

INSPECTION REPORT

OAK BANK SCHOOL

Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109747

Headteacher: Mrs. P. Rumble and Mr. P. Cohen

Reporting inspector: Sarah Mascall
20536

Dates of inspection: 30th June – 2nd July 2003

Inspection number: 249338

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed

School address:	Sandy Lane Leighton Buzzard Bedfordshire
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Postcode:	LU7 3BE
Telephone number:	(01525) 374559
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Tony Drury

Date of previous inspection:	08/11/1999
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INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20536	S. Mascal	Registered inspector	Geography History Religious education	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are pupils or students taught?
19692	B. Folks	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
29960	W. Hug	Team inspector	Science Art and design Physical education	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils or students? English as an additional language Inclusion
27409	S. Hunt	Team inspector	English Modern foreign language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
20024	P. Wright	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Design and technology Music	How well is the school led and managed? Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Oak Bank is a day school for boys and girls between the ages of 11 and 16 who have statements of special educational needs for emotional and behavioural difficulties. At present there are 44 pupils on roll, of whom 3 are girls. Nearly all pupils are of white British background; three are of a mixed ethnic minority background and there are no pupils with English as an additional language. 30% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. When they start school their attainment is below average; this is often because they have had disrupted school lives and many have not reached their academic potential prior to their admission. Pupils travel to school from all areas of the county.

The school has gone through a considerable period of disruption and was closed in July 2001. It was re-opened in September 2001 under the same name but as a new school. There has been a large turnover of staff and the headteacher appointed to the new school left in July 2002. The present joint headteachers have only been in post two months having been in an acting capacity since July 2002. The school continues to have problems with recruiting qualified and experienced teachers and only four members of staff are qualified teachers. During the inspection Year 11 pupils were on study leave to prepare for their exams and only 1 girl was in school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Oak Bank is an improving school and provides satisfactory education for its pupils. Leadership is satisfactory. The headteachers have a clear vision for the school and are very well supported by staff and governors. As yet the roles of the headteachers and subject leaders have not been clarified and, as a result, management of the school is unsatisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall because teaching is satisfactory and in a few subjects it is good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make good progress in mathematics, science, physical education and Spanish
- The school is developing because of the very high level of commitment of all staff to improvement
- The governing body provides strong guidance and leadership for the school
- Parents are very supportive of the new headteachers and of the school
- The curriculum for older pupils includes good opportunities for work experience, careers education and for pupils to gain qualifications

What could be improved

- The management structure and roles and responsibilities of the headteachers and subject leaders
- Strategies to support teachers in managing pupils' behaviour and as a result improve the overall effectiveness of teaching
- Pupils' attitudes to school, including their attendance, use of abusive language and bullying of other pupils
- The systems used to record and assess the progress pupils make
- The emphasis placed on improving pupils' spiritual, moral and social development

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.

Much has been achieved in the last year and the school is making appropriate progress in improving the quality of education it provides. However, there remain serious weaknesses in teaching, pupils' behaviour, the procedures to try and improve behaviour, and the management of the school.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has not been inspected before.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year 11	Key	
speaking and listening	C	very good	A
reading	C	good	B
writing	C	satisfactory	C
mathematics	B	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	C	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	C		

**IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.*

Pupils' achievements in Year 11 and in the standard assessment tests show that they make at least satisfactory progress. In mathematics, science, Spanish and physical education their progress is good. In Spanish, pupils' progress is reflected in the fact that two pupils are taking Spanish GCSE after studying it for only two years. Pupils are studying for GCSEs in mathematics, English, Spanish and physical education (PE) as well as Entry Level Certificates in information and communication technology (ICT) and science. The school has set targets for next year that are appropriately challenging and reflect the increasingly high expectations of staff. Boys and girls make the same progress as do those from different ethnic backgrounds. Pupils make satisfactory progress against the targets they are set in their IEPs. The progress made by all pupils in speaking and listening skills and reading is satisfactory. Progress in writing is satisfactory and there are examples of pupils achieving well in this area. The curriculum has been developed in a number of subjects and this has ensured that in nearly all subjects pupils make satisfactory progress. There have been disruptions to the teaching of personal, social and health education and this has led to the varied progress of pupils, although overall it is satisfactory. The school has appropriate plans to develop what it offers to pupils in this subject area.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Unsatisfactory. Although pupils are now keener to come to school than they were a year ago several still do not have a positive attitude to lessons. Whilst many will sit in the class others find it difficult to remain for a whole lesson and are frequently disruptive.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Unsatisfactory. Pupils' behaviour has improved over the last year and there are no longer the high number of incidents of physical violence. However, pupils are frequently verbally abusive both to staff and each other. On other occasions they are very keen to help and hold sensible discussions with adults. There was evidence of bullying during the

	inspection and the number of fixed term exclusions, although reducing, is still high.
Personal development and relationships	Unsatisfactory. Pupils do not take responsibility for their actions and they do not take the initiative in behaving appropriately. When they are given opportunities to take on responsibilities, such as in the school council, pupils behave very maturely. Relationships are satisfactory and pupils clearly like staff. There were a number of examples where pupils worked together well both in and out of lessons.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. This is improving gradually; a year ago it was poor. There are five pupils who rarely attend, three of whom have moved out of the area but are still on the school's roll.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 11
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Although during the inspection nearly one in five lessons was unsatisfactory, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Evidence from pupils' work and the results they are now achieving in exams and standard assessment tests supports this judgement. In order to assist the teachers from overseas or those who are unqualified the school has ensured that the planning of lessons is consistent and this has supported staff well. Teaching in physical education and science is good. It is also good in mathematics and Spanish where teachers' secure subject knowledge enables pupils to make good progress. Teaching in English is satisfactory and there is a good focus on developing reading and writing skills. However these skills are not always as well promoted in other subjects. Opportunities for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills vary and, although satisfactory overall, not all staff are confident to encourage pupils to contribute to discussions. In all other subjects teaching is satisfactory. The development of numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory although ICT skills are not well developed in other subjects. Teachers are making appropriate use of national initiatives to improve teaching and there is a consistent approach to the structure of lessons that enables the pupils to know what is going to happen. There are weaknesses in teaching that include the management of pupils' behaviour and the lack of systems to record and assess what pupils know and understand. Support staff often provide appropriate support but the lack of clear planning for their use reduces their effectiveness on occasions.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school has worked hard to ensure that there are now plans in every subject for what pupils will study whilst in school. The full National Curriculum is taught and the school is appropriately developing the curriculum for 14 –16 year olds.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are no pupils with English as an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural	Unsatisfactory. There are limited opportunities for pupils' spiritual development. There is no whole school approach to promoting pupils' moral and social development. Pupils' cultural development is

development	satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Unsatisfactory. Arrangements for child protection are good and there are appropriate procedures for health and safety. However, the locking of classroom doors whilst a lesson is in progress is unsatisfactory. The school has good systems for monitoring attendance and these are beginning to have an impact on attendance for the younger pupils. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory; there is no whole school system and as a result teachers lack sufficient knowledge of pupils' achievements. Procedures for monitoring and improving behaviour and preventing bullying are unsatisfactory.

The systems for improving behaviour have had an effect on reducing pupils' aggressive behaviour but the culture of verbal abuse has yet to be addressed effectively. Links with the community are at an early stage of development and are at present unsatisfactory.

The school has good links with parents and ensures that they are kept well informed about their children's behaviour. Parents have positive views of the school and its work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteachers have been very effective in improving staff morale and this is having a positive effect on stabilising staffing. They have a clear vision of how they see the school in the future and are very well supported by all staff. However, their roles and responsibilities and those of the subject leaders are not clear and although the school runs reasonably smoothly on a day to day basis, overall management is unsatisfactory. The school is in the process of appointing a senior management team. At present though it is difficult for the headteachers to delegate responsibilities.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good. The school benefits from a very strong, committed governing body. Governors are very involved in the development of the school and have good plans for how they wish the school to improve. For example, they recognise the need to develop a better picture of pupils' progress and teaching.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school is developing a good understanding of what it needs to do to improve and the school improvement plan provides a good basis for this.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school makes satisfactory use of its resources. However, not all staff are used to their best effect and a few staff have too many subject responsibilities. The role of support staff is not sufficiently developed. Monies are used well and the school has appropriate plans to use the large underspend which has grown because of the lower than expected cost of staffing.

The school is well staffed and in a number of subjects teachers' knowledge has been used well to improve the curriculum. Accommodation is satisfactory although indoor PE facilities are poor. Resources are satisfactory in most areas of the curriculum - the school recognises that they need to be developed in history and geography.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their children now like to come to school The positive approach of the headteachers to their children 	Parents had no criticisms about the school

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The contact they have with the school and the fact they are kept well informed • The progress they feel their children are now making | |
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Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time at Oak Bank school. Many arrive with low attainment levels in most subjects but by the time they leave many have achieved passes in the Entry Level Certificate and a few have achieved passes in GCSEs. Last year a small number of pupils passed GCSE in mathematics and 86% achieved passes in Entry Level award. This year pupils are being entered for GCSE in four subjects and are studying for Entry Level Certificates in a range of subjects. The results of standard assessment tests (SATs) taken in Year 9 show that a small number of pupils are achieving in line with national expectations in mathematics and science. This confirms that pupils are making at least satisfactory progress.
2. The progress of pupils has been reduced because of the disruptions to staffing and the previously low expectations in the school of what pupils could achieve. There are now though increasingly high expectations of what pupils can achieve and as a result there are more pupils being entered for a wider range of exams than last year. This is reflected in the targets which have been set for next year. These are appropriate and challenging.
3. In English pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Their speaking and listening skills vary and can be good. However, pupils tend to offer monosyllabic answers and do not listen well to each other. In reading pupils' progress is satisfactory with a number of pupils being fluent readers by Year 11. The school recognises that there is a need to develop support for those who are not confident readers. There are good examples of pupils writing at length, but this again varies and not all pupils are confident in putting pen to paper. In mathematics pupils make good progress and benefit from good teaching; six pupils including one in Year 10 have been entered for GCSE this year. In science and physical education strong subject expertise and good management of behaviour has enabled pupils to make good progress. High expectations in Spanish have enabled two pupils to take their GCSE after only two years studying the subject.
4. In nearly all other subjects pupils make satisfactory progress. In humanities pupils in Year 7 have only been studying history and geography since last October and as a result their levels of attainment are low. However, they are making satisfactory and at times good progress in their learning.
5. Progress in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. Disruptions to staffing and a lack of clear planning have hindered pupils' progress. Temporary arrangements are in place that ensure pupils are now making satisfactory progress and there are appropriate plans to develop the subject further in September including the development of a programme for teaching citizenship.

6. There is no formal planning to promote literacy and numeracy across the curriculum although the school has recognised this as an area for development and there are appropriate plans in place for next term. At present pupils develop their skills satisfactorily in other lessons. For example Year 10 pupils use their mathematics skills when working out how much money they have in a PSHE lesson and occasionally teachers encourage pupils to make detailed, written recordings of their answers and findings such as in geography. Although ICT is used in subjects such as history and religious education it is not well promoted in other areas of the curriculum and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills.
7. There is no evident difference in the achievements of boys and girls. At present there is only one girl attending and teachers work hard to ensure that she contributes to lessons and makes the same progress as the boys. The small number of pupils from ethnic minority groups make the same progress as their peers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes, values and their behaviour are unsatisfactory. At times during the inspection they were poor. Parents feel that their children like school and discussions with pupils confirm this. However, although this may be the case many do not enjoy being in lessons and many frequently refuse to work. Several staff are skilled enough to engage pupils and they respond to this showing interest and concentration for long periods. This was particularly evident in science, physical education and mathematics. However, this is not consistent in all subjects. Pupils often walk out of lessons and when they do so they show a poor attitude by wandering the corridors and disturbing the learning of others. On occasions teachers resort to locking their classroom doors to avoid other pupils coming into their lessons and disrupting pupils. This is an unsatisfactory situation and constitutes a serious health and safety issue.
9. Pupils have come to the school with a history of difficult behaviour. A number have improved their behaviour and incidents of violence to staff have considerably reduced in the last year. Individually and in small group settings pupils can show a more mature outlook and even show insights as to why abusive behaviour is unacceptable. However, pupils' behaviour including the frequent use of abusive language is still unacceptable. Because abusive language often goes unchallenged there is no incentive or model which will help encourage pupils to stop being so abusive.
10. Reported incidents of fixed term pupil exclusions run on average at one or two per week. These are often issued following assaults on staff or damage to school or staff property. During the 3 days of the inspection 2 pupils were temporarily excluded. There have been 50 exclusions over the last year, all but one being fixed term. Although this is high, it is an improvement on figures before 2002 when there were a considerable number of informal exclusions. Parents feel that there are now valid reasons for pupils being sent home and that the occasions when their children are excluded are far fewer. Minor incidents of bullying and oppressive behaviour are common in the school. Pupils sometimes openly plan to bully another pupil and speak about it freely. There is also racial abuse directed at members of staff.
11. Pupils' personal development is unsatisfactory. Where they are given responsibilities such as those on the school council they do so sensibly and with maturity. Reports of pupils on work experience and attending college show that a few pupils behave and take on responsibility well. However, there are few opportunities available for them to do so in school. Pupils show a great deal of disrespect for the building and for others and do not see themselves as acting as role models.

12. Relationships are satisfactory and on a one to one basis pupils show that they can hold conversations and express their thoughts and ideas clearly. During lunch times and during the breakfast club there is evidence that pupils will sit with staff and converse but this is often disrupted by the behaviour of others. There were incidents of pupils showing initiative and common sense during the inspection. For example, a Year 10 pupil broke up a fight between two younger pupils and sent them on their way.
13. Overall pupils' attendance is unsatisfactory with the incidents of unauthorised absences running at 7%. Whilst the school, together with the Education Welfare Service, follows up absences promptly and systematically, this has not been successful in reducing absence significantly. The high rate of absence is, however, mainly due to a small number of persistent non-attenders. The attendance of younger pupils is much better than the rates for older ones.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

14. During the inspection 17 per cent of the lessons observed were unsatisfactory. However, evidence from pupils' work including their examination results and the monitoring by the LEA and outside consultants show that teaching is normally better than this and is satisfactory overall. The stabilisation of staffing and increasingly high expectations have ensured that all staff whether qualified or not provide a satisfactory quality of teaching.
15. Teaching in science and physical education is particularly effective. The teacher has very high expectations of what pupils can do in lessons and the good relationships with pupils ensure that behaviour is appropriate. In mathematics and Spanish teaching is good because lessons are well planned and there are clear expectations of what pupils can achieve. In all other subjects teaching is satisfactory.
16. The school has established appropriate guidelines for teachers to plan their lessons and this has ensured that, regardless of their expertise, they are clear about what they have to teach. As a result teachers plan their lessons well. This was evident in the majority of lessons; for example in a Year 10 PSHE lesson an unqualified teacher had carefully planned her lesson and the resources. Because of this pupils were attentive and enjoyed the work that they did. They make good use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy (*a recent government initiative to improve the teaching of 11-14 year olds*) to ensure that there is an introduction to their lessons and pupils are clear about what they are to learn. Teachers follow their subject plans well, which enables pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding in a systematic way. The school recognises the need to ensure that planning for music and drama is as effective as in all the other subjects.
17. There is good use of subject knowledge by staff. This is very evident in Spanish; the focus on encouraging pupils to speak in Spanish and the use of it by the teacher has enabled pupils to achieve well. Equally in mathematics teachers are secure in their knowledge and they explain quite difficult concepts well. For example, a Year 10 group by the end of the lesson had made good gains in their understanding of "pi". In design and technology the teacher ensures that pupils experience a range of activities in making and designing items such as collages and coloured tiles.
18. The teaching of basic skills is satisfactory. In subjects such as history and geography pupils are often encouraged to respond in writing to questions. However, this is not consistent and pupils often do not record what they have done. For example in

personal, social and health education there is little evidence of the work that has been done. In subjects such as science pupils use their numeracy skills well and calculate measurements. The school has appropriate plans in place for next term to ensure that there is a whole school approach to promoting literacy and numeracy in other subjects. There is evidence of ICT being used in subjects such as religious education and history but there is no planned approach to developing pupils' skills. Although a few teachers have had training not all are confident in using ICT to support their teaching.

19. The management of behaviour is a weakness and largely accounted for the high number of unsatisfactory lessons during the inspection. Where there are high expectations of pupils such as in science and PE pupils' behaviour is not a problem. Lessons are interesting and the teacher invites pupils to investigate and challenges them to think independently. The pace in such lessons is brisk, the range and variety of activities is broad and any disruption is skilfully minimised. Teachers use humour well to defuse situations and to bring pupils around but this is not the norm. On the whole teachers have not been given the right strategies to deal with pupils. For example, there is an acceptance both in and out of the class of abusive language which only occasionally gets addressed. Teachers do not use the reward system effectively and it is not made clear to pupils what are the consequences of their actions. Because of the inconsistencies in dealing with behaviour pupils do not realise what is acceptable and, therefore, do not always respond to teachers appropriately.
20. Teachers know pupils well and this is reflected in their questioning during and at the end of lessons. They ensure that the questions are appropriate to the pupils' understanding of the work that has been done. This encourages pupils to answer without fear of getting it too wrong. Teachers ensure that all pupils, including those from ethnic minority groups and the very small number of girls, are as involved in the work as their peers. However, there is not sufficient focus on providing different work for the range of ability of pupils within each class and sometimes the support given is inappropriate such as when teachers write down pupils' dictated answers rather than encouraging them write them down themselves. Equally worksheets are sometimes inaccessible to those who struggle with reading but little allowance is made for this other than to read the worksheet to them.
21. Time is used satisfactorily, although, because the lessons are only 35 minutes long teachers do not always have time to recap on what pupils have learnt. When this does occur for example in mathematics and history pupils enjoy the opportunity to show what they have understood. Time is also lost when pupils arrive late or disrupt lessons and the teacher has to repeat what has been covered at the start of the lesson.
22. The support assistants are used well in lessons such as art and mathematics. They work well with individual pupils and there is good team work when they support the teachers such as in personal, social and health education when they are actively involved in the lesson. However, support assistants are not involved in the planning of lessons and teachers do not always consider how they can be best used. As a result time is lost when the teacher has to explain what they need to do.
23. Teachers evaluate their lessons on a regular basis but this is often linked more to how the pupils behaved rather than what they did or did not learn. In a few subjects the plenary at the end of the lesson is used well to check what has been learnt but teachers do not keep a record of this. There is no clear policy for homework and it is

not routinely given. This does not prepare pupils well for returning to mainstream schools where there will be expectations that they complete work at home.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

24. The quality and range of opportunities on the school timetable are satisfactory overall. The school has worked particularly hard to develop what it offers pupils in Years 10 and 11, and they are now given appropriate opportunities to gain GCSE and other nationally recognised qualifications. Since the September 2002 the school has also ensured that pupils are taught the full National Curriculum and religious education, based on the Bedfordshire syllabus. There is now effective planning to support teachers and ensure that pupils' learning is developed in a consistent way.
25. The literacy and numeracy strategies for younger secondary age pupils have been implemented appropriately. Teachers are using the guidance effectively to help them plan learning and this is supporting pupils to make satisfactory progress in both areas.
26. The work taught in personal, social and health education lessons is just satisfactory although the school has yet to introduce citizenship. The provision for PSHE has been improved lately by a more formalised approach to teaching which covers a wide range of topics. The school recognises the need to introduce citizenship and more detailed planning for what is to be taught. There is no policy for personal, social and health education or for sex or drugs education. However, pupils are taught PSHE on a regular basis and they have covered a number of areas, including anger management and the misuse of drugs and alcohol. Pupils are also studying for the Asdan bronze award and do work in connection with the Prince's Trust which includes "crime in the community", "preparing for the world of work" and "self-awareness".
27. Sufficient time is allocated to teaching, although the lack of any detailed planning for Friday afternoon activities reduces the effectiveness of these sessions. Lessons are 35 minutes long and time is lost through movement from one lesson to another. There are double lessons in subject areas such as PE and design and technology which is appropriate but the short length of time in single lessons limits the amount teachers can do. Tutorial lessons can at times be very effective, such as for one group in Year 9 when pupils are encouraged to think about the thought for the day and evaluate how they have done during the day. However, this is not consistent and time is not being used well, in the majority of these sessions.
28. Links with colleges are satisfactory. There are opportunities for Year 10 and 11 pupils, with support, to attend various colleges throughout Bedfordshire for courses to suit their individual needs. These include electrical engineering, computer studies, agriculture and horticulture. Two Year 10 pupils will be attending a mainstream school next term to study performing arts. The school is concentrating on developing a 14-19 curriculum in conjunction with the local colleges of Bedford, Dunstable and Shuttleworth, and as part of a 'Pyramid of Schools' starting to use the Learning Warehouse. Links with local mainstream schools are being developed although at present there are only limited opportunities for pupils to attend mainstream lessons. The English department has formed links with the local upper school to access support for literacy planning and ensure that they cover the same GCSE course to support any pupils who may return to mainstream education.

29. Links with the local community are developing but are unsatisfactory at present. However, recently the local football team has started to use the school's football pitch each week for training. The local Rotary Club has shown great interest in the school and many of the governing body are members. Recent links with the local parish church – All Saints – have been established with the younger pupils in religious education. However, the school is very much aware of the need to improve links with the local community.
30. Careers education and work experience arrangements are good and are planned through Education Business Partnership (EBP), with good support from Connexions. There are individual interviews held by Connexions for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to plan for their two week work experience placement either to local firms or to firms near their homes. The school hopes in the future for more ongoing work experience for some of their pupils in line with the new 14-19 curriculum.
31. Extra-curricular opportunities are satisfactory overall. Football is organised each lunchtime and there are opportunities for pupils to use the music room on certain days of the week. The Breakfast Club each morning which starts at 8.15 a.m is very well attended by pupils clearly enjoying the opportunity to meet their friends and enjoy a good breakfast. This is very beneficial as some pupils spend up to an hour on transport coming to school from across the county. There are no after school clubs due to transport difficulties. However, each year there are residential trips planned to the Forest of Dean, the Lake District and an annual skiing holiday to France.
32. Planning to support pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is unsatisfactory. The encouragement for cultural development is satisfactory. Until recently there were regular whole school assemblies, however, it was felt that these were not effective and in 2002 the school decided to stop them except for one on Fridays. There are appropriate plans to resume regular assemblies next term. The school now delivers spiritual awareness through the tutor time each morning. However, there was little evidence of the school's "Thought for the Day" being delivered to the pupils effectively other than for those in one Year 9 group. The school is trying to address spiritual matters through religious education and recent examples of these include visits to the local church and a Japanese Temple in Milton Keynes.
33. Work to support pupils' moral development is a little more directed and most pupils certainly know right from wrong. The school is attempting to raise moral awareness throughout the school day, through tutor time, Friday assemblies and lessons. In order to develop pupils' moral awareness the school involved them in establishing their own rules but, unfortunately, the pupils take little notice of these. The school council also provides opportunities for them to develop an understanding of what is right and wrong. However, the lack of consistency by staff in managing behaviour, often ignoring inappropriate behaviour, gives pupils the wrong messages and does not support them in developing moral values.
34. The school is doing its best to foster a sense of community and encourage pupils to work together in the classrooms. The school council is working well and enables pupils to represent and think about the needs of others. Residential visits and trips into the community are organised to help foster their social development and has good support from the Educational Psychologist to counsel pupils. He also goes on the residential outings and trips with them. However, the school recognises it has a long way to go to ensure that the pupils are able to show respect for other people, exercise responsibility, share views with others, relate well with other people and work successfully as a member of a group or team.

35. More efforts are being made by the school to improve cultural awareness, which is considered satisfactory at this stage. The development of music and drama is helpful in this context and opportunities for recognizing and understanding their own culture appear in a number of lessons. Examples of multi-cultural knowledge and awareness are developing in the school, with Black History month, a visit to a Japanese Temple and examples of Batik Art being evident in the school. Such activities, together with the school's efforts to employ staff from a wide range of cultures and beliefs, prepares pupils appropriately for life in a diverse, multi-cultural society.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school's procedures to care for its pupils are unsatisfactory overall. Although staff display a caring attitude, know pupils well and respond to them as individuals, systems and practices are inconsistent and largely ineffective. Procedures to monitor pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory and do not have a uniform format.
37. Child protection procedures are good; a fully trained member of staff is available to give advice and guidance to others. Staff are clear who to approach when child protection matters arise. Pupils are equally confident that they can talk to and confide in staff, should they be worried about their health or welfare. The school has satisfactory procedures to ensure the health and safety of pupils and risk assessments on every pupil are documented. Arrangements for the dispensing of medicines are clear with a comprehensive recording system. A number of staff are trained in first aid and can deal with any medical incidents safely. Health and safety audits are carried out with routine testing of electrical appliances and fire extinguishers and plans for activities are carefully evaluated as to what risks they might pose. The school is aware of the need to address the situation whereby staff lock classroom doors during lessons as it could place both staff and pupils in danger.
38. The school has made considerable efforts to improve the attitudes and behaviour of pupils, which it admits were very poor in the recent past. The staff group now in place is committed to these improvements and there has clearly been a reduction in physical assaults on staff and others. However, arrangements for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are unsatisfactory. The behaviour points system is not effective because teachers are inconsistent in its use. Pupils value the points and can use them for purchases at the tuck shop but they often pressurise staff over the allocation of points. As a result teachers and teaching assistants often allocate positive points to pupils who have displayed abusive behaviour. This invalidates the system and reduces its effectiveness in helping pupils to behave better.
39. If pupils are physically restrained or held, staff are aware of the school's guidelines. They are trained to effectively calm situations and only apply physical holding as an emergency measure using minimum force for the shortest possible time. Such incidents are recorded on the appropriate form. Forms are then collated in a special file with a copy included in the pupil's file. This is not an entirely satisfactory arrangement as sheets could easily be removed from files. More minor incidents of physical intervention are not always recorded. As a result pupils do not have to face the consequences of much of their behaviour. When pupils leave the classroom, they are followed by adults. There is, though, no clear procedure as to what happens in such instances other than to bring the pupil back to the lesson when he or she calms down. During the inspection this happened on a number of occasions but pupils were often not ready to return and disrupted the lesson further. There is some attempt by staff to ensure that pupils make up for lost lesson time during Friday afternoons but

this is not consistent. There is no clear monitoring of pupil absences from lessons. In cases of physical violence pupils are excluded from school for a fixed period.

40. The monitoring of pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. The school recognises that pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) and their behaviour plans are in need of improvement. IEPs do not relate in any detail to the pupils' statement of special educational needs. There are no precise targets about what pupils should learn over a given period or in what way their personal development or behaviour should improve. The plans are not reviewed every half term as the 'Special Educational Needs Policy' suggests. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress and monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are unsatisfactory. This is recognised by the school and is a priority for development. There is reference within subject policies to assessment but in practice there is considerable inconsistency between subjects and teachers. For example, there is some good assessment of pupils' progress in mathematics, science, physical education and in Spanish; appropriate records are kept and teachers have a good understanding of what pupils know and can do. There is no system for assessing and recording pupils' achievements in other subjects. The lack of a marking policy and guidance prevents teachers from having a better idea of what pupils have learnt.
41. In the past pupils have been assessed when they start school but this has not been done for some time nor has it been updated. Staff have no way of assessing how much progress pupils are making. Good records are kept of the certificates pupils have gained and, although most of these are linked to personal development rather than academic achievement, the records form a good basis for pupils' records of achievement.
42. The school's arrangements to improve pupils' attendance are satisfactory. Unauthorised absences are followed up daily. The school routinely refers pupils to the area education welfare team in Bedfordshire following continued absences of more than 4 weeks, earlier if the pupil's background or social circumstances warrant this. Pupils' attendance is reviewed every half term in a meeting between one of the headteachers and the education welfare officer allocated to the school. Internally, the school could promote and reward good attendance more and raise the importance of regular attendance with pupils and parents.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

43. Parents are pleased with the school. This is apparent from the pre-inspection parents' meeting and from the parental questionnaires returned. There are very few areas of even slight disagreement. It is clear that the school under the leadership of the two joint headteachers has gained the confidence of the parents who feel that it has improved greatly since September 2002. They now feel welcome in the school, consider that they are well informed and aware of any action taken to improve their child's behaviour. They receive details of trips and events, and are involved in setting their children's targets at review meetings. They feel they can approach the staff and teachers.
44. The information provided for parents is satisfactory. Parents are definitely better informed than they have been in the past but the school recognises that this could be further improved and plans to introduce newsletters. Parents very much appreciate the telephone calls they receive from staff about what their children have been doing. They are particularly pleased with the fact that these calls celebrate achievements

and are not always about their children's misdemeanours. Parents at the meeting with inspectors asked for information about the curriculum to be covered and the school is going to address this. The school prospectus is a well-presented document and is very informative. There are though one or two requirements missing, which the school is going to include in the future. The first annual report to governors is due next term. Annual reports to pupils do not yet include sufficient detail about the work covered and vary in quality. They could also be improved by giving more information about pupils' achievements particularly in English, mathematics, science, ICT and PSHE. Because of the distances they have to travel, parents are not as involved in the work of the school as they would like to be. However, a small number do visit regularly and are active in the life of the school. For example one parent has recently supported staff on a residential camping week.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. The joint headteachers have only been in their substantive posts for two months and recognise that they have a considerable amount to do. They have a clear vision for the school and, together with the governors, key staff and the LEA, have steered the school through a very difficult time. They have formed a staff team that has the potential to continue to move the school forward. Much work has already been done and the headteachers have the confidence of the staff and parents. They show a genuine care for the pupils and are fully committed to improving the school.

46. Although the headteachers provide satisfactory leadership there is still discussion about how the school will be managed under joint heads. They work well together and clearly complement each other's skills but there is not yet a clear division of tasks. They are at present hampered in delegating responsibilities to other staff by the lack of a senior management team and a limited number of suitably qualified and experienced staff. This has affected the school's ability to monitor teaching and pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons. At the moment, there is an imbalance in the allocation of subject responsibilities and as a result two members of staff have far too many subjects to co-ordinate. The governors and headteachers are aware of this and have focused their attentions on appointing staff to improve and extend the expertise available. For example, they have appointed a teacher to start next term to support the teaching of PSHE and citizenship in the school. Equally the school is aware that subject leaders have not been given time to monitor and support the teaching in their subjects.

47. The governing body provides strong support for the school. Governors take a genuinely keen interest in the school's development and give freely of their time and considerable expertise. They have effective and relevant committees to deal with finance, resources, accommodation, personnel and the curriculum. Those governors on the finance committee have been particularly active and supportive, as the school has been involved in resolving financial issues. The governors fulfil their statutory duties, although they are aware that there are some areas such as the school prospectus and annual reports that require more work. They provide good support and advice that has helped move the school forward. The inspection team was also impressed with governors' clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The governing body has considered its relationship to the school's headteachers and is aware that it now needs to enter a critical dialogue with them to strengthen their approach to future planning and target setting.

48. The school improvement plan is in draft form but recognises the main areas for the further development of the school. Improvements are costed and the plan will be a useful tool to help move the school forward. The majority of subjects have also outlined improvement plans and recognise where there are areas of weakness; for example geography requires more resources. The processes for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance are at a very early stage of development although the school has a clear picture of what it wants to achieve. This is reflected in the challenging targets it has set itself for next year.
49. The school is committed to the principles of 'best value' whenever the opportunity arises. There is a finance committee and the headteachers ensure that school governors receive regular updates on income and expenditure. The administrative support in the school is efficient in handling all ordering and payments of goods as well as the numerous other administrative tasks. The school's use of new technology is satisfactory. The office makes good use of the electronic systems. All staff have job descriptions and are clear about their role in promoting the aims and values of the school. The strategies adopted to monitor the performance of teachers are satisfactory. However, the headteachers' targets have not yet been set.
50. Grants provided by the government for specific projects, particularly those for literacy and numeracy, have been used appropriately. Priorities for spending are identified through the school improvement plan and the school actively seeks value for money in staffing and in the purchase of learning resources. No major items are purchased without consultation or an evaluation of whether they will be effective. Monthly figures are also available for subject managers to monitor their subject spending. The large underspend is a result of the fact that the school has had to employ a number of unqualified teachers. There are good plans to use this money; for example in paying a retention bonus to staff to try and address the problem of recruitment.
51. The school has had difficulty getting together a team of teachers and learning support assistants to cover the full range of curriculum subjects. In the circumstances it has done well to achieve this and has done so by appointing a newly qualified teacher, two overseas teachers, qualified and unqualified teachers. Nevertheless, the standard of teaching in the school is satisfactory overall and the school is able to teach the full range of the National Curriculum. Support assistants are not always deployed effectively to support pupils' learning and behavior. The newly qualified teacher had appropriate training and a satisfactory induction into the school.
52. The school was first built as a residential school and has been adapted to reflect its current use as a day school. Best use is made of the accommodation although parts of the school are not ideal with narrow corridors and stairways. There are specialist rooms for science, art, food technology and an ICT Suite. There is also a library and a music room. The hall and dining room are combined and are satisfactory for most purposes but not for PE. Although there are very large, attractive grounds around the school with outdoor sports facilities, the school does not have appropriate facilities for teaching indoor sports and accommodation for PE is poor. Apart from this, the school is well maintained and in good condition.
53. The school's learning resources are satisfactory, overall. PE resources are of a good range and quality and are well used but accessibility is only satisfactory. Resources for mathematics, design and technology and ICT are good. Resources are unsatisfactory for history and geography.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

54. In order to continue to raise standards the headteachers, staff and governors should:

- Clarify the management structure and roles and responsibilities of the headteachers and subject leaders. This should enable teachers to then monitor and develop their subjects and ensure a clear management structure for the school. (Paragraph 46)
- Develop teachers' expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons and ensure that they have effective strategies and support for dealing with pupils' behaviour. (Paragraphs 19, 38)
- Develop strategies to improve pupils' attitudes to school, their attendance and reduce bullying and the use of abusive language. (Paragraphs 8, 9, 10, 13, 39, 42)
- Develop a policy and systems for recording and assessing pupils' achievements which will enable the school to monitor pupils' academic progress. This should also enable teachers to improve the quality of individual education plans, planning for pupils' individual needs and the reporting of progress to parents. (Paragraphs 20, 40, 41, 44)
- Establish a whole school approach to promoting pupils' spiritual, moral and social development. (Paragraphs 32, 35)

In addition to the above key issues, the school should also consider including the following in its action plan:

- Extend and improve links with the community and other schools. (Paragraph 28)
- Ensure that staff do not lock doors of classrooms where lessons are being taught. (Paragraph 37)
- Implement plans to develop citizenship and develop a PSHE policy and curriculum. This should include statutory requirements for the delivery of sex education and drugs education. (Paragraph 26)
- Develop the use of ICT in all subjects. (Paragraph 18, 96)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	35
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number		2	14	13	6		
Percentage		6	40	37	17		

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	44
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	13

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	16
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	7

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	7.1

Both tables give 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
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
22	30	1
	1	
4	9	
2	2	
1		
	1	
	2	
	3	
15	2	

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	11
Average class size	6

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	333

Financial information

Financial year	2002-03
	£
Total income	805548
Total expenditure	700303
Expenditure per pupil	17508
Balance brought forward from previous year	38342

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Balance carried forward to next year	105245*
* As a result of problems in recruiting teachers there is an underspend in the staffing budget. The school is aware of this and has appropriate plans in place to use the funds.	

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Nine questionnaires were returned by parents. They, together with the discussions with parents, show that parents are very positive about the school. They feel it has improved considerably since September 2001 and are very supportive of the new headteachers. There were very few concerns.

PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES
ENGLISH

55. Pupils' progress in English is satisfactory because teaching is satisfactory overall. The subject is being developed and a good start has been made.

Key strengths

- There are high expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Accreditation has been introduced.
- The planning of lessons is based on the National Literacy Strategy planning.
- The present co-ordinator is a subject specialist.
- There are good plans in place to develop the subject.

Areas for improvement

- The recording and assessment of pupils' work.
- Work is not always matched to pupils' ability.
- The management of pupils' behaviour in lessons.
- Teachers do not plan for the effective use of support staff.
- The development of reading skills for those who start school with poor skills.

56. By the end of Year 11 pupils make satisfactory progress in speaking and listening. Pupils listen attentively, for example in a Year 7 lesson pupils discussed sensibly and with insight the characters and their many moods from the story of 'Romeo and Juliet'. Year 8 pupils talked about their favourite cartoon characters, whilst a group of Year 9 more able pupils studying 'The Truman Show' could discuss the reasons for Truman wishing to leave the island. On these occasions pupils listen appropriately to each other and show consideration for each other's feelings. For example, during a tutorial session on feelings a Year 10 pupil talked about how he had felt at 11 years old when he stayed for the first time residentially. He said quite openly 'I don't mind admitting I cried, I was so scared.' Pupils show the ability to become confident communicators and they talk to staff and visitors, answering questions confidently and expressing opinions more clearly. However, opportunities for pupils to develop their skills further are limited because teachers lack the confidence to encourage pupils to enter into discussions because of concerns with controlling their behaviour.
57. There is a clear focus on developing pupils' reading and elements of the National Literacy Strategy are used well. More able Year 9 and 10 pupils are able to select their own choice of books and read with understanding and comprehension. The majority of younger pupils read out loud with confidence and follow the text in the books they are studying. Those who are less confident in reading are willing to receive adult assistance. The school recognises that there are insufficient

strategies in place to develop the skills of those pupils who start school with poor reading skills or who have additional learning needs. As a result there are appropriate plans to invest in a reading scheme in September to encourage and improve literacy skills for the less able Year 7 and 8 pupils.

58. Overall progress in writing is satisfactory. Evidence of pupils' work shows good examples of more able pupils writing extensively. For example a Year 9 pupil wrote creatively about how Macbeth felt before battle. Year 10 pupils recorded their feelings about capital punishment and wrote their own autobiographies. Good word frames and webs are used in class to help and encourage pupils to write well. However, this is not consistent and skills are not developed in other subjects particularly for the younger pupils who occasionally have their work written for them by staff. There is clear evidence of pupils word processing their work but computers could be used more extensively to enhance pupils' writing skills and help the reluctant writers within school.
59. The promotion of literacy across the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers encourage pupils to read out loud such as in humanities, and in subjects such as personal and social education pupils are encouraged to contribute their ideas. However, opportunities to develop writing skills are limited.
60. In the majority of lessons the teachers plan well, imaginatively linking what they want pupils to learn to the planning for pupils of that age. However, behaviour is not always managed effectively and an otherwise well planned lesson is often spoilt by pupils' behaviour. Support staff are often an asset to the class, working well with the pupils and encouraging them in their work, but this is not always the case and occasionally they do not have a clear perspective on what their role should be.
61. At the present time a newly qualified teacher is doing a good job managing the upper school English and will be taking on the role of co-ordinator in September. The school recognises that she will need support in moving the subject forward especially in areas such as monitoring and developing teachers' expertise. However, there are appropriately high expectations for what pupils can do and this is reflected in the fact that accreditation has been introduced this year and Year 11 pupils have sat the entry level for GCSE. It is hoped they will achieve D to E grades.
62. Assessment is unsatisfactory. The department has attempted to level pupils' attainment but this is not moderated or monitored. It is far too inconsistent to provide any information to plan pupils' learning and to reflect the range of pupils' literacy needs. There is very little evidence of records of progress of reading levels kept and pupils are not tested regularly to check how well they are doing. The lack of any assessment of what pupils can do when they start school makes it very difficult for staff to ascertain the amount of progress pupils are making. The quality of marking of pupils' work varies but generally lacks any comments that will help pupils improve upon what they have done or gives them a clear indication about how good their work is.
63. The department is improving the resources and the library facilities, however, at the present time the library is not used regularly by pupils. The subject development plan appropriately recognises where there can be improvements in this area. At present the community is not used enough to bring the curriculum to

life through theatre visits, visiting theatre companies, poets and using speakers from the local community.

64. A good initiative has been the use of a drama specialist who comes into school twice a week and drama is taught to certain classes throughout the school. Pupils clearly enjoy drama and are developing confidence. However, the school recognises this is an area for development and that planning for drama lessons needs to be more structured.

MATHEMATICS

65. Overall pupils achieve well and make good progress as they move through the school. This is because the quality of teaching and learning is good.

Key strengths

- The successful application of the National Numeracy Strategy.
- The subject is well led and co-ordinated.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work.
- Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are positive

Areas for improvement

- The marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not tell them how they can improve.
 - The identification of areas where pupils have difficulty so that lessons can be aimed at resolving these problems.
 - Information and communication technology is not used enough to help pupils to learn.
66. Teachers make good use of the National Numeracy Strategy in lessons, especially at the start of lessons when they practise mental arithmetic skills. The majority of pupils enjoy this and it helps to settle them for the main activity. The opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in other subjects is satisfactory.
67. In Years 7 to 9 pupils learn about all the required aspects of mathematics. Pupils have a good understanding of bar and line graphs and can use the information gained from them effectively. They manipulate simple numbers well and are confident in the use of decimals, fractions and estimation. For example, pupils in a good Year 7 lesson use a map with a scale to estimate distance using whole and half units of measurement. Pupils in Year 8 make 3D mathematical models and reflect simple shapes in a mirror line. By the end of Year 9 pupils have made good progress in mathematics. This is supported by the good SATs results for this year, with 8 pupils reaching level 4 and 1 pupil at level 5. Lower attainers recognise sequences of numbers, including odd and even numbers. They can make up a sequence given a term or rule. However, not enough time and emphasis are given at the end of lessons, in order to assess and share pupils' progress, and to celebrate their achievements and incidents of good behaviour.
68. By the end of Year 11, pupils understand a wide range of mathematical ideas, for example, decimals, decimal fractions and symmetry, and are working towards GCSE, mainly at foundation level. Higher attaining pupils are entered for intermediate level GCSE. Year 10 pupils understand and use the formula for the

area of a triangle and know the common properties of number, including multiples, factors, and prime numbers. Teachers plan lessons which are linked to previous learning and use good behaviour management skills to help more restless pupils to be engaged in activities. For example, they make sure they intervene to help a pupil before they get frustrated. However, there are a number of occasions when pupils are verbally abusive to teachers and support staff and walk out of lessons. Support staff are not always sufficiently involved in lessons and their role in supporting teaching and learning needs to be developed.

69. Leadership of mathematics is good. The enthusiastic subject leader has a clear awareness of his responsibilities. Overall assessment is satisfactory, but there is a need for more opportunities to identify areas where pupils have difficulty and plan future lessons to resolve these problems. Also, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not tell them how they can improve. Resources and accommodation are good. However, information and communication technology is insufficiently used to support pupils' learning and homework is not used effectively to consolidate and extend pupils' learning.

SCIENCE

70. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in science because the quality of teaching and planning is good and often very good. In Year 10 all are entered for the entry level Certificate of Achievement.

Key strengths

- Good relationships between the teacher and pupils lead to a purposeful atmosphere in lessons.
- The teacher has high expectations of pupils' attitudes in lessons and manages behaviour very well.
- The curriculum is carefully planned to meet pupils' needs.
- The introduction of a modular GCSE is planned.
- There is a high regard for health and safety.

Areas for improvement

- There are few resources for the use of ICT in lessons.
- The quality of marking of science work is inconsistent.

71. In Year 7 pupils can explain different habitats of animals and how animals have adapted to their surroundings. They understand the properties of different solids, liquids and gases and distinguish natural and man made objects. In Year 9 pupils record different sources of energy and explain the difference between conductors and insulators. By Year 10 they prepare for the entry level certificate and sit regular tests at the end of each teaching unit. They distinguish between igneous, metamorphic and sedimentary rocks. Pupils label electrical diagrams and consider the impact of pollution on the environment in detail. The current Year 11 pupils did not receive any science teaching but followed a variety of college courses. However, the present Year 10 pupils will be entered for examinations at the end of Year 11.
72. The teacher has a thorough knowledge of the subject and uses every opportunity to extend pupils' learning. He has high expectations of what pupils can do. Through the prominent use of new vocabulary and the rehearsal of research methods the

teacher expects pupils to define words such as 'glossary', 'index' and 'hypothesis' or 'centrifuge' and 'solution'. The subject makes a good contribution to progress in pupils' literacy skills. The pace of lessons is brisk and pupils are constantly challenged to think in scientific terms. If any disruption occurs, pupils are quickly brought back to the lesson focus. For example, a pupil arrived to a science lesson 15 minutes clearly upset and angry. The teacher slowly and sensitively engaged him in the lesson, reviewed the content he had missed, let the pupil carry out a brief experiment and then convinced him to complete the test planned for the end of the lesson.

73. The teacher does not shy away from letting pupils use valuable or specialist equipment. There is a high regard for health and safety procedures in lessons and these are frequently referred to. Pupils show great respect for the teacher and respond to the friendly but firm tone in which lessons are conducted showing good attitudes to work.
74. There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons. The specialist room has only one computer, which is not linked to the internet. There is little evidence of computer use for science simulation exercises or the recording and graphic display of experimentation results. Pupils' work is not consistently marked. Although some work is annotated, other work is just marked with ticks and a minority is not marked at all. Resources are satisfactory and used well.

ART AND DESIGN

75. Pupils' achievements in art and design are satisfactory; they make better progress in design and making than in drawing and painting. Teaching is satisfactory.

Key strengths

- The craft aspect of the subject is well taught.
- The teacher offers encouragement and is confident in demonstrating a variety of artistic techniques.
- Planning is good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers in design is underdeveloped.
- The lack of accreditation available to pupils.
- The development of pupils' drawing skills.

76. Pupils' achievements in art and design are satisfactory overall. Pupils learn to draw accurately, are encouraged to think about their designs and go through a series of stages in order to complete a presentable product. They learn about artistic traditions such as 'Art Nouveau' and the style of the Spanish designer Gaudi. As a result, for example, Year 9 pupils are able to form clay into simple shapes and produce decorated and coloured tiles. They assemble effective collages and show an understanding of how to mix colours for painting to get the right effect. Their textile designs are of a high standard and show good skills and imagination. Pupils understand the importance of designing before making a product, for example, Year 10 pupils design pots that they have first made from paper.
77. The teacher is well qualified in the design aspects of this subject and many of the skills pupils develop are linked to this area of the curriculum. Lessons are well planned and good use is made of the correct terminology such as "glazing" and "slabbing". Pupils are encouraged to work together and they will help others to

complete their work. For example, in one lesson, a Year 9 pupil who had completed painting a ceramic tile helped others to form smaller pieces of clay into varying shapes and attach them to their tile. At times support for pupils is not always effective. For example one pupil, who had obvious problems with forming clay into the shape of a pot, was not supported sufficiently and ended up with no completed work at the end of the lesson. The artistic skills of pupils are less well promoted and as a result pupils who have a talent in fine art techniques are not sufficiently challenged to achieve better results.

78. There are appropriate plans to introduce a short GCSE course in art. As yet assessment is not well developed. Resources are satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

79. Design and technology is only taught to pupils up to the end of Year 9. Overall they make satisfactory progress although there are a few individual pupils who make good progress. Teaching is satisfactory.

Key strengths

- The good subject knowledge of the subject leader.
- Accommodation and learning resources for work with resistant materials are good.

Areas for improvement

- The programme of work, showing what pupils are to learn, is not complete.
 - Opportunities for pupils to use the good workshop facilities or to study food technology are limited.
80. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have investigated and designed simple circuits. They generate ideas and recognise that their designs have to meet a range of different needs. For example, Year 8 pupils design and manufacture board games. They then evaluate the final construction and describe ways in which the designs can be improved. By the end of Year 9 pupils make at least satisfactory progress. However, there are no opportunities for pupils to study design and technology further or take externally accredited examinations. Opportunities for pupils to study food technology are affected by the lack suitably trained staff. Although pupils have the opportunity to cook there is not a formal programme of learning in this area.
81. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they make satisfactory progress and cover a good range of basic skills. Lessons are taught at an appropriate pace and pupils are developing a good knowledge of using the tools such as a coping saw. This was reflected in a Year 7 lesson where pupils were able to identify a range of workshop tools.
82. Design and technology is satisfactorily led across the school. The subject leader is enthusiastic and has good subject knowledge. However, the planning for what pupils will learn and detailed assessment to inform future planning is yet to be developed. As a result of this, pupils' achievements and progress are only satisfactory. There are insufficient opportunities identified in planning to use ICT within the subject. Accommodation and learning resources for working with resistant materials are good.

GEOGRAPHY

83. Overall pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils benefit from satisfactory and on occasions good teaching.

Key strengths

- Planning for what pupils will learn is effective.
- The teacher has good subject knowledge and uses this well to develop pupils' knowledge.
- Pupils study a range of topics.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers.
- Resources are inadequate.
- The community is not used well to develop pupils' knowledge.

84. In Years 7 and 8 pupils are only just developing their knowledge and understanding of the subject as it had not been regularly taught until October. As a result they have only covered a limited amount of work. Year 7 pupils' knowledge of symbols in maps is good and many are developing the skill to make up their own keys to a map. In Year 8 pupils have looked at different countries and recognise features in Brazil and the Amazon. They are able to make predictions of what the weather might be like and understand the concept of "tropical" climates. Pupils in Years 9 and 10 have benefited from more regular lessons and have studied life in different countries including Japan and America. The work they have done on the effects of deforestation is very detailed.
85. Pupils are developing their skills in a systematic way because the teacher is following the plans of work for geography well. She is secure in her subject knowledge and this enables her to hold pupils' interest and explain things well. For example, it was very clear that Year 7 pupils have a good understanding of what causes volcanoes to erupt and are keen to show off their knowledge. There is good use of key words and a brisk start to lessons is often effective in ensuring that pupils are immediately involved in lessons. At times though this does not work and behaviour issues that should have been dealt with initially are left to bubble and problems arise.
86. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. There has been a good focus on developing the subject and the improvement plan recognises the need to improve resources. The use of ICT and the community are limited and do not enable pupils to develop their skills further. The lack of a range of resources has a negative impact on teaching. For example, in a Year 8 lesson pupils were struggling with the idea of the effect the Trans-Amazonian highway would have on the forest. The lack of any interesting resources such as photographs made it very difficult for the teacher to keep pupils interested.

HISTORY

87. Pupils are making satisfactory progress and show a growing interest in the subject. Teaching is satisfactory and pupils benefit from the enthusiastic approach.

Key strengths

- Planning ensures that pupils are developing their skills in a systematic way.
- The teacher has good subject knowledge.

- There are good opportunities for pupils to be involved in discussions.

Areas for improvement

- The use of computers.
- Resources are inadequate.
- There is an over reliance on worksheets and pupils have insufficient opportunities to record their work.

88. Pupils have only recently started studying the subject but are developing an interest in the work. They show a good knowledge of life in the Middle Ages and recall words such as “fielty” well, explaining clearly what it means. In Year 8 pupils have looked at life in medieval times and have developed an understanding of the Tudors and life during the reign of Elizabeth 1. Older pupils have considered the slave trade and what it was like to be a slave as well as the effects of the Holocaust. Year 10 pupils have been able to link their work on terrorism and Vietnam with the events of the recent year and show a good understanding of the impact on people.
89. A strength of teaching lies in the teacher’s subject knowledge and her encouragement of pupils to discuss issues. For example in a Year 7 lesson, pupils were able to talk about the differences in the role of women in medieval times and nowadays. Good use of questioning enables all pupils to be involved. There are not always opportunities for pupils to evaluate what they have learnt at the end of a lesson although when this does happen pupils are pleased to show how much they know. There is insufficient recording of what pupils have done and the over use of worksheets restricts pupils’ opportunities to answer questions in more detail.
90. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Resources are underdeveloped and there is a lack of artefacts for the pupils to work with. ICT is used appropriately and pupils have downloaded information from the Internet. There are no systems for assessing what pupils know and understand.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

91. Pupils make satisfactory progress in information and communication technology throughout the school and it is an improving subject. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

Key strengths

- Teachers’ good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject.
- Recent improvements in the curriculum, incorporating National Curriculum levels and requirements.
- The good accommodation and resources.
- Teaching in Year 10.

Areas for improvement

- The attitude and behaviour of pupils in ICT lessons is unsatisfactory.
- More discussion in lessons, so that pupils can share their views and experiences of ICT with others.
- Appropriate accreditation in Year 11 for more able pupils.
- The use of ICT in other subjects.

92. By Year 9, pupils make satisfactory progress; the unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a significant number of pupils prevents their progress from being good. Pupils find and save information and describe the use of ICT outside the school. They can search the Internet and download appropriate information. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, the pupils were able to describe a web page, hyperlink and bookmark. They have created pie charts from spreadsheets and can identify records and files in databases. All pupils have the opportunity to achieve an entry level certificate which includes databases, input and output peripherals and data storage.
93. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to improve their use of word processing, desk top publishing and spreadsheets, and progress is helped by the teacher's good subject knowledge. Pupils also make good progress in their use of technical vocabulary. As a result of good teaching and the teacher's good subject knowledge, pupils in Year 10 are able to design their own website. One pupil has designed a site on the dangers of smoking and has set up hyperlinks to other sites.
94. Teaching overall is satisfactory. There is enthusiasm for the subject and effective subject knowledge enables pupils to learn a range of skills. However, the management of behaviour of younger pupils is unsatisfactory and as a result these pupils do not do as well as they could. The time at the end of the lesson is not always used effectively but where it is, for example in a Year 9 lesson, pupils are able to show what they know; they answer questions about the website and clearly understand terminology such as web page and bookmark
95. The management of the subject is satisfactory. There is clear planning for the work pupils will do and the development plan identifies appropriately what is needed to improve ICT in the school. The action plan includes identifying the most suitable accreditation for Years 10 and 11, including intermediate level GNVQ, and ensuring that all staff have received training in ICT. The subject leader is aware of the need to ensure that the work matches pupils' individual needs and will be focusing on strategies to match tasks to all levels of ability.
96. The use of ICT across the curriculum is a weakness. It is not identified in the planning of other subjects and there were few examples of ICT being used to support pupils' learning during the inspection week. There are lost opportunities to use the Internet as a valuable research tool. There are no systems in place for assessing pupils' progress or monitoring the teaching of ICT.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Spanish

97. Overall pupils make good progress. They benefit from the teacher's secure subject knowledge and good teaching.

Key strengths

- The teacher speaks in Spanish for as much as possible during lessons.
- There is assessment each term of what pupils know.
- Accreditation has been introduced in Year 10.
- Work in the subject supports pupils' cultural development well.
- The teacher's subject knowledge is very good.

Areas for improvement

- Behaviour management needs to improve in lessons.
 - Monitoring of the subject.
 - The use of ICT.
98. Pupils achieve well in speaking and listening and in reading and writing Spanish as they are given good opportunities to practise all of these in lessons. A broad range of experiences are provided in class and the language is taught well. Years 7 and 8 pupils are able to give and respond to everyday greetings in Spanish. Their pronunciation is clear; they can count to ten in Spanish and express their likes and dislikes. Pupils recall well the terms for colours and talk in Spanish about different kinds of animals and whether they own a cat or a dog. By Year 9 pupils can fluently describe different parts of their bodies; in addition, they know how to complain how ill they are! A Year 10 pupil was happy to conduct a board game with the teacher, understanding both the written and spoken instructions in Spanish. This year two Year 10 pupils have sat (a year early) the foundation GCSE and it is anticipated they will achieve E grades
99. Particular strengths of teaching are the constant use of the foreign language and the wide range of teaching skills and resources used during the lessons. Learning objectives are shared with pupils at the start of each lesson and reviewed at the end. This works well. All written work is marked well and in a way that is helpful to pupils. Suitable praise and encouragement is also given to pupils in class and, as a result, pupils take care with their written work. Pupils are clear about what they have to do to achieve success although work is not adapted to meet the individual needs of the pupils. More use could be made of ICT within the subject, and behaviour is not always well managed.
100. The subject leader has worked extremely hard to establish a new department. A policy and planning for what will be taught have been written to match the National Curriculum requirements. Achievements of the pupils are well documented through a test at the end of each topic. Lessons in Spanish make a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

MUSIC

101. Pupils' progress in music is satisfactory. The teacher has good subject knowledge and uses this appropriately to develop pupils' confidence in the subject.

Key strengths

- The very good practical knowledge of the teacher, who is a professional musician.
- The range of opportunities for pupils to develop their skills.
- The commitment of the teacher to the pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The management of behaviour.
- The planning of lessons to ensure that pupils build on their skills and teaching is more structured.
- Planning for developing the subject.
- Accommodation for music.

102. Pupils have only recently started studying this subject and are learning to play a range of instruments. These include the drums, keyboards, guitars and percussion instruments. They work together to produce tunes such as "Land of hope and glory". They keep time and play in tune using guitars, drums and keyboard. They are very proud of the taped results and are happy to practise until they get it right. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 recognise piano keys and can label them correctly in their books. They show a knowledge of scales and understand what a semitone and treble clef are. There is less evidence of work for Year 9 pupils but it is clear they are able to recognise musical notation and rhythm patterns.
103. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teacher is very committed to developing pupils' knowledge and skills and gives freely of his own time when in school. He has established a school rock band and pupils have access to recreational music. There are limited occasions throughout the year when they can perform to a wider audience than their immediate class. Planning of lessons is a weakness and at times lessons lack a clear focus of what is to be learnt. The management of pupils' behaviour varies and is often unsatisfactory.
104. The subject leader has not established a plan for developing the subject. Assessment is unsatisfactory. Although tapes are made of pupils' performance, individual pupils' records do not show what pupils know, understand and can do. Resources are good. However, the music room is an unsatisfactory environment for the purpose. The shape of the room makes it unsuitable for whole classes to practise and perform music and it is also an unsympathetic environment acoustically.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION (PE)

105. The progress of pupils in physical education is good. They achieve well and learn new techniques quickly as a result of good teaching.

Key strengths

- The introduction of GCSE certification in PE is planned.
- The pace of lessons and the variety of activities are always good.
- Assessment is comprehensive and varied.
- Pupils respect and respond well to the teacher.
- Pupils gain self-confidence from physical activities.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation for indoor physical activities is poor.
 - The deployment and organisation of teaching assistants to support lessons with larger groups is unsatisfactory.
106. Pupils are given a good range of experiences in physical education. In Years 7 and 8 they learn to swim and play team games. They are confident in taking part and clearly enjoy the lessons. In Years 9 and 10 they rehearse a range of techniques for athletic activities. Pupils practise the shot put using a variety of techniques and compare different ways of crossing the bar in the high jump. They learn to work together in teams and participate in football competitions.
107. Teaching is always good and sympathetically supports all pupils to participate, even drawing in those pupils who joined the school only recently and are inhibited often refusing initially to change for the lessons. These pupils act as helpers and

record the results of others. For all others there are high expectations that they will take part and the teacher insists on pupils changing into PE kit. Pupils are taught to listen carefully to instructions. The teacher continually encourages pupils with praise. Pupils visibly gain confidence in physical activities. For example, in a lesson for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 on shot put techniques a smaller pupil scored better because he used the correct way of pushing the shot away from his shoulder. Without offending others who scored inferior results, the teacher praised the smaller pupil who reacted with pride about his achievement.

108. Physical activities make a positive contribution to pupils' personal and social development. The teacher insists on co-operative behaviour and has immediate sanctions available for any abusive language. Despite the protestations of a few pupils, sanctions such as sitting on the side lines for five minutes are enforced. Pupils learn from the consistency of the teacher's approach.
109. Pupils' achievements are carefully recorded and, whenever possible, externally accredited or 'in-house' certificates are awarded. Video recording is also used for assessment. Community links are developed through football tournaments and in a recent competition the team from Oak Bank came first.
110. Support staff are not always deployed appropriately. Although they get involved in the activity they ignore pupils arguing on the side lines. The school's dining hall is small, has a relatively low ceiling and is unsuitable for many PE activities. It limits the range of safe physical activities which can be conducted.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

111. The progress pupils make is satisfactory. Pupils benefit from satisfactory teaching.

Key strengths

- The teacher leading the subject is very committed to its development.
- There is an appropriate curriculum based on the LEA agreed syllabus.

Areas for improvement

- The use of the community to support pupils' learning is just being developed.
- The management of pupils' behaviour.

112. The subject has only recently been introduced as a regular lesson and as a result there is not a large amount of work available. However, in the last year pupils have developed a good understanding of Christianity and aspects of other religions including Buddhism. Year 7 pupils are developing an understanding of the difference between belief/fact and opinion. They are aware of different places of worship and give details of different aspects of Christianity. Pupils in Year 8 have considered Christian beliefs and different celebrations. They have used the Internet well to get details of mosques. Older pupils show an understanding of the rites of passage and have studied the impact of the Crusades.
113. Teaching is well supported by effective planning and as a result pupils are gaining an appropriate range of experiences. Teachers' own interests and expertise are used well; for example in a Year 7 lesson a teacher was able to explain in detail about aspects of Buddhism. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss their experiences and talk about moral issues. In a Year 10 lesson pupils on the whole responded maturely to the work on what is valuable and valued, and through the

activities the majority had developed an understanding that not all things valuable were linked to their financial worth. Teachers do not always manage behaviour well and although planning is good their lessons do not go as planned. Support assistants, particularly for older pupils, are used well and participate effectively in lessons.

114. The subject is led by a conscientious and enthusiastic teacher. There is an awareness of the areas that need improving and the need to monitor the work of others teaching the subject. Marking and assessment are underdeveloped. Resources are good. The community has been used for a few visits, for example to a Christian Church and a Japanese temple, however, the subject leader is aware that opportunities need to be developed further.