-aided manufacturing, safely and effectively. They have increasing knowledge of mechanisms, structures and products in food studies, graphic products, textiles and systems and control and are increasingly able to evaluate the functional qualities and the suitability of their prototypes for both the consumer and the manufacturer. Pupils' annotation of their work is less evident and evaluative than it should be. Pupils enjoy technology and respond very positively to working with a range of materials to solve problems and design and make prototypes. The teachers know their pupils well and plan the work to allow those who have special needs to make satisfactory progress while the Young Engineers Club allows the more able and those who are particularly interested in technology to make satisfactory progress.
84. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and often good. Teachers plan well for their lessons to be challenging and engaging. They make effective use of questioning but pupils occasionally rely too much on their teachers in their research because their teachers provide too many examples of possible methods and outcomes, thus removing the joy of discovery. Where discovery has a high profile such as when pupils were designing and baking biscuits or when exploring the properties of textiles, productivity is good and pupils are fully extended. Teachers ensure safety is paramount when children use equipment. Good reference is made to new words and technical language. Pupils' weak drawing skills prevent their fully developing their initial research and investigation. Lesson endings do not allow pupils sufficient time to reflect on or discuss their own or their classmates' progress. Classes are well managed and teachers have high expectations of behaviour and industry. The way they manage their pupils promotes very good relationships and the climate is right to raise expectations of personal research and innovation. The assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. Good use of a level chart provides pupils with a clear view of their progress relative to the National Curriculum although assessments are somewhat generous. Marking offers guidance on improvement but spelling errors often go uncorrected.
85. The department is in transition and a new head of department, leading a strong team of capable specialist teachers, has been appointed since the last inspection. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Detailed subject documentation aims to raise standards. Teaching and learning are monitored regularly. The accommodation and resources are good. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards have fallen. Teaching and learning, pupils' achievement and the leadership and management were all good and are now satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average.
- Pupils' basic skills of drawing and sketchbook usage are weak.
- There is insufficient good and very good teaching and learning.
- Pupils' attitudes and relationships between pupils and teachers are good.
- There is insufficient use of computers to create artwork.

Commentary

86. Standards are below average. The pupils do not draw to record information about space, light or texture or to experiment with composition. Drawing is essentially in pencil but those pupils engaged in 'The Big Draw' use charcoal and pastel in a variety of scales. Year 5 pupils look for patterns and shade in flowers while Year 6 pupils draw figures to suggest anger or joy in their attitudes. All pupils interpret the styles of other artists in collage, clay, relief and pastel, including a large group work influenced by Georgia O'Keeffe's *Radiator Building*. Landscapes and model chairs use the shapes present in Cubism and Picasso's paintings. Sketchbooks are not well used for experimentation and investigation. Although the development of literacy features strongly in lessons, pupils do not record their thoughts and opinions of their own and other artists' work nor are they comfortable using art and design language to talk about their work. Apart from digitised photographs, little of the work is produced on computers. Recognising the low levels of attainment and knowledge of art when they enter school, the achievement of all pupils is satisfactory by the end of Year 8.
87. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and often good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and present their subject well. Lessons start with clear, occasionally compelling, demonstrations, when the work is explained. Lessons often over-run so there is no time for pupils to reflect on their own or others' work. Teachers relate well to their pupils, who respond with creative industry and good attitudes. Occasionally the noise of gossip slows progress or pupils find the work difficult to complete because their basic drawing skills are weak. Learning was poor in one lesson because the work was not sufficiently challenging to engage the pupils and the teacher failed to manage the behaviour of those who then interfered with the learning of others. The assessment of pupils' work is well planned and allows pupils a clear view of how well they are doing relative to the National Curriculum but information from assessment is not used to remedy weaknesses in the curriculum. Because sketchbooks are not regularly used for personal research the pupils are more dependent on their teachers for guidance than they should be. Marking sometimes allows spelling errors to go uncorrected. Teachers know which pupils have special educational needs or are more able but none of the work is modified to suit their particular needs.
88. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of department, appointed since the last inspection, is ambitious for his subject and his pupils. Planning aims at higher standards but the monitoring of teaching and learning is inadequate to ensure consistency of provision. Difficulty accessing computers makes delivery of the National Curriculum difficult. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards have fallen and achievement is now only satisfactory. Teaching and learning were excellent but are now satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- Pupils achieve very well through the school as a result of very good teaching and learning.
- Assessment of pupils' work at the end of projects is good.
- Standards and progress are closely monitored by the teacher.
- Instrumental and vocal work and activities outside the classroom are very good.

Commentary

89. Standards are well above average in Year 6 and well above average in performance in Year 8. Pupils achieve very well through the school. Pupils in Year 6, including many of the boys, sing very well and in tune. Although intonation suffers a little when they sing in more than one part, they do keep going. They sing expressively without accompaniment, making the meaning of the song clear in the way they sing. Year 5 pupils compose well making imaginative use of percussion sounds to describe a forest. A few pupils make very effective use of repetition and even some development of ideas.
90. In this brief inspection it was impossible to observe Year 7 and 8 lessons. However, a tape of Year 8 pupils performing *Wimoweh* in small groups near the beginning of the school year showed well above average standards of performance. Pupils chose their own backing style on the keyboard and the variety of mainly woodwind with some percussion instruments were very competently played. Each pupil listened carefully and stayed well in time with the rest of their small group, performing enjoyable and polished pieces of music.
91. The department is very well led. Pupils respond very well in kind to the teacher's enthusiasm, talking about their enjoyment of music in the school. This was obvious in the lessons and in the instrumental work at lunchtime. They perform concerts and attend workshops at other schools. The recording of their work shows commitment to high standards of performance and presentation. Classroom work is highly practical. Pupils enjoy very good teaching and learning. They are lively. Some, especially boys, find concentration difficult especially at the end of the school day. However, they are very well managed by the teacher who, through a succession of varied activities and careful support, helps them to concentrate better and make good progress. The teacher's expertise in the subject is excellent. Her insistence that pupils perform together with expression and sensitivity provides very good opportunities for their personal development.
92. The teacher advises pupils in small group work. Support for pupils with special educational needs is very good, especially enabling an autistic boy to remain in the classroom and make worthwhile progress. The teacher talks about the quality of their work in class but pupils are given little opportunity to reflect on this or to evaluate their own work and learning in lessons. Nevertheless pupils' work is well assessed at the end of each unit of work, making assessment good overall. Pupils know how they will be assessed and are involved in the grading process.
93. The management of the department is good in that pupils' progress is well tracked by the teacher. Information on trends and the progress made by different groups of pupils is not collected and analysed to help plan for raising standards further. High standards reported at the last inspection have been maintained.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Pupils work well together in lessons to improve their skills.
- Teachers make it clear to pupils how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.
- Regular liaison with other schools means that best practice is shared so that teaching can be improved.

Commentary

94. In Years 5 and 6, standards are average. This represents good achievement and progress as pupils' attainment is below average on entry to the school. Pupils can perform a series of balances and shapes and link them appropriately in a sequence. They can compare and comment on skills used in their own and others' work and use this to improve their own performance. In Years 7 and 8, standards are average. Achievement and progress are good. When performing movements involving balance and flight, pupils show control and fluency. They can analyse and comment on these skills and refine them to improve performance. They can explain how the body reacts during exercise.
95. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and enable pupils to progress from the performance of individual skills to the development of sequences. Pupils' demonstrations and peer assessment are used well so that all pupils are able to improve. Pupils' interest is maintained because lessons move along at a good pace. Good standards of behaviour are insisted upon although lack of concentration by a minority is not checked often enough. Warm-ups are well matched to particular activities although these could be more rigorous at times. Pupils know the standards they have reached and what they must do to improve. They are made aware of the importance of safety and the correct way to set out apparatus.
96. Leadership and management are good. The department provides a variety of individual and team activities. Pupils' progress and achievement are recorded in detail. There is good provision for more talented pupils especially in athletics and football using facilities and expertise outside of the school. The sharing of good practice amongst teachers is helped by regular contact with other schools. Monitoring of the quality of lessons is not thorough enough and assessment schemes require modification so that they can be more easily used by non-specialist teachers. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

97. Personal, health and social and education and citizenship were sampled. It was possible to observe only one lesson of PSHE during the inspection. Pupils responded in lively and interested fashion to a very good lesson about drugs taught by a former policeman. There were opportunities for pupils to express views and clarify their attitudes as well as to learn more information. All pupils have a planned programme of PSHE. The programme meets requirements for sex, health and drugs education. Planning suggests that pupils have the opportunity to reflect on issues and clarify their own attitudes to controversial issues. Year 6 pupils, for example, cover such issues as anger management and peer pressure and the focus is on distinguishing between right and wrong. In Year 7 there is a strong focus on crime and legal awareness. Pupils' personal development is supported by work in other subjects such as English and music.

98. Implementation of the curriculum for citizenship is at a relatively early stage but the policy statement is clear and meets requirements. Some departments across the school have a way to go in realising the opportunities for citizenship which they could develop. The taught programme is integrated into PSHE provision. One lesson about criminal justice was observed. The group had visited a magistrates' court and were now conducting a mock trial. The lesson successfully reinforced understanding of the court processes. Planning indicates that the requirement for reporting on pupils' progress will be met through Year 9 reports by the high school. Assessment procedures are planned and integrated into a portfolio of work to transfer to the high school with pupils at the end of Year 8. An audit of the potential contribution of subject departments has been carried out, though little reference was seen to citizenship across the curriculum except in English, where relevant work is identified and made clear to pupils. The class and school councils are excellent in giving pupils practical experience of participating and involving themselves in discussion about their school. Debate in these councils is lively and serious and pupils appreciate the importance of the process. Pupils also have many other opportunities to participate in the life of the school through extra-curricular activities, charities and responsibilities.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

poor (6); very poor (7).