

INSPECTION REPORT

**St JOHN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND
FOUNDATION MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Watt Close, Bromsgrove

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 117001

Headteacher: Mr David Macey

Reporting inspector: Mrs E Gillmon
2774

Dates of inspection: 2nd - 5th October 2000

Inspection number: 223795

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Watt Close
Bromsgrove
Worcestershire

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr John Blackhall

Date of previous inspection: 19th June 1995

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
E. Gillmon	Registered inspector	Information technology	Standards;
			Quality of teaching
			Management
J. Brasier	Lay inspector		Attitudes, values and personal development
			How well the school cares for its pupils
			How well the school works in partnership with parents
J. Marshall	Team inspector	Modern Languages Equal Opportunities	
J. Brown	Team inspector	Science	
B. Frederick	Team inspector	Geography History	
C. Holland	Team inspector	Music	
G. Heap	Team inspector	Maths	How good are the curricular and other opportunities
P. Curtis	Team inspector	Design & technology	
E. Firth	Team inspector	Physical education	
M. Johnson	Team inspector	Art	
G. Barnes	Team inspector	English Special Educational Needs	
M. Elson	Team inspector	Religious education	

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Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Registrar
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The school was inspected by 12 inspectors, led by Mrs Eveleen P Gillmon. This is a summary of the inspection report, which is available from the school.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St John's is a much larger than average middle school (9-13) with 594 pupils on roll. Located close to the centre of Bromsgrove, it serves a socially mixed catchment area although overall the percentage of high social class households is above the national average. Approximately one-third of the pupils come from outside the catchment area. They are predominantly of white UK heritage and there are no pupils for whom English is a second language. Attainment on entry is generally above average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, as is the number of pupils registered as having special educational needs. There have been no exclusions for several years and pupil mobility is low. Attendance is consistently above the 90% benchmark.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

St John's is a very good school with some excellent features. Standards of attainment in mathematics and science are above national and local averages. In English, standards of reading exceed those in writing, particularly for boys, but overall they are usually good. Pupils are happy in the school and they make excellent progress in their academic and personal development. Teaching is a strength, and the school's strong sense of purpose reflects both its Christian aims and the energetic and visionary leadership of the headteacher. Resources for teaching and learning are very good and very well managed. The school provides excellent value for money.

What the school does well:

- provides high quality teaching in all subjects
- enables pupils, including those with special educational needs, to enjoy learning, make good progress and achieve well
- fosters pupils' confidence and good relationships throughout the school
- makes excellent provision for pupils' personal and spiritual development and provides a high standard of care
- gives effective guidance in the setting of personal targets for pupils' academic progress, social and moral development
- offers very good extra-curricular opportunities, particularly in sport, music and information technology
- has effective working partnerships with other schools
- manages its resources very efficiently.

What could be improved:

- monitoring of teaching and of subject co-ordination
- effectiveness of communications with parents
- monitoring of the consistency and quality of homework set
- assessment and recording of pupil capability in ICT
- co-ordination of planning for pupils with special educational needs and those with greatest ability

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 inspected in 1995 and has since made satisfactory progress on most of the key issues that were identified. Teachers' in-depth knowledge of their pupils strengthens their planning and preparation to cater for individual needs, particularly those with learning difficulties. They use a wide range of teaching and grouping strategies to meet the learning needs of all pupils, but the provision of specific extension tasks to challenge the more able remains inconsistent and there remains a need for greater co-ordination of this across subject areas. Learning support staff are deployed in response to prioritised needs but time constraints limit their involvement in lesson planning. Procedures have been developed to enable classroom monitoring, but have not yet been fully implemented. The small but attractive library is now a popular lunch-time venue. Programmed visits by departments enable pupils to employ their study skills. The library stock has improved and is supplemented by class libraries and access to electronic media throughout the school. Access to the information and communications technology curriculum has been extended, and the school's assessment, reporting and recording procedures are satisfactory. All health and safety issues have been addressed.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 11 year olds based on National Curriculum Key Stage 2 test results:

Performance in:	compared with				<i>Key</i>
	all schools			similar schools	
	1997	1998	1999	1999	
English	B	C	A	B	well above A average above average B average C below average D well below E average
Mathematics	C	D	B	C	
Science	A	A	A	A	

As yet unvalidated Key Stage 2 results for 2000 indicate a below average performance in English, but relative to the particular cohort the results were satisfactory. There are no national tests at the end of Year 8 but results obtained by pupils from this school in Year 9 (end of Key Stage 3) indicate that they do well. Trends over time, and performance observed during the inspection, show that the school's high level of achievement is being maintained across all subjects of the curriculum and in both key stages. The school usually performs above average when compared with other middle schools in the LEA. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are at least at the level expected nationally in English, mathematics and science and the achievements of many pupils are above this.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school are excellent. They enjoy coming to school and are enthusiastic participants in lessons and extra-curricular activities.

Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	The behaviour of pupils is excellent both in classrooms and around the school. They are courteous to each other and welcoming to visitors, often exhibiting a maturity beyond their years.
Personal development and relationships	Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and have opportunities to engage in corporate activity, such as the School Council. Relationships throughout the school are excellent.
Attendance	Attendance is very good. Unexplained absence is rare.

The behaviour and deportment of pupils around the school is excellent. They wear a simple uniform with pride, they show respect for persons and property, and articulate their pleasure in belonging to the school community. With few exceptions, they demonstrate good social skills and are co-operative with each other and with their teachers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 9-11 (Key stage 2)	aged 11-13 years (part Key stage 3)
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good

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

Teaching is a strength of the school. It was satisfactory or better in 100% of lessons observed in all subject areas, of which 83% were good or very good. Some excellent lessons were observed in French, history, ICT, religious education and science. Teachers demonstrate good knowledge of subject, very good lesson planning and excellent classroom management. They know their pupils well. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported. Literacy and numeracy skills are well taught and are reinforced in most subjects. A particular developing strength is the setting of individual pupil targets and the shared evaluation of these with the pupils themselves, which significantly contributes to the quality of pupils' learning and progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. Extra-curricular provision is very good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in all subject areas, particularly for the minority with statements of SEN.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Provision for moral and social development is excellent. The school's Christian ethos permeates all work and activity and contributes strongly to pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Procedures for monitoring attendance and welfare are good. All pupils are valued and cared for as individuals.

Curriculum provision is broad, balanced and relevant and meets statutory requirements. The literacy and numeracy strategies are well integrated and there is a good programme of personal, social and health care. Provision and support for pupils with special educational needs is good. Teachers know the pupils well and demonstrate dedicated care for their welfare. Sound systems for communicating with parents are in place, including open access to the headteacher and staff, although these are not always fully understood or taken up.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. An experienced and competent senior management team, stimulated by the energy and vision of the headteacher, has created an ethos of achievement and respect for community and Christian values within an efficient and welcoming environment.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good. Governors fulfil their role well through structured committees and their considerable expertise is well deployed. All statutory requirements are met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. There is a conscientious approach to the evaluation of outcomes but monitoring of classroom activity is not yet implemented systematically.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Financial management and control is very efficient and enables the high standard of accommodation and learning resources. The school provides excellent value for money.

The school is appropriately staffed with well-qualified personnel, although local difficulties in recruitment of 'supply' teachers impinge on some management practices. Accommodation and learning resources are very good, and governors and managers continually strive for further improvements.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most:	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the high standards achieved • the good behaviour and politeness of pupils • the quality of the teaching • the quality of the leadership and management • support for pupils with special educational needs • resources for the teaching and use of ICT • extra-curricular activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the apparent variability in the amount of homework set between year groups • inconsistency in monitoring of homework diaries • quality and frequency of information provided to parents

The inspection team fully supports the parents' positive views. No evidence was found during the inspection of inconsistency in the setting, quality or marking of homework as planned by the school, although inspectors took the view that pupils in Key Stage 3 would benefit from progressive homework loads in preparation for transition to the High School. The quality of information about pupils' progress and the procedures for communication and consultation are good, but the team

acknowledges the need for the school to strive to alter the perception of a significant minority of parents in relation to how well it communicates its intentions.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Data assembled by the school, including Key Stage 1 test results, shows that the attainment of pupils on entry is generally above average, although the full range of ability is represented. In relation to prior attainment, standards achieved by pupils are good and often very good.
2. Taking the core subjects of English, mathematics and science together, the performance of the pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 was well above the national average. Recorded results for the previous three years (1996-1998) reflect a steadily rising trend.
3. The percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 and above was above the national average in mathematics and well above in English and science in 1999. In 2000, it fell below the national average in English, but in relation to the measured reading ages of the cohort at entry, this represented a satisfactory level of progress and considerable added value. In mathematics, the number achieving Level 4 and above in 2000 was marginally below the national average, but in science achievements remained well above with a significant number of pupils achieving the higher levels.
4. In the 1999 national tests, girls outperformed boys in all three core subjects. In 2000, the gender gap had widened in English, most notably in the area of writing. The pattern was reversed in mathematics with a higher percentage of boys achieving Level 4 and above, although the percentage of girls achieving Level 5 was double that of boys. The gap between boys and girls in science narrowed considerably in 2000.
5. Observation of lessons during the inspection, and examination of pupils' prior work, confirmed that the majority of pupils in Key Stage 2 achieve appropriate standards, and are challenged and stimulated to produce a high quality of work, irrespective of ability level.
6. Standards of achievement observed in the early part of Key Stage 3 (Years 7 and 8) were at least commensurate with the expectation for age and frequently above it in many subjects. They were found to be well above expectation in French and in science. The inspection took place early in the school year when the Year 7 cohort were only 4 weeks into this key stage, and Year 8 pupils had completed one-third of the programme. However, analysis of previous pupils' attainment in the Key Stage 3 tests at the main destination High School, shows a rise in attainment from Key Stage 2, reflecting the considerable value added during the two-thirds of Key Stage 3 which is completed at this school.
7. In all other areas of the curriculum, standards are mainly good. The high standards of achievement in physical education and music in both key stages are linked to the extensive extra-curricular provision. Throughout the curriculum, many pupils are confident and skilful users of ICT, as demonstrated particularly during a Year 8 English lesson involving creative writing, and a Year 6 lesson in mathematics.

Literacy

8. Pupils' good speaking and listening skills are developed well by the use of extended talk in all subjects. Many read accurately, with clear expression and a good level of understanding. They

research enthusiastically using a variety of sources and study texts conscientiously. Correct punctuation and accurate spellings are features of pupils' work in all subjects. Presentation of work is neat but standards of handwriting are variable.

Numeracy

9. Numeracy standards are high across both key stages, and show improvement as pupils progress through the school. Pupils can use mental skills competently, using a range of mental calculation strategies appropriate to age, and their use of these skills in other subjects is good, most notably in science, geography and music.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

10. In all subjects pupils with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well. This is aided in many subjects by the use of ability sets particularly for those identified as more able. For those with difficulties which impede learning, achievements for many pupils are often high in relation to those difficulties and particularly noteworthy in the rapid improvement of their literacy and numeracy skills. Across the full range of subjects, teachers ensure equal participation and the quality of their support promotes good progress in knowledge and understanding. Particular strengths in the standards of attainment and achievement of pupils who have special educational needs are found in mathematics, science, art and the spoken aspect of modern foreign languages.

Higher Attaining Pupils

11. When compared with schools in similar contexts, the number of pupils achieving the higher levels in science at the end of Key Stage 2 in 1999 was well above the national average. In English it was above average, and in mathematics it was broadly in line. The year 2000 national comparative figures for schools in similar contexts were not available at the time of the inspection.
12. The school sets itself challenging targets for Key Stage 2 achievement in the three core subjects, and has been successful in meeting and exceeding them in recent years. They were met in science in 2000, but fell short in English and mathematics.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Attitudes, behaviour and relationships are excellent, and contribute to the high standards achieved. This represents a further improvement on the already good position at the last inspection.
14. Pupils enjoy school and speak highly of their teachers. Irrespective of their ability, they enter into lessons with enthusiasm. They are keen to get down to work, concentrate very well and show enthusiasm, particularly for answering questions. These very commendable attitudes are due to the widespread acceptance of the school's behaviour rules, the brisk and appropriate pace and challenge in almost everything that takes place in the school and above all to the enthusiasm demonstrated by the teachers themselves. Pupils collaborate quietly and effectively to help each other. Pupils are encouraged to use their own initiative in lessons. This is particularly noticeable in the geography and history projects that they tackle. At lunchtime the school buzzes with interest as pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs.
15. Behaviour is excellent. Around the school pupils move calmly and cheerfully. A noteworthy incident observed during the inspection was when classes moving in opposite directions through a narrow gap quickly devised a filtering system and there was no pushing or shoving. They are polite to staff, visitors and each other. Pupils are very proud of their school and the improvements that have been made in recent years. They keep the school tidy and in good condition and take

good care of their own and others' property. Behaviour observed on the playground during the inspection was also excellent. Pupils mix well socially and there is no evidence of oppressive behaviour. The school has good procedures for dealing with occasional incidents. No pupils have been excluded from the school in recent years.

16. Pupils work very well independently and in small groups. They cope maturely with occasional disruption and are responsive to each other. In one class, a poorly behaved pupil was successfully ignored by his neighbours but eventually produced some work which, when read to the class, won a spontaneous round of applause for effort to conform and do good work. This incident, together with pupils' positive attitudes to their peers who are known to have special needs, illustrates the strong respect for others' feelings that exists in the school.
17. Personal development is very good. Positions such as prefect, house captain or form captain provide opportunities for the exercise of responsibility. Form captains belong to, and contribute to, the School Council.
18. Attendance continues to be very good and unauthorised absence is negligible. Registers are maintained efficiently. Pupils arrive promptly for the start of the school day and lessons start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

19. Teaching is a strength of the school and is very good overall. It was satisfactory or better in all lessons observed in both key stages. Eighty-three per cent of lessons were good, and of the forty-seven per cent which were deemed to be very good, nine per cent were excellent. The best examples of very good teaching seen during the inspection were in history, information technology, French, religious education and science.
20. All teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and of the relevant programmes of study in the National Curriculum. Relationships with pupils are generally excellent, and classroom management skills are of a very high standard throughout the school.
21. Examples of very good teaching, promoting high standards of pupil attainment, progress and behaviour were seen in both key stages and most subjects. These lessons were characterised by effective teaching strategies, stimulating materials and pupil involvement in their own learning and assessment. The learning objectives for each lesson were shared with the pupils and appropriate tasks were set. Teachers negotiate challenging targets with individual pupils.
22. Teachers' planning and preparation of lessons is thorough. Their in-depth knowledge of pupils strengthens the provision for individual needs, particularly those with learning difficulties. An improvement since the previous inspection is evident in the wide range of teaching and grouping strategies employed to meet the learning needs of all pupils, but the provision of specific extension tasks to challenge the more able remains inconsistent across departments. Learning support staff are deployed in response to prioritised needs, but time constraints limit their involvement in lesson planning.
23. Homework is set regularly to a given timetable. Some parents expressed concerns about inconsistencies in the application of the timetable and the quality and relevance of the homework set. During the inspection, no evidence of such inconsistencies was noted, and homework

activities designed to reinforce and extend classroom learning were evident. However, there is room for the progressive extension of the amount of homework for pupils in Years 7 and 8.

Literacy

24. The school has effective programmes for the teaching of literacy. Teachers' good knowledge of the agreed strategies and their effective use of the national framework are reflected in pupils' improved standards of work. Whole class work is managed efficiently with good use of question and answer sessions ensuring the involvement of all pupils. Key grammatical aspects are reinforced during sentence work and texts for guided reading are used effectively. Group work activities fulfil learning objectives and plenary sessions are used for genuine reflection on learning. Reinforcement of literacy skills is implemented well throughout the curriculum.

Numeracy

25. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching numeracy skills is also very good. The whole staff was involved in the national training and this has enhanced teaching in all subjects and made a significant contribution to improved standards in mathematics and a significant contribution to learning in other subjects. Pupils can use a range of mental calculation strategies appropriate to age. Their use of these skills throughout the curriculum is good. Positive contributions to learning were observed in science where graphical skills helped them to learn about the cooling rates of liquids. In geography pupils use numeracy skills to work out slopes and describe rainfall and population growth whilst links are made to fractions and percentages when learning about notation in music.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

26. Information and communications technology is used to support and extend learning opportunities for pupils. Teachers have good and developing ICT skills and some examples of excellent teaching with ICT were observed in English and mathematics.
27. The school undertakes conscientious collation and analysis of performance data from entry through to High School transfer. This is circulated to all teachers and its use to inform ability grouping, lesson planning and individual target setting is developing well.

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

28. The quality and range of learning opportunities in the school is very good. The school has a comprehensive curriculum statement, which describes clearly how it plans to meet the learning needs of all pupils. Lesson time is fully utilised in all subjects, complies fully with the recommended length of time for the teaching week and gives adequate time to all subjects in all years.
29. The curriculum covers the teaching of all the usual subjects of the National Curriculum for all pupils. There is strong emphasis on the learning of English and mathematics, with adequate time given to learning all core and foundation subjects of the National Curriculum and RE. In Years 6, 7 and 8 the curriculum is effectively enriched by the addition of French, and health education is taught in all years. ICT is taught as a separate subject in Year 5 and 'Study Skills' is introduced in Years 7 and 8. The school pays for music lessons in a variety of musical instruments with take up in this area increased since the last inspection. The link between the RE curriculum and the content of school assemblies is good. The school fully meets the statutory requirements for the National Curriculum, the teaching of religious education and for collective acts of worship.

30. The school has made good progress in developing its curriculum since the previous inspection. Control and measurement is now taught in ICT with better learning opportunities in design technology, French and drama. Improved facilities have led to recent improvements in the teaching of ICT although greater integration with work in design technology is needed.
31. The quality and range of extra curricular activities provided is very good. Weekly clubs include ICT, dance, chess and gardening. A choir and an orchestra meet regularly and achieve high standards and there are opportunities to learn African drumming. There are numerous sports teams for football, rugby and netball. Lunchtime and after school activities are supervised by many volunteers from a committed staff. There are many opportunities to take part in school concerts and musical performances, including house music festivals and a residential weekend.
32. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good and includes sex and drugs education, taught in all years. The scheme of work is very good and includes all the appropriate elements of self-awareness development and safety education for this age range of pupils. The specialist teaching in RE makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development.
33. The school has a conscientious approach to ensuring access to the full curriculum for pupils identified with special educational needs. Staff are very familiar with pupils' individual education plans in which the targets are reviewed and amended regularly but there is scope to add more rigorous, subject specific measures of progress. Provision for the minority with statements of special needs is implemented effectively and the skilful support provided, particularly for those with physical impairment, enables their full access to the curriculum.
34. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills is very good. Learning and application of reading and listening skills are, for example, followed up in tutor periods to support better attempts at home work and to aid understanding of work learned during the day. Lists of specialist vocabulary are in evidence in most classrooms. These are used regularly by teachers and they play a positive part in enhancing learning in all subjects. Numeracy skills are developed well during mathematics lessons, and further enhanced through planned intervention elsewhere in the curriculum
35. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good. In Science, help from a German company working with polymers enriches the curriculum. Some adults who were former pupils contribute to history teaching with accounts of their war experiences and in PE, Kidderminster Harriers and Bromsgrove Rugby Club support school teams. Parents support the development of independent learning, particularly in geography where pupils produce extended projects of a high quality. The school has developed close links with the church, the Police and the fire service, and uses a DfEE sponsored independent-State schools link with Bromsgrove Lower School effectively. Links with Hungary and East Germany have resulted in pupil exchanges and pen friends in the past, now continued through the use of email.
36. The relationship with partner institutions is excellent. Transfer arrangements with the local First and High Schools are good. There is effective curriculum liaison in all subject areas through twice-termly meetings.
37. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. During the inspection spiritual development opportunities were observed in most subjects. Examples observed in English lessons included work on poetry, dramatic and literary texts and was evidenced by the depth of thought in pupils' response to teachers' skilful questioning and peer group provocation of

thought. All teachers make full use of opportunities in English to empower pupils to appreciate the awe and wonder of the conceptual imagery behind texts. Children expressed amazement and experienced excitement during experiments in science. They came to appreciate the importance of ways other countries care for their environment in geography and used religious paintings to develop their work in art. The specialist teaching in RE makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. In addition to Christianity, the wide range of religions covered deepens understanding and widens cultural horizons. There are good opportunities for prayer and reflection during assemblies.

38. Provision for pupils' moral education is excellent. It pulsates through school assemblies, tutorials and teaching and is reflected in extremely good behaviour and good relationships between pupils and pupils and teachers. For example in English analysis of characters' actions, intentions and responses, through the study of set books promote much discussion of moral issues at a variety of levels and challenge pupils' thinking. Teachers make good moral role models in their dealings with pupils and promote honest and fair environments in their classrooms.
39. Provision for social development is excellent with paired and group work strong in most lessons. Pupils encourage each other to contribute and were observed to consider each other's opinions in science, history and geography. They share facilities well during practical work in ICT and design and technology and converse well with the teacher and during group sessions in French. Above all, good relationships with adults in the school set the example for a very positive social ethos in which pupils have come to regard co-operation with others as the backbone to their learning experiences.
40. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. In science they learn about the contribution to knowledge of scientists in other countries; in design and technology and in French, food labelling is used to stimulate knowledge of multicultural issues; in history and geography pupils explore life in Tudor times and the life style of South American Indians; and examples of the work of other cultures are examined and used to create work in art. The Internet is also used frequently to explore resources beyond the locality.
41. Equality of access to the formal curriculum and to extra-curricular activities for all pupils is very good. The curriculum statement has equal opportunities as one of its aims and pupils have equal access to the taught curriculum for example through setting in maths and through equal access to the content of the curriculum in history, geography and music. Access is very good in areas such as ICT where provision is made mainly across the curriculum.

Literacy and Numeracy in the curriculum

42. Provision and planning to secure the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies are good. The school has developed a whole school approach to the teaching of literacy leading to improved skills. These are most securely applied within English and through the work of the special needs staff. Most other areas of the curriculum, particularly modern languages, science, music, technology, history and art support the development of literacy skills through the reinforcement of grammatical accuracy, technical vocabulary, the use of key words and opportunities for research. The national numeracy strategy is very well developed in Key Stage 2 and has considerable impact on teaching and learning in Key Stage 3.
43. Links with partner institutions are excellent. The First, Middle and High Schools form a pyramid organisation and work closely together, particularly on curriculum matters. Exchange of information about pupils' levels of achievement is a priority in order to secure continuity of learning on transfer. The headteacher is a member of the Development Committee of the High School (a

specialist Technology College). Liaison between the First schools and Middle school, is led by the head of Key Stage 2, although the large number of feeder schools renders this a complex task.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

44. The school cares very well for its pupils as it did at the time of the last inspection. Marking and other assessment procedures have much improved since that time. Several safety issues have been resolved and there is now a medical room.
45. The school is a safe environment with good supervision at all times. Usual safety procedures are in place and audited regularly. Safety checks are conducted seriously, for instance for one fire drill a few pupils were hidden in the school to see if they were reported as missing as the fire brigade arrived and carried out a mock rescue. Child protection procedures are good as the nominated person is experienced in this field and has useful contacts and knowledge of local procedures. Staff are generally well trained. Welfare provision is very good, with strict control of medication. Aspects of the personal and social education programme help pupils to look after themselves with external bodies, such as the local Police, making a valued contribution.
46. A high level of care is demonstrated by the school in its whole school approach to meeting the needs of pupils identified within a wide range of special needs. It is particularly sensitive to the more complex area of physical impairment and is aware of the specific needs of the more able. The learning support provided by the school is enhanced by additional assistance from the specialist external support agencies with whom there is frequent and effective contact.
47. Attendance is very well promoted, with accurate records and first class collaboration with the education welfare officer. Good attendance is rewarded with certificates and awards. The celebration of achievement and improvement is an important feature of the school and is marked by an annual prize giving ceremony.
48. Good behaviour is promoted, praised and monitored extremely well. Much attention is given to ensuring that incoming pupils in Year 5 fully understand the school's expectations and the reasons for the rules. There is a natural assumption that pupils will behave responsibly and they respond well to this adult treatment. Staff are excellent role models and treat pupils in the way they would like to be treated themselves.
49. Procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development are informal but effective as pupils are well known to their teachers. Form teachers teach their own classes where appropriate, talk knowledgeably about their pupils and give very good support and advice on personal development. Each term pupils set themselves a personal development target which is monitored, evaluated and recorded.
50. Academic progress is monitored efficiently throughout the school. Pupils' academic progress is well known to form teachers in Key Stage 2 as they frequently teach their own class. In Key Stage 3 advice on progress is provided by subject teachers. Individual pupils' performance is collated three times a year prior to parents' evenings or report writing. Academic targets in terms of National Curriculum levels are set collaboratively with pupils and their progress towards these is an important part of the monitoring process.
51. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. They vary from very good in mathematics and French to satisfactory in geography and art. There is a difficult situation in Years 6 and 7 for information and communications technology because it is not taught as a discrete subject as it is in Year 5. In Year 8, to provide the High School with accurate data,

National Curriculum levels are assessed from a portfolio of computer applications. Baseline data for Year 5 is obtained from feeder schools and this, together with tests of reading, reasoning and mathematics, provides a good basis for curriculum planning.

52. Assessment is used for setting and banding and for identifying pupils with special needs including the most able. In some subjects, such as science and mathematics, it is used effectively to modify what is to be taught, but this is less well developed in other subjects. Heads of Department monitor marking once a term to check on its effectiveness and conformity to the school's policies.
53. Previous performance in the First School, results of routine testing, the professional judgement of teachers and the experience of the SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator) are considered effective indicators in the identification of pupils' special needs. Additionally, specialist diagnostic testing by external agencies is organised for pupils about whom the school is particularly concerned. The school does not hesitate to resource this and responds positively to parents' concerns. Individual educational plans and statements of special educational need are reviewed and amended appropriately according to a pupil's progress against identified targets.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. Parents have a very high opinion of the schools' management and achievements, its reputation for hard work and good teaching, its good behaviour, the way their children mature and the school's approachability, but this high praise is tempered by concerns about homework, communications and school trips expressed by a minority of parents.
55. The inspection team agrees with the favourable comments by parents. Their concerns about homework are mainly about consistency and quantity, particularly in Key Stage 3. The inspection team concludes that homework could be used more effectively and more frequently in Years 7 and 8 to prepare pupils for High School. One of the most frequent comments about communications was the perceived lack of information about the school's wide range of extra curricular activities. There were also reported uncertainties about the logistics of attending school sporting fixtures. Another area of parental concern was the lack of advice or consultation when a child is moved from one subject 'set' to another.
56. The school prospectus and governors' annual report are not used to provide information about extra-curricular activities, and messages conveyed orally to pupils are not always transferred to parents via the homework diary which is the recognised channel for communication between school and home on a day to day basis.
57. However, the quality and frequency of information provided for parents is generally good. The procedures for informing parents about their children's progress are very good, starting with an Autumn term meeting accompanied by a brief resume of pupils' achievements and efforts in the subjects studied. This is followed in the Spring term by a full academic report and a meeting to discuss the content. A further summary report is issued at the end of the school year showing what progress has been made since the full report. The school's 'open door' policy enables parents to request a meeting to discuss pupil progress at any time. The full report issued in the Spring term has useful summaries of what has been studied in each subject and detailed information on the attainment and achievements made. Targets are included where considered important. These are often precise, but sometimes too broad to be useful. There are no reports on ICT capability in Years 6 and 7.

58. Monthly newsletters are provided and information is also sent home as required. There are minor infringements regarding the content of the school's prospectus and annual reports, which do not fully meet requirements, and opportunities are therefore lost to promote the school. In previous years, the school has organised events for parents to learn more about national initiatives, such as the literacy and numeracy programmes in Key Stage 2.
59. Induction procedures for Year 5 are arranged effectively and the new children settle in quickly. Parents of pupils identified with special educational needs are encouraged to be involved in the identification of their child's needs, the provision of support and the regular review of progress.
60. Parents help the school in a variety of ways. They help by hearing readers, by accompanying school trips, including residential ones, by providing transport for sporting fixtures, by coaching rugby and by supporting the Friends of the school, who raise useful finance and hold social events. Parents help at home by hearing reading and helping with projects. Many work hard to support their children's education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The school's published aims are reflected in its ethos of care, achievement and celebration which underpins its day-to-day life. The positive values which the school promotes effectively are shared by its community and the high standards of pupil conduct and mutual respect between adults and children are a measure of this.
62. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities effectively and gives purposeful direction to the school. Its membership includes a wide range of expertise which is assigned effectively to appropriate sub-committees. Some governors play an active part in the life of the school, but as yet direct involvement in monitoring and evaluation of classroom and extra-curricular activity has not been possible. Much of the evaluation of the school's policies, practices and decisions is undertaken on an informal basis and this has worked well for the school in the past.
63. The headteacher's visionary, caring and energetic leadership provides a very clear direction for the school. The experience of senior management, the diligence of staff and their loyalty to the school is a major factor in its success.
64. The school aims to develop a self-evaluation culture. Since the previous inspection, steps have been taken to resource senior and middle management to undertake classroom and subject monitoring responsibilities. Governors have ratified a sound policy for this, but while training has taken place and procedures have been agreed, the planned cycle has not been systematically or fully implemented, due to circumstances often beyond the control of the school's management. A review of the published plan, and development of alternative strategies to resource its implementation, is necessary. This is a management responsibility which will need immediate attention in the light of the new requirements for teachers' performance assessment.
65. The school's published development plan incorporates clear priorities for development at whole school and subject level. The plan co-ordinates curriculum planning and supporting staff development effectively, together with an outline for premises development. All staff are consulted within the planning cycle, and the school's collegiate commitment to continuous improvement is evident, as is the capacity to succeed.

66. The management of special needs is developing well with a SENCO organising specialised provision for those with learning difficulties, an adviser encouraging provision for more able pupils and an appropriately qualified governor providing strong support. Learning support staff are now deployed in response to prioritised needs but as they are frequently not involved in the planning and evaluation of mainstream lessons, the potential value of their support and enthusiasm is not fully realised. Time constraints have impeded implementation of the plans by senior staff to monitor the various departments' provision for all those with special needs and to co-ordinate the overall experience to which individual pupils are exposed. The SENCO has clear priorities for improving the effectiveness of the school's work in this important area.

Staffing and Accommodation

67. The match of qualifications and experience of teachers to the school's curriculum is good. Deployment of staff is generally appropriate, although middle and senior managers carry heavy workloads in addition to their teaching responsibilities. Staffing turnover is low, but the school has experienced difficulty in recruiting sufficient high-quality 'supply' staff and this, in turn, impinges on some management tasks as cover for absent colleagues has too frequently to be found from within the senior management team.
68. The school holds the Investors in People (IIP) award, and was recently re-accredited for the second time. Its practices and procedures for staff development are good. Training is planned, after consultation, and it is linked to the priorities of the school and personal professional development needs. Heads of Department are effective and fulfil their delegated roles with commitment, but a high teaching contact time acts as a constraint on development of their management role. The school has developed a sound performance management policy, and this together with its IIP procedures, secures structured access to professional development opportunities for all staff. The induction of staff new to the school and effectiveness of support for newly qualified teachers is good.
69. The school's calm, orderly and efficient operation owes much to its efficient administrative support team, and the quality of catering, infrastructural and technical support which is remarkably good.
70. The school presents a warm and welcoming image and has exploited the potential of its site well. The buildings are graffiti and litter free and allow access for the physically disabled. Maintenance is to a high standard. Pupils' work is displayed and achievement celebrated throughout the school. There have been many additions to the accommodation in recent years, including up-to-date science laboratories, technology work areas, and newly refurbished music and ICT suites. The dual purpose gymnasium and school hall enables whole-school assemblies. The building is secure and the spacious grounds enable a wide range of sporting and recreational activities.

Financial Management

71. Financial management is very good. Educational priorities are well supported through financial planning. Governors closely monitor provision in terms of curriculum development, standards of achievement, and quality of environment. Specific grants are used effectively for their designated purposes, and funding for special educational needs is carefully directed. The portions of budget associated with most of the essential services the school provides are similar to those in other schools. Spending overall for pupils is low, and the school provides excellent value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

72. In order to further raise standards of work and quality of education provided, the governors, headteacher and senior managers should:

- (1) facilitate a more systematic implementation of the school's comprehensive monitoring and evaluation policy and procedures by
 - reviewing the planned procedures in the light of current circumstances and resources
 - prioritising within the wide range of monitoring activities
 - securing a consistent and regular approach to classroom observation and feedback
 - building in contingency arrangements to cover staff absence
- (2) ensure that parents are fully apprised of the school's communication procedures by
 - reinforcing the clear procedures for informing parents about forthcoming events
 - monitoring the use of homework diaries as a medium for communication between school and home
 - exploring alternative strategies for communication with parents
 - expanding the content of the school brochure and governors' annual report to parents

73. In addition, the governors should consider action to improve the following minor weaknesses:

- (a) monitoring of the consistency and quality of homework set (*paragraphs 23,55,100*).
- (b) the assessment, recording and reporting of pupil capability in ICT (*paragraphs 51 and 57*).
- (c) the co-ordination of subject provision for pupils with special educational needs and those with greatest ability (*paragraph 66*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	88
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	38	36	17	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	595	N/A
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	29	N/A

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5	
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	117	

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	12
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	95.3
National comparative data	93.3

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	76	72	148

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	46	59	71
	Girls	51	44	69
	Total	97	103	140
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	66 (81)	70 (75)	95 (92)
	National	75 (70)	72 (69)	85 (78)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	51	63	67
	Girls	49	56	61
	Total	100	119	128
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	68 (73)	81 (73)	87 (87)
	National	70 (68)	72 (69)	79 (75)

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	4
Pakistani	4
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	587
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y5– Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	29.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	21..8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y5– Y8

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	109

Deployment of teachers: Y5– Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	79.8
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Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	28.75
Key Stage 3	27.3
Key Stage 4	N/A

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	987,377
Total expenditure	985,230
Expenditure per pupil	1,655
Balance brought forward from previous year	65,008
Balance carried forward to next year	78,778

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	595
Number of questionnaires returned	342

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	49	47	3	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	30	58	4	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	37	52	3	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	20	53	16	3	8
The teaching is good.	33	58	2	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	52	16	2	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	50	37	9	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	59	37	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	49	16	6	8
The school is well led and managed.	50	43	2	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	42	48	3	2	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	27	46	9	2	15

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

ENGLISH

74. Pupils report their enjoyment of this subject throughout the school. From the evidence of lessons observed and previously completed work, overall standards of attainment for most pupils by the end of Key stage 2, and in the year before the end of Key stage 3 (Year 8), are at least at the level expected nationally and for many pupils they are higher.
75. These above average standards are reflected in pupils' performance in Key stage 2 national tests where, since the last inspection results have, until the year 2000, improved steadily. With the exception of that year, performance has been consistently above the national average. In 1999 results were significantly in excess of the national average particularly the percentage of pupils attaining level 5. Although boys performed well in reading, in common with the national trend the overall performance of girls was consistently better. In 2000 above average performance in reading was accompanied by poor performance in writing particularly by boys but in relation to pupils' attainment on entry to the school in 1998 results showed satisfactory progress.
76. At Key stage 2 pupils are confident conversationalists as they are provided with good opportunities to ask and answer questions, to listen and respond to others and to present their own ideas and opinions. Standards of reading, understanding and response are very varied but many read aloud with confidence, fluency and expression. Most understand the intention of the writer and when responding to texts support their answers with textual evidence. Appropriate emphasis on basic skills and language study produces a higher than average level of technical accuracy in written work. The school's effective application of the literacy strategy has ensured that attention to the framework is anchored in practical language use. At this key stage written expression through poetry and extended writing is developing slowly.
77. During Key stage 3, pupils' oral fluency develops well as they become increasingly competent in articulating their feelings to engage the listener's interest. High expectations and effective discipline ensure that pupils listen attentively and challenge the responses of others. Critical literacy is developing and interest is stimulated by guided, close reading of suitably challenging texts. The approach supports significantly the study of language. Research skills are generally well developed and most pupils can retrieve, collate and use information from a variety of sources, including electronic media. Written work is wide-ranging in topic, form, style and approach but standards vary considerably. In Year 8 many pupils are adept at matching the style and structure of their writing to its intended audience and purpose but at the time of the inspection there were few examples of extended and sustained writing of very good quality.
78. In both key stages re-drafting for improved structure and precision is encouraged and pupils' writing and creative skills are supported by structured opportunities to use, information and communications technology. Written work is generally presented neatly but a significant number of pupils have a poor handwriting style. The development of pupils' spoken and written language is supported by the work in a range of curricular contexts and by their engagement with book and screen text when seeking information in relation to their studies in other subjects.
79. Conscientious monitoring of pupils' performance shows, in relation to the levels of skill recorded earlier, most make good progress in their work over time. Those identified with special

educational needs are supported very well and attain standards appropriate to their specific difficulties but in a minority of lessons the most able could be challenged further by the provision of more pre-planned extension tasks.

80. A consistently high degree of teacher commitment and good subject knowledge contribute significantly to the high standards pupils attain and produce a quality of teaching which is at least satisfactory, usually good and frequently very good. All lessons are planned diligently, resourced carefully and incorporate very skilful classroom management techniques to facilitate effective learning. The most successful secure a constantly brisk pace and include planned questioning and written tasks of differing difficulty to consistently challenge the full range of ability within the group. In all lessons pupils behave very well, are motivated by the tasks, work successfully in collaboration with others, respond well to their teachers' high expectations and share their enthusiasm for the subject.
81. During the prolonged absence of key personnel a co-operative team approach has maintained some strong features established in the past and has also initiated some essential development. The team's diligence and honest evaluation of performance support the department's commitment to further improvement. Refinement of a recently introduced scheme of work at Key stage 2, urgent updating of the scheme of work at Key stage 3 and improvement in standards of written work have been identified as priorities. The recommendations of the previous inspection to increase library use, widen reading for information and monitor the curriculum have been addressed but the wider use of drama to support all aspects of English has yet to be implemented.
82. This subject makes an important contribution to the academic life of the school and to the moral, spiritual, social and cultural development of the pupils.

Points for action:

- accomplish the priorities already identified
- ensure that pupils encounter literature from a variety of cultures
- secure progression in drama within English
- strengthen the sharing of good practice by a more systematic approach to classroom observation

MATHEMATICS

83. Over the last four years there was no significant variation in mathematics between the proportion of pupils gaining level 4, in Year 6 and the national average and the trend in improvement in Year 6 is similar to the national trend. Test results in mathematics were above the national average in 1999 and close to the results of similar schools, but in 2000 fell marginally below the national average. In 2000, overall a higher percentage of boys achieved level 4 and above, but more girls achieved Level 5.
84. In work seen during the inspection, attainment was above average in all years across the whole ability range and in all areas of the mathematics curriculum. In the earlier years pupils attain at the national standard whilst pupils in Years 7 and 8 attain above the national levels. By the end of Year 6 pupils can, for example, compare and cancel fractions, progressing well in Year 8 to understanding how equations effect the shape of straight line graphs. Pupils can use metric and imperial units effectively in Year 6 and have developed by Year 8 to use the properties of angles in parallel lines to solve problems. Data handling skills are good, progressing from using frequency diagrams to represent data in Year 6 to constructing pie charts and histograms in Year 8. By the end of Year 8 many pupils in the middle and higher ranges of ability achieve above national

expectations with able pupils attaining particularly highly in using and applying mathematics. Many pupils use ICT well to investigate, analyse and display their work

85. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good with every lesson judged satisfactory or better. In Key Stage 2 six out of ten lessons were judged very good with seven out of ten lessons good or better in Key Stage 3. Teachers plan well using the National Framework for mathematics. They follow the principles of the National Numeracy Strategy, teaching good mental and oral sessions, which practise the recall of number facts and concentrate on the learning of mental calculation skills. Mathematical concepts are explained clearly and activities are of very good quality. Management and discipline of pupils is very good and teachers are well organised and have the resources they need to hand. Pupils always know what to do and what they are going to learn.
86. Pupils with special educational needs and more able pupils are well taught. Less able pupils undertake practical work, related to real life situations which are carefully adapted to suit their learning needs. More able pupils attempt work that is well above the level expected for their age. As a result, these pupils attain well and make very good progress.
87. Leadership of mathematics is very good and has had a significant impact on the improved performance in mathematics. Early use of the National Framework for Mathematics and the inclusion of all teachers in the national training for the Numeracy Strategy supported teachers well and has resulted in a high quality of numeracy teaching in all years. Leadership has extended to very good supplementation of schemes of work using national materials and the creation of exemplar mental and oral activities, which are supporting teachers well. The Head of Department regularly monitors pupil progress to ensure that high attainment and good progress are maintained.
88. Good progress has been made in mathematics since the last inspection. Resources in Key stage 2 are now very good and the Head of Department has time to monitor the work of colleagues, which is having a beneficial effect on quality of teaching and learning. The National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented very well in Key Stage 2 and the influence on Key Stage 3 teaching and learning is excellent.

Point for action:

- Continue the development work to improve continuity of work planned in early Key Stage 2.

SCIENCE

89. The attainment of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 is well above the national average. In the year 2000, test results were well above the national average for all schools. At the time of the previous inspection, results were in line with the national expectation, but since then there has been a gradual move upwards to the current very high level. Girls and boys perform equally well. Classroom observations and scrutiny of work confirm these very high standards. By the end of the key stage, high attaining pupils understand the nature of light and how it is reflected in various types of mirror. Of particular note is the mature way in which pupils can evaluate the quality of their investigations. High attainers make very good progress. Low attainers and pupils with special educational needs make good progress when compared to prior attainment.
90. In Years 7 and 8, pupils were observed to be making good progress in learning. Observation of lessons and pupil workbooks show that, by the end of Year 8, most pupils are achieving standards well above the average expected nationally. High attainers carry out more sophisticated

investigations with skill and scientific insight. They can apply their scientific knowledge and understanding to justify predictions and produce conclusions. Low attainers and those with special educational needs also make good progress in relation to their prior attainment. They can carry out practical investigations with good skill and show a good understanding of a wide range of basic concepts. Literacy skills are well developed and pupils of all attainment levels can fully describe their work orally and convey their understanding through free writing. Numeracy skills are good, with most pupils able to draw accurate line graph (with relevant interpretations), carry out calculations and present work in tables and pie charts.

91. In Key Stage 2, teaching and learning are very good overall. In Key Stage 3, teaching and learning are both good. Very good subject knowledge and the use of a variety of teaching strategies promote good learning. Class-teaching, demonstrations and small group practical work all play an important part in involving pupils in their own learning and pupils respond with enthusiasm. In one lesson observed, learning was made easy and greatly enhanced when the teacher had pupils acting out how kinetic theory explains changes of state. Good understanding of the learning process was continually demonstrated as pupils were made to construct their own answers with very little reliance on copying. Pupils not only improve their investigative/practical skills but also learn to apply their prior knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts. The most successful lessons observed had a lively introduction, learning objectives clearly set out, high expectations of all pupils, frequent checks on progress and understanding and a final opportunity for all pupils to demonstrate what they have understood and learned. In the very small number of lessons where teaching and learning was not quite as good, the pace was slower and not enough time was left at the end for a full discussion on findings and conclusions. Group work is a particular strength of the department with all pupils learning to co-operate and to take a full share of responsibility. Pupil-teacher relationships are excellent and pupils apply themselves diligently and with enthusiasm to a wide range of tasks.
92. The use of information and communications technology within science teaching is now formalised within schemes of work. Further integration will be beneficial.
93. The department is well led and this is reflected in the quality of teaching, learning and results. There is a shortage of technical assistance, but the hard-working staff ensures that good quality practical work is the main feature of the department.

Points for action:

- Further develop monitoring of teaching and sharing of good practice
- Expand the Department Handbook to provide greater support for new teachers.

ART

94. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is in line with national expectation. By the end of Year 6 pupils have learned to use a variety of techniques, which they apply well to their work. In Years 7 and 8, standards observed during the inspection were in line with national expectation at this stage of the Key stage 3 programmes of study. Pupils are able to use line tone and texture effectively in their drawings. They observe natural forms well and understand three-dimensional concepts.
95. In Key Stage 2 pupils' progress in investigating and making are sound overall with some good features. Sketchbook work is now established in Year 5 and, on the whole, used effectively. Pupils use them in homework to extend or consolidate work in lessons. In Year 6 pupils develop

good understanding of composition and are able to explore ideas through much of their drawing, painting and design work.

96. In Years 7 and 8, pupils are able to develop and sustain a chosen theme in their work and experiment and make successful expressive observational drawings and paintings. They demonstrate some personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce. In both year groups, pupils' knowledge and understanding is strengthened and consolidated through class discussion and research of art from the present and past. Pupils enjoy their art lessons and apply themselves purposefully to their work.
97. Attitudes to learning and behaviour throughout the department are good in both key stages. Pupils are well motivated and respectful to adults and each other. They listen attentively and are disciplined in their work. Lessons are orderly and characterised by good relationships.
98. The quality of teaching is good and makes a positive contribution to the standards achieved. The teachers create a secure framework for learning and provide individual support where it is needed. Teachers have sound levels of subject expertise and use their own media skills to demonstrate techniques to the pupils. The art curriculum is enhanced by visits to museums and galleries to widen pupils' cultural awareness and help to raise their aspirations. The use of ICT to support art teaching is underdeveloped, and lack of technical support constrains the amount of ceramics work possible.
99. The subject is well led and managed and good relationships throughout contribute to an effective working ethos. Teaching schemes are clear and assessment policies are now being implemented which will provide good guidance for teachers. Access to computers in all rooms is still inadequate. Greater emphasis on the use of homework in Key Stage 3 is needed to help pupils prepare for the transition to High School.

Points for action:

- Take a more proactive approach to the integration of ICT within art teaching
- Review the quantity, quality and frequency of art homework in Years 7 and 8

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

100. Attainment at Key Stage 2 is in line with national expectations for most aspects of design and technology.. Pupils work with resistant materials, clay, card, food and textiles to produce good quality products. At Key Stage 2 pupils have a sound idea of the design process. They make plans and list the materials and tools required. The evaluation of their work and suggestions for improvement show independent thought and reasoning. The written evaluations enhance their literacy skills.
101. In Years 7 and 8, attainment is in line with expectation and pupils make good progress. They use technical language to describe the materials and tools they use. Books and sometimes computers are used to research ideas before deciding how to interpret a brief. Some good work was seen where pupils designed and made a variety of holders using acrylic. Prototypes and templates were made from card. The acrylic was cut, finished and heat formed to produce attractive and stable containers, for example a letter holder.
102. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in both key stages. Teachers are well aware of their needs and adjust work to enable them to succeed.

103. Teaching in both key stages is good. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their work and adjust their designs. Most projects include some skills teaching. For example, an exercise in accurate joining of card to ensure stability took place before a project involving making simple valves. In a food technology lesson on analysing a new product, including packaging and advertising, pupils were made aware of the commercial world. Emphasis on safety was a good feature of all the teaching seen. Teachers have good class management skills, and meticulous preparation ensures maximum use is made of the time in a practical lesson. In some lessons there is need to emphasise the stages of the design process so that pupils fully understand the difference between a creative craft design activity and designing for a specific need. Good records of attainment are kept. The Head of Department gives good guidance and provides well documented resource material for the team. Lack of technician support for maintenance of materials and equipment erodes time for curriculum development and staff support.
104. Some of the programmes of study in the National Curriculum are not covered in the design and technology schemes of work. For example, there is no computer aided designing and making. Some pupils use word processing and the Internet, but the use of ICT is less than it should be and training is needed for teachers. The school has plans for this to take place together with more access to computers and relevant software.
105. The department has made good progress since the last inspection. All the issues have been addressed. The accommodation is now good. There are no concerns for health and safety issues. The food technology scheme is relevant and provides pupils with the right balance of practical and theory work.

Points for Action

- Include all the National Curriculum programmes of study in the schemes of work.
- Make ICT training for teaching staff a priority

GEOGRAPHY

106. Standards of attainment in geography are above the national expectation across the two key stages. At Key Stage 2 map work reaches a very good standard. Pupils can use four figure grid references to locate features on the ordnance survey map. Lower attainers, including those with special needs have more difficulty in calculating accurately but understand the basic concept of direction in following a route. Most pupils are competent in collecting data and presenting in geographical form their findings. In Year 6 most pupils produce written work of a high standard in their project study of the River Severn, which is well illustrated with photographs and diagrams. The high attaining pupils are confident in using their skills at home to edit information researched from the Internet and newspapers in order to enhance their findings. In a lesson pupils understood the concept of flood control using their local knowledge of Worcester. Pupils with special needs keep abreast of the coursework with the help of specially designed worksheets.
107. At Key Stage 3 most pupils in Year 7 are able to locate capital cities of the world using an atlas as a source in order to plan a trip around the world. In Year 8 most pupils can interpret data in plotting population densities on the world map. Higher attainers have more idea of the rate of population change across the world. Lower attainers have difficulty in understanding keys on maps but with individual support are able to complete coursework. Pupils become more confident in the use of geographical vocabulary with the help of writing frames. By Year 8 most pupils produce extended writing of a good standard on climate and economic factors in making

comparisons between developed and underdeveloped regions of the world. Extended studies for higher attaining pupils include opportunities to demonstrate ICT skills such as desk-top publishing.

108. At both key stages pupils make good progress in geographical knowledge and understanding. They gain skills in the use of maps, graphs and statistical data both in oral and written presentations. In Key Stage 3 most pupils make progress in a range of writing styles and are capable of producing work well illustrated with diagrams and graphs.
109. Geography has made sound progress since the time of the previous inspection. There is more emphasis on enquiry work by pupils in well planned lessons with a range of teaching methods and activities using the text book as a source of information. The detailed scheme of work provides a good structure for teaching and has an imaginative approach, known as 'a passport to the world' at Key Stage 3. A start has been made on the use of ICT to enhance quality of the work. The use of assessment is closely related to the literacy strategy at Key Stage 2. The use of National Curriculum teacher assessment levels in Year 7 and 8 is not yet sufficiently developed to target improvements in teaching and pupil performance. The programme of field work is planned to focus in Year 8 on a neighbourhood urban study.
110. Teaching is always satisfactory and more usually good at both key stages. Features of good teaching were found in all lessons, particularly in the teachers' subject knowledge and this, combined with the good use of resources takes pupils' learning forward at a good pace. Lively teaching and good organisation was observed with pupils in Key Stage 2, grouped on similar lines to the literacy strategy. Teachers are aware of different abilities and provide different materials for lower attainers and those with special needs, which result in their good progress. Pupils are skilfully questioned on their understanding, which helps them to consolidate and build on their knowledge.
111. Most pupils are very keen to learn and behaviour is excellent. They collaborate well in pairs, remain on task throughout and enjoy their work. The Head of Department provides support to a team of teachers through well structured schemes of work which provide progression in geographical knowledge and skills over four years. This progression is enhanced by the close working arrangement of the subject within the local 'pyramid' of schools.

HISTORY

112. Standards of attainment in history at both key stages are above the national expectation. At Key Stage 2, Year 5 pupils are capable of writing imaginative accounts as if they were Spanish explorers visiting the Aztecs of Mexico. They write a letter home comparing their own way of life with the customs and culture of an earlier civilisation. In Year 6 work is presented neatly and well illustrated by a range of graphic and written communication. The higher and average attaining pupils are beginning to produce structured writing combining information from various sources. Pupils with special educational needs attain well with the support of specially designed worksheets. Opportunities are provided for the more able pupils to undertake extended studies, such as a word-processed publication of wartime life in Bromsgrove.
113. At Key Stage 3, a strong feature of the work in history is the way in which pupils develop their investigative skills and seek sources of information for use in their written work to support conclusions. They are encouraged to make full use of computers at home and in school to look up information on the Internet and word process their project work. Year 7 pupils are able to reconstruct events leading to the battle of Hastings in 1066. Most pupils in Year 8 are able to

examine a number of different sources in coming to a conclusion on the character of Henry VIII. High attainers produce well-structured project work in the style of an official report. Pupils of average attainment can explain whether statements are fact or opinion but their coursework contains fewer diagrammatic illustrations. Low attainers keep abreast of the coursework with a more limited range of writing but are capable of imaginative expression.

114. Teaching is good overall at both key stages. Features of very good teaching are found in all lessons, particularly in the teachers' subject knowledge and management of pupils. Teachers have high expectations of the amount of work that pupils should do in school and at home. Pupils are challenged to use imagination in expressing an opinion or an interpretation. In most lessons teachers skilfully question pupils on their understanding, which helps them to consolidate and build on their skills. Pupils are encouraged to think like historians and are given structured guidance on how to use historical evidence and present information in a balanced form. From Year 7 onwards, they make good progress in extended essay writing skills.
115. Pupils show willingness to undertake independent study and enquiry work outside lessons. They are well behaved in class and clearly enjoy the numerous challenges to be creative.
116. History has made good progress since the last inspection. More rigour and coherence have been put into the scheme of work; more attention is paid to historical skills and there is a good programme of fieldwork visits. A strength of the subject is the progression and planning of the curriculum within the local 'pyramid' of schools. Planned developments in the use of ICT will further enhance quality. Assessment arrangements are now well developed to target improvements in teaching and pupil performance.

Point for action:

- Implement the plans for increased use of ICT to support teaching

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

117. Attainment is above the national expectations at Key Stage 2. It is also above national expectations in Year 7 and Year 8 in most strands of the National Curriculum, although the programme of study concerned with measurement and control need further development. This was a criticism at the time of the last inspection and although it has been addressed in the ICT policy, it has not yet been fully implemented. Plans are in place to secure this element of ICT entitlement within the comprehensive scheme of work for Year 5 and within other subjects in the curriculum. There is, as yet, no provision for computer-aided design or making.
118. In Key Stage 2, Year 5 pupils are taught ICT skills in whole class groups in a very well equipped room. In Year 6, ICT is taught through separate subject disciplines. Mathematics and English classes spend one period each week using the ICT facilities. Pupils are able to log on and log off and identify the parts of the computer. Observation of work displayed and discussion with pupils about their work, revealed that they can enter text, alter fonts, plan different layouts on the screen and print their work; using a graphics package, they can create space within the text, move and resize pictures. In a mathematics lesson, Year 6 pupils were observed using LOGO effectively to draw a variety of shapes. They can understand and follow instructions using the dialogue boxes. Keyboard skills are limited for many pupils.
119. In Key Stage 3, Year 7 and Year 8 pupils build on the skills previously acquired and good progress is seen in developing word processing skill. Again, for some pupils, lack of keyboard

skills limits progress. The Internet and CD-ROM are used for research in several subjects. Good work was seen in English, geography and history. Pupils show a developing discrimination in accessing and editing information. Some well researched and very well presented geography projects were displayed. Pupils are familiar with the use of spreadsheets and they can create and use databases. In science, pupils use data logging using sensors for measurement.

120. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is in line with other pupils in the class, with support given by the teachers and technical staff.
121. Teaching at both key stages is good. Alternative methods of completing a process are discussed and pupils have the opportunity to compare them with the computer-based solution. This is a strong feature of the ICT teaching. Class management is very good and the pupils are stimulated and interested in the well presented topics.
122. The subject is managed well and benefits from a qualified technician who assists teachers and pupils. The Head of Department gives support to all other subject areas to ensure cross-curricular application of skills. Most subjects incorporate ICT into their schemes of work but there is need for improvement in some subjects, particularly design and technology and art. Excellent examples of the use of ICT to enhance learning were observed in English, through creative writing, and in mathematics using LOGO to teach measurement.
123. Many pupils benefit from the experience of using computers at home. There is also a regular and flourishing lunchtime computer club for all year groups, well supported by teaching and technician staff.
124. The school has ambitious plans to extend and develop the use of ICT and is working closely with the specialist Technology College, South Bromsgrove High School, to further these.

Points for action

- Ensure that 'measurement and control' is incorporated in the ICT scheme of work.
- Include details of pupils' ICT attainment in the reports to parents.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

125. Pupils in Year 6 are achieving standards well in advance of what might be expected of pupils who have studied French for such a short time (less than half a term at the time of the inspection). In Years 7 and 8, many pupils are working at National Curriculum levels well above expectations for this subject.
126. The pupils' listening and speaking skills are particularly good; they pronounce French very well and are quick to understand the spoken word. As early as Year 6, pupils can use the language rather than just repeating it; they can spell words in French and can recognise words spelled aloud by their teacher. In Years 7 and 8, pupils can ask and answer straightforward questions and the majority can adapt the language according to whether they are speaking of one person or more, or whether a word is masculine or feminine. In all year groups, pupils easily read the printed word and produce careful and accurate written work. In general, their skills in speaking, reading, writing and understanding French are very good for their ages and for the stage they have reached in their studies.

127. Good progress is made in individual lessons, new work being introduced and learned so that pupils can use it in speech or writing by the end of the class. This good progress is seen over time in the levels achieved by the different year groups. It is particularly noticeable that Year 6 pupils who have had only a few hours' tuition can not only spell but count fluently and can respond to requests in French with clear understanding. Pupils with special educational needs understand well and make a good progress in lessons.
128. All the teaching observed was good or better. Teachers use French confidently and fluently throughout lessons and expect pupils to respond in French. English is used appropriately when necessary to ensure that pupils understand and do not become confused or anxious, but it is always supported by repetition in French. Overall, this is a strong department with very good leadership and teamwork. It makes a very good contribution to the cultural and academic life of the school.
129. Lessons are planned thoroughly, with full use of time and a brisk pace, using a wide variety of techniques and resources so that pupils can learn in the way best suited to their individual strengths. Pupils with special educational needs are fully included in lessons; written work is marked in such a way that pupils who find writing difficult are encouraged while the most able are challenged to produce their best work. In class, there are occasions when able pupils are waiting for others to finish; extension work could be given at these times to enable these pupils to progress at a faster pace. In oral work, these differences are dealt with very well by the teachers who are skilled at questioning pupils in a way which will draw out the best from each individual. Class management is of a high standard and relationships are mutually respectful and friendly.
130. Pupils work well together in pairs or groups for part of most lessons, learning from each other and learning to work as a team and to listen courteously to each other's contributions.
131. There are very good resources for teaching French, including extra reading material. It was not possible to see ICT in use during the inspection but there is appropriate software available and opportunities for its effective use are integrated within the department's scheme of work.
132. All the issues raised at the time of the previous inspection have been fully resolved. The department should consider the provision of written extension tasks for classroom use for the most able and should seek opportunities to enable pupils to experience the use of French by native speakers.

Point for action:

- Develop additional written extension tasks for the more able pupils

MUSIC

133. At Key Stage 2 standards are good across both attainment targets and they are above average for most pupils. Pupils play a variety of instruments and most demonstrate good control and appropriate techniques. They understand how to use music to create different effects and they use correct vocabulary to describe music. Singing quality is at least satisfactory and pupils sing enthusiastically in school assemblies. Pupils' achievement, including progress over time and gains in lessons, is good for pupils of all levels of ability.

134. Standards at Key Stage 3 are also good with most pupils achieving above the expected standard for the stage of the course. They perform and compose in a variety of styles using musical elements with understanding. Singing standards are satisfactory and most pupils can describe different musical styles using correct terminology. Pupils of all levels of ability make equally good progress and achievement in lessons, and over time, is good.
135. At both key stages pupils use ICT in their work to notate their compositions but do not currently have sequencing and editing facilities to ‘manipulate and refine’ their work.
136. Standards in instrumental music and in the extra curricular music are generally good and occasionally very good. Ensemble playing is good in the orchestra and pupils add musical details of articulation and dynamics to their performances. The 50 strong choir sings with a pleasing tone and the popular African drumming groups manage cross rhythms with good playing techniques.
137. Teaching is a strength of the department. It is good overall and some very good teaching was also observed. The teachers have good subject knowledge; they establish very pleasant relationships and a positive working environment in their lessons. Clear explanations with good use of questioning to recall prior knowledge sets a secure starting point for the lessons and leads to good learning gains. The high expectations of the teachers result in hard working, well behaved and enthusiastic pupils who are further encouraged by praise for their efforts. On occasion they need more time to respond when appraising work of their peers. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and a variety of tasks linked to different attainment targets ensures that pupils work with interest to develop a wider understanding of the subject. Resources are used well and varying difficulty levels in tasks allows all pupils to make progress although, in a few instances, tasks need shorter term targets.
138. There have been several areas of improvement since the previous inspection. Standards are higher overall and singing, which was judged to be unsatisfactory in the previous inspection, has improved. The curriculum has been broadened with further plans to develop understanding of African and Indonesian music in hand. There are also plans to develop music technology in line with the National Curriculum by linking keyboards and sequencing software in the new ICT suite. The most striking improvement has been the development of a new music suite with a large classroom, an instrumental teaching room and a further small area equipped with a computer. There is some sound contamination between the instrumental teaching room and the main classroom and sound proofing is needed here. Resources in the library have been improved and new percussion instruments have been purchased.

Points for action:

- Improve soundproofing between instrumental teaching area and main classroom

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

139. Standards of attainment are good in all activities and in all year groups. Attainment in Dance in Year 8 is very good. The achievement of the majority of pupils is in line with national standards and a number of more able pupils exceed the level expected of their age. Learning at both Key Stages is good in the majority of cases and never less than satisfactory.
140. The quality of teaching observed was always good and, in more than half the lessons it was very good. The specialist teachers are well qualified, experienced and have broad subject knowledge.

All teachers use time and resources effectively, have high expectations of, and a positive and caring relationship with pupils. Behaviour, safety and personal hygiene are given high priority.

141. Pupils are extremely well behaved, well dressed according to school guidelines, well mannered, polite, co-operative and enthusiastic at all ages in their approach to Physical Education and put the subject high on the list of things they like and enjoy in the school.
142. Children with special educational needs are involved in all aspects of the physical education curriculum. They are well known by the teachers and their needs met with the assistance of support staff as appropriate.
143. The subject is well managed for both boys and girls by two experienced Heads of Department and staff relationships are good. The organisation of both teaching and classes runs very smoothly. Finance is adequate and well controlled. Equipment is plentiful, in good condition, safely stored and readily available. Accommodation is good for both indoor and outdoor activities. Curriculum provision is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities and school team fixtures in major sports for all pupils across the age range. However, a minority of parents expressed concern about equality of opportunity to participate in school teams and sports days. Teams are generally successful and the school is well represented at district and county levels and in local clubs.

Point for action:

- Ensure that parents are fully informed and understand how selection criteria are applied when organising team events and sports days.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

144. Standards are high. All pupils make good progress within the Agreed Syllabus and by the end of Key Stage 2 all have reached the standard expected. Within the range of expectation most pupils achieve at the higher levels. They know the distinctive beliefs and practices of Christianity and understand the meaning of religious ideas. They also know how to reflect on what they learn and how to relate it to their own experience.
145. In Key Stage 3 pupils make very good progress. In Year 8, the majority of pupils are on course to reach the middle and higher levels within the range of expectation. Pupils appreciate how song and music are not only forms of religious expression but also the means by which to interpret and celebrate life. They understand the nature of pilgrimage and, for example, can explain with confidence the observances of Hajj and their spiritual significance.
146. Teaching is very good. Most lessons at Key Stage 2 and nearly all lessons at Key stage 3 are taught by specialist teachers. Their expertise in religion enables these teachers to prepare and present their lessons with confidence. The use of resources is particularly effective and pupils respond well to the intellectual and creative demands made of them. Lessons have structure and sequence, and a strong sense of purpose. Teachers have high expectations and use lively activities and carefully constructed writing tasks that are effective with all pupils. When pupils saw one of their class dressed in Ihram it helped them to produce writing full of empathy for the ideas and feelings of a Muslim on pilgrimage to Mecca. Such skilful teaching worked well not only for the higher attaining pupils but also for those with special educational needs. As a result not only do pupils learn well but their progress increases as they move up the school. Even in the

minority of lessons taught by non-specialists teaching and learning are never less than satisfactory.

147. Other factors contribute to the high standards and good teaching in religious education. The schemes of work are exemplary for their coverage of content and the clarity of learning objectives. Assessment is very good. Attainment is measured systematically and reported annually to parents. The information generated could be used to identify trends, to analyse the performance of different groups and to compare pupils' attainment in religious education with their performance in other subjects. The excellent collection of learning resources is used very well in lessons.
148. Religious education benefits from very good leadership, which gives clear direction and a strong commitment to further improvements. All recommendations made at the time of the previous inspection have been implemented. In particular, better use of specialist teachers was recommended and during this latest inspection it was observed that there was a direct correspondence between high standards and specialist teaching. As well as enabling pupils to achieve high academic standards religious education also makes a very significant contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' personal development.

Point for action:

- Develop further the use of available data to fully inform lesson planning and schemes of work