

INSPECTION REPORT

STOKE HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

Stoke Hill, Exeter

LEA area: Devon

Unique reference number: 113087

Headteacher: Roy Souter

Reporting inspector: Raymond Jardine
7428

Dates of inspection: 10 - 13 June 2002

Inspection number: 196098

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 primary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 8 to 12

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Stoke Hill

Exeter

Postcode: EX4 7DP

Telephone number: 01392 667830

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Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Andrew Holbrook

Date of previous inspection: 30 June - 4 July 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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7428	Raymond Jardine	Registered inspector	Science Design and technology	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
10965	Pat Edwards	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11849	Mary Dornan	Team inspector	English Music Physical education English as an additional language	How well does the school care for its pupils?
29371	Paul Hodson	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography Religious education Special educational needs	
2433	Ian Bennett	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design History Equal opportunities	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stoke Hill Middle School is a middle, deemed primary, school which serves the district of Stoke Hill in the north-east of Exeter. The school is similar in size to middle schools nationally. There are 336 boys and girls between the ages of eight and 12 on roll, of whom 47 (14 per cent) are eligible for free school meals (about average). The great majority of the school's pupils are of white UK heritage, but 41 (12 per cent) are from a diverse range of ethnic minorities. There are 35 pupils for whom English is an additional language and ten of these are at an early stage of language acquisition; a high proportion compared to the national average. Of the 49 pupils (14.6 per cent) on the register of special educational needs (below average), 37 are at early stages of intervention and six (1.7 per cent) have Statements of Special Educational Need. The proportion of pupils who come in or leave the school mid-year is above average. Pupils' abilities on entry to the school have been rising in the last three years; they are wide ranging but broadly average in their mathematical and reading skills but below average in their writing skills.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Stoke Hill Middle is an improving and effective school. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, it provides a safe, welcoming and supportive atmosphere for learning where pupils develop good social and moral values, achieve standards expected for their abilities and in some subjects, exceed them. Pupils from a diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds are integrated well and relationships are good. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching because the school has effective systems for monitoring its own performance and there is good teamwork as a result of effective changes to the management of the school. The school is well placed to sustain further improvements and provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils like coming to school, they have good attitudes to learning and relationships across the wide range of social and cultural backgrounds are good.
- Pupils achieve well in mathematics and in design and technology and those with English as an additional language are supported effectively and fully involved in lessons so that they make good progress.
- Teachers make effective use of questioning in lessons to assess pupils' learning and to develop their thinking, and this helps pupils acquire a good understanding of key ideas.
- Teaching and pupils' progress in key subjects are closely monitored and effective actions taken.
- The headteacher provides clear vision and direction for the school through his strong leadership.

What could be improved

- Information and communication technology is not used enough to help raise standards within subjects across the curriculum (This is a priority in the school's development plan).
- Teachers do not adapt the planned work in some lessons enough to ensure that all pupils, especially the more able, are challenged and encouraged to learn more independently.
- Pupils' skills in scientific enquiry are not developed sufficiently in later years to enable them to plan and evaluate their experiments more successfully.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in June 1997. It had a period of temporary leadership before the appointment of a new headteacher in September 2000. Since then, the pace of improvement gathered considerable momentum. As a result, the key issues arising from the last inspection have been addressed and overall, progress has been good. The management of the school has improved and key staff have been given more responsibility and encouragement to monitor and develop the school's provision. Teaching is more closely monitored so that very little of it is unsatisfactory. Pupils have targets for their expected achievement in English and mathematics and their progress is monitored towards curriculum objectives for each subject. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes have improved. The new suite for information and communication technology has had a major impact on improving pupils' skills in using computers, although their use within subjects is still underdeveloped. Much work has also been done to improve the school's internal appearance so that it is now bright, attractive and full of display. The school monitors and reviews its performance at a number of levels more rigorously and takes effective action. Consequently, it is well placed to improve further.

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				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1999	2000	2001	2001	
English	B	C	D	D	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	B	B	D	E	
Science	C	C	D	E	

The table shows pupils' standards by the age of 11 years in English, mathematics and science have been about average or better until 2001 when they dipped below the national average. In relation to those in similar schools, standards in 2001 were below average in English and well below in mathematics and science. Local education authority data relating to these pupils suggest that the great majority made the progress expected, although the school did not quite meet its targets for English and mathematics. The school was late in implementing national strategies for literacy and numeracy because of staff changes, and the impact of this training is now resulting in a recovery in standards. Pupils' standards by the age of 11 years seen during the inspection are broadly in line with the national average in English, mathematics and pupils' knowledge and understanding of science facts and concepts, but their skills in scientific enquiry are below average. The school's own monitoring suggests it is likely to meet its targets for English and exceed them in mathematics this year. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory in English and in most aspects of science and many achieve well in mathematics by Years 6 and 7. By the age of 12, pupils achieve the levels expected for this age in all three of these subjects and many have progressed well in their English and mathematics, partly as a result of the good leadership of the subject co-ordinators. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress

and those with English as an additional language make good progress. In the majority of other subjects, pupils' achievements are at least satisfactory and they reach the expected standards but in design and technology their standards are good.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils show interest and enthusiasm and enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Most pupils behave well in classrooms and around the school. There were seven fixed period exclusions and one permanent during the last reporting year.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils enjoy good relationships with each other and with adults so that their learning is supported well. Pupils from a wide range of cultural backgrounds respect each other's values and beliefs.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Attendance is about average and pupils arrive at school punctually

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils in:	Years 4 - 6	Year 7
Quality of teaching	Satisfactory	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.

Teaching and learning throughout the school are mainly satisfactory but with some good features, including some very good teaching. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching and where there is, it is due to unsatisfactory planning. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have now been fully implemented and the teaching of literacy is at least satisfactory with some good features, for example, in Years 4 and 6. However, numeracy is taught well by many teachers. Teachers use questioning well in lessons to encourage pupils to recall earlier learning and to think and apply what they have learned. Lesson objectives are clear and most lessons planned well. Time and resources are used well and learning support assistants are effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Where pupils are set by ability across classes or grouped within the class by ability, for example, in mathematics and English, teachers plan effectively to challenge them, and their expectations of all pupils' work and behaviour are good. In some lessons, where the range of ability is wider and where support assistants are not available, teachers do not take sufficient account of pupils' needs in their plans and when supporting pupils as they work. In these situations, more able pupils in particular do not achieve as much as they might. Marking varies in quality; the best provides evaluative comments and guidance on how to improve, but some is cursory. Homework is set in line with the school's policy and effectively extends the learning in lessons.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum is broad and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in place. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Pupils' skills with computers are developed well but there are too few opportunities to apply these skills sufficiently in some subjects.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Overall, provision is satisfactory, but, where there is additional adult support in lessons, pupils generally make good progress. The provision is well managed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils with English as an additional language are fully involved in lessons, and those at an early stage in their language are given effective individual support so that they achieve well.
Provision for pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good overall. Good provision is made for pupils' moral and social development, with priority given to providing pupils with clear moral values and encouraging a respect for social differences and similarities. Provision for promoting pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory, but there are some missed opportunities to learn more about and celebrate the wide range of cultures within the school community.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Well. Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety, including child protection procedures, is good. Pupils' progress is closely assessed and monitored in English and mathematics and the information is used effectively to guide planning and teaching in these subjects.

The school's partnership with parents is good. Parents are pleased with recent changes that have improved communication and links with them. The school has fostered good links with partner institutions, including Beacon schools that have guided developments in the curriculum.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The school management team works effectively under the strong leadership and direction provided by the headteacher. Most subject co-ordinators support teachers and lead developments in their subjects effectively.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body is effectively organised and led, and supports the school well. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and monitor school priorities. However, their annual report to parents is unsatisfactory, with several gaps in the information provided.

The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Key staff, including heads of year and subject co-ordinators, monitor and support teaching, the curriculum and pupils' progress in key subjects. Effective action has resulted in improvements in teaching and pupils' achievements.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The school's budget is managed and controlled well. The school's development plan is detailed and carefully costed. Resources are targeted to good effect at appropriate priorities for example, to improve pupils' skills in literacy and information and communication technology.

The school has adequate staff to cover the curriculum taught. The accommodation is welcoming and bright as a result of recent decoration and good displays of pupils' work. Resources are adequate for the curriculum. The school applies best value principles well by comparing its standards and provision rigorously, consulting widely on key developments and ensuring that good value is obtained in its spending.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children like coming to school and are expected to work hard. • Children make good progress and the school helps them to mature. • Children behave well except a small minority. • The teaching is good. • Parents feel comfortable approaching the school. • The school is led and managed well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework, although some think it too much and others too little. • Information about how their children are getting on. • Closer links with parents. <p>A relatively small minority expressed these views.</p>

Parents are generally very happy with the school and inspectors broadly agree with their positive views. Homework is appropriately set in line with the school's policy and effectively extends learning in class. The school has worked hard to improve communication with parents in recent years. Reports are informative and the school has adjusted the times and frequency of parents meetings in response to their wishes. Regular newsletters and curriculum evenings are improving the school's relationship with parents and inspectors judge that these links are now good.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils enter the school at the age of eight. Information about pupils' standards in national tests for seven year olds and other standard assessments suggest that pupils' attainment on entry has been rising in recent years. Pupils in the current Year 4 are broadly average in their reading and mathematics but below average in their writing skills compared to those nationally. The attainment on entry to the school of pupils currently in Year 6 was below average in their reading and mathematics as well. About ten per cent of pupils have English as an additional language and about a third of these pupils are at an early stage of language acquisition. In addition, in the past year, about a fifth of pupils entered or left the school mid-year, an above average proportion. Taking all these factors into account, comparisons with similar schools only on the basis of those eligible for free school meals should be treated cautiously.
2. Over recent years, pupils' standards in the national tests for 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science have been in line with or above the national averages until 2001. The results of the 2001 national tests were below the national average in English, mathematics and science. Taken over three years, standards overall have been broadly in line with the national average, but, within this, English standards were declining and standards in science have not been rising as fast as standards nationally. There were few significant patterns of difference between the achievements of boys and girls in recent years, although boys achieved better than girls in English last year.
3. In comparison with schools with similar proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals, a similar picture emerges with pupils' standards in 2001 below average in English and well below in mathematics and science. However, information about individual pupils supplied by the local education authority show that the great majority of these pupils achieved expected levels in relation to their standards at the age of seven in English and mathematics. Even so, the school fell a little short of its statutory targets in both English and mathematics last year. The headteacher and staff have responded urgently to these results.
4. Inspection findings show that pupils' standards by the age of 11 years have now recovered to be broadly in line with the average and that pupils in Year 7 are reaching the standards expected for their age although there are variations in these judgements between subjects. There are a number of reasons for this improvement. The school was late in implementing the national strategies for both literacy and numeracy because a number of key staff left the school at a critical time and this affected standards in 2001. It is likely that standards nationally rose at a faster rate than at the school as a consequence. The headteacher implemented a full programme of training following his appointment that is now having a positive effect on pupils' standards. Important changes in the management of the school, and particularly the resulting close monitoring of teaching and pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy, have contributed to improvements. The school's literacy and numeracy co-ordinators, who are relatively new to their posts, are also effective in leading developments in their subjects.
5. The National Literacy Strategy is now fully implemented in the school and as a result, pupils' standards in literacy by the age of 11 years are at least broadly average.

Pupils in Year 7 have reached the expected level for pupils of their age and many are achieving well. Standards in reading are better than in writing throughout the school. The great majority of pupils enjoy reading, talk freely about it and have good reading habits at home and at school. Some more able pupils are reaching very good standards in their reading and, by the age of 11, many can discuss authors and themes critically. Pupils in Year 7 have progressed well in their reading as a result of careful analysis of test information by the subject co-ordinator that has guided teaching strategies.

6. Improving pupils' writing is a continuing priority for the school. The teaching of writing skills is now better planned. Pupils' work is well presented and they develop their skills in a variety of writing styles and for different audiences. These skills are developed further across many subjects of the curriculum and there are signs of further improvements in standards, for example where Year 4 pupils are showing good skills in writing poetry.
7. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are satisfactory. They speak freely, for example, in class discussions and develop their technical vocabulary well across all subjects as key words are highlighted by their teachers. Pupils with English as an additional language progress well in speaking and writing as a result of very good specialist teaching and effective in class support. There are some examples of quite remarkable progress amongst pupils who are at an early stage in speaking English.
8. Many pupils are achieving well in their numeracy skills, especially in Year 7 because the national strategy has now been fully implemented and much of the teaching is good. By the age of 11, most pupils are confident when working with negative numbers, decimals and fractions. Many have good skills in solving problems using efficient methods of calculation involving two and three digit numbers and good foundations are in place for developing algebra further so that by the age of 12, many pupils can use algebra to solve simple equations and explore mathematical relationships.
9. Standards in science are broadly average by the age of 11 and most pupils achieve the standards expected by the age of 12 but their knowledge and understanding of key concepts are better developed than skills of enquiry in which some more able pupils underachieve. This is because curriculum plans provide more guidance for teaching concepts such as forces and life processes than for developing higher skills in planning and evaluating investigations and there has been little training provided for teachers in promoting pupils' enquiry skills. As a result, some more able pupils in Years 6 and 7 do not build on their basic skills as much as they should.
10. The relatively new information and communication technology suite has had a dramatic effect on improving pupils' basic skills with computers so that their standards are at least satisfactory. However, there are gaps in the school's provision and pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to apply their skills to help raise their standards in many subjects, for example, to gather and interpret data from experiments in science. Standards in most other subjects are satisfactory but in design and technology, they are good.
11. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language make at least satisfactory progress. In lessons where they are supported by the good learning support assistants or the co-ordinator for special educational needs, these pupils' progress is good. The school has recently produced a register of pupils who are gifted and talented and they make good progress in some subjects

where classes are set or grouped by ability such as mathematics. On occasions however, these pupils are not challenged enough, for example, in some foundation subjects where tasks and activities are not adapted for them sufficiently. There are no patterns of difference between the achievements of boys and girls or within particular groups of pupils from different social and ethnic backgrounds.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Throughout the school the attitudes, values and personal development of the majority of pupils are good. The positive aspects highlighted in the previous report have been maintained and others improved, particularly pupils' behaviour. Parents are happy with their children's attitudes to school and feel they are encouraged to behave well and grow in maturity.
13. Pupils enjoy coming to school and talk about their work with enthusiasm. The great majority of pupils show interest in the activities provided as seen in a Year 5 lesson in personal, social and moral education where pupils were discussing stereotyping with high spirits and good humour. They sustain good levels of concentration, listening carefully and responding to their teachers well. Throughout the school pupils work hard in lessons and try to do their best.
14. During the inspection the behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school was good. This confirms the view of most parents. Pupils demonstrate their acceptance of a clear moral code and show care for one another, their belongings and school property. Pupils willingly offer support, encouragement and friendship to those new to the school and to those pupils learning the English language. A few incidents of bullying and intimidation do occur in the school but when pupils report these, action is always taken by staff. However, in a small number of incidents this action is not always sufficient to stop reoccurrence. During the last reporting year, there were seven fixed period exclusions and one permanent exclusion involving four boys and one girl. One of these pupils had recently been admitted to the school on a fresh-start scheme.
15. Relationships between all members of the school community are open and friendly. Pupils are proud of their school and recognise that staff want what is best for them. This has a positive impact on the way pupils treat each other. There are high levels of mutual respect and regard for the views and feelings of others. Pupils are honest and trustworthy and they are willing to accept responsibility. There is a school council with elected members from every class. Currently the major area for discussion is the development of the school grounds. However, there is no formal structure to the council with elected officers and agreed minutes. There is too much adult intervention and the council meets too infrequently for it to make a major impact on the school as a community. Pupils act as classroom helpers and volunteer as litter pickers and older pupils support pupils in Year 4 when they are new to the school. It is mainly through homework that pupils have opportunities to use their initiative and to take responsibility for their own learning. Independent learning skills are not sufficiently promoted in lessons.
16. Attendance is broadly similar to the national average. Most pupils arrive punctually at school allowing lessons to start on time and continue without interruption.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

17. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. Almost all teaching is at least satisfactory and there is very little unsatisfactory teaching. Well over a third of teaching is good or very good and the better teaching is seen across all year groups. The almost complete elimination of unsatisfactory teaching is a direct result of greater emphasis being put on close monitoring and support of teaching by the new headteacher following his reorganisation of staff responsibilities. Key managers, including the school's management team and subject co-ordinators, have played their part in bringing about these improvements. Parents also think the teaching effective.
18. In the majority of lessons, teachers' planning is guided by clear objectives shared with pupils so that activities are focused on what is to be learned and pupils know what is expected of them. Teachers use questioning skills well to consolidate what pupils have learned from previous lessons and to encourage them to think and explain. They use praise effectively where it is merited and pupils respond well to the school's rewards system. Relationships are good and in most lessons, pupils are managed well so that their behaviour is good and they sustain their concentration on the tasks given. However, in a small minority of lessons, teachers allow noise levels to rise too much where they are not applying effective control measures. Resources, including learning support assistants and helpers, are generally effectively deployed so that practical and group activities are effective in helping pupils to learn and to build on teachers' introductory sequences. In one good food technology sequence, the class teacher used parent helpers effectively to guide Year 7 pupils cooking their pizza bases while other pupils evaluated their own diet with help from reference books about food groups. Time and resources were used efficiently in learning about healthy eating and applying ideas to design pizza based products.
19. Lessons are generally inclusive of all pupils. Teachers engage a good cross-section of pupils in whole-class discussions and work closely with support assistants in lessons. Learning support assistants are effective in supporting pupils with special educational needs so that they learn at a good pace. They know these pupils well and take proper account of objectives in their education plans when working with them. However, in a minority of lessons, where pupils are not grouped by ability and where assistants are not available, some teachers do not adapt their teaching sufficiently for these pupils and their learning is consequently slower. Pupils with English as an additional language, and those who are at an early stage of language acquisition, also learn well as a result of effective specialist teaching in the library and also because teachers and their assistants support their developing language skills well to ensure that they are fully involved in activities in lessons.
20. In the better lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils and take account of their different abilities to adapt their questioning and the demand of tasks, for example in mathematics lessons where pupils are set by ability. A lesson with a top set of Year 4 pupils provides a good example. Pupils were to learn how to sort data using Carroll diagrams. They learned the key principles involved very quickly as a result of their teacher's clear exposition and very good use of questions about true or false statements that could be made from the diagrams. Pupils worked out further examples for themselves with more able pupils producing more complex examples guided by their teacher's effective support as they worked. In a well conducted plenary, pupils then compared their methods with those learned previously using Venn diagrams.
21. In the minority of weaker lessons, pupils are over directed by teachers and those pupils who are able to solve problems and research further for themselves are

constrained by the teaching methods. This results in a tendency for some pupils to look to the teacher for answers rather than learning to work more independently. Tasks set tend to be similar for all pupils because teachers do not give sufficient thought to ways of ensuring that pupils of different abilities are challenged appropriately, for example, by working with particular groups to discuss and extend their thinking or to provide more demanding work for those who are ready to move on. This weakness is most noticeable in subjects where pupils are not in sets or grouped by ability within the class, for example, in science and foundation subjects such as geography. Where there is unsatisfactory teaching in one lesson seen, it is the result of inadequate planning and insufficient knowledge of the subject which results in little learning or consolidation of key skills.

22. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects and in mathematics religious education and design and technology it is good. Both literacy and numeracy are now taught effectively throughout the school following national guidelines, although staff training for both the national strategies was provided later than in other schools. These areas have subsequently been a particular focus for monitoring the effectiveness of teaching and learning throughout the school. Although pupils develop good skills in information technology in the new computer suite, teachers are not providing sufficient opportunities to apply these skills in lessons within some subjects, for example, in science.
23. Homework is regularly set and follows the school's guidelines. It appropriately extends the learning in lessons. A few parents expressed concerns about homework but their opinions were equally divided with some thinking it too much and other not enough. Teachers regularly mark pupils' work but the quality of marking varies considerably. The best marking includes correction and useful comments on ways of improving; some good examples of guiding comments are seen in feedback on some design and technology projects. The weaker marking is rather cursory with little more than ticking and a comment of praise.

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

24. The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. There have been significant improvements since the previous inspection brought about by improvements in the leadership and management role of heads of year and curriculum co-ordinators and instigated by the headteacher. More rigorous subject reviews take place and revisions are then made to long and medium-term plans to improve curriculum coverage and quality. The time allocated by the school to each subject is appropriate. The curriculum is enriched through visits to places of interest and residential experiences. The school also provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular opportunities. The school effectively promotes equality of access to the whole curriculum in a number of ways and monitors the achievements of different groups such as those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. No exceptions are made on the basis of gender or ethnicity. Good support is given by teachers to pupils with English as an additional language and by support assistants in lessons to ensure that they can take a full part in learning. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been effectively implemented, although later than in other schools. The Key Stage 3 Strategy is being implemented in Year 7 in collaboration with other schools in the city and staff are attending training. Much of the curriculum for Year 7 is planned with other middle schools to help upper schools build on pupils' achievements more effectively.

25. Overall, provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory but where there is additional adult support in lessons, pupils generally make better progress. Teaching assistants are very effective and skilled. They offer sensitive, caring and challenging support. All support staff feel valued and are encouraged to contribute to weekly support staff meetings. All statutory procedures are in place and all pupils on the register of special educational needs have detailed individual education plans. These have clear, appropriate targets and parents and pupils are involved in writing the plans and assessing progress. This is an improvement since the last inspection when individual education plans were less specific. These plans are continually reviewed and some teachers have the pupil targets inside workbooks to aid continual assessment. Very good use is made of the special educational needs room. This is well resourced and provides a welcoming, colourful working space. The wall displays celebrate pupils' achievements and there is a small suite of computers that are used to support pupils' studies.
26. The school is developing links with the local community and makes good use of visits and residential experiences. There are good links with the local first school that result, for example, in consistency with the assessments made of pupils on transfer. The pupils transfer at the end of Year 7 into five high schools. An academic board comprising headteachers of the middle and high schools in Exeter helps the school explore curriculum issues to promote better transition from the middle to the upper school's curriculum. The school has established useful links with two Beacon schools, using their strengths for example, in developing the management role of curriculum co-ordinators and recently, support for more able and talented pupils.
27. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when it was satisfactory.
28. The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies and the newly introduced religious education syllabus provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to discuss and reflect on important aspects of life, feelings and personal beliefs. For example, pupils in assembly reflected on how people have faith in others but may not put that faith into action. The story of the famous tightrope walker Blondin, who could find only one volunteer to actually sit on his shoulders as he crossed the Niagara Falls even though hundreds of spectators believed he could do it, illustrated the point well. The inspirational works of art on school displays promotes pupils' spiritual development and careful procedures when handling sacred books in religious education lessons also have a positive impact. Overall, however, there are missed opportunities in some subjects to promote spiritual development and a sense of wonder.
29. Good provision is made for pupils' moral development. This is an improvement since the previous inspection when the school's behaviour policy was not consistently applied. A high priority is given to providing pupils with a clear set of moral values and teaching them the difference between right and wrong. All staff, including support staff and midday supervisors, model the principles they promote including; fairness, integrity, respect for property and caring for others. The merit system is popular with pupils and is used effectively to reward caring attitudes and good behaviour as well as good work. Moral issues are featured in many subjects, including the good curriculum for personal, social and moral education that provides pupils with an open and safe learning environment where they can express their views and listen to those of others.

30. The provision for pupils' social development is good. The school staff make strong efforts to help build relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils and as a result, they have successfully addressed the weakness in this aspect in the last report. Most lessons are planned to encourage the development of social relationships and these tend to be good. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibility, such as sitting on the school council or as monitors and helpers. There are residential visits, clubs and major music and drama productions. All of these opportunities help promote pupils' self-esteem.
31. The provision for pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. They gain insights into the beliefs and cultures of other people. In religious education, pupils study the customs and beliefs from a wide variety of cultures. In geography, Year 4 pupils identify similarities and differences between life in England and an Indian village. There are developing partnerships between the school and outside agencies and individuals. These help to develop pupils' cultural awareness and visits to local churches and museums take pupils where they can experience different cultures at first hand. However, the school does not do enough to develop pupils' perception of Britain today as a multicultural society and to celebrate the wide range of cultures within the school community.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

32. The school provides good support for its pupils. This is an improvement since the time of the previous inspection. It provides a caring environment where teachers know their pupils well and value them as individuals. Most parents are happy with the care and the guidance offered to their children. They feel that their children are happy in school and able to concentrate on their work. Pupils' personal development is monitored informally but effectively by teachers through discussion. Teachers are familiar with pupils' backgrounds and support their individual needs well.
33. Staff consistently apply and monitor the implementation of the school's behaviour policy. Pupils and parents are aware of the rules of the school and support them through the home-school agreement. Staff deal with any reported incidents of bullying very swiftly but the actions taken are not always monitored sufficiently to eliminate their recurrence.
34. Procedures for checking attendance are good. Teachers call the registers promptly at the beginning of each session and any unexplained absence is followed up the same day. The school regularly reminds parents of the need for punctuality and good attendance. The education welfare officer visits monthly and works closely with the school where there is perceived to be a problem with attendance.
35. The school has an effective child protection policy. Procedures comply with those of the area child protection committee and all staff are fully aware of these procedures. Training is regularly undertaken. The arrangements for first aid including recording of accidents and informing parents are good. Outside agencies successfully support lessons on drug awareness and sex education. The school has a comprehensive health and safety policy and regular checks on equipment and risk assessments are carried out.
36. Procedures for monitoring pupils' academic progress are good. The school has very effective practices to identify how well pupils are progressing in the priority subjects of English and mathematics and they are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. These procedures are now strengths of the school and demonstrate good

- improvement since the last inspection. Outcomes of assessments in English and mathematics are recorded carefully to guide the work of year leaders, teachers and teaching assistants. The use of assessment is less well developed in other subjects such as science and information technology where assessments are not as systematic or collated centrally to guide pupils' progress and curriculum planning.
37. Analysis of teachers' assessments and test results is systematic, thorough and well documented in English and mathematics. The rate of progress made by pupils is regularly measured and compared with predicted levels of achievement and targets. The outcomes of the school's tracking system are evaluated and the information gained is acted upon. Assessment is increasingly forming a natural part of teaching and learning in these subjects. Teachers know their pupils well and the school makes appropriate changes to meet the needs of individual, groups and classes of pupils. Changes include making alterations to the curriculum, adjusting methods of teaching and, when necessary, involving the expertise of outside agencies.
 38. In English and mathematics, teachers' assessments are accurate and reliable. The assessment co-ordinator has ensured that systems enable results to be checked for validity and agreement is reached on the standard of work required for each National Curriculum level, especially in writing. This effectively ensures consistency in assessment within year groups and across Years 6 and 7. This strategy has had a positive impact on pupils' writing in Year 7 this year where good progress in writing has been made. Pupils with special educational needs are regularly assessed in relation to the targets in their education plans and those with English as an additional language are closely monitored by the specialist language teacher who works with them. The school has recently identified those pupils who are gifted and talented, but the use of this information is at an early stage in helping to ensure that they achieve appropriate standards.
 39. Good use is made of assessment by most subject co-ordinators to guide curricular planning. Many lessons are now monitored regularly and work samples scrutinised to ensure that pupils are not underachieving.
 40. The school has rightly focused attention on the key areas of the curriculum and now has good models on which to base future developments in assessing and monitoring pupils' academic progress in other subjects. Overall, the school's work in relation to assessment, especially in English and mathematics, has played a significant role in bringing about improvement.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. The school's partnership with parents has improved since the previous inspection. Most parents indicate that they are pleased with what the school provides and achieves.
42. The quality of information provided by the school is good. Parents feel that the school's monthly newsletters keep them well informed about events and give good information about the curriculum being taught. Communication with non-English speaking parents involves translation by family and friends but there are no more formal means of communication with these parents should matters of a sensitive nature arise. Consultation meetings are held in the autumn and spring terms and an opportunity is provided for parents to discuss annual progress reports at the end of the summer term. The school prospectus is attractively presented and provides a useful practical introduction to the school. The school makes parents feel welcome and parents find staff approachable and willing to discuss concerns at any reasonable

time. Pupils' annual progress reports are clear and informative providing information on work covered, the progress made and ways in which improvements might be made.

43. Parental involvement with the school is good and has a positive effect on pupils' learning. The school has consulted parents about the homework and behaviour policies and about their expectations of the school. Homework is set consistently and parents are asked the homework book. Computer classes have been organised for parents and parents hearing pupils read in school attend a meeting and are given a booklet to aid them in their role. Parents assist with swimming, cooking, sewing and extra-curricular activities and clubs. Staff greatly appreciate this regular reliable help. The Parent Teacher Association organises fund raising and social events raising considerable additional funding to enrich pupils' learning.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The leadership and management of the school are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. The school's systems for monitoring and evaluating its performance and taking effective action have improved considerably in the last two years and are now good. Resources are deployed effectively in support of targeted priorities through good development planning over three years. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily.
45. The headteacher took up his post in September 2000 following a difficult period under temporary leadership and at a time when standards and the staff's morale were falling. The buildings were in a poor decorative state. He immediately set about clarifying and reorganising the management of the school and in particular, developing the school's strategies for monitoring teaching, the curriculum and pupils' achievements, involving all key staff in these strategies. The staff, governors and parents were fully consulted to guide these developments. As a result of these actions, the school's fortunes have been reversed; standards are now improving again. The school has a clearer sense of purpose and direction and the headteacher has brought all the staff and governing body closer together in a shared commitment to improve the school's standards and to succeed. The school's aims are clearly reflected in its work and much has been achieved in improving the school's internal appearance. Pupils enjoy coming to school because they are received into a welcoming, safe and attractive environment for learning where pupils from a diverse range of social and ethnic backgrounds work productively and play together in harmony.
46. The school management team, which includes heads of year and the deputy headteacher, meets weekly and is effective in monitoring progress on school priorities and taking action in areas of weakness. These meetings focus on issues arising from their monitoring of teaching and the curriculum and their tracking of pupils' progress towards curriculum objectives in the key areas of literacy and numeracy. Heads of year also provide termly reports about strengths and weaknesses in provision and pupils' achievements for their areas so that the headteacher can collate and take an overview of the school's progress. However, the deputy headteacher's role in the team is insufficiently focused to ensure that he oversees and develops key areas such as the curriculum effectively. The co-ordinator for special educational needs has a clear view of the next steps in managing the provision and understands the value of good assessment procedures in helping pupils to improve. Although she has not been a part of the school management team until now, her role is being

developed further to monitor inclusion issues as a full member of the management team from September.

47. Like the heads of year, subject co-ordinators have also been given more key responsibilities for raising standards as a result of management developments in the school. They have been encouraged to observe other teachers, review their planning and sample pupils' work to guide developments in their subjects. They are enthusiastic and have taken up the challenge well. Most provide effective leadership and act promptly on weaknesses they have identified, although there have been fewer developments in science. The school was late in providing training for the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies because of staffing problems in key posts and it is likely that this contributed to pupils' standards not improving at the national rate in 2001. However, the hard work of new co-ordinators for English and mathematics in developing the curriculum and providing guidance over the past year has contributed much to recent improvements in pupils' standards. The school's capacity for and commitment to making further improvements is now good.
48. The governing body is well informed of the school's strengths and weaknesses as a result of the regular and informative monitoring reports provided by the headteacher and school management team. They understand the school's standards and have directed resources to improvements in key areas, for example; to improve literacy and to develop information technology throughout the school. The school's development plan, mapped over three years, is the result of extensive consultation and has drawn on key staff reviews to ensure that appropriate priorities are addressed. Its very complexity however, tends to hide the goals the school has for improving standards further because there is no short statement of them for the next few years at the front of the document and the school's statutory targets do not feature strongly enough in key areas.
49. Governors are informed of developments in the school in a number of ways, for example; good headteacher reports, staff presentations to the curriculum committee and through governor visits that are currently being made more regular and systematic. They support the school well and are now enquiring more closely about progress on school priorities. However, the governors' annual report is unsatisfactory. There are several gaps in the information governors are required to provide and it does not convey adequately, the work of the school.
50. The finance committee receives regular budget profiles from the school's finance secretary so that spending is closely monitored and under-spends at the end of each year are small. The finance secretary is very efficient in managing the budget. Budget controls are clear and effective and the last auditor's report described financial systems and controls as good. Specific funds are used for their intended purpose. Governors review spending decisions, for example, the effectiveness of the new information technology suite, informally through their visits, although their monitoring of spending decisions is not yet a systematic part of their management. The school rigorously reviews its standards against national benchmarks and increasingly is challenging what it provides. The headteacher has also consulted widely on developments such as management changes and behaviour policy. Effective systems are in place for ensuring that good value for money is achieved when purchasing. Overall, the school's commitment to best value principles is good.
51. The school's administrative staff and the site manager provide good support for the headteacher and staff. The school is open and welcoming to visitors and parents and information and communication technology is used effectively in the school's

management and dissemination of information. The school's overall provision, particularly the teaching is satisfactory and there are some good features that are leading to good achievements in some areas such as mathematics and in pupils' attitudes and values. Taking account of the relatively high spending per pupil, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

52. The headteacher has introduced an effective performance management programme linked to the school's improvement strategy. Professional development plans for staff take account of their individual needs and of school priorities. Curriculum co-ordinators have valued the ability to influence policy decisions through their role in performance management and its acceptance by the staff as a positive factor in school improvement is a major contributor to the improvement in standards in the school. Newly appointed staff are supported effectively by senior managers, heads of year and curriculum co-ordinators.
53. Teaching staff have an appropriate range of qualifications and experience to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and, in the case of modern foreign languages in Year 7, there is a specialist teacher of French. Learning support assistants are trained well and effective in their work. The school provides effective support and guidance for student teachers, working closely with their partner higher education institution. Students value the feedback they receive on their teaching.
54. The accommodation is good. Almost all classrooms are of an appropriate size for the number of pupils. There are specialist teaching areas for information technology, food technology, science and pupils with special educational needs. There is adequate storage space and a good sized hall. The attractive displays celebrating pupils' achievements successfully raise their self-esteem and contribute to the positive learning atmosphere in the school. The school site is clean, tidy and well maintained by a hardworking staff. The playgrounds and fields are spacious and include a wildlife area.
55. Overall resources are satisfactory to support the implementation of the National Curriculum. Recently the school has made significant purchases to support improvements in literacy. Resources are good for English, design and technology, geography and religious education, and to support pupils for whom English is an additional language. Resources are used effectively and the library is well stocked and is a pleasant and inviting place to sit and read.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

56. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
(References are made to these issues in paragraphs shown in brackets)
 - (1) develop the school's provision for information and communication technology further by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills where appropriate across the subjects and eliminating some gaps in the school's curriculum for information technology;
 - providing further training for staff;(paragraphs: 10, 22, 62, 77, 85, 97, 101, 110, 115, 120, 131)

(This is a priority in the school's development plan.)

- (2) adapt the work within some lessons to ensure that pupils of different abilities, especially the more able, are extended in their learning and encouraged to work more independently;
(paragraphs 11, 15, 21, 70, 86, 89, 102, 108)
- (3) raise pupils' skills of scientific enquiry further by providing a more systematic approach to teaching these skills as they progress through the school, especially in later years.
(paragraphs 9, 82, 84, 86, 87)

57. Minor issues the governors may wish to take account of:

- build on the good practice established for English and mathematics to improve arrangements for assessing pupils' standards and progress in some other subjects, especially science and information and communication technology; (paragraph 36)
- review and develop the deputy headteacher's role within the school's management team (paragraph 46);
- improve the governors' annual report to parents to ensure that it includes all statutory information required (paragraph 49);
- summarise the key goals and expected outcomes for the school's three year development plan (paragraphs 48);
- ensure that action taken following incidences of bullying is closely monitored.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	59
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	40

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	0	7	17	34	1	0	0
Percentage	0	12	29	57	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	0	336
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	0	47

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y4 – Y7
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	n/a	6
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	n/a	49

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	35

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	47

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

National comparative data	5.6
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National comparative data	0.5
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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	43	45	88

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	28	28	34
	Girls	33	27	34
	Total	61	55	68
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	69 (72)	63 (75)	77 (81)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	29	29	36
	Girls	33	29	37
	Total	62	58	73
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	70 (71)	66 (80)	83 (84)
	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	1
Black – other	1
Indian	8
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	1
White	305
Any other minority ethnic group	18

This table refers to pupils of compulsory school age only.

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	7	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y4 – Y7

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	22
Average class size	28

Education support staff: Y4 – Y7

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	181

Qualified teachers and support staff: nursery

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	0
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	0
Total number of education support staff	0
Total aggregate hours worked per week	0
Number of pupils per FTE adult	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	780,007
Total expenditure	772,765
Expenditure per pupil	2,273
Balance brought forward from previous year	19,881
Balance carried forward to next year	27,123

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.8
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	7.9
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	337
Number of questionnaires returned	97

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	40	54	3	3	0
My child is making good progress in school.	43	49	4	2	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	71	4	2	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	59	13	3	0
The teaching is good.	38	58	0	1	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	38	46	14	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	60	36	1	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	51	44	2	1	2
The school works closely with parents.	33	49	11	2	4
The school is well led and managed.	41	52	1	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	54	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	47	36	12	1	3

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

ENGLISH

58. Standards in English are broadly average throughout the school.
59. Although standards overall in English have declined in recent years when compared with both the national figures and those from similar schools, those seen during the inspection are now broadly average for pupils aged 11 years and pupils in Year 7 are reaching the expected level for 12 year olds. About a quarter of 11 year old pupils are working above the expected level for their age in all aspects of English. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and those with English as an additional language make good progress. Class teachers monitor each of these pupil's progress and termly assessments are made until an expected level of fluency is achieved. Pupils are supported effectively by the local education authority advisory support unit for pupils with English as an additional language.
60. The school's results in the 2001 national tests were below average when compared with both the national figures and with those from similar schools. The statutory target set by the school was not quite met. The school's own monitoring of pupils in Year 6 suggests that it is likely to meet its targets for 2002. The 2001 results show that pupils achieved better in reading than writing overall. However, the higher attaining Year 6 boys achieved better in writing in 2001, going against the national trend.
61. Pupils' standards seen during the inspection throughout the school in reading, writing, speaking and listening are broadly average but their reading standards are better than their writing. Most pupils make satisfactory progress and 12 year old pupils have made good progress since last year. The majority of pupils in the school are keen, interested and motivated in all they do. Relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils are good.
62. Pupils of all ages have very positive attitudes to reading. Their achievements are at least satisfactory and many pupils achieve well in Year 6. They talk openly about their favourite authors and books. Particular authors pupils like are Roald Dahl, Dick King-Smith and Jacqueline Wilson. Many pupils, have well developed reading habits at both home and school. Most pupils are able to locate books in the school library quickly using the 'Where's the book' booklet although some who have not been at the school since Year 4 are not secure in this skill. A significant minority of pupils belongs to the public library in Exeter although they may not be regular visitors but few pupils were seen using the school library to research information or to read during the inspection. Teachers do not encourage pupils sufficiently in lessons to develop their learning skills, for example, to use computers and the school library to research topics further. The use of information and communication technology to support the teaching of literacy is limited and has been identified by the school as an area requiring further in-service training.
63. By the age of eight, the majority of pupils are reading at the expected level and many are able to use strategies for decoding words. One high attaining pupil was able to fluently read 'The Lord of the Rings' with excellent skill, painting a picture for the listener as he read. By the age of 11, pupils confidently explain their likes and dislikes and discuss how different authors develop characters themes and plots. At the age

of 12, pupils are discerning critics of films based on popular books such as Tolkien's 'The Lord of the Rings' and J K Rowling's Harry Potter stories. They compare and contrast each method of story telling and confidently explore strengths and weaknesses in both. This is an improvement since last year and 12 year old pupils have made good progress in the year. This is because the co-ordinator and Year 7 leader have worked closely with the headteacher to analyse the reading test results in 2001 and is implementing appropriate strategies to eliminate any underachievement. Most pupils are aware of conventions such as alphabetical order contents, index and glossary and know the difference between fiction and non-fiction books. However, few pupils regularly have opportunities for independent study with books, CD-ROMs and websites regularly. The school is very well resourced with 'big books' and this assists with the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. Registration times are used well to promote reading.

64. Over the last two years, developing pupils' writing skills has been a focus of the school improvement plan. Standards seen during the inspection in writing are about average by the age of 11 years and are at the expected level for pupils at the age of 12. A consistent approach to medium-term planning at both key stages has now been established. All teachers have completed training relating to The National Literacy Strategy and are now carrying out the strategy effectively. As a result, they put more emphasis on teaching and developing basic skills. The new co-ordinator, working with the headteacher and teachers in Year 7 has helped pupils to progress well in writing this year.
65. The work completed in literacy lessons enables pupils to understand different styles and functions of writing such as describing, reporting, narrating and persuading. This is supported well through the work done in other subject areas, particularly history where in a Year 5 class, pupils were encouraged in pairs to write a letter pretending they are a chimney sweep in Victorian times. They described how many hours a day they were required to work and were encouraged to describe what might happen to them in the job. *'Tomorrow I have to go scavenging under the machines and I might lose a finger or my head could get crushed'*. In a literacy lesson, Year 6 pupils linked their work on Greece with the Greek origin of words in everyday use. This was developed further by working on an encyclopedia entry, using a book on Greek myths and legends as a model. Pupils are enthusiastic about this work and keen to learn more. Younger pupils in the school are showing significant signs of improvement in their writing. More able pupils in Year 4 recognise simple forms of poetry and write creatively using rhythm and rhyme:
- 'When the wind blows the clouds are black the sun fades away,
When the wind blows the clouds don't budge, it lasts all day'*
66. In another Year 4 class, pupils worked as a group changing adjectives in a passage of text to adverbs before working on materials in pairs and individually, to develop their understanding further.
67. Drafting books feature throughout the school. Pupils are encouraged to improve their work in a logical and systematic way. This attention to the basic skills of handwriting, spelling, punctuation, drafting and redrafting contributes significantly to improved standards because pupils are able to organise their thinking and communicate ideas quickly and successfully.
68. Pupils in Year 7 have made good progress in their writing this year because they are clear about what is expected of them in lessons. They edit as they write, making

notes in the margin where improvement can be made. They are able to express themselves with a breadth of vocabulary and maturity of style expected for their age. For example, they work on drafting, editing and revising a persuasive piece of writing on inviting the public to visit the city of Exeter. When the teacher demonstrated the writing, pupils suggested that the first paragraph '*needs to be different from the norm*' and '*eye catching*' so that readers want to read the text. When drafting, pupils of all abilities were able to offer a variety of starting points such as, '*...This historic city is in between the rugged hills of Dartmoor and the picturesque Devon coastline*, and '*If you want to visit a superb place then I suggest the dazzling city of Exeter*, and '*Why Exeter? Well apart from its breathtaking scenery...*'.

69. Overall, standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory. Pupils of all ages at Stoke Hill Middle School talk freely and confidently. Most willingly take part in class discussion and are keen to share their ideas and views. Questioning in most classes involves all pupils and teachers value their contributions and use correct and incorrect answers skilfully to reinforce teaching points. This positive ethos enables pupils of all ages and abilities to offer suggestions without the fear of ridicule or embarrassment. This is a significant factor in fostering the good attitudes that pupils have to English. Class assemblies offer many opportunities for pupils to communicate orally. A recent assembly in Year 5 gave pupils the chance to take part in role play and develop their moral understanding. Pupils in Years 6 and 7 take parts in school productions such as *Bugsy Malone* and the *Pirates of Penzance* enhancing their speaking and listening skills further.
70. Teaching is mainly satisfactory with some good features, particularly in Years 4 and Year 6 and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. In the better lessons, teachers explain to pupils exactly what is expected; 'I am looking to see if you are able to decide in pairs on the adverb to make this paragraph make sense...', 'How might you improve your poem by adding rhythm and rhyme to verses?', 'Demonstrate how language may be used to good effect to enhance a written passage'. Pupils rise to the challenge, especially when lessons are well paced and both teacher and pupils highlight new learning at the end of lessons. In the less effective teaching, activities are not sufficiently matched to pupils' abilities because worksheets or books used do not provide sufficient challenge.
71. Teachers have begun to plan together in year groups and this has enhanced their teaching. Homework is also used effectively to enhance pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 6 class, pupils were asked to think about idioms and to bring a collection of them to the next literacy lesson. All pupils had lists of examples ready for use in the lesson. Marking quality varies and some is good. The best is effective because it guides pupils on ways of improving but some teachers' marking focuses mainly on giving praise.
72. The English co-ordinator provides strong leadership. Although not long in this role, she has worked closely with the headteacher and year leaders in establishing what needs to be done to raise standards in the school and the literacy action plan is a good working document. Literacy teaching is monitored and supported across the school and pupils' test results are now analysed and targets set for class groups as well as individual pupils. A conferencing day was set aside this year for teachers and pupils to negotiate targets using the test analyses and the school knows where pupils are in terms of National Curriculum levels and where they should be at the end of each year. Progress towards end of year targets is regularly reviewed and adjustments are made to curriculum plans, teaching methods and support structures where necessary. Teachers check their assessments and moderate work so that

the criteria for each National Curriculum level are understood and used with accuracy in most year groups. Advisory staff from the local education authority have effectively guided the implementation of the literacy hour with the new co-ordinator and involving all teachers.

73. The school is well resourced for English. Substantial spending has taken place during the last two years. There is still an inadequate supply of scheme reading books for pupils in Year 4 but there is a rich supply of other books in each class library. The school library has recently been refurbished and is an attractive place to work. There is a good variety of fiction and non-fiction books as well as reference books for pupils to use. There are plenty of group readers and big books.

MATHEMATICS

74. Pupils' standards achieved in the 2001 national tests for 11 year olds were below average compared to those nationally and well below those in similar schools. Pupils' standards had been rising in the previous three years at a rate above the national trend and so these results were disappointing. A contributory factor to these lower results was the late introduction of training for all staff to implement the National Numeracy Strategy. There were no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. The standards of 11 year old pupils seen during the inspection are broadly average, and those of 12 year olds have improved since last year and are in line with national expectations.
75. Most pupils enter the school with levels of ability in line with those expected for their age and many achieve well as they build up their skills and understanding. Recent improvements in the quality of teaching, linked to the successful introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, have had a positive impact on pupils' progress. Pupils with special educational needs are making satisfactory progress and where they are supported by the special educational needs teacher or by teaching assistants, their progress is good. Pupils with English as an additional language and gifted and talented pupils make good progress.
76. In Year 4, most pupils show a good understanding of place value to 1000 and mentally add and subtract numbers with two digits. They can extract and use information presented in simple tables and lists and find perimeters of simple shapes. By Year 6, most pupils have good skills in ordering numbers including negative numbers, decimals and fractions. They can draw common two-dimensional shapes in different orientations and reflect simple shapes in a mirror line. Most Year 6 pupils are developing effective strategies for solving problems and can present information and results clearly. More able pupils are able to evaluate and construct simple equations involving algebra, displaying understanding and mental calculation skills well above national expectations. They can interpret positive and negative co-ordinates and reduce fractions to their simplest forms. In Year 7, most pupils can construct geometric shapes accurately and use basic algebra principles to solve equations. More able pupils can plot algebraic equations of lines and can conduct mathematical investigations in order to find relationships between numbers.
77. Pupils enjoy mathematics, showing good levels of interest and concentration. They work well together and can work independently when required. Year 5 pupils, investigating symmetry in regular polygons worked cooperatively, discussing possible approaches to the set task. Pupils use equipment carefully and share well. The use of information and communication technology to support pupils' learning in

mathematics is not strongly developed and their use of classroom computers in numeracy lessons is limited. Teachers make a useful contribution to pupils' literacy through their careful use of mathematical vocabulary and by the way that they encourage them to express ideas clearly.

78. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to very good in Years 4 to 6 and it is good in Year 7. The successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy is demonstrated in every lesson and teachers use a variety of teaching strategies, an improvement since the last inspection. Strengths in teaching include careful planning, with clear learning objectives for the lesson shared with the pupils. Every numeracy lesson follows the recommended numeracy strategy structure and ends with a plenary session. In the best lessons, teachers allow sufficient time in the plenary to involve pupils fully in judging how successfully they have, or have not, achieved the learning objectives. Teachers have good subject knowledge and commonly use their day-to-day assessments to inform their planning and teaching so that pupils of different abilities learn equally well. In the more successful lessons, teachers use questioning techniques skilfully to lead pupils into new learning experiences. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, a teacher encouraged pupils to investigate the relationship between the number of faces, vertices and edges in complex three-dimensional shapes. Through skilful probing he was able to lead pupils to five different interpretations of 'Euler's Formula' for describing relationships in three-dimensional shapes. In less successful lessons, teachers miss opportunities to encourage pupils to apply intellectual or creative effort and reach solutions through their own investigations. Homework for older pupils effectively extends and develops learning in lessons. Marking is generally good and helps to foster improvements.
79. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory, with some recent planning to address a drop in standards proving to be very effective. The school's arrangement for setting classes for numeracy is a very positive feature that is helping teachers adjust the work for pupils' different abilities. Teachers make continuous assessments of progress and adjust their plans accordingly.
80. The subject is led well. The co-ordinator provides effective staff development and support. Improved monitoring procedures enable the co-ordinator to have a very clear view of strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning throughout the school. All teachers have been monitored and the co-ordinator looks for areas for improvement. A good example of this was a staff development session on improving the quality of plenary sessions as a result of his monitoring of a number of lessons. The co-ordinator has produced numeracy guidance booklets for parents and arranged evenings for them to learn about new teaching strategies that were well attended. There is a good transition programme for Year 6 pupils, which prepares them well for Year 7. The co-ordinator took appropriate and immediate action to address the decline in standards in 2001 and this led to substantial improvements in learning for the pupils involved. Learning resources for mathematics are satisfactory, are of good quality and used effectively in lessons.

SCIENCE

81. In 2001, pupils' standards in national tests for 11 year olds were below the national average and well below those in similar schools, although the proportion of pupils achieving higher levels was in line with the national average. Standards in science in 2001 were similar to those achieved in English and in mathematics. These results

were lower than in previous years but comparative information from the local education authority about these pupils suggest that almost all made the expected progress from their standards at the age of seven years. Taken over three years, the standards of 11 year olds at the school were broadly in line with the national average. There has been no significant pattern of difference between the achievements of boys and girls.

82. Standards of 11 year olds seen during the inspection are broadly average compared to those nationally and by the age of 12, most pupils achieve at least the standards expected for their age, particularly in their knowledge and understanding of key scientific facts and concepts. By the ages of both 11 and 12, most pupils' achievements are satisfactory in most respects but their skills of scientific enquiry are less well developed and more able pupils underachieve in some of these areas. Pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress, especially where they are supported in lessons by learning support assistants. Those pupils with English as an additional language and who are at early stages of language acquisition are supported effectively both in and out of class so that they have good access to the curriculum and achieve well.
83. Pupils in Year 4 understand and can describe different types of forces in a range of contexts and know about types of microbes and ways of reducing the risk of passing on disease. Many know key facts about sound, for example, they distinguish pitch from loudness. They learn to plan a fair test, for example, to find out which materials are the best heat insulators, by comparing the rate of cooling of hot water under similar conditions. Pupils measure and tabulate results accurately. By Year 5, most pupils are secure in their ability to carry out a fair test in straight forward contexts and develop a sound understanding of many scientific concepts such as the properties of solids, liquids and gases and the key features of photosynthesis. By Year 7, most pupils are secure in their knowledge and understanding of key science principles, for example, of ways of separating mixtures and understanding what a pure substance is.
84. Pupils acquire a sound grasp of basic skills of scientific enquiry in Years 4 and 5. However, more able pupils do not build on these skills as much as they should in Years 6 and 7 because strategies for guiding the teaching of such skills have not been planned for sufficiently and pupils do not practise these higher skills enough. In one Year 6 lesson, pupils investigating the period of a pendulum showed a good understanding of the forces and energy changes taking place and they could identify the key variables to investigate and those to control. However, pupils were unsure about how to solve practical problems for themselves, for example, by undertaking trial runs when planning their experiments. More able pupils did not consider the range of measures to take for more secure conclusions and few were secure in their ability to comment on the accuracy of their measurements or ways of improving their methods.
85. Pupils enjoy science, particularly practical work where they work well in groups. They apply their numeracy skills to measure carefully and tabulate results accurately although sometimes units of measure are overlooked. However, opportunities to use information technology to raise standards in science are few. For example, pupils do not use data-loggers to capture data from experiments and rarely process and display information using databases or spreadsheets.
86. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in all years and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and, as a result,

use questioning skills effectively to consolidate learning from previous lessons to make pupils think and explain, for example, the forces affecting the motion of a pendulum. Objectives for lessons are clear and shared with pupils. Most pupils learn at an appropriate pace because teachers know and manage them well, relationships are good and resources, including support assistants, are used effectively. Teachers retain useful background information on all their pupils but sometimes take insufficient account of their different abilities when planning and teaching lessons. As a result, the work tends to be similar. This affects more able pupils who are sometimes not challenged sufficiently, especially during investigations and also less able pupils on occasions when there are no learning support assistants present. In one Year 7 lesson about classification and variation, all pupils examined some fingerprints and classified them into groups. More able pupils should have been challenged to go further, for example, to speculate about patterns and origins of finger print groups in the population and plan ways of researching them. Homework is set regularly and effectively extends learning in lessons. Teachers' marking varies in quality, the best provided correction and comments to guide improvements but some is rather cursory.

87. The curriculum, planned around a national scheme, provides a good basis for teaching key knowledge and concepts in science but insufficient guidance is provided for teachers to help develop pupils' scientific enquiry skills systematically as they move through the school and too few opportunities are taken to use information and communication technology. Teachers assess pupils in a variety of ways but assessments are not yet systematic through each year or compared to targets for the subject centrally to help track their progress and identify potential underachievement. The subject co-ordinator, who has led the subject for some time, monitors standards and provision, including teaching, in a variety of ways and is well informed about strengths and weaknesses. Even so, insufficient action has been taken to address weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum and progress since the last inspection has been slow as a result. Resources, including the provision of a science laboratory, are satisfactory.

ART AND DESIGN

88. The school's provision for art is satisfactory and covers all requirements of the National Curriculum. Staff are enthusiastic about the subject and make good use of opportunities to use art to support other subjects. The quality of provision and the enthusiasm of the staff are having a positive impact on standards in the school. Pupils enjoy their work in art and, in those lessons where they are taught well, achieve high standards. The quality and range of work on display around the school, both in classrooms and in shared areas are good.
89. Pupils' standards by the age of 11 years overall are generally satisfactory, including those of pupils with special educational needs and who have English as an additional language, although there is little three-dimensional art evident in pupils' work and in displays around the school. Standards in Year 7 are also satisfactory but again there is little evidence of three-dimensional work. However, observational work is a strength across the school; displays of work related to a project based on the Eden Project demonstrate this. There are also displays of high quality work based on the work of other artists such as David Hockney and Du Champ where pupils in Years 6 and 7 demonstrate good use of pencil, charcoal, conte crayon, pastels and watercolours. Digital media such as images from cameras are now being

increasingly used although it is a recent development and the use of information technology in raising standards in the subject is not well established.

90. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 4 to 6 is satisfactory. Most teachers provide good support for pupils through clearly defined tasks and requirements, and they encourage them to critically analyse their work. In one lesson in Year 4, pupils who had been exploring the watercolour techniques used by Monet shared their observations about what had been successful and what they needed to do to improve their own work. In most lessons, pupils are managed well and their behaviour and attitudes are good but occasionally, some pupils do not sustain their concentration or remain on task. In Year 7 insufficient teaching was seen to make a rounded judgement of quality but what was seen was unsatisfactory owing to a lack of planning. Pupils were insufficiently challenged and the working environment did not encourage high quality work. In some lessons, classroom organisation is not appropriate and pupils are not taught appropriate techniques with the media they are using.
91. There have been improvements in the standards achieved by pupils and in the provision for the subject since the last inspection. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator is aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the school's provision, particularly imbalances in the curriculum, and has a clear action plan to address them. Pupils' standards and the quality of teaching and learning are monitored through observation of lessons and sampling pupils' work. The information gathered is guiding improvements in curriculum planning and the focus of training for staff. Visiting artists have contributed to projects in arts weeks that are a feature of the school's calendar. For example, an exchange teacher from the United States of America who has worked in the school has returned to work with pupils on a project based on the ethnic art of native Americans. The co-ordinator is developing portfolios of work and resources to be used by teachers to support lessons. Art plays a significant part in the teaching of other subjects, particularly history.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. By the age of 11, pupils achieve standards above those expected nationally in design and technology and these standards remain above average by the time pupils leave the school at the age of 12. Most pupils achieve well. Pupils with English as an additional language and those who are at early stages of language acquisition, also achieve well because they are supported effectively by learning support teachers in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs make at least satisfactory progress but their progress is good where they are guided by support assistants.
93. As they move through the school, pupils acquire good skills in measuring, cutting, shaping and joining when making products. For example, pupils in Year 4 measure and cut wood accurately when making quite complex mazes as part of their history studies. In Year 5, pupils making soft toys such as a toy dolphin, trial their designs with paper, showing accuracy and care when cutting and shaping the components. Pupils evaluate their work effectively as it develops, considering the needs of their intended users, for example, when designing shelters for different purposes. Year 5 pupils making shelters tested some properties of their intended materials and some wrote assembly instructions for their products. They evaluated their designs and suggesting improvements with guidance from their teachers.

94. Teachers encourage pupils to develop these skills in a variety of ways, more recently, through the use of surveys by pairing up year groups. In one project to design biscuits, pupils in Year 6 evaluated some commercial products against key criteria before making their own. They surveyed the views of pupils in Year 5 about what biscuits they liked and again when evaluating their finished products. As a result, pupils are developing good awareness of the needs of their intended users and suggest improvements that take these into account. By Year 7, pupils are skilled in their cutting and assembly skills and apply a good knowledge of materials and mechanisms, for example, of cams and levers, when making moving picture books. Some examples seen were of good quality and of which pupils are justly proud.
95. Pupils enjoy design and technology. They work productively and safely in group tasks, sustaining their concentration. Pupils from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds relate well to each other so that ideas are valued and exchanged freely as their work develops. Pupils apply their numeracy to measure and estimate and they write for a range of purposes and audiences throughout their projects, for example, when making moving books to illustrate stories they have produced and when designing surveys to gauge opinions.
96. Insufficient teaching was observed in the week of the inspection to form a rounded judgement of quality, but that which was seen was good. Teachers have a good knowledge of skills in design and technology and pupils are managed well. The stimulating context provided for projects, combined with teachers' effective use of praise for good work, ensures that lessons are productive and proceed at a good pace. Lessons are planned carefully around clear objectives and teachers use resources very efficiently. In one Year 7 food technology sequence, the teacher planned a range of assignments very carefully so that all pupils had equal access to help and to the limited cooking resources. Pupils considered aspects of healthy diet and cultural diversity in food to take account of when designing their own pizza while learning support assistants helped other groups cooking their pizza bases. As a result, time and resources were used productively and all pupils were able to progress well. Marking is mainly good. Many teachers provide thoughtful comments and guidance when responding to pupils' work.
97. The curriculum is broad and balanced to provide for planning and communicating ideas, making a good variety of products and developing evaluation skills, but the use of information technology to raise standards in the subject is underdeveloped. Pupils now experience aspects of control technology as a result of the recent acquisition of new resources, for example, in sequencing lights for illuminating characters in a play. But they are not yet using computers to aid the design process sufficiently. While a portfolio of representative work is kept by the co-ordinator, pupils' work is not yet assessed periodically in relation to national standards to help guide their progress in the subject.
98. There have been good improvements in pupils' standards and the school's provision since the last inspection. Although the co-ordinator is relatively new to her post, she is already having an impact on developments in the subject, her leadership of which is good. Curriculum plans are based on a national scheme that the subject co-ordinator is monitoring in a variety of ways: observing colleagues teaching, sampling pupils' work and reviewing teachers' plans. As a result, a number of actions have been taken to improve weaknesses identified and progress in developing the curriculum is good. Resources for the subject are adequate, although there are insufficient illustrative commercial products, for example, torches of different designs, to stimulate pupils' initial ideas at the start of some projects.

GEOGRAPHY

99. Standards have been maintained since the last inspection and by the age of 11, pupils are achieving standards expected for their age. Most 12 year old pupils also attain the expected levels for their age. There are no significant differences between the performance of boys and girls. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are making satisfactory progress. Where these pupils are supported by teaching assistants their progress is good. The progress of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory.
100. In Year 4, pupils make excellent progress and develop good investigative skills. They can describe the differences and similarities between Woodbury village and the City of Exeter and through investigating the design of tourist pamphlets, they design their own to encourage people to settle in Woodbury. Their designs show that they have noted the major features of pamphlet design and are able to use geographical terms to describe the village's physical and human characteristics. By Year 6, most pupils have developed an understanding of how humans make a considerable impact on the environment and in turn affect the lives of others. For example, pupils explain how a mountain can be an enticement for snowboarders but the actions of a snowboarder could cause an avalanche, turning the mountain into a deadly danger for people living below. In Year 7, most pupils use geographical data to support their arguments; for example, concerning the economic impact of human societies. Some Year 7 pupils can recognise some of the relationships that link places and human societies, for example, describing the factors which explain why people continue to live in volcanic areas.
101. Pupils enjoy geography, showing good levels of interest and concentration. They work well together and show respect for the feelings of others when discussing their investigations. They use equipment carefully and share well. However, information and communication technology to support pupils' learning in geography is not strongly developed. Year 4 pupils use the Internet to find information about India and they produce graphs and charts. In Year 6, pupils produce information sheets from resources found on the Internet and Year 7 pupils found valuable information on flooding. The new computer suite offers teachers a much-improved access to the Internet. Teachers make a useful contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy. They encourage them to use correct geographical vocabulary in their speaking and writing and reinforce principles taught in literacy lessons. Pupils use their numeracy skills in designing charts and graphs, studying transport timetables, assessing data collected on fieldtrips and using measurement skills in map work.
102. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but very good in Year 4. In the best lessons, teachers focus on teaching geographical skills to pupils, particularly investigation skills. Through skilful questioning techniques, teachers lead the pupils into acquiring new knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils develop an approach to looking at the world and question why things are as they are. A Year 4 lesson where pupils were asked to list the features that relocating workers would look for if they were moving to the Exeter area provides a good example. The teacher used probing questions very well to lead pupils into an understanding of why people may choose a village location rather than live in the city. In less effective lessons, teachers miss opportunities to encourage pupils to apply their geographical enquiry skills creatively in their studies. In some lessons, pupils with special educational needs are well supported but generally all pupils are given similar work tasks. More able pupils

learn well where teachers provide more challenging activities that suit their different abilities but too often this does not happen. Homework for older pupils effectively extends and develops learning in lessons. For example, a group of Year 7 pupils produced very detailed written accounts of the causes and effects of seasonal flooding in Bangladesh and this considerably enhanced their learning.

103. Improvements since the last inspection have been good with a noticeable improvement in the quality and quantity of fieldtrips to enhance the subject. Each year group has trips and all of these relate well to the scheme of work. There have also been major improvements in monitoring and assessment procedures for the subject that were a weakness in the last inspection. For example, the co-ordinator monitors teaching and carries out regular work sampling. Immediate action is taken if the co-ordinator notices any issues.
104. The subject is led well by a very experienced co-ordinator who has excellent subject knowledge. She has a very clear view of the way forward for the subject and the detailed scheme of work and rigorous monitoring of work provides a very good base for further improvement. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to focus on improving the teaching of geographical skills in order to build on the very good progress made in Year 4. When sampling pupils' work, she checks that all pupils have full access to the subject and that there is a uniform approach to teaching. Learning resources for geography are satisfactory and the subject is supported generally by wall displays of a high quality. The best displays clearly remind pupils about the major geographical features and celebrate the findings from pupils' investigations.

HISTORY

105. Standards by the end of Year 6 and in Year 7 are in line with those expected nationally. In a Year 6 class pupils are able to use their knowledge and understanding of the differences between life today and in ancient Greece to develop hypotheses about how the first Olympic Games may have differed from the Games today. In Year 7 pupils showed interest in the subject and the ability to consider evidence provided and draw relevant conclusions. For example, when studying the Black Death they demonstrate the ability to use primary sources and to recognise that the past is both represented and interpreted in various ways according to sources used.
106. Pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning, including those pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language because learning support assistants work closely with teachers to provide clear guidance. Artefacts and other resources are used effectively to support learning in lessons. For example, Year 6 pupils studying ancient Greece examined photographs of current events in the Olympic Games and were able to draw comparisons between events such as hurdles that may not have been available to ancient Greeks, with some suggesting hypotheses, such as events that entailed running and clearing low level obstacles. Teachers give pupils opportunities to collect information through first hand experiences on visits to places of interest. In the few lessons observed the majority of pupils worked well and showed interest in the subject. Most pupils work well together in groups and support each other's learning.
107. Insufficient lessons were observed during the inspection to make a rounded judgement of teaching quality but what was seen is satisfactory and there is some good teaching, for example, in a Year 6 lesson where a range of appropriate teaching strategies were used effectively to engage all pupils in a challenging historical

investigation. The teaching of the subject contributes much to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.

108. In the weaker lessons, teachers do not adapt the work for the range of pupils' abilities in the class so that some do not learn at an appropriate pace. Information and communication technology is underused, although teachers are beginning to use, for example, the Internet, to enable pupils to research issues and information.
109. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator has held the responsibility for the subject for two years and, following a comprehensive review of the subject aided by the adviser from the local education authority, has revised long-term curriculum plans to provide improved coverage across the school that is helping to raise standards. The co-ordinator has a clear understanding of the next steps for the subject, including better use of information and communication technology within the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

110. Standards at the end of Years 6 and 7 are broadly in line with those expected nationally. However, there have been recent rapid developments of the subject as a result of the provision of a new networked computer suite and staff training that is giving teachers growing confidence when teaching the subject. Consequently, many pupils make good progress throughout the school in developing their basic skills although the use of information and communication technology within many subjects remains underdeveloped. Pupils with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language are supported well, particularly in the computer suite where more able pupils are often paired with those who are less able. Pupils show good support for their peers, a process of which is of clear mutual benefit. Through the enthusiasm of the co-ordinator who has laid a solid foundation for further improvement, the school has effectively addressed some of the criticisms made of the subject in the previous inspection.
111. By the end of Year 6, pupils are able to perform all the necessary operations, locating and opening files, copying and pasting work from one application to another, and checking their spelling, saving and printing work in different styles. Most pupils take account of the intended audience when drafting their work. They can access websites and use them to research topics they are studying. Year 6 pupils perform calculations with spreadsheets to determine the perimeter and area of rectangles. They develop the appropriate formulae by applying their knowledge gained in recent numeracy lessons. Pupils show good understanding of the benefits of information and communication technology and how it is changing the world. They can also identify some problems the users of technology are most likely to encounter and many are able to give informed accounts of how they have tackled and learnt to overcome such problems.
112. Good access to the new computer suite and increased focus on acquiring skills in using information and communication technology in the curriculum are leading to improvements in standards, particularly in Years 4 and 5 where pupils can navigate websites, select appropriate text, copy and paste into a range of applications, edit existing text and use spell checks and word counters etc. In Year 7, pupils build on the skills they have acquired and use the Internet effectively to support work in other subjects. A study of websites related to Bangladesh enabled pupils to collect evidence that informed their tasks in a geography project. Pupils are familiar with the

application of e-mail. All classes have their own e-mail address and, many pupils have their own address on computers at home. Teachers actively encourage pupils to share experiences and knowledge of applications and programs. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and they work together and support each other very well.

113. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers use the computer suite effectively to develop pupils' knowledge and skills and to support learning in some other subjects. Planning for lessons is thorough and appropriate. Teachers encourage pupils to work together, sharing their expertise. While assessments of pupils' skills are made within lessons, teachers do not yet evaluate pupils' progress from year to year and use such information to guide their planning. Pupils are well managed and teachers encourage active participation in the computer suite with pupils working cooperatively in pairs. In a Year 5 lesson the teacher carefully prepared the pupils for access to a relevant website that allowed them to research education in Victorian times. Pupils were managed well and fully engaged and interested in their research so that effective learning took place.
114. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator monitors and evaluates the subject and has a clear understanding of the steps necessary to build on the progress made. Appropriate controls have been established to ensure that pupils are protected from inappropriate content and access to the computer suite is effectively managed. All staff have now completed the first stage of national training and some are now moving on to further training.
115. While all classes have computers, they are not yet used effectively within subjects. The co-ordinator has worked closely with advisory staff from the local education authority to develop the subject. The use of information and communication technology in other subjects to promote improved standards has been rightly identified as the next priority. A learning support assistant ably provides technical support for the co-ordinator. Resources for the subject have improved considerably over the past two years, but there are still gaps in the school's resources and provision, for example, using sensors to gather and display data from science experiments and using computers to help pupils to design in technology. The school's ratio of pupils to computers is now in line with national targets and plans are in place to replace some obsolete computers.

MUSIC

116. Pupils achieve standards expected nationally by the age of 11 and when they leave the school at the age of 12 and they enjoy their music making activities. The school has a successful choir and orchestra where pupils are encouraged to play a variety of instruments. In the orchestra, pupils play the electric and acoustic guitar, clarinet, recorder, violin, flute, drums and trumpet. Pupils from all year groups are encouraged to join the orchestra which practises at lunchtimes and there are equal numbers of boys and girls included. One pupil with English as an additional language who did not speak English when she joined the school last September was able to confidently play the recorder and read music at a basic level, having been a member of the orchestra for six months. The standard achieved by the orchestra is good and they regularly perform for the school and the local community. Pupils read musical notation at varying levels. Their playing is enhanced by additional lessons, supported in the main by the music service of the local education authority, with tuition in a variety of instruments.

117. Pupils make at least satisfactory progress in music. Pupils in a Year 4 class listened to a poem about the wind and were encouraged to create the mood stimulated by the poem by using percussion instruments. They were introduced to musical vocabulary such as 'pitch', 'volume', 'rhythm' and 'tempo'. Pupils worked in groups and chose the percussion instrument they wished to use giving the reason why. They effectively discussed how the verses in the poem might differ demonstrating contrasts and then transferred the choices made to creating a piece of music together using the instruments. In a Year 5 lesson the teacher introduced the word 'texture' and explained how pupils can 'hear' the texture in musical pieces. Pupils listened attentively to a tape recording, and the teacher discussed the texture of the sound. Pupils were able to identify the different instruments they could hear. They work in groups using tuned and untuned percussion instruments and are able to create a textured composition using four sounds. In a Year 7 class pupils thoroughly enjoyed working on the 12 bar blues structure and could quickly see the pattern they needed to play on their xylophones. This lesson also enabled pupils to explore and discuss chord patterns.
118. Throughout the school, pupils enjoy music and respond with interest, although they did not take part in any singing during the inspection week except the choir, who sang at the end of the week during a practice session for the end of term performance. When given the opportunity to use instruments and perform to others, pupils are willing and eager.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is at least satisfactory. Most of the teaching of music at present is carried out by the music co-ordinator. She works with the choir and orchestra well and their work is of a good standard. In lessons, there is a good balance achieved between explanation, demonstration and practical application and most pupils learn effectively throughout the school. However, they are not always managed consistently, and sometimes the teacher uses ineffective strategies when pupils are inattentive. Pupils consequently are not always fully engaged in the task. Lessons are planned around clear objectives but the scheme of work provides insufficient guidance on ways of developing pupils' skills and understanding from year to year. Opportunities to develop pupils' skills through other activities such as assemblies are sometimes missed
120. The music co-ordinator is now part time and is leaving at the end of the term. Although an action plan has been prepared for the year, it lacks focus and does not address developments in the curriculum sufficiently. Information and communication technology is not used in the school at present to enhance the music curriculum. There are no formal assessment procedures to evaluate pupils' learning and to guide planning and this affects the quality of provision. The school has a satisfactory range of musical instruments both tuned and untuned, and there is a collection of music CDs and tapes available to the teachers to support musical appreciation.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

121. Only a small number of physical education lessons were observed during the inspection. Pupils' standards are satisfactory. Evidence collected through discussions, reviews of the co-ordinator's file and subject documents suggests that provision overall has been maintained and improved since the last inspection is also satisfactory. There is no significant difference between standards achieved by boys and girls.

122. Pupils are aware of the importance of warming up and cooling down, and the effect of exercise on their bodies and how it contributes to their general health and well being. Good links are made with science lessons where pupils consider the types of food they eat and how moderation is important in order to maintain a correct body weight.
123. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils moved around the playground with increasing control and demonstrated an appropriate range of passing, catching and volleying skills. The main part of the lesson was active and pupils played effectively together as a team and used each other's strengths to enhance the game. Year 7 pupils are encouraged to identify and practise skills, for example, for kwik cricket. Pupils consider the way they send the ball to each other, discussing different speed and strengths and think about footwork in order to get into position quickly. Pupils play as a team in their groups and are aware of the space around them. They think carefully about the opposition's strength. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons. However, some safety issues are not highlighted and addressed firmly enough, for example; pupils are expected to remove jewellery but many do not and some pupils wear earrings and false nails that could be dangerous.
124. Most pupils enjoy physical education lessons. They respond positively in lessons and a minority has above average potential that is not being effectively used. Most pupils have a good attitude to the subject and work hard in lessons, although some older girls not doing games tend to talk constantly amongst themselves while the teacher is giving instructions and so disturb others. There are too many older pupils not involved in physical education lessons, for example, because they forget their kit, and the school has rightly identified this as an area that needs to be addressed.
125. Teaching overall is satisfactory. Teachers plan their lesson carefully and use resources appropriately. In the best lessons, learning objectives are clearly communicated to pupils, activities are purposeful and they are conducted in a controlled and safe manner. In some weaker lessons, expectations of pupils are not high enough and consequently they are not all achieving their potential. Teachers sometimes miss opportunities to encourage pupils to demonstrate skills to each other and pupils lose interest when the teachers' exposition to the class is too long.
126. Extra-curricular activities have improved since the last inspection in physical education and pupils are now able to participate in dance, cross-country, Kwik cricket and cricket clubs in the summer term. The school takes part in local football, tag rugby and Kwik cricket where the emphasis is very much on 'having a go' and 'play to win'. The new co-ordinator encourages regular practice of team games which are showing signs of improvement as a result. Older pupils have the opportunity to participate in residential visits to France and Dartmoor.
127. The subject co-ordinator is new this year and is keen to raise standards in physical education, aware that they could be higher overall. To this end, he has written an action plan in collaboration with the headteacher to fully implement a nationally available scheme of work for the school and to monitor teaching and pupils' achievements. Assessment is currently very informal. Resources are mainly satisfactory but some old and worn out rackets need replacing.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

128. Pupils' standards achieved by the ages of 11 and 12 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Pupils, including those with

special educational needs make satisfactory progress. Pupils with English as an additional language are making good progress and the progress of gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory. The last inspection also judged standards to be in line with expectations.

129. Pupils study world faiths and are encouraged to consider how they feel about the ceremonies and beliefs that they study. Pupils in Year 4 can compare local churches and describe how they feel when they visit them. In Year 6, pupils are asked to look at significant events through the eyes of people involved. Some have written letters by Simon Peter to describe the miraculous catch of fish. Year 7 pupils have a good understanding of the Five Pillars of Islam and can debate positive and negative aspects of visiting a place of worship through reference to good subject knowledge.
130. Pupils enjoy religious education, showing good levels of interest and involvement. When working together or discussing issues, they display respect for the views of others and use resources and equipment carefully.
131. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some teaching that is good. Teachers develop pupils' literacy well, encouraging them to listen carefully and talk very precisely when describing religious ceremonies or putting sacred texts into their own words. There are also good links with art, for example, where pupils study art that portrays different religions. However, information and communication technology is not yet used effectively. In the good teaching, care is taken to encourage pupils to understand the spiritual aspects of the subject and encourage them to apply intellectual and creative effort in their work. Year 6 pupils studying sacred texts provide a good example. The teacher introduced the subject by explaining the rules to be observed when handling the sacred book before it can be opened. Her description of how it should be protected from dust and kept in a special place and how hands should be washed before touching the book produced a moment of awe as she carefully opened it to find the verses being studied.
132. The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This was illustrated in a Year 7 class when pupils watched a short video showing the terrible plight of children who are used for cheap labour. The pupils described their feelings for the child workers and their admiration for the Christian Aid centre, which rescues and looks after the children. In groups, the pupils began to design positive posters to show how the people who use children in this way contravene many of the statements from the Declaration of Human Rights. This activity helped pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
133. The subject's co-ordinator provides good leadership in supporting and promoting improvements and she has a clear view of the way forward. She has worked hard to resource the subject and she introduced a new scheme of work in 2001. She monitors teaching and regularly examines pupils' books. Learning resources are good and well organised. Improvements since the last inspection include; an improved scheme of work, improved planning and assessment procedures and much improved resources for learning and all have assisted in affecting pupils' attainment and progress.