

INSPECTION REPORT

HOWARD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Bury St Edmunds

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124801

Headteacher: Mrs Fiona Bromley

Reporting inspector: Marjorie Glynne-Jones
2918

Dates of inspection: 17 - 20 January 2000

Inspection number: 189579

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: County

Age range of pupils: 9-13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Beard Road
Bury St Edmunds
Suffolk

Postcode: IP32 6SA

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Peter English

Date of previous inspection: June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Marjorie Glynne-Jones	Registered inspector	Music	How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed?
John Brasier	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Vera Foster	Team inspector	Mathematics	How well are pupils taught?
Beryl Buteux	Team inspector	English English as an additional language	How good are the curricular opportunities offered to pupils?
Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communications technology	
Marilyn Nathan	Team inspector	History	
David Rogers	Team inspector	Art	
David Sutcliffe	Team inspector	Modern languages	
Neil Cowell	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs	
Alan Brewerton	Team inspector	Science Equal opportunities	
Peter Hick	Team inspector	Physical education	
Brian Martell	Team inspector	Religious education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Howard School is a mixed county middle school for pupils aged 9 to 13. There are 327 pupils on roll, about average, slightly more than at the last inspection. The profile of pupils' attainment on entry is currently below average; it was well below average for the current Year 8. The area served by the school, a housing estate on the outskirts of Bury St Edmunds, has high levels of disadvantage which are not reflected in the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, 18 per cent. There are very few pupils from ethnic minorities. The school receives no travellers or refugees. The two pupils who have English as a second language are fairly fluent English speakers. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is about average, and the proportion of those with full statements is below average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Howard is a good school, developing at a rapid rate on a range of aspects of its provision. This is being achieved because management is generally very good and the new headteacher gives excellent leadership. There is a strong sense of corporate identity, and a buzz of enthusiasm about the school; relationships are very good. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are a strength. Pupils make good progress so that they reach the standards expected nationally by the end of Key Stage 2 although their entry profile is lower than usual. This standard is maintained in Years 7 and 8. Results in Year 6 tests are improving, though they are below the average for similar schools. The school gives good value for money.

What the school does well

- excellent leadership by the headteacher
- good management generally by key staff
- supportive governors
- good achievement at each key stage
- good progress by pupils with special educational needs because of good provision
- good teaching and good learning
- good attitudes and very good relationships
- very good behaviour because very well handled by the school
- good provision for moral and cultural development, particular strength for social development
- good care for pupils' welfare

What could be improved

- results in National Curriculum tests are below average for similar schools
- achievement in mathematics in Years 7 and 8 is unsatisfactory
- the statutory curriculum is not in place for information and communications technology (ICT) and the use of new technology is unsatisfactory; curriculum requirements for modern languages are not fully met
- parents giving their views (meeting, questionnaire) are unhappy with many aspects of the school; their involvement is unsatisfactory
- governors' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school is not sufficiently developed

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1996. The improvement since then is very good.

Between 1996 and 1999 the school's results, while below average, show an improving trend, although at first the trend was downward. The standards in the work seen in English, mathematics, science, geography and history are now in line with expectations whereas they were below expectations in 1996. Standards have been maintained in other subjects at Key Stage 2, and have improved at Key Stage 3 in design and technology, ICT and physical education.

There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching: then only 75 per cent of lessons were judged to be satisfactory or better; the figure is now 100 per cent. Then, 40 per cent were judged to be good or better; now the figure is 72 per cent. Then, eight per cent were judged to be very good or better; now the figure is 35 per cent.

Very good improvement has been made on the key issues from the last inspection.

- Standards in reading, writing and speaking have been raised throughout the curriculum.
- There is good improvement in mathematics standards at Key Stage 2 though this has not yet worked through to Key Stage 3.
- There is now very good consistency in the quality of teaching, so that most aspects of teaching are good, including planning and teacher expectations which were singled out in the last report.
- Arrangements are in place which ensure that pupils receive regular advice about improving their work, although marking does not always make clear what they need to do to improve. Individual targets are set.
- The school's objectives about improving attainment are now being put into practice very well indeed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11-year-olds based on

Performance in:	compared with				Key well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
End of Key Stage 2 tests	E	E	E	D	

In each core subject, English, mathematics and science, these comparisons (based on average points) are the same. For the proportion of pupils achieving level 4 and above, the results in English and mathematics are below average, and for science are well below average. In each subject, the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 or above is well below average.

Between 1996 and 1999 there is an improving trend, helped by the good improvement in results in 1999. The rate of improvement is much the same as the rate nationally, faster than the national rate in mathematics, slower in English, and much the same in science. The school's agreed targets 2000 for English and mathematics were unambitious for the achievement of level 4 and above. They were exceeded in 1999. The school has 'informally' set suitably higher targets.

In the work seen in all subjects at each key stage, except in mathematics at Key Stage 3, standards are in line with those expected nationally. The strengths are in design and technology and ICT, and particularly in physical education. Art is a strength at Key Stage 3. In English and mathematics, improved standards are a result of the school's work to implement the Literacy and Numeracy

Strategies. In all three subjects, they are the positive effect of the very good quality of attention given to planning, teaching and learning in the last year.

Pupils' achievement is good. On entry their profile of attainment was below average, well below for pupils in Year 8. Pupils make sufficient progress to achieve standards at least in line with those expected nationally in all subjects by the end of Key Stage 2. In a small number of subjects standards are above those expected. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. These standards are maintained in Years 7 and 8, except in mathematics where the good improvements at Key Stage 2 have not yet worked through to Key Stage 3.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes are good; generally pupils enter into activities with enthusiasm, take their work seriously, and treat others, staff and pupils, with courtesy.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good; staff, governors and pupils say that it has improved significantly in the last year; during this time there was a sharp rise in exclusions followed by a fall to the currently low level.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships are very good; pupils are co-operative and work effectively in pairs and groups; they show respect for each other.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 9-11 years	aged 11-13 years	
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	

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.

Teaching of

English:	satisfactory at both key stages
mathematics, science:	good at both key stages
literacy and numeracy skills:	satisfactory at both key stages

Overall, in most other subjects, teaching is good. There are particular strengths in music and physical education where it is very good. In art, teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 2 and good at Key Stage 3 where there is more rigorous pace and increasing challenge. The teaching in French, history and religious education is satisfactory. There is a similar picture across subjects for how well teaching methods meet pupils' needs, except for science. In science, while this is good at Key Stage 2, at Key Stage 3 it is only satisfactory because pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the work set.

In lessons teaching was

Satisfactory or better in	100 per cent
Good or better in	71 per cent
Very good or better in	33 per cent
Excellent in	1 per cent
Unsatisfactory in	0 per cent

Pupils' learning is always satisfactory or better, including learning by pupils with special educational needs. It is good overall in mathematics, science, design and technology and ICT. There are particular strengths in geography, music and physical education which reflect the strengths in teaching. The consistency in quality is a school strength.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Although what is in place is satisfactory, overall provision is unsatisfactory because the statutory requirements for ICT and modern languages are not met fully; good range of extra-curricular activities; strong commitment to equal access for pupils generally well achieved; timings of the school day not well organised.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good: all pupils follow the National Curriculum and have access to all school events and activities; good transfer arrangements from primary schools and sound to upper schools; good practice in the termly review of pupils' individual education plans.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory overall; fluent French speakers not sufficiently challenged by the work set in modern languages.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall; strength in provision for social development, weakness in providing for spiritual development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is good, with particular strength in achieving good behaviour. Two areas, though satisfactory, are not as well developed as others: these are the way the results of pupils' assessments are used to help curriculum planning, and the regular checking of pupils' progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is a school strength, with outstanding leadership by the headteacher; there is a strong staff commitment to improvement.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors give good support, but are not taking the role of critical friend sufficiently; statutory responsibilities are not fully met for worship, the curriculum, and the contents of the annual report to parents.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good monitoring of teaching; targets for improvement in National Curriculum tests not ambitious enough and appropriately under review within the school; effectiveness shows in the strong sense of professional community in the school and the rate at which secure improvements are being achieved.
The strategic use of resources	Effective use of resources, which are good overall for staffing, accommodation and learning resources. The school applies the principles of best value well in its purchasing arrangements; there was recent, good consultation with parents through a questionnaire in preparation for the home-school contract; the school compares thoroughly its standards and its context with those for other schools.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

There was a 22 per cent return to the parents' questionnaire; six parents (two per cent) attended the parents' meeting.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• their child makes good progress• teachers have high expectations• teaching is good	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• behaviour• the amount of homework• information about pupils' progress• the way the school responds to questions and problems, such as bullying• closer working with parents• the way the school is led and managed• the way pupils are helped to mature and become responsible

The inspection team agrees with parents that the school is not working closely enough with parents; this is recognised by the headteacher. The team agrees to some extent with parents' concern that they do not receive enough information about their children's progress. They find that reports vary in quality, with some that are helpful and others that are too vague.

Inspectors do not find that the other concerns raised by parents are justified. They do not find that behaviour is a concern, rather that it is very good, although it is evident that a good improvement has taken place in the last year. While they judge that pupils' personal development is generally good, inspectors find that there are not always sufficient opportunities in lessons for pupils to be responsible for their own work. The inspection team finds that homework is usually managed satisfactorily, with good practice in science.

Because of the strong concerns raised at the parents' meeting about the way the school handles problems, and bullying in particular, inspectors examined school records thoroughly and talked to pupils and staff about bullying. Their finding is that school procedures for following up complaints and concerns are satisfactory. The team judges the leadership and management of the new headteacher to be exceptionally strong.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

English, mathematics and science

Key Stage 2 National Curriculum test results 1999

1. In each of the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, the 1999 results are well below the national average for pupils' average points for each of these subjects. This is true for boys' and girls' results. The proportion of pupils reaching level 4, or above, is below the national average in English and mathematics and well below in science. When compared to similar schools, these results are below average.
2. In English, between 1996 and 1999 there is a rising trend in the average points, which mostly results from the good improvement in 1999. These results are rising at a slower rate than nationally. Girls' results are improving faster than boys' results. Compared to similar schools the results are below average.
3. In mathematics there is a rising trend in the average points between 1996 and 1999, helped by the good improvement in 1999. The rate is faster than the national rate. Girls' results are improving much faster than boys' results. Compared to similar schools the results are below average.
4. The results in science have been stable between 1996 and 1998 with a good improvement in 1999. There is a rising trend 1996-1999, which is much the same as the national trend. Girls' results are improving a little faster than boys' results. Compared to similar schools the results are below average.

Key Stage 2: standards of the work seen during the inspection

5. By the end of the key stage, in each of the three subjects the standards are in line with the national expectation, showing a good improvement in comparison with the test results in 1999. In English and mathematics, improved standards are a result of the school's work to implement the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. In all three subjects, they are the positive effect of the very good quality of attention given to planning, teaching and learning in the last year.
6. In English, some aspects are better developed than others. Pupils use grammar and punctuation correctly in their writing; they spell well. They read accurately, but do not always communicate the meaning effectively, or follow up words they do not understand. In mathematics, because of the school's emphasis on teaching number, pupils' skills are better developed in this area than in the others of shape and space, and using and applying mathematics. Pupils can calculate simple fractions, find the perimeters of simple shapes and interpret simple line graphs. In science, pupils show similar standards in each area of the science curriculum. They set up simple electrical circuits, know that the four seasons result from the angle of inclination of the earth and its rotation round the sun, and represent the results of their investigations in tables or graphs.

Key Stage 3, Years 7 and 8: standards of the work seen during the inspection

7. In English and science pupils are reaching satisfactory standards in the first two years of the key stage, but in mathematics standards are below those expected. In English, pupils' skills in reading, listening and speaking are satisfactory, although the range of their reading is limited. There is not much evidence of creative writing, but there are good examples of writing about books such as *Oliver Twist* and *The Iron Man*. In science, pupils understand the relationship between speed, distance and time, and can handle the calculations involved. They carry out investigations confidently and make accurate measurements.
8. In mathematics pupils can multiply three-digit numbers by two-digit numbers, translate two-dimensional shapes, and use frequency tables.

The other foundation subjects and religious education

Key Stage 2: standards of the work seen during the inspection

9. Standards are in line with the national expectation in art, geography and history; they meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. There are good standards, above those expected, in design and technology, and in ICT. Standards are particularly good in physical education, well above those expected.
10. In art, pupils have a sound range of skills, and a knowledge of famous artists and works by these artists. They use technical vocabulary confidently. In geography, pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of the main features of St Lucia, but do not describe a range of physical features. They have a good understanding of how people are affecting the environment. Pupils have a clear understanding of chronology in history, and remember the topics they have studied, for example, the Tudors. In religious education pupils have a satisfactory understanding of what is meant by 'beliefs and values' and a basic knowledge of Christianity and other main world religions.
11. Pupils' skills are well developed in design and technology: they understand the properties of common materials, cut and join a variety of them accurately, and evaluate the quality of their finished work. Pupils' good ICT skills and knowledge show in their confident word-processing and creation of spreadsheets and databases; they know how to combine text, graphs and pictures. In physical education very good standards are reached in swimming and dance, and good standards in gymnastics.

Key Stage 3, Years 7 and 8: standards of the work seen during the inspection

12. In subjects where standards were good at Key Stage 2 this continues into Years 7 and 8, while standards in art improve. Pupils use tone and shadow in their drawing, and use colour boldly in their painting, a level of skill and understanding that would usually be expected by the end of Year 9. In design and technology pupils' skills are extended: they work confidently with tools such as saws, drills and scissors; they apply finishing techniques, such as painting, to enhance the quality of their artefacts. They work from designs. Good ICT skills show in the way pupils independently enter, amend and retrieve information; they show advanced skills in combining texts and images. Pupils show high level skills in netball, soccer, basketball and volleyball.
13. Satisfactory standards are maintained in geography, history and physical education. In geography, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the implications of population growth and know about the reasons for changes in the birth and death rates. Pupils

show sound factual knowledge of history topics; they can give a range of causes for an event, categorise them and say whether they are long or short term. In religious education pupils understand what it means to be committed to a group in secular and religious contexts; they can identify appropriately the qualities which promote a sense of community.

Pupils' achievements

14. Pupils' achievement is good. The school expects it to be good and is successfully gearing all its development work to achieving this. On entry, pupils' profile of attainment was below average, well below for pupils in Year 8. Pupils make sufficient progress to achieve standards at least in line with those expected nationally in all subjects by the end of Key Stage 2. In a small number of subjects standards are above those expected. This represents good added value. In the work seen there is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. These standards are maintained in Years 7 and 8, except in mathematics where the good improvement in mathematics at Key Stage 2 has yet to work through into Key Stage 3. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress. Those with statements of special need make sound progress, particularly in reading and spelling when they are taught in small groups away from the main classroom. They make good progress when taught individually. Regular testing of reading competence shows progress over time though generally pupils continue to need support with their reading and remain on the register of special educational needs from Year 5 to Year 8.
15. The very small number of pupils for whom English is a second language are fairly fluent English speakers. They nearly always make similar progress to their peers. The exception is in modern languages, where native French speakers have little opportunity to make the progress they could because the work is pitched at too low a level to challenge them properly.
16. The school's agreed targets 2000 for English and mathematics were unambitious for the achievement of level 4 and above. They were exceeded in 1999. The school has 'informally' set suitably higher targets. The fact that the school is able to do this reflects the strong impetus for improvement which is raising expectations and performance.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

17. The standards achieved in pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are a strength of the school and have been maintained since the last inspection. Relationships and behaviour are very good, an improvement since the last inspection. Attendance is satisfactory, although the rate is slightly lower than reported at the last inspection.
18. Pupils enjoy school and enter into most activities with enthusiasm. For example, in Year 6 singing sessions for the whole year group pupils join in with gusto and great good humour. In lessons they are keen to answer questions. When asked what they would like to see changed in the school pupils come up with creative ideas rather than complaints. They speak very positively about their teachers and the quality of their lessons. These good attitudes are the result of good teaching and interesting lessons, especially teachers' enthusiasm, and the clear rules about behaviour which are applied consistently and fairly.
19. Behaviour is very good. All adults and pupils remark on how it has improved during the past year, when previously it was hindering effective learning. The change was brought about by strong leadership from the new headteacher, some strong subject

leadership, and rigorous application of the behaviour policy by all staff. For a while this led to a sharp increase in the number of exclusions, but as things have settled the number has returned to a very low level. Teachers now need to spend very little time on behaviour control. Pupils are polite to each other and to staff; as one midday supervisor said 'Respect is returning'. The school building is well cared for and treated with respect. Pupils are very appreciative of the improvement in behaviour. While they take no part in deciding what the rules should be, they accept them as fair and sensible.

20. Relationships within the school are very good; pupils respond co-operatively when working in pairs and small groups. This is a particular strength in science, geography, design and technology, ICT and music. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into group work. Pupils understand the effect of their behaviour on others; for example, there is no scoffing when answers are not sensible, or not known. They listen well to each other and rarely interrupt. Pupils are able to approach any member of staff about a personal problem and the school is relatively free of oppressive behaviour. As one pupil put it, 'One girl occasionally has a go at me, but I know a word in the right place will immediately stop it'. Staff are very supportive of each other, have excellent attitudes and are good role models for the pupils.
21. Pupils with special educational needs show the same positive, co-operative attitudes as other pupils. They develop good relationships with learning support assistants when they work out of lessons. A firm but friendly working atmosphere characterises the work in special educational needs. Pupils with special needs are well accepted by others. In discussions with adults they show assurance in putting forward their own point of view.
22. Pupils' personal development is good. In Year 8, for example, pupils arrange events for charity or for the school fund, such as the Christmas Fayre and fashion shows. They organise basketball games themselves. In class there are some opportunities for independent research which are often organised with suitable materials for lower attainers. There could be more. The school operates well as a community and pupils feel part of it.
23. Attendance is satisfactory, being about average for middle schools. Registration happens promptly, there is very little lateness and lessons start on time. Unauthorised absence is below the national average.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

24. Teaching is good. It is always (100 per cent) satisfactory or better, and good, or better in 71 per cent of lessons at Key Stage 2 and 72 per cent at Key Stage 3. There is much very good practice to build on.
 - There is good quality at each key stage in mathematics and science, in design and technology and in ICT.
 - Teaching in art is better at Key Stage 3 (good) than at Key Stage 2 (satisfactory) where rigour and pace lack the edge they have in Years 7 and 8.
 - There are particular strengths in geography, music and physical education where teaching is very good at both key stages.
 - There is some very good teaching in each of the core National Curriculum subjects, English, mathematics and science, and in art.
 - In the remaining subjects, history, modern languages and religious education, teaching is satisfactory.

25. Teachers have secure subject knowledge which enables them to present and explain their subject clearly and to share their enthusiasm for it. They are competent in teaching literacy and make good use of key words; these are emphasised in a range of subjects. For example, in geography, words such as 'oceanic', 'continental', 'erosion' feature well. Numeracy skills are formally taught in mathematics, and used effectively in science, design and technology, geography and ICT. For example, in science, pupils in Year 6 present the results of their investigations in graphs or tables. ICT skills are taught well in specific ICT lessons but not through the other subjects of the curriculum as they should be.
26. The quality of teachers' planning is a strength. Teachers plan effectively, setting clear objectives which they share with pupils. There is consistency in the quality of planning across the school, which can be attributed to very good leadership and management by subject leaders; planning was the first area given thorough attention when the headteacher was appointed. The result shows in the good use to which lesson time is put, encouraging pupils to make their best effort. Teachers mostly set high expectations for pupils' work in English, mathematics, history and religious education. This is done well in other subjects. There are times in mathematics where some higher and lower attainers are not given enough challenge and this affects their progress. Teachers have the ability to inspire pupils, for example in music, where the teacher's warm enthusiasm makes challenging activities fun. Teachers motivate pupils through using interesting resources, for example in science, using *Thomas the Tank Engine* in a lesson on speed.
27. Teachers use methods which enable all pupils to learn effectively, to acquire new knowledge and skills and to increase their understanding. While there are good examples of pupils working independently, they do not have enough opportunities to take charge of their own learning. Sometimes the work is exclusively teacher-directed so that pupils have limited opportunities to learn to think for themselves. Pupils generally put effort into their work. In physical education, for example, they work hard at performing a variety of sequences on mats and fixed apparatus. This amount of effort is not always evident, for example, when pupils carry out reading tasks in a library lesson. Pupils are generally interested in their work and do concentrate. Teachers manage pupils well and insist on high standards of behaviour. The pupils respond well both in class and in practical activities, such as boys' volleyball.
28. Teachers have a high level of awareness of the special needs of pupils and take these into account when preparing work and by giving additional support during lessons. Where pupils with the least developed reading skills are supported year on year by an experienced learning support assistant this ensures that they make progress commensurate with their increase in age. Pupils with statements of educational needs make sound progress particularly in reading and spelling through being taught in small groups away from the main classroom. Pupils also make good progress when taught individually.
29. Lesson time is used efficiently. Most lessons proceed at a brisk pace. For example, in ICT, pupils rapidly acquire the skills and techniques for entering information on a database. Where, on occasion, a lesson moves more slowly, the teacher has to stop to call back pupils' attention. Good use is made of resources such as overhead projectors but computers are left unused for substantial periods of time. Support staff are used effectively and make a valuable contribution. Pupils' work is assessed thoroughly and they set targets for themselves. Although they know how well they are doing, they cannot usually relate this to National Curriculum levels, and are not always clear about what they need to do to improve. Homework is used effectively, sometimes to

consolidate what was learned in the lessons, and sometimes to take it further. This is done well in science.

30. Learning is good. This reflects the good quality of the teaching which enables pupils, including those with special educational needs, to make good progress. The positive ethos and co-operative spirit in the school foster good attitudes which in turn have a notable effect on learning.

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

31. Overall, there is a sound range of learning opportunities for pupils at each key stage. In science, design and technology, geography, music and physical education, and in art at Key Stage 3, the range is good. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. They follow the National Curriculum and have access to all school events and activities. None is disapplied from the National Curriculum. Strengths are the consistent quality of curriculum planning across subjects to which good attention has been given in the last year, and the strong commitment to pupils' equal access to the curriculum which is generally well achieved. Weaknesses are: the variable length of lessons which in the shorter lessons can limit the range of subject activities compared with the longer ones and results in some unequal access to the curriculum; and the time allocation for modern languages which is preventing full coverage of the National Curriculum. The variable lesson length was carried over from the previous year's timetable, although the particular reason to do with timetabling literacy no longer applied. It results in different lesson lengths between subjects and year groups. Personal and social education is suitably provided, although with limited time, and handles sex and drugs education well. Pupils in Year 8 have a helpful opportunity to experience vocational courses at West Suffolk College, for example, attending classes on plumbing as a way of learning about work-related education.
32. The English curriculum has recently been updated to indicate plans for the development of literacy skills across all subject areas. The arrangements are effective. Access to the full literacy programme is provided for all pupils. Those with special educational needs are supported especially well. Glossaries of technical terms are in place in all departments. Procedures for assessment and recording have been revised to ensure that progress in literacy skills is tracked across all subjects and all year groups. The marking policy provides helpful guidelines for this to ensure consistency across all year groups. Extra-curricular activities include 'booster' classes to raise standards in literacy, particularly in writing skills. The department has good resources including its own library. The teaching of library skills to encourage pupils to read more widely and use the school library for research is under-developed.
33. Overall, there are effective arrangements for teaching numeracy. Pupils acquire numeracy skills in their mathematics lessons. Great emphasis is placed on the four basic rules of arithmetic and on developing mental mathematical skills. In design and technology pupils use measurement to weigh and to make estimates for amounts of ingredients or materials needed. They produce design drawings to scale. Pupils construct and interpret statistical diagrams in design and technology and in geography where they draw bar charts from rainfall data, line graphs from temperature data, and pie charts of unemployment survey data. In science they plot graphs of extension against mass for a spring.
34. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to extend and enhance their learning through a range of extra-curricular activities. Particularly helpful are the homework clubs and after school 'booster classes' in English and mathematics, with the support

for writing skills in the English sessions. There is a pioneering outdoor and adventurous activities programme, with nearly all pupils experiencing hiking and camping overnight. In the science club, pupils are working for the Bronze Award of the British Advancement of Science Youth Section, which involves investigative work; the school has achieved sponsorship for this and it is a good opportunity. A range of music activities happens frequently during the week, participation is enthusiastic, and during the inspection week resulted in some good performances in assembly.

35. Social, cultural and moral education is a powerful force in the school, underpinning the way of life both in and out of the classroom. There is particular strength in provision for social development. Especially important are the assemblies which, during the inspection week, focused on freedom with an African dimension to the theme. They gave opportunities for pupils to participate, including all of Years 5 and 6, and reflected a strong sense of community, shared by pupils and staff alike. Subject areas make valuable contributions to the provision, for example in religious education, through themes such as loyalty and commitment, and in geography through reflections such as 'What would you feel if.....?' Pupils develop social understanding through fund raising activities, and through opportunities to develop skills in collaborating and negotiating in group work. This is particularly strong in science and music. In music, duos, trios and quartets work effectively to make and perform a piece, the groups including boys and girls, higher attainers and pupils with special educational needs. Cultural education is strong in music and art, but insufficiently developed in French. For example, display in the music room asks the question 'What was happening at the time Stravinsky wrote the *Rite of Spring*? The hall is enhanced by the display of paintings influenced by Aboriginal art.
36. The statutory requirements for the curriculum are not fully met: the school is not teaching ICT across the subjects of the curriculum, although provision for 'specialist' lessons is good; and the scheme of work for modern languages does not cover the cultural aspects of the curriculum. Religious education is properly taught to the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, *Beliefs and Values*.
37. Relationships with local primary schools are effective in achieving smooth transfer for pupils in Year 5. Year 5 staff visit the primary schools to ensure that good information is exchanged to support pupils settling in quickly. Pupils work on bridging projects in the core subjects which continue, using the same workbooks, from Year 4 into Year 5. There are good links with the local upper school, resulting particularly from its technology school status. For example, technician support for ICT is provided on a weekly basis. Music links are good. The good links with primary schools and the high school ensure continuity in the provision for pupils with special educational needs. There is a range of ways in which the community contributes to the school's work. Members of local religious groups visit to take assemblies; Year 8 pupils join the ATC (Air Training Corps) and army cadets; an artist-in-residence has worked with pupils; and there are links with a retreat in a local village, through which, for example, people from Eastern Europe visit to talk to pupils in Year 5.
38. The quality of provision has been maintained since the last inspection. The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice has been fully implemented and statutory requirements are met. Staff training has greatly increased awareness and improved subject arrangements for pupils with special needs. Provision for cultural development has improved although the weakness in providing for spiritual development persists. There are opportunities in assemblies, but, except in art, few opportunities are taken in subject work and activities across the curriculum although many arise. Planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is not included in subject schemes of work.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

39. The school's care for its pupils is good. This quality has been sustained since the last inspection.
40. A safe environment is provided, with good supervision at break times and before and after school. There are regular safety inspections, carried out and recorded as required. The headteacher is responsible for child protection. While she has been trained, is familiar with local procedures, and has good contacts with the appropriate agencies, there has been no staff training either for new or for existing staff. Planning is in place to put this right. Staff are aware which pupils are on the child protection register and are appropriately vigilant for their welfare. Aspects of the personal, social and health education programme help pupils to understand how to look out for themselves and develop a responsible attitude as they grow up.
41. Individual pupils are known well by their form tutors. Tutors talk knowledgeably about their pupils and have concern for their welfare. They meet weekly with heads of year to consider any difficulties pupils are experiencing. The management team has pastoral matters as a standing item on its weekly agenda, including those matters reported by heads of year. At daily staff briefings staff are made aware of any circumstances that may affect pupils' response in school. This range of procedures ensures good quality care.
42. Through ensuring that parents keep to the requirements about notifying the school about their child's absence, satisfactory standards of attendance are achieved. This is done through telephone calls on the first morning of absence and letters home. Persistent erratic attendance is followed up by the deputy headteacher and education welfare officer. Attendance data is well monitored; the distinction between authorised and unauthorised absence is well understood and applied, including absence for holidays. These are good procedures.
43. The inclusive and supportive school ethos encourages good behaviour, as does the very good classroom practice. There are very effective procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Any slips from the standard expected result in warnings and a period of partial or total separation from the class. These sanctions are consistently applied; the separation is particularly unpopular with pupils, and acts as a strong incentive to abide by the rules. The procedure is efficiently recorded and the records monitored so that it can be evaluated. This formal procedure is always accompanied by an informal discussion with individual pupils about their attitudes. The effectiveness of the procedures is shown, for example, by the fall in the number of exclusions.
44. Bullying is tackled through these procedures and addressed in assemblies and in personal, social and health education lessons. Staff are quick to respond to any concerns about bullying. At the parents' meeting, bullying was raised as an issue and specific instances quoted. School records have been thoroughly examined: inspectors find that the school's procedures are appropriate and consistently applied.
45. Assessment procedures are mostly good, with strengths in English, design and technology, ICT and physical education. In religious education procedures are not sufficiently developed. There is effective monitoring of pupils' academic and personal performance. Teachers know their pupils' strengths and weaknesses well. Records of the assessments made at the end of each stage of work are efficiently kept in all subjects. However, records of personal development are limited to comments on effort, with no comments on qualities such as persistence, co-operation, initiative and taking responsibility. The school has good systems for motivating pupils to improve their

academic performance. For example, in Year 8, tutors have half-termly discussions with individual pupils about their progress; they agree targets for improvement and review them regularly. The head of year has a fortnightly session with four pupils to which they bring pieces of work they would like to show. In English, pupils decide on their personal termly targets for improvement. While the information about pupils' performance gained from assessments is generally being used effectively in planning future work, there is scope for further improvement, particularly in religious education. A tracking system is being usefully set in place to improve the quality of monitoring progress.

46. Annual reviews for pupils with special educational needs are carried out as required. All individual education plans are routinely reviewed each term and this is good practice. Record keeping is sound and a straightforward system gives very good access to pupil information for all staff. Individual education plans are in place. They follow the clear and comprehensive policy which gives clear guidance to all staff on assessment procedures. These are used effectively for identification of needs and referral at Stage 1. Testing of Year 5 pupils on entry to the school is thorough. This, together with primary school records and liaison, ensures that appropriate provision is made as soon as possible. The school does this well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. Parents' views about the school are mixed. There are a number of areas which those responding to the questionnaire (76 parents/carers) or attending the meeting (six parents/carers) would like to see improved. Parents consider that the school has high expectations, that the teaching is good, and that their pupils make good progress. Only 60 per cent of those responding to the questionnaire (there was a 22 per cent return) think that the school works closely with parents, and only two-thirds believe that the school keeps them well informed about progress. Attendance at the parents' meeting before the inspection was poor. Very few home-school contracts have been returned although a very full consultation procedure was undertaken. The school finds it difficult to keep the record of emergency contacts up to date because they do not always receive the information. Few parents assist in the school or support the stalwarts who run the Friends of Howard School, and homework books are rarely used as a means of communication by parents. Parents are not sufficiently involved in the annual review process for pupils with special educational needs. Some parents are supportive in supervising homework and reading; they sign the homework books and occasionally comment, but are in a minority. There is no consultation with parents about the curricular provision or major spending decisions, nor is involvement of parents in sharing success or developing strategies for improvement well developed. Overall, the involvement of parents is unsatisfactory.
48. The school provides satisfactory information in the prospectus although the content could be made more inviting for future parents. There are good newsletters. However, the last annual report to parents did not include all the required contents. The school has this in hand. Reports for parents on their children's progress have some useful information, but the information on levels of attainment varies and is sometimes unsatisfactory. Some reports include suitable targets but others are too vague. No information is provided to show parents how they can help their children to improve where there are weaknesses. There are, however, follow up meetings to discuss the content of reports and these meetings are well attended. In the questionnaire returns parents showed that they think the school is approachable when there is a problem.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

49. The school is run very efficiently. The headteacher, not yet in post a full year, gives excellent leadership, focusing all school decision-making on raising pupils' attainment through improving subject planning and teaching. By spending time in the school on a regular basis before taking up her post, she was able to identify strengths and weaknesses in standards and provision. This ensured that the process of development planning could begin when she arrived, and that the plan could be completed, with consultation, at the earliest opportunity. This was carried out very well and focused the development thinking of staff and governors in a productive way. Much has been achieved, in a coherent way, even though many areas were tackled at once. Some good staff appointments, including subject managers, have been made through well-considered procedures. There is a shared feeling of excitement about improving the school and a strong commitment to doing so.
50. Key managers in the school generally give good leadership in developing their areas of responsibility so that pupils' opportunities and learning benefit. Next on the review agenda are the school day and timetable; currently the organisation does not support pupils' learning with sufficient consistency across subjects, and the time given to tutor periods is not used well. The school's finances are prudently managed and efficiently controlled. In financial planning, proper account is taken of the need to retain stable staffing while providing for the variable pupil numbers entering in Year 5. All aspects of budgeting are considered in relation to achieving the best value. For example, the school is combining with other local schools to manage its own grounds maintenance in a cost-saving venture. Funding for staff development is used properly, with adequate follow-up. While there has been appropriate attention to subject training, the management training needs of senior staff, for example in relation to performance management, have not been sufficiently addressed. Nor have the professional development needs been considered in relation to school improvement of those teachers who, because they are the sole subject specialists on the staff, lack day-to-day dialogue with specialist peers.
51. The governing body carries out its responsibilities with a strong commitment of care for the school; governors are very supportive of staff and pupils. A weakness is that this support has not been matched by their taking the role of critical friend in monitoring the school's provision so that, for example, issues of non-compliance can be picked up. The school does not meet statutory requirements for collective worship, for the subject provision in ICT, and for the cultural aspects of the modern languages curriculum. The most recent annual report to parents did not include all the required contents, a matter currently under review by a governors' working group. While there is awareness of areas of general strength and weakness, particularly in results, until recently this has not been routinely informed by the results of school monitoring and evaluation. This is because, as shown by the minutes of the governing body, thoroughgoing evaluations of all aspects of provision have not been provided for governors, nor required by them. However, improvement is underway. A start has been made on involving governors in the school's reviewing of its work. For example, as part of the process of monitoring subject teaching, the link governor for the subject now attends the evaluation meeting at which strengths and weakness are identified and action points considered. This is very good practice, enabling governors to account for areas of their responsibility on the basis of sufficiently detailed and rigorous school evaluation. In a similar way, governors are now updated on the progress of the development plan at every meeting of the governing body. This is sharpening their contribution to school improvement.

52. There is notable strength in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance for which procedures have been firmly established over the last year. This followed the very helpful preliminary work on planning. The headteacher's leadership in this area is excellent, involving staff and governors in partnership through procedures which fit their roles and responsibilities. For example, monitoring of science teaching has been carried out in the way outlined in the previous paragraph. The result is good improvement in standards, achieved through significant improvement in behaviour, consistently satisfactory but mostly good planning, and significant improvement in teaching. These priorities for action were well determined and timely.
53. Staff resources are, overall, satisfactory, with strengths in mathematics, design and technology, ICT, music and physical education. A weakness in science is the lack of technician support which means that co-ordinating time is used for preparing resources, whereas in a secondary school this would be done by a technician. All staff have appropriate expertise for their subject or support role in the school. There is good understanding of individual responsibilities and effective team working. Special educational needs staffing is sufficient to meet the needs of pupils on the Code of Practice register. The role of special educational needs co-ordinator is currently undertaken by the headteacher during a maternity absence.
54. The accommodation is good overall, and excellent for physical education. One of the science laboratories is cramped when classes of 25 are working. Learning resources are good with strengths in music and physical education, and good provision in mathematics, design and technology, geography, and in the ICT base. Computer provision in the special educational needs base is satisfactory, but the lack of computers in subject areas prevents the use of appropriate software for learning support.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. The following key issues are in order of their importance for raising standards in the school. They should be included in the governing body's post-inspection action plan.
- 1 Improve the Year 6 results in English, mathematics and science through:
 - implementing half-termly tracking of pupils' progress;
 - giving equal attention in planning to each area of the English curriculum;
 - planning work which is sufficiently challenging for higher attainers;
 - ensuring that marking consistently helps pupils to understand how they can improve their work;
 - making sure that pupils understand the National Curriculum level descriptors and end of key stage statements and can apply them to their own work.
 (Paragraphs 1-4, 6, 28, 45, 58, 64-65, 69, 71, 79, 87, 89)

 - 2 Raise achievement in mathematics in Years 7 and 8 through:
 - the ways outlined in key issue 1;
 - ensuring consistency of practice in teaching across the key stages;
 - giving equal attention in planning to each area of the mathematics curriculum.
 (Paragraphs 8, 26, 75-6, 78-9, 81)

- 3 Meet in full the requirements for the National Curriculum for information and communications technology and modern languages through:
 - providing adequate computer resources across all subjects;
 - ensure that the use of new technology is systematically developed across the school;
 - ensuring that financial planning makes provision for the updating of equipment;
 - ensuring that subject schemes of work include planning for pupils' development of ICT capability;
 - co-ordinating and monitoring ICT provision across the school;
 - organising the school day to ensure suitable subject time allocations for modern languages.
 (Paragraphs 26, 28, 31, 33, 49-50, 54, 71, 75, 79, 86, 92, 101, 103, 114, 118, 127, 132, 137-42, 162)

- 4 Improve the effectiveness of the school's links with parents so that they are as fully involved as possible with the work of the school through:
 - ensuring that parents receive full information about the school's work through the annual report to parents;
 - developing the use of the homework diary as means of home-school communication;
 - making sure that children's annual reports give parents sufficient information about the strengths and weaknesses of their child's progress;
 - seeking a shared 'putting-into-practice' of the home-school contract.
 (Paragraphs 46-7, 51)

- 5 Ensure that governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through:
 - ensuring that governing body time is properly given to monitoring the aspects of provision for which governors have overall responsibility;
 - determining the way in which the headteacher will report to governors about performance management;
 - providing governors with adequate information about strengths and weaknesses identified through the school's monitoring and evaluation of its provision.
 (Paragraphs 51-62)

56. The following weaknesses are also identified in the report but are not included in the main areas for action to improve standards:

- provision for pupils' spiritual development is lacking (paragraph 38);
- arrangements for child protection are not fully in place. This is receiving attention (paragraph 40);
- marking does not consistently explain how pupils can improve their work (paragraphs 119, 159);
- records of personal development are limited to comments on effort (paragraph 45);
- timings of the school day are not well organised. This is currently under review (paragraphs 31, 49, 78, 90, 143);
- the school does not comply with the statutory requirements for collective worship (paragraph 51);
- assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory in religious education (paragraphs 45, 162).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

84

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

35

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	32	38	29	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y5– Y8	
Number of pupils on the school's roll	327	
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	58	

Special educational needs

	Y5– Y8	
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	6	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	75	

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	15
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5
National comparative data	6.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.4

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	58	23	81

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	31	37	39
	Girls	19	15	18
	Total	50	52	57
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	62 (33)	64 (34)	70 (51)
	National	70 (65)	69 (59)	78 (69)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	17	31	29
	Girls	11	14	11
	Total	28	45	40
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	35 (39)	56 (48)	49 (30)
	National	68 (65)	69 (65)	75 (72)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	4
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	1
Indian	
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	319
Any other minority ethnic group	2

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	25	3
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.2:1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5– Y8

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	69

Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.6
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	22.6
Key Stage 3	23.0

Financial information

Financial year	1998-99
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	£
Total income	678832
Total expenditure	673484
Expenditure per pupil	2023
Balance brought forward from previous year	27366
Balance carried forward to next year	32714

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	327
Number of questionnaires returned	72

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	28	51	10	10	1
My child is making good progress in school.	28	58	10	3	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	16	47	20	9	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	51	18	6	0
The teaching is good.	28	56	13	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	32	33	22	13	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	36	11	11	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	45	42	10	1	1
The school works closely with parents.	17	43	26	13	1
The school is well led and managed.	22	46	16	6	10
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	25	47	15	6	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	18	50	14	4	14

Other issues raised by parents

Parents at the meeting expressed concerns about bullying.

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

ENGLISH

Key Stage 2: results

57. The 1999 results in the National Curriculum tests are well below the national average for all schools and below the results in similar schools. They show good improvement from 1998. The trend since 1996 is a rising one, though at a slower rate than nationally. This is true of boys' results, while girls' results are rising faster than nationally.

Key Stage 2: standards of work seen during the inspection

58. By the end of Key Stage 2 the standard of pupils' work is in line with the standard expected nationally. Attainment on entry to Year 5 is below average. Pupils progress consistently and make good improvement by the end of Year 6.
59. Standards in reading are satisfactory. Pupils read aloud accurately but not always expressively. They read quickly; they attempt all the words using phonic clues to help, but keep going even if they do not understand some of the words. For example a Year 5 pupil reading *The Sheep-Pig*, mispronounced the word 'ewe' and did not stop to find out what the word meant. A lower attainer in Year 6 read fluently from *Captain Pugwash*, relishing a character well known from the television serial. Pupils read stories with obvious enjoyment but evidence of a wider range of reading is limited. A lack of variety and challenge was reported at the previous inspection. The school has acquired a range of new book resources to address this.
60. Standards in writing are satisfactory. There is good presentation of written work in science, geography and history. Pupils use grammar and punctuation correctly. They spell well, and use the glossaries of technical terms for each subject area. Some creative writing was seen. For example, Year 5 pupils constructed an acrostic poem about bonfire night, using language imaginatively. The best improvement is in the writing of lower attainers in Year 6. All pupils write legibly in ink, and use capitals, full stops and commas. Pupils enjoy telling a story and are trying hard to develop a narrative style.
61. Standards in speaking and listening skills are satisfactory overall and sometimes good. For example, in a Year 5 history role-play on Ancient Egypt pupils enjoyed firing questions about the discoveries made to a pupil playing the role of a famous archaeologist. More formal presentations of speech skills were seen in assemblies.

Key Stage 3, Years 7 and 8: standards of work seen during the inspection

62. Standards at Key Stage 3 are line with the standard expected nationally. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The sharp rise in standards shown in the 1999 test results is maintained as pupils progress through Year 7, and levels out at Year 8.
63. Standards in reading are satisfactory. Reading logs are now kept regularly, improving on the spasmodic entries in the autumn term. These records show that pupils mostly choose to read storybooks from popular series. Although these provide an exciting read, pupils are not sufficiently directed towards the wider selection of books available within the school, particularly non-fiction books, so that they read for a variety of purposes.

64. Standards in writing are satisfactory. Improvement can be seen in pupils' written work over time. They write in a legible, cursive script and presentation is always neat and tidy. There is little creative writing, as was reported at the previous inspection. There is some good comprehension work based on a range of extracts from *Oliver Twist* and *The Iron Man*.
65. Standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory. Most pupils can explain the tasks set by their teachers and the work they are doing. Some good examples were seen in science when pupils used precise technical language to explain the sequence of an experiment.
66. Teaching at Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. There is some good teaching that has a positive effect on pupils' learning. In the best lessons teachers show a sound knowledge of the subject matter. The activities are relevant to the tasks and promote good learning. For example, in a library lesson, pupils in Year 6 talked about the books they had read and explained why they would recommend these to other readers. In other library lessons the teacher set no focus to the session and did not make enough use of the library facilities. Although pupils were surrounded by excellent reading material they were not given opportunities to explore the rich resources of knowledge to be found in books. Pupils learn best in lessons where they understand what they have to do. For example, in Year 6, pupils used dictionaries effectively to trace the derivations of words beginning with 'aqua'.
67. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is satisfactory overall. All teachers are following the National Literacy Strategy objectives for learning. However, the implementation of these objectives is not always precisely planned nor accurate in detail. In the best lessons seen the objectives were pursued logically so that pupils understood the purpose of the tasks and knew how to tackle them. For example, in Year 8 lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs analysed two extracts from novels by Charles Dickens, written from two different viewpoints. The pupils enjoyed writing *Oliver Twist's* story using the way that Pip speaks in *Great Expectations*. A Year 7 lesson was less successful. Pupils were comparing styles of writing and how language has changed over the years. The teacher was unsure of the time that Geoffrey Chaucer was writing so the purpose of the lesson, which was to compare style with period, could not be achieved.
68. At both key stages teachers have good class control, easy relationships with their pupils, and they create a good environment for learning. This promotes a good response from the pupils, who are always well-behaved. A range of teaching methods is used. The consistency of lesson content is assured because all teachers work towards the same objectives. Teachers' questioning elicits correct and accurate answers, but they do not always ask sufficiently probing questions to help pupils to reflect, ponder, think and formulate their own ideas, so that their understanding is deepened. Because extracts are mostly presented from an overhead projector pupils do not have the opportunity to handle and annotate the text for themselves. The tasks set for written activities are relevant to the topics studied but not always sufficiently challenging. All written work is marked regularly. Teachers' comments are encouraging but do not always indicate what the pupils should do to improve the standard of their writing.
69. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement overall. There have been improvements in spelling and punctuation. However, the range of reading is still limited and there are not enough challenging tasks set for written work. The lack of use of information technology was reported at the last inspection; this weakness persists.

There are no computers in the classrooms nor any planning for the use of ICT in English lessons.

70. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject co-ordinator has been in post for little over a term but already the benefits of his leadership are having a positive effect on standards of literacy throughout the school, for example through the good procedures for assessing pupils' progress. The new monitoring procedures are a good step towards raising the quality of teaching in order to improve standards in English.

MATHEMATICS

71. In the end of Key Stage 2 tests in 1999 the results were well below the national average, while below average for similar schools. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or better was also well below the national average. Girls performed slightly better than boys. Pupils' performance in the end of Key Stage 2 tests has been improving over the last four years.
72. By the end of Key Stage 2, in the work seen during the inspection, standards are broadly in line with the national expectation. This improvement in standards is partly because the school has been implementing the National Numeracy Strategy since September 1998. By the end of the key stage pupils calculate simple fractions and percentages of quantities, find perimeters of simple shapes, and construct and interpret simple line graphs. Higher attainers can use their understanding of place value to multiply and divide whole numbers by ten or 100; they create frequency tables for grouped data. Lower attainers can understand place value in numbers up to 1000, identify lines of symmetry, communicate collected data through pictograms, and find areas by counting squares. Pupils are well on the way to meeting the targets set for them by the school.
73. At Key Stage 2 the quality of learning was satisfactory or better in all the lessons observed, and mostly good or very good. Attainment on entry to the school is low. Pupils build on their prior learning to make generally sound progress throughout Key Stage 2. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with that of their peers. Pupils develop their mental mathematical skills and extend their skill of using the four rules. They gain an understanding of place value. They show an interest in their work, sustain high levels of concentration, and are willing to suggest strategies and think for themselves. The school places great emphasis on the teaching of number. There is less emphasis on the teaching of shape and space and handling data. Work in using and applying mathematics is under-developed. ICT is not delivered through work in mathematics lessons, which is a weakness.
74. In the work seen during the inspection attainment at Key Stage 3 standards are below the national expectation. By the end of Year 8 most pupils can multiply three-digit numbers by two-digit numbers, translate two-dimensional shapes, and use frequency tables for grouped data. Higher attainers can use index notation to express powers of whole numbers, find areas of circles using a formula, and create scatter graphs. Lower attainers can solve simple multiplication and division problems, using a table square when necessary, and shade diagrams to represent simple fractions.
75. At Key Stage 3 the quality of learning was satisfactory or better in all the lessons seen, and mostly good or very good. Pupils currently in Years 7 and 8 attained results in their tests at the end of Key Stage 2 which were well below the national expectation. Most pupils make sound progress, although both higher and lower attainers are not sufficiently challenged. For some lower attainers progress is hindered by weak

knowledge of tables and number bonds. Pupils with special educational needs make progress in line with that of their peers. Boys and girls make comparable progress. Most pupils continue to develop their skills in applying the four rules. Higher attainers learn to recognise number patterns and to represent them algebraically. Lower attainers gain an understanding of place value in decimals.

76. Teaching is good at each key stage. The quality was sound or better in all the lessons observed. It was good or very good in the majority at each key stage. Teachers' subject knowledge is a strength. This enables teachers to lead pupils from recognising patterns in numbers to expressing them in symbolic form and to give clear explanations about multiplying decimal numbers by ten or 100. Teachers have benefited from training associated with the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy and are technically competent to teach basic numeracy skills. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well. The quality of teachers' planning is a particular strength and is mostly based on the National Numeracy Framework. Learning objectives are clear and shared with pupils. Teachers mostly plan a three-part lesson but this task is made more difficult by differences in the lengths of lessons. Some of the shorter lessons do not include a mental mathematics starter.
77. Teachers usually have high expectations of work and behaviour but provide insufficient challenge for some higher and lower attainers. They manage pupils well. Work is usually motivating, such as multiplication and division questions involving teachers' cars. Pupils show an interest in their work. Lower attainers use 100 squares to gain an understanding of place value and draw a range of scales to gain an understanding of decimal places. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their work, for example to explain partitioning of numbers. There is efficient use of time in lessons with questions written on the board ready for the start of the lesson or pupils chanting tables while books are being given out. There are no computers in mathematics classrooms. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly through questioning in class, written homework, and end of unit and standardised tests. Pupils have the confidence to say when they have an incorrect answer and to suggest possible reasons. Pupils' learning is good. The good quality of teaching contributes to the high levels of motivation and concentration of most pupils which in turn enable them to acquire knowledge and a range of skills while working at a good pace.
78. Overall, pupils' attitudes are good and behaviour is very good, particularly at Key Stage 2. The high standards of behaviour in lessons contribute significantly to the quality of learning. Relationships are good. Pupils show respect for each other. In a lesson where the teacher asked for a number between three and four the other pupils did not laugh when a pupil gave the answer '2.5'.
79. There have been some significant improvements since the previous inspection. These are mainly as a result of very effective leadership and management, the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy, good procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' attainment, and effective planning. The end of Key Stage 2 test results have improved, although they are still below the national average for similar schools. A scheme of work is now in place and learning objectives are explicit. There have been improvements in the quality of teachers' planning. Then, there was no differentiation; now, pupils are taught in sets and there is differentiation within each set. Attainment target 1, using and applying mathematics, was under-developed and needed to be integrated. Pupils now carry out investigations but more could still be done to deliver attainment target 1 through the other attainment targets. There is no planning for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Girls were found to achieve better standards than boys in class. There is no evidence to suggest that this is still the case. Then, boys did better than girls in National Curriculum tests; now,

girls do better than boys. The previous inspection report said that the more able pupils made disappointing progress. Now most higher attainers make sound progress although some lack sufficient challenge.

SCIENCE

80. In 1999, test results at the end of Key Stage 2 were well below the national average, while below average for similar schools. There was little difference between the attainment of boys and girls and the results in science were not as good as those for English and mathematics. Since the last inspection the trend has been upward, but the increase in girls' attainment has been greater than that of boys. Teacher assessment was well below the test results indicating that, in 1999, teachers underestimated pupils' performance.
81. On entry to the school pupils' attainment was below average. By the end of Key Stage 2 the work seen during the inspection shows that standards are in line with those expected nationally. Pupils can explain how the numbers of animals in a habitat are affected by the availability of food. A small minority of higher attainers show the potential to achieve above average results. They show a good understanding of forces and know that for stationary objects, forces are balanced. They can indicate the position of organs in the human body and for some organs, such as kidneys, they can describe their purpose. Lower attainers are less secure in their understanding of forces and in their knowledge of the human body. Nevertheless they know that a force is a 'push or pull', and can say where some organs, such as the heart, are situated.
82. By the end of Year 6, pupils of all abilities have learned new skills, increased their knowledge of scientific facts and their understanding of scientific concepts, and have made progress in investigative science. For example, they can set up simple electrical circuits, know that the four seasons result from the angle of inclination of the earth coupled with its rotation round the sun, understand that a battery pushes electric current in a circuit, and can represent experimental results in tabular and graphical form. In each of the attainment targets pupils show satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding. This represents good added value over Key Stage 2.
83. The work seen at Key Stage 3 shows that in Year 8 standards are in line with the national expectation, although on entry to the school pupils' attainment was well below average. This represents very good added value. Pupils have knowledge and understanding of the relationship between speed, distance and time and the calculations associated with the concept. They confidently plan experiments based upon previous knowledge, making accurate measurements, recording results using line graphs, and use their knowledge and understanding to write conclusions to investigations. Higher attainers understand fair testing and the need to take several readings of results in order to obtain an average. They can explain that photosynthesis is the synthesis of food by plants in the presence of sunlight; explain the dissipation of energy in series and parallel circuits; and write word equations for some simple chemical reactions. Lower attainers are less secure in their knowledge and understanding. They know that the brightness of bulbs in parallel and series circuits differs, but cannot explain the reason for the difference. They know that plants make their own food but cannot explain how they do it. They are insecure in their understanding of chemical reactions.
84. Significant progress has been made by Year 8 pupils in their knowledge of scientific facts and in their understanding of scientific concepts. A small minority of Year 8 pupils shows the potential to achieve the higher levels. There is little difference between the progress made by boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make good

progress. Standards of literacy and numeracy are at least satisfactory. The use of ICT to support learning is unsatisfactory.

85. Teaching is good. The teaching of science by non-specialist teachers at key Stage 2 is very good. Teachers make use of their good subject knowledge in providing effective explanations and asking questions which challenge or assess pupils' knowledge and understanding. They set clear objectives which pupils understand; classroom management is very effective and the pace of lessons is appropriate for pupils' needs and the tasks set. Lessons are well planned. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and homework which either consolidates or extends classwork is given, when appropriate. Some lessons are, however, over-directed and there is insufficient opportunity for independent learning. While there is evidence that, in practice, classwork nearly always is suitable for the needs of pupils of differing prior attainment, this is not clearly evident in curriculum planning. While books are always marked and some good diagnostic comments are made, comments which indicate how pupils can improve are rarely made.
86. Pupils' attitudes to science are good. Behaviour is very good. Pupils listen well to their teachers, respond positively to the various activities, and show interest and enjoyment. Most pupils answer and ask questions well and have the confidence to discuss scientific ideas and experimental results with their teacher and with other pupils. They are proud of their work and that they work hard.
87. There has been good improvement in science since the last inspection. Attainment at Key Stage 2 has improved. Inspection evidence shows that standards in both keys stages are now similar, whereas the previous report indicated that standards at Key Stage 2 were higher than those at Key Stage 3. Standards in all attainment targets are now satisfactory, higher attainers are now able to explain scientific concepts as well as describe them, and there is now no evidence that some pupils copy from text books. Monitoring of academic progress is now good. Good guidance is given to non-specialist teachers through lesson observation, followed by appropriate discussion and, where necessary, additional support and training provided by the subject co-ordinator. However, teacher assessment for national tests, and the advice given to pupils on how they can improve, have not improved since the last inspection.
88. The science curriculum is broad and balanced. The time allocation at Key Stage 2 is adequate but at Key Stage 3, the allocation is slightly below average. The variable lesson length means that some pupils have less curriculum time than others: an equal access issue. All pupils have the opportunity to experience a wide range of science topics, and can attend the science club.
89. The department is well led by an able and talented co-ordinator who is enthusiastic, engenders a positive ethos and ensures that there is clear educational direction for science. While curriculum planning is good, planning for the inclusion of work suitable for the range of attainment levels even within a set, and incorporating ICT as a support and investigative tool, has yet to be addressed. Short-term developmental planning is effective and manageable but planning for long-term departmental development with longer-term targets, costings and focused success criteria is lacking. Suitable procedures for assessment are well established and are used effectively to monitor progress and improve attainment. While results are used to match pupils to ability groups, current setting procedures lead to groups containing pupils from too wide a range of abilities. Reports issued to parents provide useful information on attitudes and progress but give limited details about levels of attainment. They do not provide clear, subject specific targets for improvement.

90. There is no technician support provided by the school. The effectiveness of the science co-ordinator is reduced due to the additional work of preparing materials and equipment for lessons which, in most secondary schools, is carried out by a technician. One of the two laboratories is rather cramped for classes of 25 pupils. The level of funding for books and equipment is not high. Nevertheless, due to careful management, the number of course text books is adequate. While scientific equipment is also satisfactory the provision of computers within the department is poor.

ART

91. By the end of Key Stage 2, in the work seen during the inspection, standards meet the national expectation. This is true for boys and girls and for both attainment targets. Pupils demonstrate competent technical and expressive skills in the range of media they use. The standard of learning is satisfactory.
92. Pupils acquire an increasing range of artistic skills, knowledge and understanding as they work through the key stage. There are no significant differences in attainment between boys and girls. Many pupils have a knowledge of famous artists and their work, and use technical vocabulary with understanding and confidence. The work of lower attainers shows less development in both attainment targets, less control in the use of materials, less output of practical work and limited experimentation of ideas. Higher attainers demonstrate greater control of materials, the effective use of simplistic figurative work and an understanding of compositional elements. Their output of work is increased and includes extended work on tone and texture as well as a greater self-knowledge of their learning advances in the subject. Good drawing and making skills are developed through creative effort and concentration. The drawing and texture exercise on 'Time' and the three-dimensional creatures, many inspired by seaside images, provide good evidence of this learning.
93. Pupils with special needs are well integrated into lesson activities. Sometimes they match the rest of the group for pace, on occasions they exceed it. While their drawing and painting skills are less advanced than others, they show interest and make sound progress.
94. By the end of Year 8, in the work seen during the inspection, boys' and girls' standards are good, exceeding the national expectations in both attainment targets. Many pupils show increased knowledge of a variety of artists and accurately use an extended technical vocabulary. The standard of learning is good. Workbooks illustrate gains in independent learning, aided by the programme of regular homework throughout the key stage. The majority of pupils successfully extend work done on earlier designs into new forms of expression. Drawing exercises in Year 7 using natural forms, which are then developed into printmaking, is a good example. Drawing techniques develop well and tone and shadow are more skilfully used to express form. Painting and compositional skills are also extended and colour is boldly and sensitively handled. The impressive series of 'Dream Time' paintings by Year 7 pupils, inspired by Aboriginal art, is a good example. They provide a stimulating display in the hall. Pupils' ability to translate carefully researched drawings into imaginative and well-modelled clay relief tiles is an example of good learning and productivity in Year 8.
95. The work of lower attainers shows good progress. There are well-composed and careful paintings, as well as some strong printing. Work is more controlled and research skills are improved and more effectively used to develop greater individuality of response. Higher attainers show increased independence in their work and in the development of themes. Research is more thorough and productivity is increased. Painting and drawing skills are developed to higher standards of technical competence

and imagination. Pupils with special needs maintain their interest and pace of work in lessons. They make good progress.

96. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stage 2 and good at Key Stage 3. It is most effective when good subject knowledge and understanding relates well to the needs of the pupils, and is combined with rigorous pace, clear expectations and increasing challenge. This was notable at Key Stage 3. Teaching is less effective when pace and challenge are less demanding and when teaching methods are insufficiently varied or stimulating enough to re-awaken concentration and sharpen aims. Procedures for monitoring progress across the key stages are adequate.
97. The work of the art department also contributes to the development of pupils' literacy skills. All projects have new technical vocabulary lists recorded on evaluation sheets. Subject specific vocabulary lists are prominently displayed on the wall and key words associated with individual projects are thoroughly discussed and displayed in class. Work for attainment target 2 and the end of project evaluation sheets both include written work.
98. Attitudes to work are satisfactory at Key Stage 2 and good at Key Stage 3. Pupils settle quickly to work but concentration is more marked at Key Stage 3. They are well behaved, take an interest in the work of others, and are generally enthusiastic.
99. Since the last inspection good progress has been made, particularly in accommodation and storage. Standards have been maintained but facilities for ICT still need to be addressed. Impressive displays of pupils' work adorn the art room and many of the public areas throughout the school. Art education in the school is led by an experienced, enthusiastic and able specialist who has a commitment to achieving and maintaining high standards, and supporting the four teachers who contribute to the art curriculum.
100. Much development has taken place on assessment procedures. End-of-project teacher assessment forms are in place which relate to the National Curriculum. There are plans to refine these further. Pupil self-evaluation sheets are also in use. Pupils are encouraged to talk about their work to others in the group during the end of lesson review. This is good practice. At Key Stage 3, homework is set and marked regularly with diagnostic comments, a good feature. Assessments are used for the annual report on pupils' progress, and have also had some influence on curriculum development. The impact and consistency of assessment are not, however, monitored or collated across both key stages. Its effectiveness as a means of identifying trends in attainment or informing curriculum debate is adequate but limited.
101. Well considered schemes of work are in place for all year groups. They cover both attainment targets and offer a range of learning experiences in both two- and three-dimensional media, particularly at Key Stage 3. There are some imaginative cross-curricular links with English, history and design and technology, for example, pupils painted Tudor portraits after their history visit to Kentwell for a 'Tudor day'. Statutory requirements are not met for the use of ICT as part of the art curriculum.
102. The art curriculum makes an effective contribution to pupils' personal and social education. It promotes a sense of self-worth through achievement. It raises awareness of the varieties of creativity, stimulates self-expression and encourages pupils to take pride in their work. While the value of the spiritual aspect of art education, as part of personal development, is pursued to some extent, opportunities in class for reflection, at both key stages, are limited.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

103. In the work seen during the inspection, standards are above those expected nationally for pupils aged eleven. All pupils make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress because many subject activities are practical.
104. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils understand the properties of common materials and can make choices when designing and making products. For example, they make sensible decisions when selecting materials or the ingredients in their design and make assignments. Pupils understand the importance of planning, which includes deciding what tools they are going to use. They measure, cut and join a variety of materials accurately, for example when making a jigsaw puzzle. They assemble the components carefully when making a simple electronic game. They are familiar with different methods of joining fabrics and the methods of fabric printing developed when making an oven pad. All appreciate the importance of evaluating the quality of their work when it is finished.
105. By the end of Year 8, standards in the work seen during the inspection are above those expected nationally. Pupils continue to make good progress. They are accustomed to working from designs which specify the tools and materials that will be needed for their models. Most have a good knowledge of a variety of methods to fasten materials together, which includes pins, clips, glue and thread. Pupils work confidently with tools, such as saws, drills and scissors, and are fully aware of the need to work safely. When making pizza they follow a recipe, have ideas for adapting the basic recipe, know and practise the rules of basic food hygiene, work safely, evaluate different outcomes and draw conclusions about the impact of added ingredients, different finishes and the shape on the end product.
106. The development of literacy encourages pupils to use appropriate vocabulary when naming tools and describing the techniques that they use. For example, when analysing convenience foods, they list ingredients and write out step-by-step instructions for analysis, with strict observance of hygiene. When evaluating different types of pizza, they use appropriate vocabulary to describe products including their sensory characteristics, compare pizza in terms of appearance, flavour, texture and cost, understand that people have different preferences and that designers need to consider this when designing.
107. All pupils apply finishing techniques, such as painting carefully, to enhance the quality of their artefacts. A prime example of products finished to a high standard are the pram toys designed and made using different fabrics and the electronic quiz game. Pupils have the opportunity to use computers to design part of the quiz game. However, there are few opportunities for pupils to study mechanisms, structures and electronics in more detail. Pupils have opportunities to disassemble products in order to identify their components and to use simple mechanisms such as cams and push rods.
108. Pupils' attitudes are good. All take a pride in their work, and enjoy taking part in design and technology lessons. Pupils with special needs are equally successful as other pupils in making things and this raises their self-esteem. Pupils share tools sensibly and help one another willingly, for example, by holding materials that need to be joined.
109. The quality of teaching is good throughout the subject. A good scheme of work and curriculum plan provided useful guidance for teachers. Planning is detailed and thorough. Learning objectives are consistent with the scheme of work and the programmes of study. Good use is made of practical demonstrations to ensure that pupils know how to proceed to the next stage. Teachers emphasise the need to work

accurately and neatly. Time is given for questions and discussion during lessons to ensure that pupils are familiar and confident with the skills needed to complete projects. Teachers outline clearly what is required and provide a wide range of materials, such as fabrics, card, wood or plastic. Pupils of all attainment levels are sufficiently challenged. When they finish ahead of other pupils, the opportunity is often taken to encourage them to improve their work further. Teachers constantly assess pupils' progress ensuring that they use appropriate skills and techniques. Projects are assessed using National Curriculum level descriptors and marks recorded. All teachers are familiar with the arrangements to assess and record pupils' work. Assessment information is used effectively to plan work. One feature of teaching, homework, is satisfactory rather than good.

110. Pupils' learning is good. Pupils are keen, interested and productive. They are confident learners, for example when working in a group as a design team. They sustain concentration and offer their opinions. They work independently, and make choices about their own work.
111. There is good improvement since the last inspection. Standards are higher, now above those expected, and teaching is now of consistently good quality.
112. Good leadership and management have been maintained since the last inspection. Teaching is regularly monitored and feedback given, and the role of the co-ordinator is well developed in this respect. Accommodation is good, there are three specialist rooms with a good range of resources and materials, although a weakness is the lack of use of ICT. The curriculum makes an effective contribution to pupils' social and moral development. Due attention is paid to safety.

GEOGRAPHY

In Years 5 and 6 no teaching of geography took place during the inspection because of the arrangement to share teaching time with history.

113. The work seen during the inspection shows that standards by the end of Key Stage 2 are in line with national expectations. This reflects very good learning over the two years of the key stage making very good use of the limited curriculum time allocated to geography.
114. By Year 6 pupils ask and respond very well to geographical questions as part of a case study enquiry about the island of St Lucia. They combine numeracy and geographical skills well to draw comparative rainfall bar graphs for London and Castries. They plot line graphs for monthly temperature and construct pie charts showing the results of a class survey on service, manufacturing and agricultural employment. Pupils show knowledge and understanding of place when describing the main features of St Lucia, but do not yet describe a range of physical and human features or begin to offer reasons for what they discover. They do recognise contrasts between their own locality and the areas they study, but do not go on to offer reasons for these differences. Pupils have a very good understanding of how people in different parts of the world are affecting the environment. The vocabulary of the subject, including terms like 'oceanic' and 'continental', is used very well. Higher attainers develop tasks well, particularly where there is opportunity for extended individual research and presentation, as in the individual islands studies. Pupils with special educational needs cope well with the same topics as other pupils.

115. In Year 8, where pupils are grouped according to their previous attainment in geography, the work seen shows standards on line to meet national expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. The very good learning is maintained from the very low level of attainment on entry to the school. In work on growth of population pupils show their understanding by linking cause and effect statements. They understand the implications of population growth and know about the reasons for changes in birth and death rates. Higher attainers can identify patterns in map data and explain that Italy is most densely populated in the northern region; they go on to offer possible geographical explanations for this. They begin to understand factors which can indicate levels of development and life expectancy and can apply new learning in different contexts, for example, by mapping and discussing other development indicators. Lower attainers and those with special educational needs respond well to tasks which give practical reinforcement to their learning and can, for example, discuss differences in population in the areas shown in photographs of the Himalayas and Bangladesh. They use correct terminology and can explain that 'sparsely populated' means that 'fewer people live there'. They are able to give reasons for their answers, explaining that it is cold, there is nowhere to grow food, and there are no jobs.
116. Teaching is very good. Teachers all know the subject material very well and present and discuss geographical topics with assurance, emphasising the language of the subject. Work on graphs using comparative climate data in Year 6 shows good use of numeracy skills. There is little planned use of ICT by pupils and classrooms are not equipped to allow computer use. This is a weakness. Pupils are clear about what they are expected to do lesson by lesson. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, learn very well. Where tasks are very demanding, as in Year 8 work on population distribution in Italy, higher attainers make very good progress. For example, they respond well to challenging work, producing choropleth maps showing infant mortality and employment rates in different regions.
117. The teaching is stimulating and interesting, offering a very wide variety of activities well suited to the needs of pupils. In Year 7, for example, pupils model cone and shield volcanoes and understand their differences, know where in the world each is to be found, and use the correct terminology to describe lava flows and craters. Concepts are well taught and are very well understood by pupils of all levels of attainment including those with special educational needs. For example, in Year 8, lower attainers can explain their earlier work about differential erosion of rocks causing a waterfall. Pupils have very good opportunities for independent learning and research, as seen in Year 6 where pupils make individual studies of islands in different parts of the world. Sound assessment procedures are now in place as part of each unit of work and attainment is now clearly related to National Curriculum achievement levels. The quality of day-to-day assessment and marking is variable and record keeping in some lessons is weak. The best marking does tell pupils clearly what they need to do to raise the standard of their work. Homework is not clearly identified.
118. Both boys and girls behave very well in all lessons. They are polite and take care over the content, presentation and accuracy of their work. They formulate their own geographical questions to further their understanding and talk confidently with the teacher. They support one another, work very well together, and respect each other's views. Pupils show initiative and are willing to take responsibility for their own work, getting on with it without constant direction. Pupils with special educational needs show equally positive attitudes.

119. Since the last inspection there is a great improvement in the quality of planning for pupils' learning at each key stage. Teaching is much better. The requirements of the National Curriculum are now met in full. A very wide range of good, up-to-date learning resources enhances pupils' learning and motivation. Geography is a strength of the school. It is now well managed at both key stages. It makes a very good contribution to pupils' learning and fosters very positive attitudes. Stimulating working environments, with very good displays on home and world themes, expand pupils' cultural horizons.

HISTORY

120. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards in the work seen during the inspection are in line with national expectations. This represents an improvement on the findings of the last inspection when the attainment of a significant number of pupils was below national expectations. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls. At all levels of attainment, pupils demonstrate their clear understanding of chronology, sound knowledge and understanding of the topics studied, and good factual recall. For example, Year 6 pupils showed good recall of the Tudor topic studied more than a term ago. Lower attainers grasp key facts that build up a story, for example, Henry's VIII's break with Rome, but tell it mainly in terms of his wives and the divorce. Average and higher attainers use more concepts and ideas in telling the story. They talk about Henry's desire to increase his power by making himself head of the church and how much he wanted to have a male heir to the throne. They all demonstrate acute observation skills in picking out the main points of a source, and can distinguish between sources from the period and contemporary pictures or accounts. They make some sensible deductions from sources and have some understanding of whether a source is reliable. For example, they all understand that a photograph of an actress dressed as Queen Elizabeth I is not to be trusted.

121. In relation to their prior attainment, and especially to their level of literacy on entry, pupils at all levels of attainment make good progress through the key stage and demonstrate good learning. They develop satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the Egyptian and Tudor topics studied, and their writing skills develop well. By the end of Year 5, many lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs progress from writing brief sentences or short paragraph answers to being able to write an account, for example of a Tudor boy at school. By the end of Year 6, higher attainers write detailed accounts of Aztec society. Pupils ask questions, which helps them improve their historical knowledge and understanding. They enjoy and learn best in lessons which demand a high degree of participation, for example, when a pupil took on the role of Howard Carter, the archaeologist, and responded to questions from the class. In these lessons the pupils are enthusiastic, thoughtful and hard working. Occasionally, when a particular activity is matched less well to the needs of all the pupils, the pace of learning is slower.

122. By the end of Year 8, standards in the work seen are in line with national expectations and have been maintained since the last inspection. The standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. There is no appreciable difference in the attainment of boys and girls. Pupils demonstrate good factual knowledge and understanding of the topics. They understand and use technical terms, such as 'colonial' or Roman names. At all levels of attainment, pupils explain their ideas confidently. They grasp key ideas and offer reasons for and against the Roman invasion of Britain, or the decline of the Roman Empire and select which is the most important. Lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs write rather less fluently than they speak. They do not separate 'for' from 'against' in their list of arguments or write a conclusion to their essay. Average attainers handle essay format

successfully, but their conclusion tends to be brief. The small group of higher attainers writes structured, thoughtful essays, which are drawn together well with a good sustained conclusion.

123. Pupils' knowledge, understanding and history skills, such as source evaluation, develop steadily over the key stage. In relation to their prior attainment and their level of literacy on entry, Year 8 pupils demonstrate good learning skills, particularly in the development of their extended writing skills and ability to use essay format. They can give more causes for an event, categorise them and say whether they are long or short term. They make perceptive deductions from a range of sources. Pupils behave well, work at a steady pace, show good interest and generally good concentration, and are prepared to think about and offer a view about the topic under discussion. They listen to each other and to the teacher and respond sensibly to the ideas suggested. They learn best in lessons where discussion and questions challenge them to think or where they identify with a role. Pupils at all levels of attainment, and pupils with special educational needs, make satisfactory progress over the key stage.
124. Teaching is satisfactory. However, during the inspection week it was only possible to see a small number of lessons. Evidence for the quality of teaching was taken from teachers' plans, analysis of pupils' work and discussions with pupils and teachers. The evidence of the impact of teaching gained from these other activities provides a stronger picture of the quality of teaching than that gained solely from the small sample of lessons observed and helps to indicate where the strengths in teaching lie.
125. Improved planning with greater detail and appropriate learning objectives provides good support for non-specialist teachers and promotes pupils' progress. Good subject knowledge, shown, for example, in teachers' explanations, helps pupils understand the key features of a period well. Basic skills are taught well, for example, through explaining history vocabulary, providing opportunities for pupils to read or take part in role-play. Very limited use is made of ICT, which is a weakness, but in all other respects sound use is made of available resources. For example, a map was used effectively in a Year 7 lesson to help pupils understand how fast the Black Death spread across the medieval world, and where England fitted into the world picture. Teaching methods and learning materials are generally appropriate; well designed activities, such as the 'hot seat' activity, result in good learning. One pupil, in the 'hot seat', answers questions from other pupils in the class on the work they have been doing. Sometimes at Key Stage 2 when tasks are over-ambitious or not well designed the pace of learning is slower. Challenge is well provided, for example, by questions such as, 'Why did the Roman Empire collapse?' which focus pupils' understanding. This helps pupils' recall of the points previously learned, as do relevant homework tasks. Regular marking, with constructive advice, helps pupils to improve their work, but the absence of a specific grade makes it difficult for them to know precisely where they stand.
126. Since the last inspection, and particularly since the recent appointment of a new subject co-ordinator, the subject has improved. There is good leadership and management. Clearer direction and more detailed lesson planning have contributed to the improvement in the challenge for higher attainers and to better standards at Key Stage 2. Assessment is improving. Levels achieved in the end of module assessments are now recorded, the tracking of pupil attainment is adequate, but the use of assessment to help future planning is still at an early stage.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

127. The work seen during the inspection shows that, by the end of Key Stage 2, standards are above the national expectation. By the end of the key stage pupils use spreadsheets and databases, word process and desktop publish their work. In Year 5, pupils model effects on screen, analyse data, evaluate information, check accuracy and begin to use spreadsheets. In Year 6, pupils confidently combine text and graphics to produce a holiday brochure, compile a database, use a word processor and spreadsheets. Pupils store and retrieve their work confidently. When using a word processor they generate, amend, organise and present ideas. They use a word processor for descriptive writing, utilising clip art to illustrate the text through saving images to frames. They know some techniques for combining information, text, graphs and pictures, and select different fonts, text sizes and colour to enhance the text. When using spreadsheets they sort, classify and present their findings. They refine and present information in different forms, access information, begin to follow a line of enquiry, and add or amend information. When using logo they can draw shapes with the use of commands. They use a database to establish oldest/youngest/tallest, enter information, sort into categories, and plot a graph of a particular category.
128. By the end of Year 8, standards in the work seen are above those expected nationally. At this stage in Key Stage 3, pupils are confident in using computers to communicate their ideas. For example, they are able to access information to create a spreadsheet and produce a graph of the information. Pupils are good at entering, amending, saving and retrieving information without help from the teacher. They use a word processing program well to write business-style letters. They present their writing carefully and can alter font styles, colour and text size with confidence. They develop good skills in using the equipment and good skills in using the mouse to give instructions to the computer. In Year 8, they are at an advanced stage in the development of skills and techniques for combining text and images. They are confident in the use of word processing and desktop publishing, pasting and sizing clip art to frames, and the use of text, graphics and images. The work is well presented and pupils are able to store and retrieve their work with ease.
129. Pupils make good progress as they move through the key stage, particularly in their skills in using computers to communicate ideas and information. However, they make unsatisfactory progress in developing their understanding and knowledge of measurement and control and the use of computer aided design. They have limited experiences of controlling devices, and lack opportunities to recognise that devices can be controlled by a computer or to write a sequence to produce a recognisable event. By the end of Year 8 pupils use computers with considerable confidence and overall are making good progress in developing their ICT capability.
130. In the work seen across all the subjects of the curriculum there is no evidence of pupils' achievement in the use of computers, except in design and technology where there are opportunities for pupils to use computers to design part of the quiz game.
131. Pupils have particularly good attitudes to their work in ICT. They are well motivated, able to concentrate for suitable lengths of time and respond with enthusiasm. A strong feature is the way pupils are able to access the computer without help from the teachers and work independently. Pupils are very responsible when using computers and work together on the computer well. They show particularly good respect for the equipment and, indeed, for each other. Behaviour is always good and this contributes very effectively to the standards pupils attain.

132. Teaching is good, with strengths in all areas except homework provision, which is satisfactory. Strengths in teaching include generally secure knowledge and understanding of ICT and planning that identifies clearly what pupils are to learn. The teachers' expectation is usually appropriately high and the set tasks are suitably demanding. The computers are being used well to give classes a good experience of ICT. The effective way that the teacher manages lessons has a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and willingness to use ICT. Good use is made of demonstrations to ensure that pupils know how to proceed to the next stage. The teacher emphasises the need to work accurately. Time is given for questions and discussion during lessons to ensure that pupils are familiar with and confident in using the skills needed to complete projects. The teacher constantly assesses pupils' progress ensuring that they use appropriate skills and techniques. Projects are assessed using National Curriculum level descriptors and marks recorded. Assessment information is used effectively to evaluate and plan work. Pupils of all abilities are sufficiently challenged; provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. When pupils finish ahead of others, the opportunity is often taken to encourage them to improve their work further.
133. The good teaching has a positive effect on pupils' learning, which is good. Pupils work hard and set a good pace for their own work. They are confident learners.
134. There have been good improvements since the last inspection. The school has a policy and is implementing a scheme of work for ICT covering the programmes of study. The subject is taught to all pupils in each year group.
135. Subject leadership and management are good. Teaching is regularly monitored and feedback given. The curriculum makes an effective contribution to pupils' social and cultural development. Accommodation is good: all lessons are taught in a specialist room which can accommodate full classes as there are 27 computers available. Pupils also have access to a scanner and digital camera as well as CD-ROM. There is a better than average number of computers. However, a significant number have obsolete specifications and cannot meet the demands of the latest technology in terms of software and hardware. Links have been established with the local secondary school, which is a specialist technology school, to support the teaching of sensing and control in science using laptop computers.

Information and communications technology across the curriculum

136. There are significant weaknesses in the delivery of ICT across the curriculum. At present there is no management or co-ordination of the use of computers in other subjects. The subject schemes of work provide no evidence of lesson activities using computers. This is a whole-school issue. There is no access to the Internet. Pupils do have limited access to information on CD-ROM. The development plan does not include information about how ICT will be developed and supported in other subjects. Subject teachers do not take advantage of the facilities available when planning. There is some limited use of computers in design and technology for computer control. There has been limited progress in developing the use of computers across the curriculum since the last inspection.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES: FRENCH

137. The work seen during the inspection shows that standards at the end of Year 8 are in line with national expectations. There is no difference between standards in the four attainment targets, or between the standards achieved by boys and girls. Pupils show a high standard of accuracy in their writing and answer basic questions correctly. Higher attainers do this over a wider range of topics. Lower attainers are equally competent, but over a limited range. There is no evidence of standards being achieved in the use of basic ICT skills in French.
138. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall; some is good, which shows in particular when pupils talk about their work. There is sound learning by boys and girls. Most pupils use new language structures and vocabulary effectively. Generally they concentrate well and make contributions in lessons. Behaviour is good. Pupils with special educational needs learn well; one Year 8 boy was especially keen to answer questions in the lesson, doing so correctly and with a good accent. Pronunciation is generally good, although it is less good with unfamiliar words and expressions. Some pupils do not reproduce all the sounds, or they muddle one sound for another, as they make a guess at reproducing what they have heard. For example they say 'un' instead of 'au', or use 'j'ai' instead of 'j'aime'. They can correct these mistakes when they are pointed out to them. There is little opportunity for pupils to work independently of the teacher except when they use dictionaries to assist their learning. A weakness is the lack of any use of the language when pupils work in pairs or groups, or through the use of ICT. Higher and average attainers in Year 7 develop their learning well by using French for most of the lesson time. This is a less successful area of learning for other pupils. Native French speakers are insufficiently challenged by the work set because their particular learning needs have been overlooked.
139. The teaching is satisfactory, on occasion good. It is effective in creating a positive environment in which pupils can learn well, and expectations are high. This reflects school aims well. Pace is appropriate at the beginning of the lesson, but is not sustained throughout in some classes. Lessons are generally planned effectively, but with a restricted range of strategies for promoting the learning of French. For example, pupils were able to answer questions but given no opportunity to ask them. French was used for a considerable part of all lessons, with good use of an interpreter to ensure class understanding. Pupils' response was good except in the lower sets. Management of pupils was good in most lessons. A strength of the teaching was the large amount of praise and encouragement given to pupils of all abilities. There were also good and successful strategies for dealing with any misbehaviour, for example, through the use of the school behaviour code with its 'behaviour slips'. There was evidence of good marking with consistent grading. Pupils have a good idea about how they are getting on.
140. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement in the provision of textbooks, the amount of French spoken in the classroom, and in the appointment of a specialist teacher, although no improvement in the provision for the cultural aspects of the curriculum.

141. Although French was taught in Year 6 in the previous academic year, this has been discontinued. The curriculum only broadly reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is weakness in the lack of ICT provision. The inadequate treatment of the cultural section of the programme of study is partly because the time allocated to French is lower than recommended and lesson lengths vary. There is, however, good progression from year to year, including from the 1998/99 Year 6 to the current Year 7. The lack of an up-to-date handbook reflects some weakness in management, as the aims and policies have not been revised since the present post-holder was appointed five months ago. Development priorities are not adequately determined.

MUSIC

142. The work seen during the inspection shows that by the end of Key Stage 2 pupils' attainment meets the standards expected nationally. Boys and girls play and sing confidently, with enjoyment and commitment. They hold the pulse steadily when playing their own part in a group piece and, because they listen very attentively to each other, can make adjustments to keep fitting in. If their own part wavers, they usually recover it, with no fuss. This is true for most pupils including lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs. They sing rhythmically and with well-shaped phrases.
143. By the end of Year 8, pupils reach satisfactory standards for the second year of Key Stage 3. They perform confidently in lessons and on whole-school occasions such as assemblies. Their performance is accurate and expressive, showing secure control of their chosen instrument, good rhythmic skills and an understanding of the piece. They focus intently on the music as players and listeners. Pupils make their own pieces within given frameworks. They show an understanding of structure, for example, using repetition to good effect.
144. The inconsistency in standards reported at the last inspection is no longer evident. Consistency, for pupils of all levels of prior attainment and across both key stages, is good. There is some improvement in pupils' skills in appraising the work they do and hear in lessons, but more to be done. There is a dramatic improvement in singing.
145. Pupils' learning is very good. They work with effort and excitement, often set themselves a cracking pace, and produce work in the lessons which shows good gains in skills and understanding. Effort goes into setting up equipment quickly and carefully, collaborating in groups to come up with good ideas, practising their part, and following the teacher's direction keenly in whole-class music-making activities. Pupils' behaviour is very good: boys and girls are far too interested and involved for it to be otherwise.
146. The teaching in music is a strength of the school. The teacher's warm enthusiasm keeps pupils on their toes; expectations are very high. Lessons move at a spanking pace so that, through a variety of activities, pupils progress well. High-level subject skills are put to very good use in demanding the best that pupils can offer. This is supported in lessons by very clear explanations and demonstrations, and by whole-class practice activities which exemplify the lesson objectives so that pupils are very clear about what they are doing. Technical language is a feature of the talk in music. In performance, for example in assemblies, the teacher's musical leadership enables pupils to take part as confident, self-responsible musicians, whether in a small percussion group or when singing as a whole year group.
147. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement. Standards now meet the expectation, with the specific improvements noted above. There is significant improvement in the quality of teaching. The school continues to value music. A full-time music teacher is now in post.

148. The subject is very well led and managed; there is a very strong commitment to improvement. There is excellent practice in meeting school aims. There is a good range of music activities, and pupils are to be found practising at breaks and lunch-times on most days. The Christmas concert (seen on video) showed confident and disciplined participation, with clear and shapely singing by all Year 5, and shapely, rhythmic playing by small groups of instrumentalists on recorders, strings, woodwind and brass. However, the ICT requirement of the National Curriculum is not met although the co-ordinator has highly developed ICT skills; no computers are provided for the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

149. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards are well above those expected nationally in the work seen in gymnastics, with very good progress from year to year by all pupils, including those with special educational needs. In dance, pupils respond enthusiastically to music from different cultures and create their own story telling through dance. Teachers' records show that, because of the provision for swimming in Year 5, in a typical year, 99 per cent of pupils become competent at swimming and water safety, with 25 per cent progressing to more advanced awards.

150. In the work seen at Key Stage 3, and in the club activities observed, higher attainers demonstrate a high level of skill at netball, soccer, basketball and volleyball. There is good effort and enthusiasm in girls' new image rugby, although technical skills in passing and line-out play are under-developed.

151. The quality of teaching is consistently very good. All lessons are very thoroughly prepared, drawing upon the teachers' deep knowledge of the subject and clear understanding of the pupils' capabilities and progress. There are good assessment procedures, but the way the information learned from assessment is used is not as good, though satisfactory. Class management is invariably very good and pupils are provided with an environment in which they can work with confidence. All teachers show enthusiasm for the subject, which is reflected in the pupils' response. Tasks are differentiated where appropriate and full use is made of the very adequate stock of equipment. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good.

152. Pupils arrive promptly at lessons. They co-operate and compete in a sporting manner. With rare exceptions, attitudes and behaviour are excellent.

153. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement. Pupils have been encouraged to develop technical skill in various activities. Higher attainers are now better challenged in lessons and in extra-curricular clubs and competitions. Skilled use of differentiated activities, where appropriate, enables average and lower attainers to make very good progress.

154. Physical education is a strength in this school. The subject is very well led and managed. Contributory factors are: very competent and enthusiastic staff, excellent facilities, very adequate equipment and co-operative and well-behaved pupils. There is a pioneering outdoor and adventurous activities programme with virtually all pupils experiencing hiking and overnight camping. A full range of National Curriculum activities is available to all pupils. Contact sports are taught in single gender groups, other activities are mixed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

155. In the work seen during the inspection, standards at both Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 are in line with the attainment targets set by the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus, 'Beliefs and values'. Curriculum content is appropriate with a strong emphasis on moral, social and cultural values
156. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils have an understanding of the terms 'beliefs and values' and have a basic knowledge of Christianity, Islam and Judaism and of the practices in these religions, such as the place of worship. Pupils can describe some of the things believers do to show that belief in God is important to them; for example, the five pillars of Islam are understood to be the basis of that religion. They know how significant the lives of Jesus and Mohammed are in these faiths. Higher attainers clearly understand, for example, the role of prayer and fasting. Lower attainers copy and illustrate text with a minimum of understanding. At Key Stage 3 pupils can identify the qualities which promote a sense of community. They understand the nature of commitment to a group in both secular and religious contexts. Higher attainers can explain ways in which loyalty or commitment to a group might be expressed. Lower attainers understand loyalty as experienced by themselves. Pupils describe familiar rules about conduct and explain their purpose and importance.
157. Standards of written work vary at both key stages. Higher attainers write clearly and often with originality. Lower attainers produce work which is sometimes unfinished and shows limited knowledge and understanding. Generally the amount of written work is insufficient. The marking of work is barely adequate with little in the way of constructive comment or pointers for future learning. In this respect no progress seems to have been made since the last inspection. The department must therefore look again at the educational outcome of students' work and use assessment not only to monitor pupils' progress but also to evaluate teaching and the curriculum provided. Boys and girls attain equally.
158. Teaching is satisfactory at each key stage. Teachers show sound subject knowledge and lessons are generally well planned. There is satisfactory class management but some lessons move at too slow a pace. Activities are well organised but there is a limited range of strategies to inform and encourage interest and reflection among pupils at all attainment levels. This links with the fact that learning materials are not always suitably differentiated. Resources are used appropriately, and artefacts relevant to the religions being studied are displayed.
159. Pupils have a satisfactory attitude to the subject. They behave well, respond to teachers' instructions and work consistently. Respect is shown for the views of fellow pupils and pupils are confident to express their own views.
160. Leadership and management are generally sound, although some areas lack sufficient attention. Assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory: pupils' progress is not monitored adequately, and what information is gained from assessment is not used to help future planning. A religious education record card is being developed to help in improving assessment procedures. Resources are adequate, although computers are not used to aid pupils' learning and this is a weakness. Staff development is limited. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, giving pupils the opportunity to consider their own beliefs and stances for living. Schemes of work have a strong moral, social and cultural content but give less attention to spiritual awareness, for example, through visits to places of worship.