

## INSPECTION REPORT

**ST EGWIN'S VC MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Evesham

LEA area: Worcester

Unique reference number: 116984

Headteacher: Mrs J Armstrong

Reporting inspector: David Jones  
8197

Dates of inspection: 29<sup>th</sup> April – 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 191762

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Middle deemed secondary
School category:	Voluntary Controlled - Church of England
Age range of pupils:	10-13
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	St Egwin's VC Middle School Worcester Road Evesham Worcestershire
Postcode:	WR11 4JU
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J A Davey
Date of previous inspection:	4 <sup>th</sup> November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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8197	David Jones	Registered inspector		How high are standards? How good Are curricular and other opportunities? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed?
9756	Ken Parsons	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How does the school work in partnership with parents?
16548	Don Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art and design Music	Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
11508	Chris Griffin	Team inspector	English	
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Design technology Information and communication technology	
20395	Caroline Rowe	Team inspector	Physical education	Assessment
1050	Ron Wallace	Team inspector	Geography History	Special educational needs
7428	Ray Jardine	Team inspector	Science	
27523	Graham Jones	Team inspector		Year 6
10244	Roger Freeman	Team inspector	Mathematics	
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages	

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

St Egwin's Middle School is smaller than the average middle school nationally with 334 pupils on roll. The school is one of only a very small number nationally that admits pupils in the 10-13 age range at the beginning of Year 6. The school's intake comes from the northern side of Evesham and some of the surrounding villages. On entry, pupils have an average spread of attainment but have not covered all the necessary areas of learning. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average and the percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language is very low. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is above average but the percentage of pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is below average. A consistent percentage of pupils come from a Traveller cultural tradition.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is an improving school with effective leadership. Despite the difficulties that result from the point of entry into the school being less than thirty weeks before the national tests, standards overall were judged to be rising. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory with nearly half the lessons seen judged to be good. The leadership of the headteacher is very strong, promoting a caring and inclusive ethos. However, whilst relationships between pupils and with staff are good, the overall standards of behaviour are unsatisfactory. This has improved significantly under the new headteacher. Taking these factors into account, the school now provides a sound quality of education and satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The personal development of pupils, their understanding of others and the quality of their relationships are having a positive impact on classroom behaviour.
- Pupils now achieve well in Years 7 and 8 as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge and their effective management of pupils.
- The policies and procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are having a positive impact.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher is now ensuring very clear and appropriate educational direction and standards are beginning to rise as a result.

#### **What could be improved**

- Pupils' achievement in mathematics and the leadership and management of the subject.
- Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) in all year groups and the opportunities for its structured use in all subjects.
- The results in national tests at the end of Year 6.
- All subjects generally, through improvements to the curriculum, use of assessment and match of staff to subject demands.
- Behaviour and attendance, which remain unsatisfactory in spite of recent improvement.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

During a long period of decline, which followed the last inspection in November 1996, standards, provision and behaviour all regressed. However, the school has begun to move forward very rapidly following the appointment of the current headteacher in September 2001. At the time of the last inspection the school was given key issues for action that related to: accommodation, the monitoring of achievement and curriculum development, the use of assessment to inform the curriculum, and the raising of standards and provision in ICT. Not enough had been done prior to September 2001. However, since then behaviour has improved, standards have begun to rise again and the provision for ICT has been prioritised. The school has identified what it needs to do to improve the curriculum and has set about correcting this in a vigorous way. The new headteacher is aware of deficiencies in the provision and use of assessment and has identified where improvements can occur. Inspectors feel that sufficient is now being done to correct the inadequacies and there are signs of rapid improvement.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 6 based on average point scores in National Curriculum tests.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	D	C	D	E
mathematics	E	D	E	E
science	C	B	D	D

**Key**  
 well above average A  
 above average B  
 average C  
 below average D  
 well below average E

Less than 30 school weeks are available from the date of entry to the school and beginning of the national tests. Whilst teachers attempt to prepare pupils for the national tests, and whilst the quality of teaching observed in Year 6 is good, there is insufficient time to cover all the necessary ground that has not been covered previously. Consequently, pupils do not perform as well as they should in national tests and this has been the case for several years. In the last two years the school has not achieved the over optimistic targets it has been set. Current targets do not take into account the impact of the school age of transfer and these will remain difficult for the school to meet.

In the lessons seen in English, mathematics and science, standards in Year 6 are now close to the national average and improving following improvements to the deployment of specialist teachers, improvements to the provision and use of exemplar material from the Qualification and Curriculum Agency (QCA) and, in English, better use of assessment to inform teaching. Standards in the foundation subjects at the end of Year 6 are in line with national expectations in: design technology, geography, art, music, history, French and physical education. They are below expectations in information and communication technology (ICT) because of the lack of sufficient equipment. Standards at the end of Year 8 are above national expectations in English, mathematics, history and science. They are in line with national expectations in: design technology, geography, physical education, French and art. They are unsatisfactory in music and ICT. As this is a Church of England school standards and achievement in religious education feature in the local diocesan report that accompanies the full inspection report. Overall, standards are high enough, and there are clear signs of good achievement the longer pupils are in the school.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school are satisfactory.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	This remains unsatisfactory overall because the number of exclusions remains high. However, behaviour in school has improved significantly as a result of recently introduced policies and is now satisfactory.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development and relationships are good.
Attendance	Attendance is just below the national average and is therefore unsatisfactory.

The pupils' understanding of the impact of their actions on others and their respect for the feelings and beliefs of others is good. As a result of this the quality of their relationships is good. Attendance is still unsatisfactory although the school's good policies on these matters are having a positive effect. The number of exclusions, although declining as a result of the school's good behaviour management policies, still remains above the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Year 6	Years 7 and 8
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory

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

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and nearly half the lessons seen during the inspection were judged to be good. Two out of three lessons seen in Year 6 were judged to be good or better, whereas one in three lessons in Year 8 was found to be good or better. There are strengths in teachers' planning in Years 7 and 8 as well as in the management of pupils in all year groups. Pupils' learning is stronger in Year 6 than in Years 7 and 8; this was directly linked in the lessons observed to stronger teaching. In Year 6, pupils' intellectual, physical and creative effort, their productivity and pace of working as well as their interest, concentration and independence were all judged to be good; this is clearly linked to teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject, which was also graded good for this year group.

Teaching is very good in English in Year 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. That in science is satisfactory in Year 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. It is satisfactory in mathematics in all years. Teaching is very good in music in Year 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. It is satisfactory in design technology, modern foreign languages, physical education and art. Teaching is unsatisfactory in ICT and in geography in Years 7 and 8. The teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is good in English and mathematics in Year 6 and in history in all year groups. It is satisfactory in all other subjects in all year groups with the exception of French, where it is unsatisfactory. The effectiveness of teachers' use of ICT is unsatisfactory.

Pupils with special educational needs are taught satisfactorily, as are higher attaining pupils, with strengths in English and history. Pupils' learning is satisfactory overall with a number of good features in Year 6. However, their knowledge of their own learning is unsatisfactory overall in all year groups and this relates directly to the unsatisfactory quality and use of assessment information to inform both teaching and learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall, although there are some deficiencies in physical education, French, design technology and ICT, because not all aspects are covered in sufficient detail. National curriculum requirements are not met in these subjects. Extra curricular provision is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Satisfactory.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. The very small numbers of pupils with English as an additional language have a good command of English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The care of pupils is satisfactory overall, although the provision and use of assessment is not well enough planned for.

The school has a satisfactory partnership with parents.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Overall good. The leadership and management of the headteacher is very good and is rapidly improving many areas of provision. However, there are weaknesses in the support available from some key staff and some subject co-ordinators.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory and improving as they get used to working with the new headteacher. They positively accept that change will initiate improvement and are becoming increasingly independent in their decision making.
The school's evaluation of its performance	This has improved significantly since September 2001 and is now good and improving consistently.
The strategic use of resources	Good.

The school has sufficient teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. However, the teachers are not always deployed well. An issue of concern is the regular staff absence, including long term absences, which disrupts teaching and adversely affects standards. The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. There are not enough classrooms for the number of pupils in the school and some rooms are cramped. A lack of space in science and design technology limits pupils' achievements. There are adequate resources for learning, with the exception of the below average computer provision. The school applies the principles of best value well.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The efforts made by the headteacher since her appointment.</li> <li>The introduction of the new behaviour management policy.</li> <li>That children like school and it expects them to work hard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further improvements to behaviour and pupil maturity.</li> <li>Better liaison with parents.</li> <li>A more consistent approach to homework.</li> </ul>

Most parents believe that the teaching is good and that their children make good progress. They are comfortable approaching the school with a question or problem and recognise the efforts made by the headteacher to improve matters, but still feel further progress is needed. The inspection team largely agrees with parents' positive comments. Inspectors agree that behaviour could be further improved, as could liaison with parents. On balance, homework was used appropriately during the inspection week but subject scrutinies revealed that some inconsistencies exist.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Whilst pupils have an average spread of attainment when they arrive at the school, they have not covered all the necessary areas of learning in English, mathematics or science. Less than 30 school weeks are available from the date of entry to the school and beginning of the national tests. Whilst teachers attempt to prepare pupils for the national tests, there is insufficient time to cover all the necessary ground. There is an inevitable dip in learning as pupils adjust to the new school; making new friends, getting to know new teachers and adjusting to new systems and procedures.
2. Consequently, pupils do not perform as well as they should in national tests. English standards in the national tests in 2001 were below the national average and well below those of similar schools. Those in mathematics were well below the national average and those of similar schools. In addition, standards in science were below the average for both schools nationally and those in similar contexts.
3. This is a serious matter and the new headteacher has moved to set up links with the main first schools that send pupils to St Egwin's so that pupils are better prepared for middle school and there is better continuity in their learning. Inspectors did not find that standards of teaching were unsatisfactory in Year 6. On the contrary, they were the strongest in the school with two thirds of lessons seen in the year group graded as good. Teachers are satisfactorily preparing pupils for the national tests, but are unable to cover all the required areas of learning or to reinforce the required knowledge, understanding and skills. Notwithstanding this, there are aspects of pupils' understanding that the school could improve, and these are identified below.
4. In lessons seen in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, standards have improved in Year 6 and are now close to the national average and pupils have achieved satisfactory rates of progress since arriving at the school, even though they have had to adjust to the new situation. This was confirmed by a detailed work scrutiny conducted across all year groups and in all subjects. However, standards in mathematics remain weaker than those seen in English and science. This is because the co-ordinators of Year 6 literacy and science pay close attention to what is happening in Year 6, whereas this has not happened until very recently in mathematics, following intensive support from the local authority numeracy adviser.
5. This improvement is the result of the better deployment of specialist teaching expertise since the arrival of the new headteacher and more accurate assessment of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding on entry to the school.
6. Other factors that prevent the school matching the standards of similar schools include:
  - (a) The unsatisfactory structure of the school timetable that inhibits setting arrangements in design technology, science and French.
  - (b) An unsatisfactory match of staff expertise to the demands of the curriculum, which is partly caused by the structure of the school timetable.
  - (c) The unsatisfactory use of assessment information to inform both curriculum planning and teaching, which is particularly noticeable in mathematics.
  - (d) The negative impact of small groups of pupils in both Year 7 and 8 whose unsatisfactory behaviour has impacted on standards as they have moved through the school.

The new headteacher is aware of all these deficiencies and is acting decisively to improve provision. Inspectors noticed an improvement in standards and in overall achievement, clearly linked to the efforts of the headteacher and staff on teaching and learning.

7. Similarly, standards of attainment in Year 8 show those pupils have made good progress since they took the national tests in Year 6. This shows that they have achieved well since that time. In the optional national tests for Year 7 taken in 2002, results in mathematics show that all pupils had improved their performance by 1 full level and more than 40 per cent had improved by 2 full levels. This is significant progress and standards of attainment in Year 7 mathematics are now in line with national expectations.
8. Standards in the foundation subjects at the end of Year 6 are in line with national expectations in: design technology, geography, art, music, history, French and physical education. They are below expectations in information and communication technology (ICT) because of the lack of sufficient equipment. When pupils' attainment on entry is considered, their achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT but satisfactory in design technology, geography, art, French and physical education. It is good in history, and very good in music.
9. Standards in English, mathematics, science and history at the end of Year 8 are good and reflect the progress pupils have made in their three years in the school. Standards in the foundation subjects at the end of Year 8 are in line with national expectations in design technology, geography, physical education, French and art. They are below expectations in music and ICT. They are below in ICT because there is insufficient equipment and pupils' progress is not sufficiently tracked and targeted. In music, pupils in Years 7 and 8 suffered a period of decline in which standards suffered. Standards are now improving following the appointment of a new music teacher and achievement is very good throughout the school. When pupils' attainment on entry is considered, their achievement is broadly satisfactory across all other subjects apart from history, where it is good.
10. As this is a Church of England school, standards and achievement in religious education feature in the local diocesan report that accompanies this full inspection report.
11. The achievements of pupils with special educational need (SEN) are satisfactory. The progress made by a quarter of the pupils with SEN has been sufficient for them to be removed from the register in less than six months. The achievement of pupils from the Traveller cultural tradition has been satisfactory but affected by absence and, in a small number of cases, by occasional poor behaviour that has resulted in temporary exclusion. The provision for pupils with special educational needs ensures that most make satisfactory progress. Appropriate support for overcoming weaknesses in language skills is provided. Whilst the pupils' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) seldom acknowledge their weaknesses in number skills, support is provided by the special educational needs co-ordinator (Senco) taking the lowest-attaining mathematics class in Year 6. This arrangement and small mathematics classes in Years 7 and 8 enable the pupils to make satisfactory progress.
12. The standards of literacy in Year 6 are broadly average. In Year 8 they are above average. Most pupils read fluently with expression and understanding. The above average standards in Year 8 are reflected in standards of writing. Most Year 8 pupils write extensive pieces with accuracy and assurance. Notable strengths are well-organised paragraphs and clear expression. Some pupils have below average writing standards throughout the school because of spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors and a lack of clarity in written expression.
13. The standard of numeracy is satisfactory in Year 6 and good in Years 7 and 8. However, as a whole school policy is not in place, there is not a consistent strategy to build upon the work in mathematics. This means that valuable opportunities to consolidate and reinforce mathematics skills are lost. The mathematics teachers have adopted the National Numeracy and Key Stage 3 Strategies and these are beginning to make a positive contribution to rising standards. Pupils are making good progress in the development of strategies for solving number problems. Most teachers also encourage pupils to explain how they have arrived at the correct answer. For example, a low attaining Year 7 pupil when adding 68 and 15 said 'you add the tens 6 and 1 to make 70, take 3 from the 8 to make 5, then add the other 5 to make 10, the total is now 80 and then add back the 3 you took away to get the answer 83'; this was also a good example of mental maths in action.

## **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

14. Most parents believe that their children like coming to school and discussions with pupils broadly confirmed this view. Most pupils are prepared to come to school, although there are some who attend without much enthusiasm for their lessons or learning, despite the school's attempts to engage with them. There are also some pupils who have a negative attitude to their education and a few who sometimes avoid attending. Many pupils do take advantage of the good range of school clubs on offer. For many, their attitude in lessons is very dependent on the quality of the teaching they receive and whether they find the content interesting. In lessons that have a fast pace and which provide a stimulating learning environment, most respond well and participate well. There are also some variations by subject, with English, maths, science, design technology and history achieving the most positive responses. In lessons where they can get away with chattering and not working, some pupils will on occasion take advantage of the situation. Within the wide variations seen, pupils' attitudes are satisfactory overall.
15. A significant minority of parents do not consider behaviour in the school to be good enough, with a feeling that standards had slipped considerably after the last inspection and before the arrival of the current headteacher. Parents are more comfortable with the new behaviour policy but believe that not all staff are effective in implementing it. The school is heading in the right direction but has further to go. Inspection findings support this view. Overall, behaviour is unsatisfactory, but within this judgement there are wide variations. In lessons, pupils' attitudes and behaviour varied from being excellent in one lesson to a number of lessons where they were unsatisfactory. Many lessons saw good or very good behaviour, but the variations do highlight the problem the school has in maintaining consistent standards. Good behaviour is related closely to good teaching, which delivers interesting and fast moving lessons. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson on acids, behaviour was good because the teacher had a good relationship with the pupils and conveyed to them clear expectations of behaviour. In a lesson in a Year 6 lower maths set, a key person was the teaching assistant, who kept her eyes on those pupils who were having difficulty concentrating; despite the range of behaviour problems exhibited by pupils, in this lesson behaviour was also good. An example of behaviour adversely affecting learning occurred in a Year 7 ICT lesson on questionnaire design, where unchallenging work contributed to a situation where in discussion sessions some pupils were calling out and spoiled it for the others, making it difficult for them to listen. In another ICT lesson, this time in Year 8, the majority of pupils were enthusiastic and eager to start the lesson, but the behaviour of two pupils delayed the logging-on process for everybody.
16. Acceptable behaviour is not something that comes naturally to all pupils. Exclusions, mainly fixed term, are running at a very high level for a school of this size and type. Last year the school recorded 58 exclusions involving 21 different pupils. Exclusions this year are running at a lower rate but still number nearly 30. Reasons are justified and include abuse of staff, serious violence to other pupils or staff, and an alcohol-related incident. Most of them involve pupils with known special needs for educational and behavioural difficulties. It is a measure of the school's commitment to educational inclusion and the efforts it puts in to support such pupils that some of them are racking up multiple fixed term exclusions rather than being permanently excluded. A promising sign is that so far this year none of the exclusions has involved a pupil from Year 6, suggesting the improved behaviour policy is having some effect on new pupils. This is not to say that Year 6 cannot be challenging; in a literacy lower set, for example, pupils calling out and making a fuss about trivial issues led to a unproductive and bad-tempered atmosphere in the room, not conducive to learning.
17. Discussions with pupils indicate that all are aware of the school's expectations but there is a small minority that quite simply chooses not to follow them on occasions. In addition, a proportion of pupils is ready to take advantage of any perceived weaknesses on the part of the teacher. It is to the credit of the school's current behaviour management procedures, and the professional way that many teachers apply them, that it is generally an orderly place. This is particularly important at breaks and when pupils are moving between classes. The narrow corridors and staircases make it important that pupils do move sensibly and in this regard

their good behaviour contributes to the orderly running of the school. They can show an easy tolerance of what could be a fraught situation. Bullying does occur in the school, although the staff treat incidents very seriously and pupils are confident that they are dealt with speedily. Pupils generally respect each other's and the school's property, with pupils prepared to leave their bags unattended on hooks in corridors. Behaviour in the courts and on the field at lunchtime is generally acceptable, with the occasional incident of play fighting; in one case this involved two boys with twigs hitting a girl; this was more playful than aggressive.

18. Pupils' personal development and relationships are good. The school has a large number of personable and mature young people whom it is a real pleasure to meet. Most can understand the impact of their actions on others. However, there is a small minority who find this difficult. As a result, for example, it was necessary to ban several pupils from the children's disco. The school offers a range of opportunities for those capable of taking initiative and showing personal responsibility in their work and around the school. The school council, house captains, their deputies and prefects all contribute to the running of the school. This system is useful in giving older pupils a taste of responsibility. The school's programme for personal and social education contributes well to pupils' personal development. Some lessons are directed too much by the teacher to allow pupils full scope to take responsibility for their own learning. For example, teachers tend to give out books or resources themselves rather than delegate the job. Where they are given responsibility, pupils often rise to the occasion. Overall, however, the teachers do keep quite a tight rein on pupils. For example, the teacher conducting a Year 8 assembly maintained complete control over more than 100 pupils single-handedly, but the silence that resulted owed more to the fear of a lunchtime detention than the self-discipline of the pupils involved. Pupils show respect for the school's property and there is no litter or graffiti.
19. Many teachers have built a close relationship with their classes and, where it works well, it contributes to mutual respect and partnership in learning. Pupils usually value each other as individuals; in a Year 7 maths lesson on spreadsheets, for instance, they listened carefully to each other's responses to questions and politely pointed out errors. In another maths lesson, in Year 6, the pupils were cheerfully tolerant of one of their number's hesitant attempts to complete mathematical shapes using an overhead projector. Low and high attaining pupils are often able to work constructively together. They can work well together in pairs or groups; for example, in a Year 8 maths set, they co-operated well, working in groups on linear equations, being well-behaved and attending with a high level of concentration. Boys and girls usually work together unselfconsciously. In a Year 7 French oral lesson on the theme of breakfast, there was a lot of enthusiasm from both boys and girls to volunteer to answer questions.
20. The general standards of pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development would appear to have declined since the last inspection of the school but have risen noticeably since the implementation of the new school behaviour policy.
21. Pupils' attendance was below the national average for a school of this type in 2000/2001, with an attendance rate of 92.1 per cent. Rates of attendance have been improving slightly year-on-year and it looks as though 2001/2002 will continue this trend, with a figure to the end of April of 92.3 per cent. The rates of unauthorized absence at the school in 2000/01 were broadly in line with the national average. Pupils arrive at school punctually, with few coming after morning registration has closed. Year 6 has marginally the best attendance record, Year 8 slightly the worst.
22. Within the overall figures, there are about 20 pupils with attendance rates below 80 per cent, and for these pupils in particular their non-attendance must adversely affect their learning. Overall attendance figures are affected by below average recorded attendance by some Traveller children and by some parents taking their children out of school for family holidays. However, the bulk of absences are recorded as sickness, with parents providing valid reasons. There have been weeks when bouts of sickness have hit large numbers of pupils in the school, with a consequent effect on the figures. The registers suggest that when pupils are sick they may stay off for an entire week, rather than be absent for a couple of days. It is

likely that the sections of the population from which some of these pupils are drawn do suffer from above average rates of illness.

23. Attendance figures at the time of the last inspection were broadly similar to the current situation.

#### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

24. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall and nearly half the lessons seen during the inspection were judged to be good. There are strengths in teachers' planning in Years 7 and 8 as well as in the management of pupils in all year groups. Pupils' learning is stronger in Year 6 than in Years 7 and 8, with particular strengths in English and history where learning was regularly very good. Overall this was directly linked in the lessons observed to stronger teaching. Some six out of every ten lessons seen in Year 6 were judged to be good or better. One in three lessons in Year 8 was found to be good or better. In Year 6, pupils' intellectual, physical and creative effort, their productivity and pace of working as well as their interest, concentration and independence were all judged to be good; this is clearly linked to teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject, which was also graded good for this year group.
25. Teaching is very good in English and history in all years, science in Years 7 and 8 and very good in music and English in Year 6. It is satisfactory in mathematics, design technology, modern foreign languages, physical education and art. Teaching is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT) and in geography in Years 7 and 8.
26. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject is good in science and in the foundation subjects in all year groups. It is very good in English in Year 6 and good in Years 7 and 8 but satisfactory in mathematics in all years. There is a correlation between teachers' subject grasp and the confidence displayed by pupils in their learning. In English in Year 6, for instance, pupils' behaviour, concentration and eagerness to learn all result from the assured English teaching from a group of specialist teachers. The teaching of basic skills is good in English and mathematics in Year 6 and in history in all year groups. It is satisfactory in all other subjects in all year groups with the exception of French. The effectiveness of teachers' use of ICT is unsatisfactory and this has an adverse impact on pupils' learning in this subject. The school is making significant efforts to upgrade its limited facilities but accommodation limitations and complex timetable arrangements have placed constraints on the use of the facilities available.
27. The effectiveness of teachers' planning is good overall across the curriculum in Years 7 and 8 and very good in English in Year 6. It is very good in history in all years, and good in science, design technology and French. Where it is good, learning takes place in a systematic way. In many mathematics lessons, for instance, pupils are engaged from the very start because teachers share, with the pupils, the learning objectives they have planned for. Planning is satisfactory in art, music and geography. It is unsatisfactory in mathematics and ICT. Teachers' expectations of pupils are satisfactory overall with strengths in English, design technology and history but with weaknesses in geography in Years 7 and 8. Linked to this the effectiveness of the teaching methods employed was seen to be good in English, mathematics, science and history overall. These were found to be satisfactory in the other foundation subjects but unsatisfactory in ICT in all year groups and in geography in Years 7 and 8. The use of homework in all subjects is satisfactory.
28. The management of pupils was found to be a strength of teaching in the school. It was judged to be good in all years, very good in English Year 6 and also very good in history with all groups. Where management of pupils is good, it has a profound impact on learning, as pupils tend not to distract each other or waste time. This was evident, for instance, in a very good Year 6 music lesson where the teacher's effervescent and lively manner engaged pupils fully in the task; there was a very productive pace and pupils surprised themselves with the rapid way that they picked up aspects of music notation. The use of time, support staff and resources is satisfactory with strengths in English, mathematics and history but unsatisfactory in ICT.

29. The quality and use of ongoing assessment to inform teaching and learning is unsatisfactory overall and only secure in English and French. This is because there has been insufficient lead from the assessment co-ordinator to develop whole school strategies. Nevertheless, individual teachers do provide helpful verbal and written feedback and, because many have a good understanding of who the lower and higher attainers are, there are regular instances of teachers adjusting the quality of their feedback to suit individual learners. In Year 6 art sketchbooks, for instance, there are very helpful examples of written comments that take pupils' learning forward. These comments are sensitively phrased to challenge both higher and lower attainers. Nevertheless, assessment was a key issue for action given in the last inspection, and whilst individual teachers have made some progress, there has been insufficient strategic planning to improve this aspect. As a result, pupils do not always have a clear idea of whether or not they are learning well.
30. Pupils with special educational needs are taught satisfactorily. Most teachers can identify the pupils and know their general needs, although subject teachers do not usually know the specific aspect of language on which the pupils are currently receiving support. Most teachers plan their lessons to meet the general needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Whilst this is not the case in design and technology, ICT and music, the pupils' needs are met in other ways; in design and technology by small classes and individual attention, in ICT by an emphasis on individual working and in music by the skill of the teacher in responding to individual needs with sensitivity. A weakness in English lessons is that the lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, are not often expected to write at length. Teaching of the highest attaining pupils is satisfactory in most lessons, with strengths in English and history. However, the school's unsatisfactory use of assessment information to inform teaching is currently preventing systematic identification, challenge and support. The teachers' assistants know the pupils with special educational needs very well, use the teaching and testing materials well and have guidance from outside agencies that enhances their support for the pupils. Their work is significant in improving the pupils' skills. Pupils from the Traveller cultural background learn satisfactorily in all year groups where they are not inhibited by any periods of absence. There are too few pupils speaking English as an additional language in the school to make a separate judgement on the nature of their learning.

#### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

31. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory in all year groups, as at the time of the last inspection. All the subjects of the National Curriculum are catered for, and there is provision of religious education according to the locally agreed syllabus. Sex and drug education are suitably covered in the regular personal, social and health education lessons, which also provide opportunities for pupils to consider aspects of citizenship. Whilst provision is satisfactory overall, three issues limit the effectiveness of the curriculum and affect standards; the headteacher and governing body are aware of these and have moved to address the issues. Firstly, the provision for ICT both as a subject and its use across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection, and this affects standards in the subject. A new ICT suite will be commissioned in November 2002, when building work is completed, and the library upgrade will include an ICT teaching suite. Secondly, the complex structure of the timetable, with its many variations of group size and setting, particularly in Years 7 and 8, make it difficult to match staff expertise to the demands of the curriculum; correspondingly, teaching was judged to be satisfactory in Year 8 but good in Year 6. The new headteacher introduced an amended timetable in January 2002, which improved the structure and organisation from that produced by the previous acting head. Plans already underway provide a more coherent match of staff expertise to the needs of the curriculum for September 2002. The school is aware of the aspects of the physical education, design technology, ICT and French curriculum currently missing from the subjects' schemes of work. The school development plan correctly links many of these to the commissioning of the new ICT facilities in autumn 2002.
32. The curricular provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. Some pupils are appropriately withdrawn for specific, concentrated tuition; some are supported in class so

that they can successfully participate in lessons; most subject teaching matches the varying needs of pupils. The match between need and provision is good. The special educational needs co-ordinator tries to vary the times when pupils are withdrawn for individual or group support, so that pupils do not miss too much of any one subject. Whilst the school has some appropriate software, ICT is little used to enhance the learning of pupils with special educational needs.

33. The provision for the development of literacy across all subjects is satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator for English provides suitable oversight of the provision. A sharper focus on writing is emerging following a recent training day. In some subjects, such as history, there is good development of writing, but this is not yet reflected in all subjects. The development of literacy is a strength within English. Recent curriculum innovations are effectively supporting improvement in the writing of Year 6 pupils. In classes preparing for the national tests in English pupils were using the QCA materials from previous tests to guide them in the writing requirements for each type of question. There is effective promotion of subject vocabulary in mathematics. In art there are regular chances for extended writing and scrutiny of work shows that pupils are encouraged to use specialist terms in both their spoken and written responses in design technology, geography, history and physical education.
34. There are satisfactory strategies for teaching numeracy skills across the curriculum. The headteacher has moved effectively to counter the former lack of co-ordination. In design and technology, pupils satisfactorily use isometric paper to support their drawings in design and weigh accurately in food technology. In geography, pupils practise skills learnt in mathematics lessons by drawing graphs to illustrate changes in climate and interpret maps using scale measurements and contours. In science in Year 8 pupils measured the effect of different materials dampening the vibrations of a ruler. They understand the need to average results and the higher attaining pupils can interpret the variations in their measures as an insight into the reliability of their data. All Year 8 pupils show a good interpretation of graphs during science lessons.
35. The provision for extra-curricular activities is good and many pupils take advantage of the opportunities on offer. There are clubs in all subject areas supporting the breadth of pupil experience; for instance, in art pupils join an after school pottery class, and in physical education the summer term rowing club is organised within the town with support from the local education authority (LEA). The local authority music service supports peripatetic instrument tuition with lunchtime percussion classes that are particularly popular.
36. The setting arrangements that result from the complex timetable produce several equality of access and opportunity issues. In design and technology, for instance, some groups use computer controlled sewing machines and so access the element of the ICT statutory orders for computer-aided manufacturing but, because of the timetable, other groups of pupils do not have access to this facility until later in their course when a room change makes the facility available, but by this time curriculum opportunities have changed. The impact of the unsatisfactory match of staff expertise to the complex curriculum provision is noted in the section on the quality of teaching.
37. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory. Timetabled classes work to a sound scheme of work but more co-ordination across the curriculum of the citizenship aspects of the programme is required, although good work has been done in developing the school council. A limited range of careers related guidance forms part of the PSHE experience. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is satisfactory. In science and geography, pupils make appropriate use of a local environmental centre, the county cricket club provides coaching and the local cricket club uses the school's net facilities, encouraging pupils to join the Colts Team training sessions.
38. The headteacher has developed satisfactory relationships with the major feeder first schools and with the local upper school since her appointment. However, the school's weaknesses in the use of assessment to inform curriculum planning, teaching and learning in recent years are linked to limitations in this area and these have had a detrimental impact on standards in Year 6.

## **Spiritual, Moral, Social, Cultural**

39. Overall, the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection. Since then, the school has introduced a daily collective act of worship, but still does not do enough to teach pupils about other cultures, including those of minority groups in Britain. However, in religious education there is now time for more reflection and exploration of issues.
40. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies provide some opportunities for quiet reflection and similar opportunities were observed in several lessons. For instance, in an English lesson with Year 6, the pupils reflected thoughtfully on evocative poetry about the wonders of the natural world. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons provide further opportunities for reflection about what has been learned and this helps to deepen pupils' self-understanding. Religious education lessons provide opportunities to explore different faith perspectives. In art, Year 8 pupils' exploration of the work of surrealist painters, such as Rene Magritte, has helped them to appreciate the deeper symbolic meanings in some paintings. Year 6 pupils have looked at the symbolic elements in Japanese art and are shortly to consider how African art and craft is linked to people's perception of spirituality.
41. Provision for moral development is satisfactory. The school is aware that some pupils have not behaved as well as they should and has recently introduced a new behaviour policy to counteract this. Whilst the moral climate is improving, the school realises that there is a little way to go before they can claim that behaviour is good. Nevertheless, the new emphasis on good behaviour is providing pupils with a clearer direction so that they understand the differences between right and wrong. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is overall sound. The headteacher and staff provide good role models, responding with consideration and sensitivity to pupils even when, on occasions, pupils behave in a discourteous way to each other or teachers. In several lessons, teachers ignored provocative behaviour, tending to emphasise pupils' positive attributes, rather than dwelling on negative attitudes. Some lessons, such as religious education and PSHE, provide useful opportunities for pupils to consider moral and ethical issues. In history, teachers use historical phenomena, such as the slave trade, to raise issues of contemporary moral concern.
42. The provision for pupils' social development is satisfactory. Most pupils work and socialise amicably, and in many lessons there is a sense of shared endeavour. In music, for instance, pupils work sensibly together, inventing and playing their own compositions. In a Year 7 music lesson, small groups of pupils worked collaboratively on rhythmic compositions. There was a buzz of activity, with pupils eagerly supporting each other as they prepared to play their pieces to the rest of the class. Pupils who are in the orchestra and choirs have performed at the local Arts Centre, senior citizens' homes, Tesco and local churches. Other examples of collaboration between pupils include large art displays on the walls of corridors, where pupils have joined their efforts to produce eye-catching designs. In science, pupils work productively and co-operatively in groups, they are eager to respond to questions and listen to, and value, each other's answers and views. This is because teachers provide plenty of opportunities for group work and set clear expectations of what pupils should achieve. The school promotes an inclusive atmosphere; those with special educational needs, of whatever nature or difficulty, are fully accepted into the school community and fully supported by everyone. In lessons such as history and geography, teachers encourage pupils to relate positively as they engage in regular group work.
43. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory overall. Opportunities for pupils to learn about the cultural heritage of Britain are good. Pupils visit churches, galleries and museums. The week before the inspection, Year 8 visited the Bishops Wood Environmental Centre, and a Year 7 group recently visited the museum in Worcester. This helped them to appreciate the rich social history of their area. In music, pupils learn about music from different times and traditions and in art about well known artists and craftspeople. Provision for the understanding of other cultures is less well developed. Songs from other countries are sung and, in art, interesting lessons are based on Indian and African art forms. However, there is not a great deal of display work from other cultures around the school and there are few appropriate

books in the library that look at the world from the perspective of ethnic minority groups or celebrate their positive achievements. Consequently, pupils are not sufficiently well prepared for their place as adults in today's culturally diverse society.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

44. The senior management team and teachers at all levels make considerable efforts to address the welfare of individual pupils when they need it. Pupils believe that many of the staff are approachable and that they do their best to resolve any problems they have, although certain members of staff are seen as authoritarian and difficult to approach. The school's provision allows pupils to concentrate on their learning.
45. The school's procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are satisfactory. The deputy headteacher is responsible for child protection. He has received suitable training and liaises with the local social services department as necessary. Adults in the school are made aware of their child protection responsibilities and proper records are kept. There is provision within the programme for personal and social education to help pupils to take responsibility for their own safety. The school site generally provides a safe environment and routine health and safety procedures and testing are in place. No unsafe practice was seen in lessons during the inspection. The health and safety officer is active in ensuring that risk assessments are carried out. Risk assessments for school trips are carried out effectively. The school has addressed specific problems identified in the last inspection report over dust extraction in the DT area and the storage of flammable liquids.
46. The educational and personal support and guidance offered to pupils is unsatisfactory due to the limitations in assessment information available. However, significant improvements have been made in recent months in the nature of the pastoral care available. A minority of parents do not agree that the school is helping their child to become mature and responsible, whilst often accepting that improvements have been made. Parents believe that pastoral support has not always been available when pupils need it, but that it is improving. However, most teachers are active in the pastoral care of their pupils, although this is not consistently the case. They know their pupils well, whilst year heads provide good support when it is needed. In this the school benefits from its relatively small size. Pupils are usually confident that help is available to them when they need it. Heads of year and class teachers provide sound advice to pupils and long term monitoring for those pupils who find it difficult to meet the school's expectations. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is based on this personal knowledge, treating each pupil as an individual. The personal and social education curriculum contributes effectively to pupils' development, helping pupils grow into responsible adults. The school nurse visits weekly to help pupils through a confidential surgery, whilst a member of the support staff also takes on a counselling role, involving the running of circle times to help pupils who find it difficult to relate to other people.
47. The school has satisfactory procedures to monitor attendance and encourage pupils to attend regularly. These procedures have improved attendance figures from those given for last year. There are appropriate systems in place to identify problems with attendance as they emerge, based on good use of the computerised attendance figures to spot problems and trends. The school follows up attendance problems and involves the Educational Welfare Officer, who comes to the school weekly, as necessary, although the service level contract in force limits his role to dealing with particular problem pupils. Morning registration periods and the calling of registers in the afternoon are efficiently conducted.
48. Behaviour and attendance improvement was a strand in the 1999-2000 school development plan, although it would appear that standards declined rather than improved over that year. The new headteacher has implemented a new behaviour policy and it is already having a significant impact on pupil behaviour in the school. Further development of the behaviour policy is a priority in the 2002-2005 school improvement plan. There are good, comprehensive procedures to monitor and promote good behaviour. Pupils are very aware of the behaviour stamp system, whereby satisfactory performance in a lesson earns a stamp in their homework diaries, ultimately redeemable for a range of rewards – this system is proving to be highly motivational. The emphasis on encouraging positive behaviour is also reinforced

by the awarding of house points and work of the week. Each pupil now has a Record of Achievement folder, which allows pupils to record evidence of their achievements as they progress through the school. An appropriate range of sanctions matches the system of rewards. Implementation does not appear to be totally consistent across the school. The written behaviour policy does not provide a firm enough framework to ensure that all teachers, including supply teachers working in the school, are absolutely clear on what is expected to happen. There is a clear written policy on exclusions, but insufficient clear written guidance about the use of less serious sanctions, so that it is clear that certain behaviour will have certain consequences. A particular strength is the way that all pupils are familiar with the systems, and the rewards and sanctions that apply. Good procedures for dealing with bullying and oppressive behaviour are in place. The policy outlines the school's approach and the responsibilities of individuals for its implementation.

49. The monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development is unsatisfactory. The system of lesson observations and checks on pupils' work in exercise books, which the school undertakes, although sound in principle, is less effective than it might be in promoting whole school coherence and consistency. Heads of department are responsible for implementing school policies and for monitoring practices in their own subject. However, because the guidelines that underpin assessment in the school are quite broad, different interpretations and varying degrees of precision are evolving. To date, the role of the assessment co-ordinator in overseeing the implementation of good practice throughout the school lacks rigour. The recently appointed headteacher recognises that the school's current procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress are poor.
50. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are unsatisfactory. The school has yet to establish: a central, computer-based record keeping system to chart the progress of pupils as they move through the school, starting from baseline testing linked to national benchmarks. In subject departments, assessment and marking practices are of variable frequency and quality. Some examples of good marking which use the school's own grading system exist in art and in English in Years 7 and 8. However, basic marking in geography is inadequate. Across the school, marking rarely reflects the use of National Curriculum benchmarks. The sharing of assessment criteria with pupils or involving them in evaluating their own learning is also embryonic. The usefulness of the portfolio of pupils' work, which the English department compiles to help with the moderation of standards across teaching groups, is limited because the work is not assessed against National Curriculum levels. The school has yet to provide pupils and parents with a clear picture of progress in relation to national standards. In 2001, it complied satisfactorily with the statutory requirements to assess and report on pupils' progress at the end of Year 6.
51. The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is unsatisfactory. Its most common use in subjects is to determine setting arrangements. Adequate curriculum and assessment links with partner first schools are in place. However, the school has yet to analyse the available information rigorously or to convey relevant details systematically to heads of department to use to improve curriculum planning, particularly in Year 6. Additionally, data which the LEA provides fails to include pupils' average points score, a system normally used nationally to predict the attainment of pupils and which helps schools to set appropriate targets. The use of value added factors is not yet embedded because the teachers need training. Accordingly, the use of assessment information to identify how pupils' learning could be enhanced has yet to be implemented satisfactorily at whole school level.
52. The initial assessment procedures for identifying pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory overall. The placement of pupils on the SEN register is reviewed and pupils are regularly removed when they are assessed as having made sufficient progress. The register includes a very brief reference to the pupils' main language weakness and this is all that most class teachers see, although the fuller individual education plans (IEPs) are available to all. Only English teachers and the teachers' assistants specifically working with the pupils usually see these. A weakness in the IEPs is that the pupils' inadequate number skills are not sufficiently emphasised. The targets are also general. Class teachers do not know what specific weaknesses are being tackled by the teachers' assistants and what the pupils' particular targets are, so that they are unable to reinforce, in their own lessons and marking,

the work being done by the specialists. The assessments are not therefore being used for the fullest benefit of the pupils.

53. The school has maintained its provision for the support, guidance and welfare of pupils since the last inspection with some improvement in the pastoral care available. Assessment was a key issue during the last inspection; lack of substantial improvement means assessment remains unsatisfactory and is an urgent key issue for action.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

54. About a quarter of the parents took the opportunity to express their views of the school through the parents' questionnaire, whilst 16 attended the parents' meeting. Based on this relatively small sample expressing a view, a mixed picture of the school emerged. The majority was positive about all aspects of the school, but there are significant minorities of parents concerned in specific areas. Most parents believe that their children like school, that the teaching is good and that their children make good progress. They think that the school expects their child to work hard, and they themselves would be comfortable approaching the school with a question or problem. A significant minority of parents was critical of the standards of behaviour in the school and does not think the school is successful in helping children become mature and responsible. There are also doubts on how well the school works with parents, being well informed about progress, and the amount of homework set for their children. Overall, parents' views of the school are unsatisfactory. However, parents' comments do suggest that they recognise that the efforts of the new headteacher to improve matters are having an effect, but that there is the need to progress further. As one parent put it, "the changes are not fast enough for our children – they are only here for three years". Inspection findings broadly support the views and concerns of the parents. Behaviour management does need to progress further and success here would also allow staff to help pupils to take more responsibility for themselves, in preparation for high school. The school has to re-earn the respect of parents in forming a partnership to the benefit of the children; improvements are possible in the way parents are kept informed of their child's progress.
55. The information the school provides for parents is sound. The prospectus and annual governors' report to parents are both satisfactory documents that give a flavour of the school. There are two forms of written reports on pupils' progress. The interim version, sent out in November and March, provides limited information on attitude and work by subject. The full annual written report has a confusing range of scales of attainment. Written comments from most teachers are limited and general, and overall it is quite understandable that many parents are dissatisfied with the information they receive on their child's progress. There are appropriate arrangements for parents to discuss their children's progress with teachers. There are interesting regular letters home on specific issues.
56. Most parents of pupils with special educational needs work closely with the school. They meet the school staff before their children start at the school and then regularly at parent-teacher consultation evenings.
57. The homework diaries provides a good way for parents to keep track of homework and also to communicate in an informal way with class teachers, although use of them is not totally consistent across the school. They are being used and taken seriously by pupils and most staff. Most are being signed by the form tutor or parent. Very few parents help in school. The school places considerable emphasis on involving parents when a pupil is having problems conforming to the school's expectations, and this approach is often productive in getting a good partnership to support the pupil. However, support from parents is not always forthcoming. The school Parent, Friend and Teacher Association (PFTA) runs social and fundraising events, although there is some dissatisfaction amongst parents that few staff support events. There is a home school agreement in place, which has had little practical effect. The parent governors do make an appropriate contribution to the school's governing body. The contribution of parents to children's learning at home and at school is satisfactory overall.

58. The quality of the partnership with parents would appear to have declined since the last inspection of the school.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

59. The overall leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are good. The headteacher provides very strong and caring leadership and is promoting a commitment to the inclusion of all pupils. The headteacher arrived following a temporary interregnum when there was no substantive headteacher. During this period, there was insufficient attention to factors that held back pupils' standards. Following her arrival the headteacher accurately identified a number of key factors that have held back standards, and has decisively started to put these right. For instance, she is tackling the unacceptable behaviour of a minority of pupils that has an adverse impact on learning. She recognises that the statutory curriculum is not fully in place and will correct this at the beginning of the next academic year. She knows that the systems for using the results of assessments to track pupils' progress are weak and is introducing more analytical procedures. The headteacher has monitored the quality of teaching of all staff and has clearly identified where improvements should be made. The correct identification of these factors, which are being shared with staff and governors, is already having a positive impact on pupils' standards and achievements.
60. Most staff share the headteacher's vision, although there is still some hesitation amongst some teachers, including others on the senior management team, about whether her reforms are necessary. In the view of the inspection team, the headteacher has got it right and the measures she is introducing will make a positive difference to the school.
61. The management and leadership provided by middle managers is unsatisfactory. Whilst subject leaders have begun to monitor what is happening in their subjects, they do not analyse results with sufficient rigour and do not use the results of assessments to target learning in order to drive up standards. This is because the procedures for the use of assessments to improve standards are not securely in place. This is particularly noticeable in mathematics, where standards are held back by a failure to make proper use of the data provided by assessments. Most staff are willing to improve their practice and, where this has happened, improvements to standards are noticeable. Most staff have willingly accepted that monitoring of teaching is necessary and improvements are evident where this has happened. However, where there is a reluctance to accept this, for instance in mathematics, improvements are slower in coming.
62. The school is committed to the inclusion of pupils, and has satisfactory arrangements for identifying and supporting lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has established good procedures that work effectively. The recently-appointed governor linked to special educational needs is already involved in the school's work and has attended training in the new Code of Practice with the SENCO. Higher attaining pupils are also identified, and inspectors commented on the successful arrangements in many lessons for providing suitable challenge for these pupils, although this is not yet supported by an agreed policy. The school recognises the particular needs of pupils from the travelling communities, and has taken good advice about how to provide further compensatory support.
63. The way in which the governing body fulfils its responsibilities has improved significantly since the appointment of the new headteacher and is now satisfactory. The weaknesses detailed below, which have had a significant impact on the curriculum, were the result of the unsatisfactory guidance available. As a result of this former weakness in the working relationship with the then acting headteacher, the governing body failed to introduce performance management at the appropriate time. The National Grid For Learning, which promotes developments in ICT, was introduced late and statutory requirements in some subjects are still not fully in place. To this extent, the governing body has not coped well with the bureaucratic demands placed on it. A strength has been the financial management provided by the governing body. They accurately identified the adverse impact on standards of lack of investment in the accommodation and successfully negotiated improvements with

the local authority, setting funds aside to support the incoming headteacher. These included the building of a new staff room, ICT suite and refurbished library.

64. The governing body have realised that they have the right to question and challenge the headteacher and staff, and this new autonomy is beginning to impact positively on the overall management of the school's affairs. For instance, they pushed for the headteacher to introduce curriculum improvements, successfully adjusted the length of the school day and commissioned an audit of teaching and learning. However, there is some way to go before the governing body are fully effective. They now have an understanding of the main strengths and weaknesses of the school and they are taking an active interest in measures to improve weaker areas. A consistent feature since the last inspection has been the resolve of the Chair of the governing body. This has provided a measure of continuity in the three changes of headteacher since the last inspection.
65. The school development plan is satisfactory. It identifies short and medium term priorities that will impact positively on standards. However, whilst the plan is well prioritised, it contains too many items and this lessens its overall conciseness and impact. Nevertheless, the action taken to meet the school's targets is evident in practice, particularly in terms of improvements in pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. Development planning is successfully linked to financial planning. The governing body prudently allocate resources to priorities and there is a strategic view of how financial investment should support school improvement. Consequently a good appreciation of what constitutes best value is evident in the very good day-to-day financial control exercised by the headteacher, administration staff and governing body. There is effective use of new technology to track financial transactions, although the school has been slow to harness new technology to track pupil assessments. Specific grants are now satisfactorily used to improve teaching and learning. The school's strategy for performance management was late in being implemented. However, this is now up and running and is poised to contribute effectively to the monitoring of teaching and standards.
66. The school has sufficient teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum. However, the teachers are not always deployed well. Teachers are sometimes used to teach subjects where they have little prior training or subsequent experience. Consequently, the knowledge and skills that teachers bring is sometimes inadequate for the needs of the pupils. This happens in mathematics, for instance, where a non-specialist recently had to have expensive LEA advisory support to plan lessons in algebra for lower attaining pupils because his knowledge was not up to the task. New staff are successfully inducted and there are suitable arrangements for the training of new teachers. An issue of concern is the regular staff absence, including long term absences, that results in regular use of temporary staff who do not know the pupils well. This disrupts the continuity of teaching and adversely affects standards.
67. The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. There are not enough classrooms for the number of pupils in the school and so a temporary building is in regular use to accommodate the overflow. Some rooms are cramped. Even though there have been some improvements since the last inspection, a lack of space in science limits the amount and type of practical work; in design technology, only half sets can be taught at any one time and inadequate work surfaces restrict practical work in textiles and food technology. There are adequate resources for learning, with the exception of computer provision where the ratio of computers to pupils is below average. However, new computers have been ordered and this will bring the school up to average in the near future.
68. The accommodation for special educational needs is inadequate. Apart from a very small interview room, no accommodation is dedicated to the support of pupils with special educational needs. The teachers' assistants work in alcoves and corridors. Storage of materials is a problem. There is no place where computers dedicated to special educational needs can be used. It is rare for any school, particularly one where two-thirds of the pupils are of secondary school age, not to have dedicated accommodation for this group of pupils. The need for proper accommodation is urgent.

69. A judgement on value for money is based on what the school achieves in relation to its expenditure. The school's income is average. The attainment on entry to the school is broadly average, although some pupils have not covered all the expected aspects needed to pass the Year 6 National Curriculum tests. By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainments are above average in English, mathematics and science and broadly in line with national expectations in other subjects. Pupils' achievement is therefore satisfactory when compared to their average prior attainment. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory and, despite a minority who misbehave, pupils' behaviour is improving following the introduction of new measures. Provision for personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is sound. Taking all these factors into account, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Under the leadership of the current headteacher the school has made significant improvements. In order to continue this process the headteacher and governing body should:

- (1) Improve pupils' achievements in mathematics by:
- Devising a scheme of work that matches the learning needs of all pupils\*;
  - Making better use of assessment to inform both teachers and pupils as to what they need to do to improve\*;
  - Improve the leadership and management of mathematics\*.

*Paragraph references: 4, 6, 26, 27, 29 and 76-89.*

- (2) Improve standards in information and communication technology in all year groups by:
- Improving the resources for computer aided learning in all subjects\*;
  - Providing structured opportunities for subject leaders to plan access to the school's existing ICT into schemes of work.

*Paragraph references: 8, 27-28, 32, 35, and 118-123.*

- (3) Improve results in the national test at the end of Year 6 by:
- Ensuring better exchange of information with feeder first schools;
  - Better target setting and the systematic use of assessment data\*;
  - Devising with the local link upper school the target setting procedures to meet the requirements of the national Key Stage 3 Strategy.

*Paragraph references: 3 and 49.*

- (4) Improve standards across subjects by:
- Making better use of assessment data to improve curriculum planning, teaching and learning\*;
  - Further improving standards of behaviour so that all pupils are willing learners and therefore limit exclusions\*;
  - Refining the school's procedures for following up on attendance issues;
  - Ensuring that the curriculum is broad and balanced, complying with the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum;
  - Improving where possible the accommodation to ease overcrowding;
  - Producing a better match of staff expertise to the demands of the curriculum through a planned and coherent school timetable.

*Paragraph references: 8, 31, 47-51 and 66-67.*

The school has identified the issues marked with a star in its development planning.

The school should also consider the following minor issue: enhancing pupils' understanding of the multi-cultural Britain they will grow up in.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	83
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	49

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	11	26	35	7	0	0
Percentage	5	13	31	42	8	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. It is important to note that each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y6 -8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	329
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	47

Special educational needs	Y 6- 8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	81

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	16

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.6
National comparative data	6.3

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3
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 (Year 6)**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
		2001	44	52

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	27	23	35
	Girls	39	29	42
	Total	66	52	77
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (74)	54 (63)	80 (88)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	24	27	27
	Girls	35	26	32
	Total	59	53	59
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	61 (59)	55 (59)	61 (80)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	327
Any other minority ethnic group	0

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	58	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: Y6-Y8**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.7

**Education support staff: Y6-Y8**

Total number of education support staff	9
Total aggregate hours worked per week	315

**Deployment of teachers: Y6-Y8**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.8%
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**Average teaching group size: Y6-Y8**

Key Stage 2	23.2
Key Stage 3	22.2

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0.6
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001-2
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	£
Total income	771,933
Total expenditure	842,206
Expenditure per pupil	2,221
Balance brought forward from previous year	18,060
Balance carried forward to next year	37,129

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	329
Number of questionnaires returned	79

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	63	5	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	25	62	8	4	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	12	41	24	10	13
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	9	59	22	9	1
The teaching is good.	16	68	9	3	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	23	57	16	3	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	39	5	4	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	44	48	6	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	20	54	18	1	6
The school is well led and managed.	16	59	9	4	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	24	50	21	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	47	11	3	4

### Other issues raised by parents

Parents expressed concerns about behaviour but also noticed an improvement since the introduction of the new behaviour management policy. Inspectors found behaviour to be unsatisfactory overall, particularly when related to the number of exclusions. However it was found to be generally satisfactory in class and often good, reflecting the effective use of the school's new behaviour management policies. The inspection team noted that homework was used appropriately in all subjects.

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

### ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **satisfactory**.

#### Strengths

- Good teaching. (Very good in Year 6.)
- Above average standards and achievement in Year 8.
- Leadership and organisation of the subject including monitoring and evaluation.

#### Areas for improvement

- The use of assessment to improve standards: Years 6 to 8.
- Arrangements for staffing in Years 7 and 8.
- Some features of the curriculum in Years 7 and 8.

70. Pupils enter the school with average standards in English, although reading standards are higher than writing. In the 2001 national tests for pupils at the end of Year 6 the overall results were below average and well below average when compared to similar schools. However, the proportion gaining the higher Level 5 was in line with the national average. Standards have been consistently below average since 1997 apart from 2000, when they were average. Over this period the average level gained has increased by about a third. There has been no significant difference in the relative standards of boys and girls. Despite this pattern of below average standards the teaching of literacy and English in Year 6 is very good. Standards and progress are constrained by the lack of continuity arising from a change of school at the start of Year 6; this significantly reduces the time available for effective learning and preparation for the national tests.
71. Standards in the current Year 6 are close to the national average. Pupils have better overall standards of writing than the previous Year 6, benefiting from a more explicit approach to the teaching of writing skills. Standards of speaking and listening are average. Higher attaining pupils showed a strong awareness of the impact of literary techniques when discussing poems about the natural world. They expressed their understanding with a high degree of fluency. Their writing is accurate and organised into well-constructed paragraphs. Many have a lively written expression, such as the boy whose opening paragraph set an effective mood of mystery and danger when he referred to 'a wisp of murder in the air'. Most pupils have reached average standards in reading. Although improving their knowledge of literary techniques they required the teacher's prompting to deduce their impact. Their writing has improved over the year in terms of organisation but some are not consistently accurate in spelling, punctuation and written expression. Lower attainers, including pupils with special educational needs, have standards that are below average and in a few cases well below average. They have weaknesses in basic writing skills but are making progress in building up their confidence in writing extended pieces, although they would benefit from more opportunities to write extensively.
72. In Year 8 standards are above average and overall achievement is good. The proportion of pupils attaining above and well above average is significantly higher than in the same pupils' tests at the end of Year 6. In last summer's end of Year 7 progress tests half the candidates improved their Year 6 results by one level. Standards of speaking and listening are above average. Higher attainers write with mature, accurate expression and engaging vocabulary. They used and commented on quotations effectively in a challenging comparison piece based on three Janni Hawker stories. Their standards would benefit from more opportunities to write more assignments of this nature. Middle attaining pupils read fluently, with expression and - with the aid of their teacher - identified tension in Act 3 Scene 1 of 'Romeo and Juliet'. Their writing skills are typified by good organisation and, in the main, accuracy. A few in this range do not consistently reach Level 5 because of inconsistent accuracy. Lower attainers are below and occasionally well below average. They are starting to develop more confidence in their writing but, as in Year 6, have insufficient opportunities to develop structured, extended

pieces. This applies particularly to explanatory writing in which their expression often lacks clarity.

73. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language progress at the same rate as other pupils. The subject does not provide enough opportunities to develop numeracy - or information and communication technology, often constrained by lack of access to resources.
74. The overall quality of teaching is good. It is very good in Year 6 where most teachers form a well-established, specialist team. Lessons are well planned with clear objectives. Tasks are well matched to the pupils' needs. Behaviour is good and most pupils respond very positively to the school's recently introduced behaviour policy. Teachers provided good preparation for the forthcoming national tests during the inspection; pupils' readiness for these tests would benefit from earlier, more explicit preparation. A consistent strength in Year 6 was the high expectations of the teachers. The volume and quality of completed work of the highest set would do credit to pupils several years older. In Years 7 and 8 teaching is good and often very good when lessons are taken by teachers with good specialist knowledge. Lower sets in Year 7 make good progress through well-planned and busy lessons which make expectations clear and take account of the relatively short attention span of some pupils. Progress is satisfactory in other lessons because, although the teachers have good general teaching and pupil management skills, they do not have an in-depth knowledge of language and literature, assessment requirements and the skills the pupils need to improve for later years. Marking by specialist teachers is very good but other marking does not provide sufficiently precise feedback of strengths and weaknesses. In most lessons planning and preparation are good, resulting in a busy menu of activities well matched to the pupils' attainments and to the learning objectives. The non-specialist teachers are well supported by schemes of work, but opportunities to develop a coherent approach are limited because members of the team have other responsibilities.
75. Overall leadership and management are good. In Year 6 a dynamic co-ordinator provides very clear direction and expectation to her team. In Years 7 and 8 the well-organised provision is ensuring good continuity despite staffing changes. Monitoring and evaluation leading to well-targeted development and training are well established. Teaching methods in Year 6 clearly reflect features of the National Literacy Strategy. In Years 7 and 8 these methods are still emerging. In each year the final stage of lessons does not provide the pupils with enough opportunity to identify what they know, understand and can do better as a result of the lesson. The curriculum in Years 7 and 8 is in the process of revision and requires more emphasis on non-fiction texts and writing. The provision for literature is strong with the teachers' enthusiasm setting a fine and effective example.
76. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory but the teachers still do not use assessment methods and information effectively enough to raise standards. Progress towards National Curriculum targets is not monitored rigorously enough; pupils are not sufficiently directed towards fulfilling the criteria for their appropriate level; neither do they know securely how well they are doing in relation to national criteria.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**

### Strengths

- Teachers and pupils take a pride in their work.
- The pupils' behaviour in lessons and their attitude to mathematics are good.
- The pupils make good progress in mathematics, particularly in Years 7 and 8.

### Areas for improvement

- Improve the management of the subject area.
- Key Stage 2 results.
- Make better use of assessment to inform teaching, learning and curriculum planning.
- Provide a scheme of work to support the new setting arrangements.

- Identification of areas of the curriculum where ICT and literacy can enhance the teaching of mathematics.
- Provide a subject handbook to give support to non-specialist as well as specialist teachers and implement a numeracy policy across the curriculum.

77. For the last three years, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 6 have been well below the national average and those obtained by pupils at similar schools. In each of the last three years, the pupils' performance in mathematics was lower than that attained in English and science. In 2001, one third of the year group scored their lowest grade in mathematics. In general, there is no significant difference between the attainment of boys and girls.
78. The work seen during the inspection shows that pupils achieve well, making good progress. They sit the National Curriculum tests in Year 6 having had less than 30 weeks to adapt to new styles of teaching with new teachers. The analysis of the results from the QCA Optional Mathematics papers taken by the current Year 8 when they were in Year 7 provides confirmation of their good achievement. One third of those pupils made a gain of 2 levels in the one year from their Year 6 National Curriculum tests. Almost four-fifths of the 100 pupils gained at least one level in that time.
79. The work seen of Year 6 pupils is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils meet the high expectations of presentation that are evident from the outset. The department rightly feel that this is as important as cramming pupils for the imminent tests; this is because conciseness and consistency of presentation affect pupils' mathematical accuracy and precision. By the end of Year 6, the higher attaining pupils accurately identify the symmetries of regular polygons and successfully investigate the relationship between the number of sides and the number of lines of symmetry. They also identify the order of rotational symmetry of these polygons. Middle attaining pupils recognise the nets that can form a cube and many accurately calculate the perimeters of composite shapes. Lower attaining pupils can write, for example, 639 in words, without too many spelling mistakes and, with the aid of model clocks, rapidly calculate what time the 1.50 pm bus will arrive if it is 25 minutes late.
80. Whilst there are no special arrangements for talented or gifted pupils, the higher attaining pupils do benefit from occasional additional challenges within the top sets. For example, in Year 7 the higher attaining pupils construct and enter formulae into computer spreadsheets to find the maximum area of a rectangle when given a specific perimeter.
81. The work of the higher attaining pupils in Year 8 is above national expectations. They confidently use Pythagoras' Theorem and their calculators to find the third side of a right-angled triangle. They have good algebraic skills, enabling them to formulate equations from sentences to calculate the missing variables. Middle attaining pupils experience some difficulties when attempting questions from an Optional Mathematics paper. Many of them forget the good practice, seen in their exercise books, of showing all their working and instead try to put just the answer in the space provided. Lower attaining Year 8 pupils, as part of an algebraic module, calculate the total number of apples when they have eight trays, each containing four apples, and many can then write a formula that enables them to produce a sequence of numbers.
82. The pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They listen carefully and often are quick to point out, in a friendly manner, the mistakes made by their peers. They take a pride in their work and this enables teachers to identify any mistakes in their working very easily.
83. The new timetable has a positive effect upon setting arrangements. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They benefit by being in smaller classes, which enables them to have additional individual help. Those in Year 6 are particularly fortunate to be taught by the SENCO, who knows her pupils very well and plans her lessons thoroughly to meet their needs. A learning support assistant who anticipates any misdemeanours with a look, a smile or a quiet word supports her very well and pupils usually respond well to this approach. This arrangement gives them a good start. Booster classes have also been provided to support Year 6 pupils who are on the Level 4 borderline. While it is too early to

assess the benefits/disadvantages of the arrangement, which is in place for just two lessons out of five per week, it is good that the department is targeting the learning of these pupils.

84. The teaching and learning of mathematics are satisfactory. There are examples of very good and excellent teaching as well as some with shortcomings. Teachers have a variety of approaches, which usually result in well-ordered, disciplined classes where learning takes place without distraction or time wasting. In the best lessons, teachers have very good relationships with their classes and the pupils learn well as a result of the challenges provided. Since September, all the teachers have benefited from the support provided by the LEA advisory teacher. For example, a non-specialist has attended three courses that have given her a wealth of ideas. Also, group planning sessions have produced a curriculum structure that meets all the new requirements and has provided teachers with a new sense of direction. All lessons benefit from the three-phase structure and are usually planned and managed effectively, ensuring pupils are always engaged in a learning activity. Pupils are involved from the very beginning as the objectives (WILF, WALT - what are we learning today!, TIBS) are written on the board and lessons always begin with a relevant starter. For example, one pupil is chosen to start the session by reading an equation from the card she has been given and the next person responds with the correct answer and then reads their question. This is repeated until all have read and answered a question. This develops their reading, listening and numerical skills as well as setting the tone for the rest of the lesson.
85. Teachers use question and answer techniques effectively to establish levels of understanding and to make pupils think. In some lessons, teachers' own enthusiasm for teaching becomes apparent as they set challenges for pupils by saying 'try this' or 'what happens if', although this is not always the case. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows when some teachers talk for too long without involving the pupils, and opportunities are sometimes missed to develop pupils' literacy skills. In the best lessons, planning is very good, anticipating pupils' needs and ensuring that they get the most out of the lesson. Whilst the whiteboards are usually used effectively to develop worked examples and thus provide pupils with additional points of reference, there are occasions where an overhead projector would be more practical and more efficient.
86. However, some classes have had to adapt to a variety of teaching styles due to the long-term absence of two teachers of mathematics. The quality of the stand-ins is variable and, whilst they do their best, some are not fully acquainted with the current styles of mathematics teaching. It is too early to say what the long-term effect will be on these pupils' mathematical development.
87. The use of assessment remains underdeveloped. In lessons, teachers are constantly on the move whilst pupils are working, enabling them to support pupils or spot common misunderstandings and adapt their lessons accordingly. The half-termly testing of pupils, using questions downloaded from a recognised web site, is an effective way of providing pupils with an opportunity to check how much they have remembered and usually to give them a National Curriculum level. Whilst these marks are used to inform setting arrangements, they are not used to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and pupils' learning. The marking of books is often superficial. It consists of ticks and some comments, usually praising the quality of work together with the reward of house points. Care should be taken that short comments are not misunderstood but give a clear indication of how a pupil could improve. Pupils are not always aware of the level at which they are working or the progress they are making in knowledge and understanding.
88. Management of mathematics is unsatisfactory. The issue raised at the time of the last inspection - 'assessment information is not fully used for monitoring progress or for planning future work' - still remains to be addressed. Whilst some data is collected, it is not analysed effectively to see what actions need to be taken. Neither is it used to inform teachers and pupils of areas to be improved or of targets to be reached. As a result, pupils' results in mathematics are not as high as those in English or science.
89. The departmental handbook is inadequate. It gives insufficient support for the non-specialist or guidance to the specialist to ensure a steady rate of progress throughout the pupils' three

years. For example, there is insufficient advice on planning for individual sets, teaching strategies, how pupils are to use and apply their mathematics or how to incorporate literacy and ICT into lessons. Similarly, within the handbook there is insufficient advice to ensure consistency in marking and how to record assessments, half-termly tests and the pupils recording of their own progress. There is no whole-school numeracy policy in place. This means that numeracy skills are not consistently reinforced in other areas of the curriculum. While instances of good numeracy support were seen in some lessons, for example in science, where pupils plot graphs and use skills of estimation and calculation, the lack of a cross-curricular policy means that opportunities are lost to consolidate pupils' mathematics skills.

90. Other issues arising from the previous inspection have been, or are in the process of being, addressed. Algebraic skills are now good. The higher attaining pupils are occasionally being provided with additional challenges within the top sets when the appropriate occasion arises but there is limited planning for this. No strategy is in place for the use of ICT to enhance the teaching of mathematics, although the elements of ICT contained in the statutory mathematics curriculum are taught within the ICT lessons. Classroom management, which was already good in the subject, is improving further as a result of the whole school focus on behaviour management.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 achieve well because teachers have high expectations of them and provide stimulating and challenging activities.
- Pupils' investigative skills are well developed as a result of carefully focused questioning and guidance provided by their teachers.
- Most pupils enjoy science, work productively in shared tasks and are eager to contribute their ideas in class and group discussions.

### Areas for improvement

- Some higher attaining pupils in Year 6 underachieve where they are insufficiently challenged in lessons.
- The use of information and communication technology, especially sensors to capture data from experiments, is underdeveloped.
- Assessment information is not used sufficiently to guide curricular planning or to monitor pupils' progress closely enough.

91. In 2001, standards in the Year 6 national tests were below both the national average and the average for similar schools. However, information provided by the LEA indicates that these Year 6 pupils achieved standards close to those expected when taking account of their past performance. Standards have varied over the past three years from above average to below but, taken together, standards have been broadly in line with the national average. There are no significant patterns of difference in the achievements of boys and girls. Over the past four years, standards in science have been at least in line with and often above the standards achieved in English and mathematics at the school.
92. The standards of pupils in Year 6 seen during the inspection are close to the national average and the majority of pupils' achievements are satisfactory. However, some higher attaining pupils underachieve where they are not challenged sufficiently in lessons. In Year 8, standards are above average and especially in pupils' investigation skills. While most pupils' achievements in Year 8 are at least satisfactory, the higher attainers are achieving well because the teacher's expectations of these pupils is high and, as a result, they are provided with stimulating and challenging tasks. Pupils with special educational needs generally make satisfactory progress. The support provided by learning assistants is effective and, where it is provided, these pupils' progress is good.

93. Pupils in Year 6 can identify and name the parts of a flowering plant such as the stigma, filament and stamen and many are able to accurately describe their function in the process of pollination. Most are acquiring a sound understanding of the main components of foods. The great majority of pupils are secure in their ability to plan and carry out fair tests and to draw conclusions from the evidence. By Year 7, pupils know that many foods contain weak acids and that some household cleaners contain alkalis. They know about the pH scale and how to test for acidity using indicators. Many pupils in Year 8 can describe the frequency and pitch of sounds in terms of their wave properties, explain the workings of parts of the ear and the higher attainers are secure in their understanding of how sound is transmitted or absorbed through different materials.
94. Pupils' acquire higher skills of scientific enquiry well as they move through the school because teachers have a good understanding of the key decisions pupils need to make throughout an investigation and guide them well through the use of carefully chosen questions. A Year 8 higher attaining class designed an experiment to find out which materials absorb sound most effectively. Their teacher encouraged them to draw on their knowledge of sound vibration to speculate about which material would be best. Pupils made their own decisions about key features of their investigation, guided by their teacher's challenging and carefully focused questions. Pupils carried out carefully controlled experiments to measure the rate of dampening of a vibrating ruler on different materials and considered the reliability and accuracy of their measures by repeating them, and all obtained good results.
95. Pupils apply their numeracy skills appropriately in science; for example, to measure and estimate, calculate and to plot graphs and interpret information. Pupils acquire new scientific vocabulary well because they are encouraged to use it in responses to questions and teachers explain new terms very clearly. However, there are too few opportunities provided for pupils to explain their reasoning and show their understanding through more extended writing or verbal presentation in classes. In particular, too many worksheets contain sentence completion or short answer questions that constrain pupils' responses.
96. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently to raise standards in science. This was a weakness identified in the last inspection. Some improvements have been made; pupils now use spreadsheets to process and display data, they model processes such as inter-relations between organisms in habitats. Nevertheless, too many opportunities are missed to use data-loggers to capture and process data; for example, when investigating some effects of sound.
97. Most pupils enjoy science. They are curious to find out more, freely offer their ideas when asked, and enjoy practical tasks. The great majority behave well, work productively and co-operatively on shared tasks and sustain their concentration. This is because relationships throughout are good and teachers know their pupils well. While most pupils work hard, the higher attaining pupils in Year 6 are sometimes not challenged sufficiently where teachers do not use their knowledge and assessments of individuals to adapt the level of demand of questions and tasks to their levels of attainment.
98. Teaching and learning overall are good. In Year 6 they are mainly satisfactory, while in Years 7 and 8 there are some good features, especially the teaching and learning of higher attaining sets in Year 8. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching. Almost all lessons are guided by clear objectives that are shared with pupils, although teachers sometimes do not make best use of them by finishing lessons with an effective plenary that summarises what has been learned. Pupils recall and consolidate what they have learned well because teachers use questioning effectively in the opening sequence of lessons. In the better lessons, pupils are encouraged to speculate, offer solutions to practical problems and explain results because teachers' questioning is more challenging and they engage all pupils fully in discussions. This is particularly noticeable with higher attaining pupils in Year 8. Explanations of key scientific ideas are clear as a result of teachers' good subject knowledge; for example, when explaining some effects of sound and linking them to their wave properties. Pupils are managed well and relationships are good so that most lessons are lively and positive learning experiences. Homework often extends learning from the lesson well. In the weaker and unsatisfactory lessons, objectives are too vague and assessment information is not used effectively to guide

the teacher's planning. Consequently, activities and pupils' questions are not sufficiently adapted to the range of their attainment levels, especially in Year 6 where the range of attainment is wide. Marking varies in quality. The best, in Year 8, includes some feedback on ways of improving and an indication of the standard reached, but much in other years is cursory with little comment or guidance provided.

99. Pupils are regularly assessed in their knowledge, understanding and skills and central records kept by the science subject adviser. While these tests are of good quality, the results are not used sufficiently to evaluate individual pupils' progress in relation to any expectations because there are no benchmark targets set for pupils on the basis of their past performance. It is less likely that underachievement is identified at an early stage with these arrangements. In Year 7, setting arrangements are based mainly on pupils' achievements in English, with insufficient account taken of their performance in science. Some boys may be disadvantaged by this arrangement; for example, the top set currently has almost three times as many girls as boys.
100. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory; pupils' enquiry skills have improved and the progress of lower attaining pupils is better. One laboratory has been refurbished although it is still cramped, constraining some practical work in larger classes. However, the school's use of information and communication technology to raise standards in science remains a weakness.
101. The science subject adviser is well qualified, enthusiastic and hard working. Curriculum plans, based on a national scheme, have been matched to school resources, but there is insufficient guidance provided on adapting lessons for pupils of different levels of attainment. Some priorities for improvement in the subject are not well focused because the impact of the curriculum on pupils' achievements, especially the teaching, is not yet sufficiently monitored and reviewed to sharply focus on appropriate key areas for development. Resources are mainly adequate but there are a few gaps in equipment resources that constrain teaching methods, for example in teaching about sound waves. Some textbooks are rather old and do not match the current curriculum well. The subject adviser is under additional pressure because technician support for one hour a day is inadequate for the number of science classes taught.

## ART AND DESIGN

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The high standard of work on display encourages pupils to try hard.
- The good quality of teachers' marking that clearly tells pupils how to improve.
- Homework effectively supports work done in class.
- The regular opportunities for extra curricular work have a positive impact on standards.

### Areas for improvement

- The limited opportunities for students to reflect cultural diversity through their work.
- The limited opportunities for students to use information and communication technology.

102. Judgements are based on lessons seen during the inspection, scrutiny of planning and displays and discussions with the subject leader, staff and pupils. These indicate that the majority of pupils reach the expected standard at the end of Year 6 and when they leave in Year 8. Pupils achieve satisfactorily. The school has maintained the standards identified in the previous inspection report. The department promotes an inclusive atmosphere; there is no difference between the standards produced by boys and girls and pupils with special educational needs also achieve satisfactorily. Whilst some display shows that higher attaining pupils are capable of very high standards, this is not always realised in lessons. This is improving as the new subject leader identifies the most capable pupils and sets them more ambitious challenges.

103. The quality of work seen in lessons was satisfactory overall. High quality displays throughout the school show that pupils successfully develop a range of skills using different media. Pupils in Year 6 have produced an exciting large-scale underwater scene with imaginatively crafted sea creatures. In doing this, pupils made good use of vibrant colours and various decorative effects to produce a dramatic and eye-catching wall display. By the time they leave the school, pupils in Year 8 show good attention to detail in observational drawing. Displayed work in the art room showed that pupils understand how to use tonal variation to create depth in their pictures. In one lesson, Year 8 pupils created imaginative clay tiles. In doing this, they effectively focused on different textures to produce unusual effects. However, whilst displayed work is of a high quality, and whilst a lot of the work done in lesson time meets expectations, some pupils do not always do their best work in class because they chatter too much. Whilst the new teacher has begun to curb this, and pupils agree that their behaviour is improving, there is still too much low-level disturbance in some lessons that prevents pupils becoming fully absorbed in what they are doing. Because their minds are not fully on the job, some pupils do not give of their best. Pupils who attend the after school art club produce very high quality work. This includes an excellent large-scale relief flower inspired by the work of Van Gogh. The work is of very high quality because these pupils are fully committed to what they are doing. Pupils' competence in using computerised art applications is low as there is not enough hardware or software available.
104. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and is improving rapidly as the newly appointed art teacher gets to know pupils and understands what fires their imaginations. As a result, pupils' learning is also improving. Management of behaviour is improving; some pupils in Year 8 said that they appreciated the way that the teacher trusted them to work in different parts of the school. By allowing them this responsibility, the teacher ensures a greater level of independent learning that leads to greater maturity. In one lesson, for instance, pupils went on to the school field to look for examples of textures that could be used in clay work. Pupils behaved themselves and enjoyed the session. The teacher successfully encourages pupils to develop a strong technique so that they understand how to improve their work. The teacher's marking of work is very helpful. As well as grading work, she often gives useful hints and tips on how they can improve. They take this to heart and later work shows a subsequent improvement. However, in trying to get the best out of the pupils, the teacher is occasionally over-effusive in her praise. When this happens, pupils are too easily satisfied with work of a limited quality. Also, the teacher sometimes allows a little too much gossip because she doesn't want to be 'down' on pupils. She is more effective when she asserts herself and makes the pupils work quietly.
105. The recently appointed subject leader manages the subject satisfactorily and is becoming more ambitious and enterprising as she settles into the role. She works with enthusiasm, organises resources well and plans interesting lessons. At the time of the last inspection, pupils were not encouraged to think critically about their work and some teaching lacked inspiration. There has been some improvement, although recent staff changes have caused discontinuity that has affected learning. The accommodation has been improved by some new lighting, although the space for art lessons is still cramped and limits the scale of the artwork produced.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Achievement at the end of Year 6 is good and pupils benefit well from the specialist teaching provided.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the subject.
- There are good relationships between teachers and pupils, creating a good learning ethos.
- There is good teaching within the subject.

#### Areas for improvement

- The use of the design process in Years 7 and 8 in order for pupils to show how their design work has been developed.
- Improve the ICT resources in order to provide opportunities for pupils to experience work in computer aided design and computer aided manufacture.
- Increase the curriculum time for pupils in Year 7 and 8 in order to bring it closer to the time recommended for technology subjects nationally.
- Improve the assessment of pupils' work and use the information to plan more specific work to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented.

106. Standards in design and technology in Year 6 are in line with national expectations. Year 6 pupils benefit well from the specialist teaching and, as a result, pupils' achievement is good. Standards in Years 7 and 8 are in line with national expectations and pupils achieve satisfactorily over the two years. The limited time for the subject in Years 7 and 8 restricts the quality and range of design work covered and prevents pupils' standards rising above national expectations.
107. In work seen during the inspection, pupils in Year 6 reached average standards. Compared to the just below average standards they reached prior to joining the school, their achievement is good by the time they reach the end of Year 6. In specialist lessons, they successfully work in a variety of materials and develop a good range of basic skills in making products in food, resistant materials, textiles and electronics. They gain a good level of knowledge to underpin and increase their understanding of the products they design. Pupils show satisfactory numeracy skills in measuring materials and weighing ingredients when making their products. In food technology, they produce product profiles after testing their recipes and succinctly present the information in the form of a star chart. They use a good range of vocabulary when they explain the work they are doing. Pupils use a good range of hand and machine tools safely when making products in all material areas. However, their use of ICT to raise the quality and presentation of their work is limited.
108. Standards of work in Years 7 and 8 are in line with national expectations and pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve satisfactorily. They successfully further their experience of using a range of materials in projects involving work on mechanisms, electronics, food and textiles. Pupils use a range of hand and machine tools safely to make a variety of products, such as mechanical toys, when they use a variety of linkages and mechanisms. They also gain an understanding of simple electronic circuits when designing a fuse tester and a burglar alarm. Pupils write specifications to guide the development of their designs and produce a range of initial ideas before developing a final product. There is less emphasis, however, on using the full design process and work does not sufficiently reflect market research for pupils to gain enough knowledge of the influence of people and their needs when designing. They are not required to prepare materials lists or apply costing methods.
109. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. In lessons where teaching was good, teachers provided a firm structure with clear objectives to guide and support pupils in their work. In these lessons, pupils learnt well because they were clear about what was expected and focused well on the tasks. Teachers plan their lessons well and create good learning conditions by promoting good relationships within the classroom. They provide guidance that enables lower attaining pupils to structure their writing; this is having a positive effect on the development of the pupils' literacy skills. This is developed further when pupils are required to write in a variety of styles such as making notes, giving instructions on how to make their products and when they evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the products they make. Teachers ensure that pupils understand the processes they use fully. This was seen in a Year 8 resistant materials lesson where pupils were making a burglar alarm. The teacher demonstrated the process of vacuum forming the casing for the alarm. He reinforced the knowledge by providing a set of cards with a different instruction on each, which the pupils had to arrange in order. This helped them to remember the order of the process covered during the demonstration.

110. The assessment of pupils' achievement in design and technology, however, is underdeveloped and teachers do not yet use pupils' National Curriculum levels effectively enough to raise achievement in the subject. This results in higher attaining pupils being relatively unchallenged by some of the tasks, which are not always well suited to their needs. Lower attaining pupils, and those with special educational needs, are effectively supported on a one-to-one basis and they make satisfactory in lessons, although there is also insufficient planning to meet their specific individual needs. Teachers use a satisfactory range of strategies to enable pupils to develop the technical vocabulary associated with the subject. They give additional support by displaying words on the wall and providing a range of words to support pupils in their work. There is, however, a need to use ICT more effectively to raise the overall presentation and achievement of all pupils in design and technology. As a result of limited resources, pupils do not gain sufficient experience in computer aided design and computer control. In the lessons seen during the inspection, teachers had a positive approach and as a result all pupils were included well in all the learning activities.
111. The management of the department is satisfactory and the department benefits from a strong team approach. The monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory and there is a good emphasis in the department on raising standards. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. Although the school has ordered resources to increase provision of ICT, computer aided design and computer aided manufacturing projects are not yet in use. Schemes of work are of good quality but contain insufficient information for teachers to provide work matched to pupils' needs, particularly those who are gifted and talented.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The main geographical skills are well covered in lessons.
- The pupils' written work is well presented with attention to accuracy.
- Folders on topics are mostly well done, showing good geographical knowledge and the pupils' pride in their work.

### Areas for improvement

- Some teaching is unsatisfactory.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT.
- The marking of the pupils' work does not give them sufficient guidance on what they should do to improve.

112. Geography was not being taught in Year 6 classes during the inspection. Judgements on Year 6 are based on samples of the pupils' written work. The standards reached by pupils in both Year 6 and Years 7 and 8 match the national average overall and pupils' achievements are satisfactory. The pupils learn the full range of geographical skills from teachers who know their subject well. There is satisfactory coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. The pupils for the most part behave satisfactorily and show interest in the subject, collaborating in groups or working individually. When a few pupils misbehave, both girls and boys, teachers handle them well.
113. The pupils' map work and diagrams are mostly done with care. Year 6 pupils in particular present their work very well. Key words are used to increase the pupils' knowledge of geographical terms. Some older pupils in all years are reaching standards above the expected level for their ages. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Standards of literacy are satisfactory overall, although some pupils have significant weaknesses in spelling and punctuation. Most pupils can construct sentences accurately. Oral work is mostly good. Although there are occasions when the pupils write in composition form, there are not enough opportunities for extended writing. Number skills are used satisfactorily as required by the subject.
114. Whilst the quality of teaching seen in the inspection was unsatisfactory, a detailed scrutiny of pupils' work clearly shows that satisfactory and in some instances stronger teaching has

regularly been available. The demands placed upon pupils enable them to progress satisfactorily and attain in line with national expectations. However, in some of the lessons seen the teachers lacked control of the pupils because they did not always set sufficiently demanding work. For instance, in a Year 8 lesson on the environment, following a day's visit to a centre, the knowledge of the pupils after an hour's further tuition was at a very low level. Some written tasks are well within the capacity of most pupils and do not take them far enough in a one-hour lesson. However, despite these observations, the pupils' books show adequate recording of their knowledge to enable them to reach average standards overall.

115. The standards now observed are similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection. Insufficient progress has, however, been made in tackling the key issues at that time. Increased use of ICT has not been realised, but the new headteacher has included proposals to deal with this in the school improvement plan when the new facilities are commissioned in autumn 2002. The marking of the pupils' work is mostly too brief and does not provide enough advice on how the pupils can raise their standards. Assessments at the end of topics are not, for the most part, related to National Curriculum skills and levels. Only one piece of work in each of Years 7 and 8 is subject to moderation, although there are plans for the middle schools in the town to begin moderation to establish common standards in assessing the pupils' work. The adviser for the subject does not have sufficient opportunities to see and assess work by pupils whom she does not herself teach.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good with well-planned lessons and a wide range of learning methods.
- The pupils are well behaved and interested in their work.
- Historical skills are being developed very well.
- The teachers take account of the pupils' different starting points and ensure that lessons meet their varied needs.

### Areas for improvement

- ICT is not used enough.
- Marking does not identify weaknesses and advise pupils on how to improve.
- The adviser does not have sufficient opportunities to monitor the subject throughout the school.

116. The overall standard of the pupils' work in is average and pupils' achievements, including those of higher attainers and those with special educational needs, are satisfactory. The pupils' historical knowledge and skills are developed well and there is little difference between the achievements of boys and girls. Pupils across years are able to proceed from known facts to speculation about what might happen next. In doing this, pupils satisfactorily make the links between cause and effect. This was the case in a Year 7 lesson about the Peasants' Revolt, where the causal link with the Black Death was established from the evidence and pupils successfully completed a sequence of small tasks to build up the picture. The pupils contribute well to lessons, being keen to offer answers that are often thoughtful and, in the case of higher attaining pupils, based on deduction from the facts. Pupils use historical sources well and learn the techniques of investigation effectively.
117. Improvements in the pupils' standard of literacy are satisfactorily promoted by the use of word lists accompanied by the pupils' definitions; these are not always accurate, needing to be moderated by class discussion and agreement by the teacher before they are recorded and learned. The overall standard of writing in English is satisfactory, with higher attaining pupils in all years writing well. The pupils do have opportunities to write at length, but this is still regarded as a special piece of work, for example preparing mock newspapers on the Civil War – very well done, but not sufficiently routine.
118. The quality of teaching, which is good overall, is particularly effective in meeting the different needs of the pupils with a wide range of attainment in each class. The teachers use language effectively for this purpose and also prepare different material on the same topic. In a good

Year 6 lesson on Greece, for example, where the pupils were learning about the differences and similarities between Minoan myth and archaeological evidence, the common written exercise was prepared in three versions. These approaches enable pupils of all abilities, both girls and boys, to make satisfactory and often good progress. The pupils' recall of history learned recently is routinely used to reinforce their understanding of the current study and to make links between events. Their memory of history learned a few months previously is, however, sometimes shaky, indicating a need for occasional revision. The pupils' effective learning is encouraged by the statement of objectives at the beginning of each lesson and a quick discussion at the end about whether these have been achieved. This keeps their attention on the main tasks. A wide range of learning methods is used, sometimes in quick succession, to maintain the pupils' interest and ensure a brisk pace of learning. The marking of pupils' work does not often enough identify weaknesses and indicate what needs to be done to remedy them. Incomplete work is identified by teachers, but is not always then finished by pupils and teachers do not always notice the lack of response.

119. The standards now observed are similar to those found at the time of the previous inspection. The response to the key issues of the previous report has been inadequate. The leadership of the subject is in new hands. The existing subject documents and schemes of work, already of good quality, are being revised to take account of recent advice. In particular, it is intended to identify lessons where ICT may be used to enhance the study of history. This is a belated response to a weakness identified in the previous inspection report. The adviser for history does not have sufficient opportunities to observe other classes in order to ensure that steps to raise standards are being implemented. These are largely matters for the school as a whole and it is already aware of the need to take action on them.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

### Strengths

- There is good coverage of a range of basic ICT skills.
- There are good relationships between staff and pupils, which creates good learning conditions.
- Staff in the department work well together.
- The school has made funding available to provide a specialist ICT room which is now being planned.

### Areas for improvement

- Increase computer resources to enhance the use of ICT in all subjects across the curriculum.
- Extend the opportunities for all pupils to experience work in computer aided manufacture and control technology.
- Develop assessment procedures and use the data appropriately to raise standards as well as reporting pupil progress to parents.
- Use the assessment data to plan work for pupils' individual needs, particularly for those who are gifted and talented and those with special educational needs.

120. Standards are below average for pupils in Year 6 and also below the standard expected of pupils nationally in Years 7 and 8. The low standards and unsatisfactory achievements result from the limited skills pupils develop both in specialist ICT lessons in Years 7 and 8 and in their use of computers to support their work in other subjects across the curriculum. The number of computers to provide opportunities for pupils to gain sufficient experience in ICT is below the national average. Although they have not yet been installed, the school has purchased more computers. However, the numbers remain below the average. The school has recognised the need to increase the provision and plans to extend the computer resources with the addition of a new computer room, which is now in progress.

121. In the work seen during the inspection, standards in Year 6 are below average. However, the school does provide a specialist ICT lesson each week and pupils are introduced to a range of ICT skills. These include: word processing, desktop publishing, use of spreadsheets and specialist software to produce geometric shapes. When questioned, pupils are able to explain

the work they do and use an appropriate range of vocabulary to describe the processes and software they use. The majority of pupils produce work showing a satisfactory range of language skills.

122. Achievement over time of pupils in Year 6 is unsatisfactory. Although there is coverage of some basic computer skills, pupils have insufficient opportunities to practice these skills in either specialist ICT lessons or in subjects across the curriculum. As a result, they lack confidence in applying these skills independently. Pupils respond well and are keen to learn. This was seen in a Year 6 lesson where they were learning to use specialist software to draw mathematical shapes. After being shown the basic functions of the software, pupils were enthusiastic to use the computers and followed the procedure provided by the teacher to produce complex patterns. They were not, however, required or able to produce their own individual designs.
123. In Years 7 and 8 pupils increase their skills by using spreadsheets, databases, desktop publishing, the Internet and specialist software to present information to an audience. In the main, pupils master these skills at a basic level and they are not sufficiently challenged to apply these skills to the work they do in other subjects across the curriculum. They cover a good range of knowledge through the use of worksheets and taught theory lessons. They save their practical work on computer but they do not have access to individual pupil folders.
124. Achievement of pupils from Years 7 to 8 is unsatisfactory. Pupils make insufficient gains in the ICT skills to reach average standards. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to build on the ICT skills they have acquired at this stage. At all levels of attainment, pupils, including those with special needs, achieve competence in the basic research skills using ICT but lack sufficient practice to gain the confidence to work independently and to achieve higher levels. When questioned, pupils were unable to explain what a spreadsheet or database was or how they have used them.
125. The quality of teaching and learning was unsatisfactory in the lessons seen during the inspection. Some satisfactory lessons were seen. Teaching is unsatisfactory, however, when comparing the achievement of pupils over a longer period. In lessons during the inspection, teachers prepared well and were well organised. In lessons where the learning was satisfactory, teachers set clear targets that helped pupils to focus on the main requirements of the task. Structured teaching led to structured learning. Lessons often emphasised the theoretical aspects of the tasks and less time was spent using the computers. This was seen in a lesson where pupils were designing questionnaires as part of a survey on leisure in the town. The larger part of a one-hour lesson was spent learning how to construct questions and writing examples of questions in a rough book. The last 10 minutes of the lesson was spent word processing the questions. Pupils found this method less interesting and found difficulty concentrating. Several pupils achieved very little and behaviour deteriorated. A similar lesson with another class was more effective when the teacher provided some examples of questions and questionnaires. Pupils were then allowed to word process their sample questions directly into the computer and as a result, the pace of pupils' learning was increased considerably. Pupils showed better levels of interest and concentration. Teachers encourage the correct use of technical vocabulary and pupils use language related to the subject to a satisfactory level, when explaining their work. This is particularly important for pupils with below average reading skills, as this helps them to become fluent users of a wide and relevant vocabulary. Pupils are given the opportunity to read from a range of texts. Some are asked to read aloud to the whole class. Pupils develop satisfactory skills in the use of numeracy mainly when using spreadsheets. They use the 'auto sum' function to add data, but are less confident with the use of formulae. The majority of pupils do not have a folder to keep all their work together. As a result, marking is inconsistent and pupils receive little feedback from teachers to understand what they have done well and how they can improve. Teachers show good subject knowledge and generally use questions effectively to assess pupils' understanding. Higher attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, however, are not always well challenged because teaching resources do not match their needs. Teachers have good relationships with the pupils and try to include all pupils in the learning activities.

126. The use of computers in other subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Some good examples of using ICT to support learning were seen in mathematics where pupils designed a spreadsheet to work out the area of a rectangle when given a set perimeter. During the lesson, pupils were taught to apply the correct formulae to the task. In English pupils use word processing to draft and re-draft their work. Some use desktop publishing. The use of ICT to enhance the work of all pupils in English, however, cannot be fully assured. In design and technology, some pupils used the Internet and several presented their work using desktop publishing. Some pupils use the computer aided sewing machine, but this is a limited resource and not used in all year groups. The opportunities for pupils to use computer aided manufacture and control technology are very limited due to lack of specialist resources within design and technology. There are also missed opportunities to use spreadsheets to process and present the information pupils gather when they do surveys about the products they design. In science, pupils used the Internet to research information and some pupils used spreadsheets for modelling when they did work on habitats. There are insufficient opportunities, however, for pupils to capture data using sensors and to use this information directly on the computer to process the data and present their findings. In history, pupils prepared a presentation using specialist presentation software. The use of ICT in other subjects across the curriculum remains underdeveloped and the use of ICT to support learning cannot be assured.
127. Leadership and management of the subject are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient planning to ensure pupils develop a good level of competence. Although schemes of work have recently been updated, attainment remains below the national average. There is only one computer room and its position and suitability for whole class teaching is limited. Although it is used for specialist ICT lessons, tasks that require pupils to write are taught in a normal classroom. In specialist ICT lessons some pupils share computers and this slows down their progress, and there is limited use of the ICT area by other subjects. Pupils are often unsettled and valuable time is spent transferring from a classroom to the ICT room. Overall planning does not sufficiently reflect the National Curriculum requirements in all subjects across the curriculum and assessment is not securely enough linked to this. The assessment of pupils' work in ICT is underdeveloped and progress of pupils in ICT is not yet reported to parents. The department has very limited network technician support. Progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Teaching, learning and achievement are unsatisfactory. Computer resources remain below the national average.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Higher attaining pupils achieve well in listening, reading and speaking.
- There is some good teaching.
- Positive attitudes and generally good behaviour help pupils to learn.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in writing.
- Matching work to individual needs within teaching groups.
- Meeting requirements for personal reading, use of ICT and communicating with native speakers.

128. Pupils in Year 6 achieve satisfactorily in French, especially in listening and speaking. They participate keenly in lessons and reach nationally expected levels of attainment by the end of the year. Because all pupils do the same work, higher attaining pupils are held back. On the other hand, pupils with special educational needs achieve well, especially when they receive individual support. Pupils learn to give simple information about themselves, to tell the time in French, and to talk about the weather. Writing in French is restricted to copying, labelling, and short responses on worksheets.
129. Evidence from lessons seen in Years 7 and 8, and from work seen in exercise books and on display, shows that attainment overall is in line with national expectations. Pupils in the top set in each year achieve well in listening, speaking and reading. They are keen to volunteer

answers, showing a growing confidence in oral work, and in the accuracy of their pronunciation. They acquire a good breadth of vocabulary and begin to understand and apply grammatical rules. As a result they identify most details in what they hear and read in short extracts in French. Writing skills are comparatively poorly developed, as written work continues to be undemanding, and consists almost entirely of sentence work, with no opportunities for extended or creative writing. Average and lower attaining pupils cover the same topics at a less challenging level. They are less confident orally, but manage brief responses. Where they rely on written prompts, pronunciation is weak. They understand some details in what they read and hear, but need extra support and repetition. Too much of their written work involves single words or brief phrases, and spelling is often an obstacle to communication. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates, and work well when they receive individual support.

130. Attitudes to learning French are generally positive. Pupils say they like the subject and enjoy many of the activities. They usually behave well, co-operate sensibly in pair or group work, and sustain concentration well. This helps them to make progress in lessons. There are some examples of restless behaviour and shouting out, usually from boys, although these do not significantly affect the progress of the class. In some lessons, pupils find it difficult to concentrate for the full hour.
131. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, overall. There is good teaching in Year 6 and in top sets in Years 7 and 8. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers use French consistently to conduct lessons, providing a good model. However, there is no expectation that pupils will use French in routine classroom situations. The teaching of basic skills is unsatisfactory. Most pupils do not use ICT, and there is little contribution to numeracy. Given the nature of the subject, the contribution to literacy is disappointing. There is little correction of spelling, no reading scheme, and a lack of use of key words, although pupils take notes on grammatical rules. Planning for individual lessons is good. Teachers provide a good range of activities, which they conduct at a brisk pace, engaging pupils well so that they learn through enjoyment. They start each lesson with oral revision, and share lesson objectives, so that pupils have an awareness of their progress. A Year 7 class, learning to talk about breakfast, took part in a sequence of oral routines and games as they learned new vocabulary, then tested their understanding in listening and reading tasks. They made substantial progress in this lesson.
132. Teachers target questions effectively, so that all pupils are involved in learning, irrespective of gender, level of attainment or ethnic background. Good planning is evident in the way topics are taught to groups of differing abilities, but work is not matched to individual needs within groups. Consequently, opportunities are lost to extend the higher attainers in top sets, whilst lower attaining pupils are set some tasks that are too difficult for them. Teachers vary their methods quite well, encouraging pupils to participate in pair work and surveys, and using visual stimuli well to support learning, notably through flashcards and video. However, the routine of learning is not enhanced through the use of ICT or appropriate reading resources, nor is there sufficient attention to developing writing skills. Most work is marked promptly, although there is no evidence of a uniform system. Spelling errors are not corrected, and pupils do not benefit from having to do corrections. More positively, helpful comments provide good guidance to pupils on how to improve their work. Pupils cannot take textbooks home, which limits the scope for homework. Consequently, the use of homework to extend and consolidate work done in class is patchy. Again, the opportunity is lost to extend higher attainers through open-ended written tasks.
133. One part time teacher delivers most of the work of the subject. Her leadership and management are satisfactory. Procedures are in place for monitoring teaching and learning, through lesson observation and sampling exercise books. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, based on end of unit tests. However, the use of assessment data to improve planning of work is unsatisfactory. Schemes of work are being rewritten to accommodate a new course book, but neither here, nor in the subject development plan, is the weakness in writing addressed. Time allocated to French has recently been reduced, and is now below the level found nationally. This makes it difficult to fulfil statutory requirements, for instance in ICT, reading for personal interest, and communicating with native speakers. In most respects,

current provision is similar to that reported at the previous inspection. The provision of better textbooks, and better procedures for monitoring and assessment mean that there has been satisfactory improvement, with standards of attainment sustained at similar levels.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- The drive and enthusiasm of the recently appointed subject leader that results in a very good quality of teaching.
- The rapid rate of improvement in lessons that results from the very good teaching.
- The imaginative use of available resources.
- The recent focus on extra curricular activities that is having a positive impact on standards.

### Areas for improvement

- Overall standards following a period of decline.
- The limited opportunities for students to reflect cultural diversity through their work.

134. Judgements are based on observation of a cross section of lessons, attendance at extra curricular practices, and discussions with teachers and pupils. These show that standards are in line with expectations at the end of Year 6, but are below expectations at the end of Year 8. However, pupils achieve very well throughout the school. Following a period of decline, where enthusiasm for music dwindled, a new music teacher, who was appointed in January, has revitalised interest and is having a significant impact on the rate of progress in music lessons. It is the consistently very high quality of her teaching that is having this very positive effect. Whilst standards in Years 7 and 8 have not been maintained since the last inspection, this is quickly being put to rights and standards will be at least in line with national expectations by July if current rates of progress are maintained.
135. In Year 6, pupils sing enthusiastically with accurate pitch and clearly articulated words. They respond well to the story elements in songs, adding movements that suit the pace and style of the songs. However, pupils are still not quite ready to successfully attempt songs that have separate parts. Pupils use percussion instruments well when they compose and perform. In one very successful Year 6 lesson, pupils played rhythms on a variety of percussion instruments. Various combinations of rhythm and instrument spelt out different letters. By listening to the medley of played rhythms, and by identifying the particular instruments, those listening had to work out what the final sentence said. This was great fun, had the pupils totally absorbed and resulted in very accurate playing. Later in the same lesson, pupils listened quietly and gave thoughtful and reflective responses about two excerpts of music.
136. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are only now beginning to improve their standards following two years of relative decline. Pupils in Year 8 successfully integrate performing and composing. In one class, for instance, pupils firstly wrote a simple rhythmic pattern, which they then turned into melodies by assigning particular notes to the rhythm. These melodies were played on an electronic keyboard. Whilst most pupils completed this work accurately, there was little melodic ingenuity or spontaneity. The teacher knows this and is providing good opportunities for rapid improvement. By Year 8 pupils sing well, with boys as well as girls singing in an unselfconscious way. However, whilst there are regular opportunities for pupils to play instruments in assemblies, and this is having a positive impact on standards of instrumental music making, there are few opportunities for pupils to sing in assemblies and this somewhat limits further development of their singing. Whilst lack of equipment and software prevents pupils using computers to aid their composition work, they do make regular use of electronic keyboards, which provides suitable opportunities to extend their aptitude in the use of musical control technology. As a result of the teacher's clear planning, good knowledge of individuals and commitment to inclusive learning, all pupils, including those who have special educational needs, or who are higher attainers, are suitably challenged in lessons.
137. The quality of teaching is very good. The teacher has a lot of energy that stimulates positive learning. She manages the pupils very well even when, as happened in one Year 7 lesson, a

pupils was ill mannered and tried to disrupt learning. The teacher has the knack of getting all pupils actively involved in music making. In one initially hesitant Year 7 class, the teacher eventually had pupils clapping and dancing to African rhythms. By the end of this lesson, pupils had learnt a great deal and were eager for more of the same in the next lesson. She achieves this level of response by being fully committed to music making, whilst making learning fun. The teacher also takes pleasure in pupils growing sense of musical confidence and this communicates itself to pupils through her positive comments. Consequently, most pupils learn well in order to please the teacher, knowing she wants them to do well.

138. The management of the department is recovering from a period of decline. Positive leadership is having a tangible impact; standards are rising and the rate of progress is shooting up. The cramped accommodation reported in the last inspection has been improved through the provision of new practice rooms. This allows pupils to rehearse small group pieces without disturbance, and provides visiting instrumental teachers with space for individual and small group lessons. The subject leader is rebuilding the stock of resources, although a shortage of percussion instruments limits some practical activities and there are no suitable computers to promote 'high tech' compositions.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teaching is never less than satisfactory, leading to satisfactory learning in most summer sports.
- Standards in competitive team games are improving at district level.

### Areas for improvement

- The curriculum does not include net games.
- Indoor accommodation remains inadequate.
- The use of assessment information is underdeveloped; assessment criteria are not shared with pupils sufficiently clearly.

139. In 2001, the teachers' own assessments were that standards at the end of Year 6 and Year 8 were broadly average for all pupils in most areas of activity. The LEA advisor for physical education confirmed that standards in gymnastics had improved to an average level for girls but remained below average for boys. School teams are successful in district competitions for rugby and netball. Some individuals attend county athletic trials; a few boys represent the county in cricket.
140. At all levels, the standard of work seen during the inspection is average in most summer sports, and achievement is satisfactory overall. By the end of Year 6, standards in striking and fielding games, and in fitness lessons, are average. In cricket, most boys bowl under-arm satisfactorily; when they concentrate, the highest attainers bat well. However, because listening skills are poor, progress in the one hour lesson is not as good as it could be. In rounders, most girls sustain an appropriate level of activity, although their catching is erratic. Pupils of all ages demonstrate average levels of fitness and stamina when doing exercise circuits indoors; associated reading and writing skills are sound. By the end of Year 8, standards in lessons are average overall. In athletics, higher attaining pupils in Year 7 are good sprinters; lower attainers make a satisfactory start to throwing the discus. In rounders, girls' knowledge of the relevant rules is limited in Year 7; the most skilful ones strike the ball well by the end of Year 8. In the extra-curricular practices seen, performance is above average both in boys' cricket and girls' netball.
141. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all years. Teachers know their subject well; they plan progressive tasks which usually engage pupils and promote appropriate rates of learning. Accordingly, most pupils are co-operative and work sensibly. Firm discipline usually curbs disobedience promptly. In the most effective lessons, pace is good, instructions are clear and pupils receive sufficient explanations of relevant technical terms. Other lessons are less successful because teachers do not devote enough attention to warming up and cooling down activities. Whilst teaching is never less than satisfactory, its

impact on learning is constrained by: the school's arrangements for withdrawing groups of pupils for social skills work during physical education time; the minority of pupils who forget kit, including appropriate footwear; and inadequate indoor accommodation when wet weather prevails. In Year 6, the teacher's lively approach encourages boys and girls from combined classes to work together amicably in the cramped conditions of the school hall. However, despite relevant instructions and useful demonstrations, boys' learning in cricket is limited because of frequent chatter and inattention. In Years 7 and 8, games and fitness teaching is always at least satisfactory; athletics teaching is good. Because the teachers set graded targets linked to a national award scheme, most pupils are keen to practise to improve their athletic performance. Disappointingly, some talented pupils in Year 7 fail to show consistent commitment. In games, the sharing of assessment criteria is limited, thus pupils are unsure what they need to do to improve.

142. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory, given that the young head of department only assumed responsibility in September 2001. She acknowledges that deficiencies exist in the curriculum, denying pupils access to net games. Provision is good for most after school sports but similar opportunities for pupils to extend their skills in gymnastics and dance on a regular basis are absent. Some monitoring and evaluating of teaching and learning occurs via lesson observations. Mentoring of the newly qualified male teacher is good. However, timetabling arrangements limit dialogue on curriculum and assessment. Some promising procedures are in place within the local pyramid of middle schools to moderate the pupils' practical work against National Curriculum levels. To date, subject links with the senior school are underdeveloped.
143. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory in most respects. Now that the department comprises two subject specialists, teaching is equally satisfactory in both Year 6 and Years 7 and 8. In the most effective lessons, the highest attaining pupils are challenged appropriately. Standards in competitive team games have risen at district level. However, boys' performance in gymnastics remains below average. Inadequacies with indoor facilities persist, constraining curriculum coverage and limiting achievement in key areas of the subject by the end of Year 8.