

# INSPECTION REPORT

**OUNDLE AND KING'S CLIFFE MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Oundle

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122089

Headteacher: Mr N Underwood

Reporting inspector: Mr J Bald  
17932

Dates of inspection: 13 – 16 November 2000

Inspection number: 223869

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: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 to 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Cotterstock Road  
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Richard Coombes

Date of previous inspection: November 1995

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
John Bald (17932)	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	The school's results and achievements.
			How well are the pupils or students taught?
			How well is the school led and managed?
Tim Page (9958)	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
			How well does the school care for its pupils or students?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
Garth Collard (4223)	Team inspector	History	
Gerald Griffin (18542)	Team inspector	Science	
		Information and communication technology	
Ian Stainton-James (27061)	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology	
David Whale (11043)	Team inspector	French	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
Patricia Walker (15372)	Team inspector	Geography	
		Physical education	
Barbara Johnstone (8139)	Team inspector	Music	
Philip Winch (11720)	Team inspector	English	
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Michael Miller (17556)	Team inspector	Art	
		Religious education	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School is very large. It occupies two sites, eight miles apart, one of which is much larger than the other. The school has 687 pupils, almost all white. The very few pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds do not need additional help with learning English. The social and economic context of the school is favourable, and few pupils are entitled to free school meals. Most pupils joining the school have reached above-average standards for their age, but the proportion with special educational needs is broadly average, and includes an above-average proportion of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need.

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

This is a good school. Standards at thirteen are above-average, and provision for pupils' personal development is outstanding. The quality of teaching is good, and the school is very well led and managed. Value for money is good.

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

- Standards are above average in almost all subjects, well above average in English and very high in art.
- Teaching is good, with above-average proportions of very good and excellent teaching on both sites.
- The headteacher and deputy headteachers provide very good leadership and management.
- Provision is very good overall for pupils' personal development, and excellent for social and moral development.
- Pupils behave very well, work hard, and have a strong sense of personal responsibility.
- Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need make very good progress.
- Opportunities for learning outside the classroom, particularly in music, are very good.
- The school has a good relationship with parents.

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

- Teaching is satisfactory rather than good in a fifth of lessons, though it is rarely less than satisfactory.
- The most able pupils are challenged well in most, but not all, lessons.
- Standards are not tracked effectively in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Provision for pupils with reading and spelling difficulties in English, but who do not have Statements of Special Educational Need, is satisfactory rather than good.
- The use of homework is not consistently effective.

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

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

When the school was last inspected, in November 1995, it was well led and managed, and relationships and behaviour were good. Standards were above average overall at 13, but below average in some subjects, and teaching was unsatisfactory in a fifth of lessons. The school needed to improve its planning, relationships between its two sites, resources, particularly computers, pupils' knowledge of other cultures, its arrangements to assess and track progress, and its work with pupils who had learning difficulties, but who did not have statements of special need. Management, including development planning, is now very good, with excellent financial planning and good priorities. The school ensures equal opportunities for pupils at each site, has improved buildings and resources and developed modern

computer suites. Pupils have good knowledge of other cultures. Teaching has improved significantly. There is now a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching, and little that is less than satisfactory. Standards at 13 have risen, and now represent a good level of achievement. Computers are used well in teaching English, but there has been little change elsewhere. Assessment has improved in English and mathematics, in line with national priorities, but not in other subjects. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties who do not have statements has improved in mathematics and is satisfactory in English. Overall, there has been good improvement in the school since the last inspection, and it is very well placed to improve its work further. Value for money has improved from satisfactory to good.

## STANDARDS

This table shows the standards achieved by eleven-year-olds based on National Curriculum test results.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
English	C	A	A	B	well above average A above average B average C below average D well below average E
Mathematics	B	B	B	C	
Science	C	C	D	E	

These tests assess standards when pupils have been in the school for two years, and not when they transfer to secondary school. The trend in test results is broadly average, and the school makes satisfactory progress towards locally agreed targets. The low results in science for 2000 were chiefly caused by a low proportion of pupils reaching higher than expected levels in the test. The school has addressed this issue, and standards in science during the inspection were above average overall at eleven and thirteen, although there were still some inconsistencies between classes. Standards in English, including literacy, are well above average at eleven and show further improvement at thirteen, with particularly high standards in speaking and listening. Standards in mathematics, including numeracy, are above average at eleven and thirteen.

Standards in art are very high throughout the school, and a major strength. Standards in music, design and technology, history and geography are above average throughout the school; standards in religious education are broadly average at eleven, but above average at thirteen. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) have recently improved, and are now above average at eleven and thirteen. Standards in physical education are above average at eleven, particularly in swimming, but broadly average at thirteen. Pupils reach average standards in French at thirteen.

Overall, standards at thirteen represent a good level of achievement, with particular strength in English and art. The recent improvements in standards in ICT, science and religious education point to a trend of rising standards in the school. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need reach very good overall standards, particularly in mathematics. Other pupils with special educational needs also do very well in mathematics, but make less consistent progress in literacy, particularly in spelling. Pupils with English as an additional language reach similar standards to those of others in their class. Standards are broadly similar between the two sites.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to school	Very good. Pupils care for their school, are interested in their work and sustain concentration well. They have excellent attitudes to learning beyond the classroom.
Behaviour in and out of classrooms	Very good, and usually excellent on both sites. Pupils care for their school, are willing to help each other, and are very courteous. There are occasional lapses in behaviour at the end of afternoon lessons, and in the playground.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Older pupils are very mature and responsible, and there is an exceptionally strong atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school.
Attendance	Well above average, with little unauthorised absence.

Pupils provide sensitive and effective help to those with Statements of Special Educational Need. There is a high level of involvement in additional music teaching, and pupils have very good attitudes to practice.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

Teaching meets the needs of most pupils well, and the overall quality of learning is good on both of the school's sites. Teaching during the inspection was satisfactory or better in 99 per cent of lessons. It was very good or better in 35 per cent, and there was one example of poor teaching.

The quality of teaching in English and mathematics is good, with a significant proportion of excellent teaching, in mathematics chiefly for pupils with special educational needs, and in English most often for higher-attaining pupils. Teaching in most lessons is thoroughly planned, contains a good range of work, and is carried on at a good pace. Where the teaching is satisfactory, work is less well matched to the needs of high or lower-attaining pupils, and teachers sometimes do not allow enough time for pupils to complete their work. In the isolated example of poor teaching, lesson planning was inadequate, and too little was expected. The best science teaching is excellent and most is good, but in some lessons higher-attaining pupils are still not stretched enough.

The overall quality of teaching is good in all other subjects, though some good teaching from recently appointed teachers is not yet reflected in standards at eleven and thirteen. Teaching in art ranges from very good to excellent, and is excellent overall, providing all pupils, including those with talent in the subject, with excellent opportunities both for learning and for cultural development. The teaching of history, especially to older pupils, also has very good features, although the challenge to more able younger pupils is not consistent. French

teaching is good overall, though there are weaknesses in some lessons taught by non-specialists. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is very effective in mathematics, but specialist literacy teaching is not sufficiently linked to the work that pupils do in their normal classes. Some pupils with spelling difficulties who do not have Statements of Special Educational Need are receiving little additional help. Teaching assistants make a consistently effective contribution to teaching and learning.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall, with very good opportunities for learning outside the classroom and for personal, social and health education. The school's policy for higher-attaining pupils is not consistently reflected in the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good overall. Very good to excellent for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need and for mathematics. Provision for pupils with less pronounced special needs related to literacy is satisfactory, but limited in scope.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	These pupils are very few in number, and do not require additional help with English.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall, with excellent provision for moral and social development. All adults in the school set pupils an excellent example of hard work, kindness and good humour. Art and music make very good contributions to cultural development, and pupils receive a good introduction to people from other cultures.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school takes very good care of pupils' health and well-being, and gives excellent personal guidance. Academic guidance is satisfactory.

The school has a good working relationship with parents. Annual reports are comprehensive, but do not provide clear information on progress and targets in all subjects. The care of pupils with physical disabilities is a significant strength. Governors provide very good personal guidance to pupils who are at risk of being excluded from school. Computer clubs, choirs and the orchestra are very well attended.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. There is a strong sense of direction for the school, based on carefully considered educational priorities. The roles of the two deputy headteachers are very clearly thought out and effective. Very effective attention is given to raising standards, to improving the quality of teaching, and to the school's inclusive ethos.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Good overall. Governors make a very good contribution to sustaining the school's values. They have clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school makes good use of all available information to assess its performance, and takes effective action to address areas of weakness.
The strategic use of resources	The strategic use of financial resources, including additional grant, has made an important contribution to improvement since the last inspection. Learning resources are generally used well, especially in mathematics, but computers are not used effectively to promote learning in all subjects.

The school is well staffed with both teachers and teaching assistants, and has good accommodation and resources for learning, including modern computer suites. The school's senior management team is well organised and effective. Leadership and management have created a strong sense of teamwork among all of the adults involved in the school, and have extended this to the pupils. The school applies the principles of best value very effectively.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils are expected to do their best.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• Pupils behave well and make good progress.</li> <li>• There is very good provision for music.</li> <li>• The school is approachable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework.</li> <li>• Information for parents on progress.</li> <li>• Co-operation with parents.</li> <li>• Activities outside lessons.</li> <li>• Parity between the school's two sites.</li> </ul>

Most parents had positive views about the school, and these were confirmed by inspection evidence. The inspection team also found that the school co-operated well with parents, and that it provided a very good range of activities outside lessons. However, there is inconsistency from class to class in the quality of homework and of annual reports to parents. Inspectors found that the school's management was effective in ensuring parity between the sites, and took effective action to address issues of equal opportunity.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. National testing does not coincide with the ages at which pupils enter and leave the school. The results of national tests at eleven have been broadly comparable in recent years with those achieved by similar schools. They have, however, been stronger in English than in science, as an above-average proportion of pupils have reached higher levels than expected for their age in the English tests, while relatively few pupils have been achieving this in science. This was the main reason for the low standards in national tests for science in 2000. During the inspection, the school was addressing the more demanding elements of the National Curriculum for science effectively. Standards in lessons were above-average for eleven and thirteen-year-olds, and a pattern of improvement had been established. Standards in mathematics were above-average throughout the school, and broadly comparable to those achieved by similar schools. Pupils showed very good breadth in their mathematical knowledge and understanding, and very good skill in solving problems. Standards in English during the inspection reflected the school's good pattern of test results at eleven. They were well above average at eleven and thirteen, with very high standards among the highest attaining thirteen-year-olds. Standards in speaking and listening are high at eleven and thirteen. While more girls than boys reached higher than expected standards in national tests at eleven, the proportion of boys achieving this result was above the national average, and the gap is narrowing.
2. Standards in literacy are good overall throughout the school, with good contributions from history, geography and information and communication technology, all of which make good use of reading and encourage pupils to pay attention to detail in writing. However, some writing tasks in lessons where the teaching is satisfactory rather than good are not designed to contribute to writing skills. Standards in numeracy are also good, with effective contributions from statistical work in geography, from design and technology, and from information and communication technology.
3. Standards in art are well above average at eleven and very high at thirteen. The overall level of achievement in this subject is excellent. Standards are above average at both eleven and thirteen in music, history, geography, information and communication technology and design and technology. Standards in physical education are above average at eleven, with very good standards in swimming, but broadly average at thirteen. Thirteen-year-olds reach standards in French which are well up to national average levels. In religious education, pupils reach locally expected standards at eleven and exceed them at thirteen.
4. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need, many of whom have disabilities as well as learning difficulties, make very good and at times excellent progress, both in their personal development and in their work. The progress of other pupils with special educational needs is very good overall in mathematics, where some older pupils achieve excellent standards, in relation to their learning difficulties, in understanding mathematical ideas and solving problems. Pupils with special needs related to literacy, but who do not have statements of special need, make satisfactory progress. However, provision for some of these pupils is limited in scope, and some of the progress they make in response to specialist teaching is not sustained in their normal class work.

5. Gifted and talented pupils achieve very good to excellent standards in music and excellent standards in art. They achieve excellent standards in the best English lessons. Overall, these pupils do well in relation to their abilities. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language reach similar standards to those of other pupils in their classes, and their overall achievement is good.
6. The standards reached by pupils joining the school are above average overall, but range from well above to well below average. The school has an average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, and an above-average proportion of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need, some of whom have serious learning difficulties. While the local target for mathematics was not reached in 2000, overall standards remained comparable to those of similar schools, many of which have lower proportions of pupils with special educational needs. The target for English was exceeded. The school keeps all aspects of standards under effective review, for example through its very effective links with Prince William Language College, and takes action to raise them when necessary. Standards at thirteen are more clearly above average than when pupils enter, and represent a good overall level of achievement. They are more consistently above average levels than at the time of the last inspection, and the current pattern of learning within the school puts it in a good position to raise standards further.

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

7. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They have a positive outlook and are eager to learn. They value the opportunity to participate in new activities, such as working in a science laboratory, creating a web site, or using apparatus in physical education. There is a mutual trust between teachers, other adults and pupils which stimulates a positive dialogue, productive lessons, and a commitment by pupils to do their best. They seize the opportunity to develop their learning out of classroom hours. At lunchtime, for example, they make good use of the computer suites, continue with design and technology projects such as the making of clay plaques, take part in band and choir practice, or hone their sporting skills on a netball court.
8. Behaviour is very good in lessons and around the school, and maintains the standard observed during the last inspection. Pupils are orderly but far from passive in their learning. They enjoy discussion and asking probing questions, displaying a high level of maturity and showing consideration and respect for others. For example, in a religious education lesson about the Hindu cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, a class of Year 8 pupils expressed profound thoughts on their place in the Universe, and could draw on the principles of Hindu religion to reflect on their own roles in life.
9. Pupils take as much pride in their school as in producing good work. They are trustworthy and treat property with utmost respect. They play a major part in keeping the school premises tidy, litter free, and undamaged. They appreciate what the school has to offer, one Year 5 pupil commenting how good it was to have changing rooms and showers! Pupils' very good manners as they move about the school make an important contribution to the school's ethos. Their excellent punctuality to lessons enhances the quality of learning by ensuring that time is not wasted.
10. The excellent personal, social, and health education (PSHE) curriculum promotes an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect throughout the school, and virtually all pupils subscribe to its caring aims. Pupils show concern for friends hurt in playground accidents, and support those with disabilities with friendship and encouragement. They understand that their attitudes towards others, including body language, are

recognised and make a difference. There is little aggressive behaviour, and it is effectively dealt with as soon as adults become aware of it. Boys and girls have equal opportunity, and the very few pupils from ethnic minorities are well integrated within the school community. Pupils are rarely excluded from school.

11. Pupils' acceptance of personal responsibility and their readiness to show initiative are excellent. Last year the school won the county 'Citizen 2000' competition against a field which included schools with sixth forms. The house system instills a strong sense of responsibility to the school and the community, and encourages pupils to support each other, as well as providing a competitive edge. It gives all pupils the chance to contribute ideas on how the school is run, including the charities the school should support, and introduces the practice of democracy when electing house officials. The oldest pupils have status and responsibility which assists the smooth running of the school, and helps maintain standards.
12. Attendance is well above average, and there is very little unauthorised absence. Registration is conducted efficiently at the start of morning and afternoon sessions. Transport problems cause some lateness in the morning, but lessons are timetabled ingeniously to minimise their impact.

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

13. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school, with significant strengths and relatively few weaknesses. It meets the needs of girls and boys equally well. Teaching during the inspection was good or better in four fifths of lessons, and very good or excellent in two fifths. Very nearly all of the remaining teaching was satisfactory. This represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was good in half of the lessons and had significant weaknesses in one lesson in five.
14. The school's good teaching is founded on good levels of professional knowledge in each subject, on careful and effective planning, and on consistently good use of questions to probe and develop pupils' understanding. This combination of strengths engages pupils effectively in their work, ensures good relationships and pace, and gives a strong sense of purpose to learning. In the substantial proportion of lessons in which teaching is very good or excellent, these qualities are present to an enhanced degree. Examples of excellent teaching included very demanding work in mathematics for pupils with special educational needs, dynamic and imaginative teaching of writing in English lessons, exceptionally well-planned teaching in science, and sensitive and thoughtful teaching of religious education and personal, social and health education. Swimming was also taught to an excellent standard. The teaching of art ranged in quality from very good to excellent in every lesson, leading to outstanding long-term progress and very high standards among the oldest pupils.
15. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is of good overall quality, with outstanding features in individual lessons. Work in both of these areas benefits from imaginative and flexible use of national strategies, and results in learning of good to very good quality among pupils of average and higher attainment. Basic number work is very effectively taught to lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs, and basic reading is effectively taught. Specialist teaching of reading and spelling to pupils with special educational needs who do not have Statements of Special Need is satisfactory, but is not sufficiently integrated with their normal work. The teaching provided for the substantial number of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need is very good and often excellent, both from teachers and from the

school's well-qualified and experienced teaching assistants. The needs of the very small numbers of pupils speaking English as an additional language are effectively met by the school's normal teaching. The needs of gifted and talented pupils are met very well through the school's high quality of teaching in instrumental and choral music and in art. They are well served overall by the remainder of the school's teaching.

16. The school has recently made important adjustments in its science teaching to meet the needs of higher-attaining pupils, who are now learning effectively. The quality of teaching in science ranges from satisfactory to excellent, and is good overall. Music is taught consistently to a good to very good standard. This brings about a high level of involvement of pupils in the subject, and high standards in instrumental and choral work as well as in the National Curriculum. The teaching of history is almost always good, with a high proportion of very good teaching, including very effective development of pupils' skills in research and analysis. Design and technology is taught to a good standard, with good emphasis on planning and on the safe and effective use of a broad range of tools. The teaching of religious education and information and communication technology have shown very significant improvement since the last inspection. Both subjects are now taught to a good overall standard, with very good to excellent work in individual lessons. Teaching in physical education and in French are both of good overall quality, though some French teaching by non-specialists is hampered by errors in spoken French. It was not possible to observe geography teaching during the inspection, but evidence from pupils' work indicated that it was of good overall quality.
17. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, sound planning ensures that the main teaching aims of lessons are clear to pupils, and that they learn at an adequate rate. However, in most of these lessons, teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject does not permit them to match work effectively to the needs of higher or lower-attaining pupils, so that some pupils are not fully challenged. In some lessons, weaknesses in timing activities limit the quality of learning, and a minority of writing tasks do not contribute enough to the development of writing skills. There was an isolated example of poor teaching during the inspection, in which a lesson was inadequately planned to enable the pupils to make progress. The use of homework is satisfactory overall. It is good in mathematics and English for most classes. The consistency and quality of homework varies, however, from class to class, and some homework is not matched closely enough to the range of learning needs in the class. Most marking is of good quality, but some lacks detail and does not give pupils enough guidance on ways of improving their work. While the school's provision for information and communication technology is improving, the use of computers to promote learning in most subjects is still underdeveloped.
18. Because of recent changes in staff, the current quality of teaching is not yet fully reflected in standards at eleven and thirteen. Nevertheless, the school's teaching is now meeting the needs of a substantial majority of its pupils to a good overall standard, and it is well placed to make further improvements.

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

19. The curriculum is of good overall quality and has some outstanding features. It has a good breadth and balance, and allocates appropriate time to work in literacy and numeracy. The length of the school day has been extended since the last inspection, and is now in line with national recommendations. The school plans its time well, so

that teachers have scope to provide a good, well planned learning experience in each lesson. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements.

20. The curriculum is very well adapted for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need, who have excellent personal support from teaching assistants, and an appropriate range of additional therapies. Pupils with special educational needs who do not have statements receive satisfactory overall provision. The curriculum for these pupils in mathematics is very good, and at times excellent. However, their needs in terms of literacy are not consistently reflected in the work they are set in lessons, and supplementary English teaching is not sufficiently co-ordinated with their normal work. The needs of pupils speaking English as an additional language are effectively met by the normal curriculum. The school makes good and flexible provision for pupils from travelling backgrounds, providing work for them while they accompany their parents. The curriculum for higher-attaining pupils meets their needs well in the longer term, but the school's policy for able pupils is not consistently reflected in lesson planning, and this limits these pupils' learning where the teaching is satisfactory rather than good.
21. The school's links with the community make a very good contribution to learning opportunities. These include a very well organised industry day, and contributions from a broad range of well-informed visiting speakers. Good relationships with primary and secondary schools contribute to consistency in planning the curriculum and to standards, particularly in mathematics. Links with Oundle School contribute to standards and quality of work in swimming.
22. Opportunities for learning outside the classroom are very good. They include a very broad range of opportunities to learn musical instruments and choral singing, and to take part in performances. There is a broad range of competitive sport. The school offers many well-considered trips and visits, ranging from first-hand study of Rutland Water to a visit to Florence. The libraries and computer suites are very well used at lunchtimes. The proportion of pupils taking part in sports and other additional learning activities is high.

### **Personal, social and health education (PSHE)**

23. PSHE, which includes sex education, health education, and education on the misuse of drugs, is a major strength of the school. Its positive themes are linked throughout the curriculum and are at the heart of the school's ethos of care and consideration. Topics are pertinent and capture the interest of pupils, and the range of the subject provides excellent opportunities for extension work. For example, a presentation, for a whole school assembly, by eleven-year-olds on the importance of personal organisation included an excellent video production. An English lesson for ten-year-olds used bullying as a theme for a playscript. The PSHE curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills.
24. PSHE is very energetically managed, and the content of the curriculum is constantly under review. Links with the community, and expert visiting speakers give the subject substance. Health education ensures that pupils are well informed, for example through the consideration of menus and cooking techniques in design and technology. Carefully constructed units address specific needs such as the change and stress associated with moving on to upper school. The result of this outstanding provision is that pupils are both well informed about their own lives, and build an attitude of care and consideration which they take back to the community through work with charities and with older people in the area.



## **Equal opportunities**

25. There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities throughout the school, and provision is very good. The school has an effective policy, and makes explicit reference to equal opportunities in its aims and values. These aims are applied well in the school's day-to-day work.
26. The school monitors the standards and progress of different groups of pupils well, including boys and girls and pupils on each of its two sites. It changes grouping and setting arrangements from year to year to meet the identified needs of the pupils. There is an open-minded, professionally considered approach, as a result of such monitoring, to ensure that pupils have the opportunities they need to make appropriate and effective progress. The school has made good progress in addressing the issues of equality raised at the last inspection.
27. No pupils are disapplied from the National Curriculum. The school's curriculum ensures that no pupils are disadvantaged; all are presented with very good opportunities to benefit from what the school provides. The school's approach to pastoral care, and its provision for the pupils' social development within the school community, are very good. This ensures that, for example, boys and girls, pupils from ethnic minority and faith groups, those with special educational needs or disability, and those who are gifted and talented, are all equally included in the life and work of the school. Staff and pupils exhibit high levels of mutual trust and respect, leading to a teaching and learning partnership of high quality.
28. A minority of parents thought that pupils at the King's Cliffe site were not as well provided for as those at Oundle. The school addresses the problems resulting from the distance between its two sites squarely and directly, and takes pains to ensure and monitor equality of provision between them, for example, by alternating meetings between sites and endeavouring to ensure proportional representation on committees and through the governing body. There is a common, agreed approach to awards and sanctions across the school, and pupils on both sites have equal representation in the house system. They have equal opportunities to take part in trips and visits, which also provide good opportunities for them to mix socially. The school uses the facilities on both sites for the benefit of all pupils. For example, pupils may be bussed to Oundle for some whole school sporting activities, or to King's Cliffe when its larger hall is needed. Recently, arrangements have been made for the use of the King's Cliffe community bus to facilitate travel between the two sites, for example for pupils involved in the orchestra or other musical activities. An imbalance of time allocated by the local authority for the teaching of swimming to pupils at the different sites emerged during the inspection, and was immediately taken up by the headteacher.
29. Pupils at both sites get a fair deal at the school. They are given the opportunity to learn effectively, and participate in activities both within and without the classroom. The school gives equal attention to the pupils' education and well-being, whichever site they attend. Discussion with the pupils confirms that they are very happy at the school, no matter at which site they may be based.

## **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

30. This aspect of the school's provision is very good overall, and excellent in respect of pupils moral and social development.

31. In addition to the strong contribution from the PSHE programme, the school promotes positive moral and social attitudes systematically in all areas of its work. Assemblies provide very good guidance to pupils and re-inforce the school's inclusive ethos. Pupils are very effectively involved in running the school. They are involved in designing rules, and help organise charitable work. Pupils throughout the school have a highly developed sense of right and wrong. For example, stock from the school tuck shop is kept in a curtained bay with no additional security, and is not tampered with. All adults in the school, led by the headteacher, set pupils a very good example of considerate behaviour, reliability and good humour. The headteacher gives immediate personal support and care to pupils who need it, and this encourages other adults and pupils to do the same. Pupils are encouraged to be reliable and conscientious in their work and play, and to appreciate the satisfaction that comes from this. Governors contribute to the social and moral development of pupils whose behaviour puts them at risk of exclusion by providing close and effective personal guidance. The school's work in moral and social development builds very effectively on the positive values which pupils bring from home.
32. The school provides a very good range of opportunities for pupils to reflect on their lives and work. These include very well constructed assemblies, and consistent opportunities for discussion in all lessons. Religious education now makes a very good contribution to spiritual development through the encouragement which it provides to pupils to think deeply about serious issues. Pupils receive very good insight into the spiritual values of all religions, both Christian and non-Christian.
33. Opportunities for cultural development are very good overall, and there are several outstanding features. Pupils have a very broad range of opportunities to learn orchestral and choral music and to take part in performances. There is a strong tradition of dramatic production, including fully staged musicals in the theatre in Oundle. The excellent quality of art in the school embraces artistic traditions from all cultures. These aspects of the school's provision are particularly beneficial to gifted and talented pupils. Since the last inspection, the school has made very good improvements its provision for introducing pupils to the ideas and values of other cultures. This includes all subjects - for example, there is an attractive display celebrating the work of the Indian mathematician Ramanujan. Religious education makes a particularly effective contribution to this work by enabling pupils to understand the practical implications of religious belief for life in other societies.

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

34. The school takes very good care of its pupils' welfare, health and safety. This represents an improvement since the last inspection, which found some shortcomings in safety procedures. Effective procedures are now in place to monitor safety on both sites. First aid procedures are effective, with sufficient trained staff available, and appropriate records are kept. The personal, social and health education curriculum makes an outstanding contribution to the school's provision of personal guidance, and is the school's main bulwark against aggressive behaviour. It is effective, and pupils are confident that, if problems occur, they can be speedily resolved.
35. The school promotes attendance very effectively through its welcoming environment, its home-school agreement, and monitoring. Child protection arrangements are secure on both sites.
36. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic development are good in English and mathematics, and very good in art. Assessment in information and communication technology has shown recent improvement, and is satisfactory. Assessment in other subjects, and the use of assessment information to plan pupils' work, is inconsistent, and this limits the progress and learning of more able pupils where teaching is satisfactory rather than good. Assessment of pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need is excellent. It involves close liaison with agencies outside the school, and is used to develop clear and appropriate targets in individual education plans, which, in turn, are closely monitored. Where pupils with special needs do not have a statement, assessment is satisfactory. These pupils' progress is monitored effectively in the longer term, but the outcome of assessment is not used consistently in planning their work.
37. The assessment of pupil's personal development is excellent, and it contributes to the school's outstanding provision of personal guidance. There are extensive and effective procedures to identify, record, and build on a broad range of achievements. Form tutors keep these procedures under continuous review, and this process becomes more formal as pupils move through the school. Pupils' personal development is sustained by the wide range of experiences available, including educational trips, industry links, and the support of outside agencies and expert visitors to the school. The school's very good links secondary schools prepare pupils very well for the next phase of their education.

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

38. The school has maintained the good links with parents noted in the last inspection report. A substantial majority of parents who completed pre-inspection questionnaires are very positive about the school. They rank high expectations, good teaching, good behaviour and fostering maturity and responsibility as the school's major strengths. Inspection evidence confirms these positive views.
39. The school provides a good flow of information to parents, and often seeks their support to encourage their children to read at home, and to provide an appropriate environment for homework. There are three parents' meetings each year, and other meetings are arranged periodically, for example on drugs awareness. These meetings are well attended and contribute to parents understanding and ability to support their children's work at home. Pupils' annual reports provide a clear

assessment of standards achieved in English and mathematics. Reports on standards in other subjects are comprehensive, but teachers' comments do not always convey a clear sense of what each pupil has achieved, and reports in some subjects do not always provide clear and practical targets for improvement.

40. All parents have signed up to the home/school agreement, and the new internet agreement. The majority of parents sign their children's homework diaries, and take an interest in what their children are learning. Over 60 parents are members of an emergency information network covering both sites, and some parents help with school trips. Sports events and school productions are well supported. There are two active Friends Associations which raise funds for the school. At King's Cliffe, because of the characteristics of the village and surrounding area, community involvement in the school is particularly strong.
41. A minority of parents prior to the inspection said that pupils at the King's Cliffe site had fewer opportunities than those at Oundle, and that the regularity and quality of homework were not consistent from class to class. A small number were concerned about bullying and unsatisfactory arrangements at open evenings. Inspectors found some inconsistency in the use of homework between classes, though its overall quality is satisfactory. The other concerns raised by parents were not borne out. The quality of teaching and of other opportunities is broadly equal between the two sites, and the school makes every reasonable effort to provide transport where it is needed. Discussions with a broad sample of pupils from both sites did not reveal bullying as a cause for concern to pupils; when incidents did occur, pupils had confidence in the school's arrangements to deal with them. Behaviour is very good overall at both sites, and often excellent. Open meetings could not be observed during the inspection, but all statutory requirements are met and parents are given suitable notice of times and dates.

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

42. The headteacher, deputy headteachers and members of the senior management team provide very effective leadership and management. They sustain a consistent and very positive ethos for learning across the school and have taken positive and effective action to address areas of weakness, for example in science and in information and communication technology. This has led to rising standards in these subjects and to the overall improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Management procedures are very well organised, allowing all of the many issues facing the school to receive proper consideration and action. There is a very strong sense of teamwork in the school.
43. The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. It is well organised, keeps in close touch with the school, and has played an important part in ensuring equality of provision between the two school sites. Governors have good relationships with teachers, and provide very good personal support to pupils whose behaviour places them at risk of exclusion from school. They help guide financial planning and the school's strategic development. Governors are closely and effectively involved with the development of the curriculum, including provision for pupils with special educational needs. They have suitable arrangements for keeping track of standards. Governors have played a full part, with the headteacher and other key staff, in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection report.
44. There is no full programme of national testing for pupils aged either nine or thirteen. However, the school keeps track of the standards reached by its pupils in tests at

fourteen and at GCSE, and has recently begun to test nine-year-old pupils joining the school. The results of national tests at eleven are closely analysed, including comparison of results between the two sites, and action has recently been taken to raise the standard expected of pupils in science. The headteacher's monitoring identified slow progress in information and communication technology following the last report, and the school has recently re-organised its provision very effectively. Standards in both subjects are rising, and were above average at the time of the inspection. On the other hand, the policy for higher-attaining pupils is not reflected in all lessons and is not effectively monitored, and standards in subjects other than English and mathematics are limited by lack of specialist involvement in monitoring teaching.

45. The school's development plan is an effective working document, with clear priorities, supported by appropriate allocation of funds. The school's large budget, which includes a substantial additional component for its widely separated sites, is managed very efficiently. Grants are used very effectively for their intended purpose, and make significant contributions to the quality of education and to the development of the school sites. The headteacher and governors have very good understanding of the principles of best value, and apply them consistently. Financial planning and control are significant strengths in the school's management.
46. There are good numbers of teachers and support staff to teach the National Curriculum and to meet the additional needs of its pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants have a good range of qualifications and experience, and this contributes to the good overall quality of teaching. All co-ordinators have good understanding of the subject they lead, and some have advanced professional skills which enable them to teach to an excellent standard. There are, however, some gaps in non-specialist teachers' knowledge and understanding of French. The school's arrangements for professional development are very effective for permanent teachers joining the school, including newly-qualified teachers and newly-appointed senior staff. Temporary teachers have sufficient support and guidance to enable them to teach to a sound standard, but some are not sufficiently briefed on the needs of higher-attaining pupils.
47. The school has developed accommodation on both of its sites to a good standard, with very good computer suites and provision for outdoor sport. The buildings are maintained very well by the site supervisors and their staff, and kept tidy by the pupils. The Oundle site provides very good accommodation for pupils with physical handicaps. Resources for learning are generally good, with very good resources for information and communication technology and excellent resources for art. Most resources are used well, but computers are not used consistently enough in teaching outside the National Curriculum for information and communication technology. Libraries at both sites are of good overall quality, well located and extensively used.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

48. To sustain and further develop the pattern of rising standards in the school, the headteacher and governors should:

- (1) Improve the quality of teaching that is satisfactory rather than good, by:
  - ensuring that all staff have good knowledge of the National Curriculum for the subjects they teach;
  - ensuring that all teachers' specialist skills are deployed to best advantage;
  - sharpening the focus of monitoring to include specialist skills;
  - improving skills in teaching higher- and lower-attaining pupils. (Paragraphs 12, 15, 17, 20, 50, 105).
- (2) Improve the consistency of challenge to higher-attaining pupils, by:
  - ensuring that the school's policy for able pupils is consistently reflected in lessons in all subjects;
  - ensuring that the more demanding elements of the National Curriculum are consistently included in teachers' planning;
  - setting demanding targets for these pupils and monitoring progress towards them. (Paragraphs 17, 20, 48, 50).
- (3) Continue to develop the use of assessment to promote learning, by:
  - ensuring that pupils' work is assessed consistently in terms of the National Curriculum and of the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education;
  - monitoring the use of assessment to pitch work at the right level for pupils in each class. (Paragraphs 38, 61, 106, 119, 124).
- (4) Improve provision for pupils who have learning difficulties in reading and spelling, but who do not have Statements of Special Educational Need, by:
  - ensuring that written work in all lessons is modified to meet their needs;
  - integrating additional literacy teaching more consistently with their normal work;
  - ensuring that all teachers have good knowledge and understanding of techniques for teaching spelling. (Paragraphs 4, 15, 20, 61).
- (5) Improve the consistency of homework, and its contribution to learning, by:
  - monitoring the consistency and quality of homework in each class;
  - ensuring that homework is matched to the learning needs of all pupils in the class;
  - monitoring the contribution of homework to learning in each subject. (Paragraphs 17, 44, 76, 96).

Minor issues for action:

Improve the use of computers to promote learning, by:

- identifying the potential contribution of computers to teaching and learning in all subjects, and in work with pupils who have special educational needs;
- improving opportunities for subject co-ordinators to inform themselves professionally of available resources;
- monitoring the use of computers and of their specific contribution to learning in all subjects.  
(Paragraphs 17,101).

Improve the quality and effectiveness of annual reports to parents, by:

- ensuring that they give clear information on standards reached in each subject;
- providing clear and practical targets for improvement.  
(Paragraphs 42, 44, 71).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	112
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
15	25	41	18	0	1	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5-Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	687
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	8

Special educational needs	Y5-Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	16
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	142

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	20

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5
National comparative data	6.7

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
National comparative data	0.4

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



### **Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2**

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	2000	88	86	174

<b>National Curriculum Test/Task Results</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	78	65	80
	Girls	78	62	75
	Total	156	127	155
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	90 (70)	73 (80)	90 (88)
	National	82 (75)	71 (69)	78 (84)

<b>Teachers' Assessments</b>		<b>English</b>	<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Science</b>
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	61	61	65
	Girls	68	63	71
	Total	129	124	136
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	74 (76)	71 (71)	78 (86)
	National	71 (68)	71 (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	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	1
White	681
Any other minority ethnic group	2

### ***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	3	1
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)	35.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	19.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y5-Y8**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	299

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y5-Y8**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	81.3
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y5-Y8**

Key Stage 2	25
Key Stage 3	22.9

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	1,441,915
Total expenditure	1,432,206
Expenditure per pupil	2,088
Balance brought forward from previous year	97,810
Balance carried forward to next year	107,519

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	687
Number of questionnaires returned	264

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	38	53	7	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	31	57	3	1	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	33	55	5	0	7
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	55	16	2	2
The teaching is good.	33	54	3	0	9
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	27	50	16	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	38	9	3	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	53	39	3	0	5
The school works closely with parents.	32	44	16	3	5
The school is well led and managed.	42	42	7	1	8
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	39	47	5	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	50	15	3	6

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

### ENGLISH

49. Results in national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2000 were well above national average levels, and were also above-average for similar schools. In the last four years, results have been well above average overall, and results in English have been better than those in mathematics and science. The gap between boys' and girls' results widened steadily from 1996 to 1999, when it was much greater than nationally. In 2000, because of a significant rise in boys' results, the gap was narrower than nationally, though more girls than boys achieved results above the nationally expected level in the tests.
50. Overall achievement in English is good throughout the school, particularly among those of average and higher attainment. Pupils join the school having reached above average standards, and these rise to well above average by eleven. By the age of thirteen, high standards have been maintained overall, and there are more higher-attaining pupils. Standards are outstanding in a third of classes for the oldest pupils in the school.
51. Pupils want to learn and have very good attitudes to work. In over a third of the lessons observed, attitudes and behaviour were excellent. Pupils are hard-working, courteous and trustworthy and look after property well. Relationships are very good. Teachers actively involve pupils in their own learning and often make excellent use of group work. Pupils' very good social skills lead to lively communication within groups. They learn through talk, and are thus stimulated to write. Teachers enable pupils to develop very good research skills. Pupils use reference books sensibly to extract and interpret information, for example in preparing reports on experiments on animals.
52. By the age of eleven, pupils speak with great clarity and confidence, using standard English well. They give lively presentations to the class. For example, in a lesson for ten-year-olds, pupils skimmed reference books on famous personalities, made notes and conveyed the information gathered to other pupils, speaking with interest and authority. Pupils listen very well. They pay close attention to their teachers and to other pupils in whole class and small group work. They listen keenly to each other when sharing the reading of a story or play. Pupils read aloud accurately and at a good pace, attending well to punctuation and understanding meaning. They read their own writing fluently and confidently to others in their class. In discussions with inspectors and in their reading records, pupils show themselves to be enthusiastic readers. They achieve a very good level of accuracy in written work. They have a wide-ranging vocabulary and suit the style to the occasion, though lower-attaining pupils find this difficult. They write good book reviews, play scripts, biographies, creative pieces and letters – for example, to Mick in Michael Morpurgo's *Kensukes's Kingdom*. Pupils compose newspaper reports and reflective work on past holidays and their first ever day at school to a similarly good standard. Work is neatly set out in cursive writing.
53. As they move through the school, pupils expand their vocabulary and improve their command of spelling, punctuation and grammar. They learn to adapt their style of speech and writing to different situations. They widen their reading habits and learn to respond sympathetically to characters in books. They are encouraged to write lively poetry with attention to rhythm and poetic devices such as simile, metaphor and

alliteration. Presentation is very careful, and often enhanced by good use of word-processing.

54. Standards at thirteen are well above average. Pupils speak with conviction, taking an interest in their audience. Their wide vocabulary enables them to develop sophisticated ideas and express complex thoughts – as in a lesson for twelve-year-olds, where pupils gave oral presentations on what a favourite toy meant to them. Pupils listen very attentively to teachers and other pupils, responding appropriately and building well on previous remarks. Most read aloud with poise, enthusiasm and very good understanding, varying pace and intonation to convey meaning. However, some lower-attaining pupils read accurately, but hesitantly and without expression. Pupils develop writing skills introduced in earlier years, and write in an impressive range of styles. They collect a series of pieces into an extended autobiography, write diary entries, produce discursive work – on experiments on animals, for example – and write very good argumentative essays, presenting both sides of the question on topics such as school uniform, drugs, smoking and capital punishment. Pupils respond well to what they read. For example, they write enthusiastically about *Granny was a Buffer Girl* and show very good appreciation of character in their *Dorothy's Diary* booklets. They write imaginative poems – as on their first day at school. A wide variety of punctuation is used, vocabulary is precise, and standards in spelling, paragraphing and grammar are good. The independent writing of lower-attaining pupils, however, has too many weaknesses in organisation and accuracy.
55. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are at least satisfactory in almost all lessons and good or better in two-thirds. In a third of lessons they are at least very good, and they are excellent in just over a quarter. Teachers use their good knowledge and understanding of the subject to ask relevant questions to assess progress. They plan well for a variety of activities to keep pupils focused on language. The teaching of basic skills is often excellent. For example, in two lessons for ten-year-olds, teachers used shape poems to enthuse pupils about words and to extend vocabulary. Excellent deployment of resources, including computers, enabled pupils of varying abilities to learn very rapidly and to produce impressive written work. Pupils understood the concepts of rhyme and rhythm and used dictionaries and thesauruses to compose phrases such as *antiquated abacus*.
56. Teachers' marking is good overall and there are examples of clear comments telling pupils how to improve and of target setting. However, some comments are only encouraging and do not indicate what needs to be done to reach higher standards. Teachers usually match work closely to pupils' capabilities and use time well. Pace is often brisk, though in a few lessons it slows when some parts of lessons over-run, or the pause between activities is too long. When this happens, pupils lose some of their concentration, and learning is only satisfactory. There was one example of poor teaching and learning during the inspection, caused by planning which lacked detail and rigour, so that the work did not engage pupils. Homework is a worthwhile extension of class-work and is set according to the published timetable.
57. The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are good overall. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need learn very well, and benefit greatly from high levels of well-informed support provided by teaching assistants. The planning of additional spelling teaching for pupils who do not have statements ensures satisfactory progress during lessons, but the work is not integrated closely enough with pupils' normal writing to ensure that these gains are consolidated. The learning of pupils at the earliest stage on the register of special educational needs is tracked through regular tests, but their learning in lessons is not monitored.

58. English makes a valuable contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Through a study of the origins of language, pupils become fascinated with words. Nine-year-old pupils in poetry lessons relish the sounds of words, and enjoy using similes and alliteration in their own poems. Throughout the school, pupils' reading provides opportunities to evaluate characters' behaviour, and group work helps pupils to further their considerable social skills.
59. Schemes of work in English are very thorough and reflect the spirit of the National Literacy Strategy well. Resources are good, and there are opportunities for pupils to use computers in drafting. Good drama activities are sometimes included in lessons, and recent reviews of work units give drama a higher profile. Assessment procedures are good, and involve pupils effectively. When data from national test results at eleven showed that girls were achieving increasingly more highly than boys, the school modified its grouping of pupils to make smaller classes, so that more individual attention could be given. Boys' standards improved, so that, in 2000, their results were only a little below those of girls. The co-ordinator gives very good leadership, which results in teachers feeling confident about their teaching. However, she has too few opportunities to contribute to the monitoring of teaching. Plans exist to rectify this.
60. The school has made good improvements in its work in English since the last inspection. Standards at eleven have risen, and the school has maintained its high standards at thirteen. Points for action from the inspection report, to improve planning and assessment, have been addressed well. The commitment of teachers to raising attainment, the good teaching, and the very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils, indicate very good capacity for further improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

61. The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are good overall. Pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need learn very well, and benefit greatly from high levels of well-informed support provided by teaching assistants. Specialist reading and spelling teaching for pupils who have learning difficulties in reading and writing, but who do not have statements of special need, ensures satisfactory progress during lessons, but is not integrated closely enough with pupils' normal writing to ensure that these gains are consolidated. The learning of pupils at the earliest stage on the register of special educational needs is tracked through regular tests, but their learning in lessons is not monitored.
62. By the age of eleven, pupils have reached good overall standards in all four rules of number. They can multiply two digits by two digit numbers successfully, most pupils are confident and accurate in using multiplication tables up to ten, and many can explain alternative strategies used in mental calculations. Most pupils can use decimals to two places in measurement and money, and have a good understanding of fractions including percentages. All can name a range of angles such as acute, reflex and obtuse, and use appropriate mathematical vocabulary when working on classification of two and three-dimensional shapes. Pupils successfully construct triangles from information on the lengths of sides and sizes of angles. They have good understanding of the differences between rotation and translation, and other aspects of symmetry. Work in using mathematics is done as part of normal classroom activities, and pupils develop very good skills in mathematical investigative work. Most pupils can record and interpret data from a range of graphs.

63. By the age of thirteen, pupils have built upon the solid foundations laid down in their earlier work. They develop good calculating skills in work with fractions, percentages and decimals. When exploring number sequences, pupils find and describe in words the rule for the next term of a sequence where the rule is linear. They tackle demanding investigative work with enthusiasm, responding well to the imaginative range of activities developed by the co-ordinator for mathematics. They develop good knowledge of algebra, using trial-and-improvement methods, and use brackets appropriately. When solving problems, pupils give valid mathematical justifications for their answers, and their explanations are invariably clear and lucid. In the area of shape, space and measures, many confidently solve problems using angle and symmetry properties of polygons, and angle properties of intersecting and parallel lines. Most pupils know and use the properties of quadrilaterals in classifying different types of quadrilateral. All pupils have a good knowledge of mathematical terms and they use them appropriately to explain their tasks and the methods of working.
64. Pupils' learning throughout the school is good. Up to the age of eleven, the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive effect on continuity of learning, which is helping improve standards for pupils aged eleven to thirteen. The school's arrangements for teaching mathematics in groups, based on pupils' attainment and learning needs, ensure that all are effectively challenged and that they learn at a good rate. Pupils with special educational needs benefit particularly from this system, which allows teachers to match work precisely to their learning needs, and to introduce more advanced ideas in forms which pupils find easy to understand. More able pupils in lower mathematics sets also make good progress in response to more challenging work on the theme studied by the class as a whole.
65. Pupils listen closely to their teachers and work with very good levels of concentration. They enjoy mental mathematics, especially when there is a slight competitive edge or expected time limit to the work. Equipment is used sensibly, and pupils collect and distribute resources responsibly in lessons. Behaviour is consistently very good, and pupils' own pride in their work ensures very good presentation. The very good relationships between pupils and teachers ensure a very positive and secure environment for learning in every lesson.
66. The quality of teaching is good overall throughout the school, and often very good or excellent in individual lessons. Teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of the subject. Explanations and demonstrations by the teacher are clear and link very well with the learning objectives. Teachers use an effective range of methods and resources to develop pupils' understanding skills. There is a strong emphasis on using mathematical vocabulary, which supports the development of pupils' literacy skills. The teaching of pupils aged nine to eleven makes good use of the Numeracy Strategy, and all teachers' use daily assessments of pupils' work appropriately. Work is matched well to the needs of pupils with different attainment, and teachers make good use of homework to reinforce and consolidate learning. Teaching assistants are well prepared, and provide very effective support and guidance, enabling all pupils to participate fully and to explore mathematical thinking. In the most effective lessons for these pupils, including work for those with special educational needs, teaching and learning were excellent. This teaching was based on deep understanding, both of mathematics and of the patterns in pupils' learning. This enabled the teachers to present demanding mathematical ideas, including deriving patterns from numbers, in a way that made them accessible and enjoyable to pupils. Challenging work is often set for higher-attaining pupils, and it assists them to develop their independent learning skills, particularly when engaged in investigative work. In all lessons, relationships between adults and pupils are very good and control and

management of the classes is of a high standard. Consistently good use is made of sessions with the whole class at the end of each lesson to consolidate pupils' knowledge and skills and to assess progress. Marking of work is consistent and effective, with good emphasis on presentation. Well thought-out resources contribute much to the range and quality of pupils' learning. Where computers are used in lessons they promote learning, but this does not happen often enough.

67. Assessment procedures are good and the information provided is used effectively for future planning. Mathematics is very effectively co-ordinated. The co-ordinator's enthusiasm, and extensive knowledge of the subject and of the needs of pupils, inspire and motivate teachers of mathematics throughout the school and give them a clear view of development in the subject. He is well aware of the subject's strengths and the areas that need development. He has made very good use of data analysis and has fostered very good links with Prince William School, to which most go when leaving Oundle and Kings Cliffe Middle School. At present, he does not monitor teaching, but often assists colleagues by demonstrating methods of teaching. He is always available for staff and continually provides appropriate guidance.

## SCIENCE

68. The results of national tests for eleven-year-olds in 2000 were well below those of similar schools, chiefly because of the low proportion of pupils reaching higher standards than those expected for their age. However, the school has addressed this problem and, at the time of the inspection, pupils were reaching above-average standards at eleven and thirteen. Boys and girls reach similar overall standards in science. The inspection evidence includes important aspects of the National Curriculum for science, including experimental science, which do not yet form part of the test. The standard seen during the inspection represents a satisfactory level of achievement in the subject, and one which is set to improve further.
69. Nine and ten-year-olds can describe accurately a good range of properties of different materials, and high-attaining pupils can classify objects by their physical properties. By eleven, pupils understand how shadows change, as part of a topic on the sun and the planets. They can design experiments to test their ideas on shadows, making predictions and applying accurately the idea of a fair test. High-attaining pupils can modify their predictions after tests, and can explain anomalous results accurately.
70. Standards are above average at thirteen. For example, twelve-year-olds have a clear understanding of using a universal indicator to measure the strength of acids and alkalis and how this fits on the standard scale of acidity. They can make natural indicators from vegetables, and make reasoned predictions as to how they will work. The oldest pupils know the function of the skeleton and can accurately describe the function and position of different joints. High-attaining pupils use this knowledge skilfully to predict the effect of weightlessness on the skeleton. Pupils make satisfactory progress in science across the school and pupils with special educational needs make good progress. In a minority of lessons, however, work is not challenging enough to enable high-attaining pupils to achieve their potential. Science makes a very positive contribution to pupils' moral and social education and to their literacy skills, through the wide use of technical vocabulary during discussions. Pupils have a very positive attitude to science and behaviour is always very good.
71. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are never less than satisfactory, and one quarter are very good or excellent. In all lessons, teachers manage practical work very well, ensuring that pupils work at a good pace and are very productive. Skilful



questioning, which makes pupils think carefully about science, is a consistent and most important strength. Where the teaching is very good or excellent, most often in lessons for pupils aged nine to eleven, teachers plan different work for high and low-attaining pupils to ensure that all work to an appropriate standard. Challenge is high and clear targets are set, so that pupils understand precisely what they have to do. Pupils' books are carefully marked with corrections and many supportive comments, but these do not always set clear targets for improvement. Homework is a feature of most lessons but it is not always pitched at the right level to promote learning, particularly for high-attaining pupils. Lesson plans do not include sufficient use of information technology to broaden pupils' learning experience.

72. The newly appointed co-ordinator is already providing good leadership for the department, and standards are rising. Assessment is developing which allows pupils' progress to be tracked effectively, but the results of assessment are not yet used to help planning, or to assess the effectiveness of teaching. The grouping of pupils for science makes it difficult for teachers to plan to meet the full range of learning needs in each class, particularly for the older, higher-attaining pupils. Overall resources are sufficient but there are no textbooks for nine and eleven-year-olds to use for background information. The science department has strong links with Prince William School that contribute well to the smooth transfer of pupils. The school has made satisfactory progress in addressing the issues raised in the last science report: the department now has the capacity for considerable improvement.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

73. Standards in art are very high and a significant strength of the school. The teaching provides the pupils with a rich range of learning opportunities and art experiences of very high quality. There is a remarkable consistency of approach within the two sites and across all year groups. There is a real focus on challenge and an expectation of the highest standards. Pupils rise to these challenges with enthusiasm. The achievements of pupils, of all levels of ability, are often excellent. Teachers know their pupils well. Those with special educational needs are sensitively supported and consequently enabled to make very good progress. The opportunities provided for those pupils identified as being particularly artistically gifted or talented are open ended. The whole approach of the school is to enable pupils to become artists in their own right. Their success in this is in no small measure due to the commitment, personal talents and enthusiasm of all art teachers, without exception. A high value is placed on pupils' work and efforts. Overall standards, which were mainly good at the last inspection, have been raised further and in this the department, as a whole, has made very good progress.
74. Standards are well above average at eleven, and mainly excellent at thirteen. The key reasons for this excellence are fourfold. First, there is an understanding on the part of the teachers of the vital part sketchbooks play in the work of an artist. Pupils use them extraordinarily well, not only for extensive preparation work but also for experimentation, research, and the development of draft ideas. Second, the teaching has a firm focus on the development of key artwork skills and techniques. Third, the inclusion of an appropriate art history element enables the pupils to understand and appreciate a range of styles, in the work of major artists, which informs their own work. For example, some very imaginative studies were being undertaken by nine-year-olds based on the work of Hundertwasser. Finally, pupils are enabled to become art critics who can properly describe, analyse, interpret and evaluate their own and others' work. By their last year in the school, the quality of many pupils' sketchbooks, and the level of their discussion about works of art, is very advanced for their age.

75. The quality of teaching and learning is never less than very good, and is mainly excellent for pupils aged eleven to thirteen. Introductions to lessons are always clear and set opportunities for the pupils' learning in context. Questioning is of a high standard, open in its approach and well aimed at assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding. Resources are of good quality and this also enables pupils to achieve quality in the work they undertake. In one lesson for ten-year-olds, pupils' cultural development was enhanced by a visit from a local artist. Here, they were provided with a very good opportunity not only to see, at first hand, original work of a commercially high standard, but also to discuss it with the artist. This strongly reinforced the work they were undertaking on colour, and gave them valuable insights into the nature of watercolour as a medium. There is a very productive teaching and learning partnership in all art lessons. Teachers are not afraid to take risks and 'seize the moment', as in one lesson for twelve-year-olds, when pupils were preparing for landscape painting. The teacher stopped the class, took them to the window and together they observed the quality of the changing, late afternoon light on the countryside outside. This was also excellent provision for the pupils' spiritual development. Pupils respond to such experiences with thoughtful consideration and maturity. They concentrate and work very hard in art lessons and their behaviour is often impeccable. They enjoy art, take the subject seriously, have a great deal of fun and enjoyment and become self-motivated to learn. One pupil, who had striven hard and improved a particular technique using acrylic paints, commented, 'I'm very proud of that!'
76. While pupils provide help with the preparation of resources and with tidying up, much of the time of the subject co-ordinator is taken up by routine preparation of materials. This limits the time available for her to monitor teaching and learning across the school. The department does not, as yet, have the information and communication technology resources it needs, though it has plans to acquire them.
77. There is excellent leadership and management of the subject, based on a clear educational direction and reflection of the school's aims and values in its work. This contributes strongly to the development and maintenance of high standards. Art has also played its part in helping the school to meet a key issue from the last inspection concerning the development of the pupils' multicultural understanding. Very good opportunities are provided which enable pupils to study and appreciate art from a diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

78. Standards are above average at eleven and thirteen. This is an improvement on the position at the time of the last inspection, when standards were broadly average. The issue raised in the last report, of ensuring that the design and technology curriculum was more closely related to industry, commerce and the community, has been fully addressed. The introduction of the industry day for the oldest pupils has been very successful. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve good standards in the subject. The oldest pupils in the school are all reaching the standard expected of pupils a year older, and some of the higher attaining pupils are reaching higher standards still.
79. Pupils respond very positively to lessons and at all times their behaviour is of the highest standard. They are all aware of the safety aspects of the subject and great care is taken when using tools and machines. Their folders show good competence in design skills, and their sketches show a steady progression of ideas. In all of their

projects, pupils draw on a range of sources of information, and good use is made of the Internet to assist them in the initial stages. Pupils produce plans, which are often detailed, and use them to explore design options. These very good attitudes are fostered by planning which gives pupils a broad and interesting range of work.

80. Consistently good teaching, based on a clearly thought-out scheme of work, ensures good patterns of learning and achievement for all pupils, on both of the school's sites. Pupils learn to select from a range of materials, to incorporate simple mechanisms into their work, and to construct accurately through careful marking out, cutting, shaping and smoothing, marking and drilling, joining and gluing. Older pupils undertake advanced and detailed projects, such as producing mechanical toys using a broader range materials and techniques. Their learning involves a very broad range of skills and activities, including making pizzas, and designing a label for a fizzy drink as part of industry day. The final product was professionally printed and affixed to six hundred bottles.
81. The quality of the teaching in design and technology ranges from good to very good. Lessons are thoroughly prepared and enthusiastically delivered. Very good guidance is given to those pupils who are less confident. Open questions consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding, and all teachers involved in the teaching of design and technology stress the importance of safety at all times. There is plenty of challenge in lessons. Expectations are high, and second-rate work is not accepted from any pupil.
82. A very knowledgeable and enthusiastic teacher coordinates the subject very well. Accommodation is good for pupils aged twelve and thirteen, and satisfactory for ten- and eleven-year-olds. The subject fosters pupils' knowledge and understanding of other cultures well through celebration activities, in which they prepare food from other countries following investigations using the internet.

## GEOGRAPHY

83. Because of the way in which the curriculum is organised, it was not possible to see any geography lessons during the inspection. Evidence from analysis of pupils' work, from discussions with teachers and pupils, and from teachers' planning indicates that standards are above average at eleven and thirteen. Standards are, overall, similar to those at the time of the last inspection, but there have been some improvements in the writing of older, higher-attaining pupils.
84. Eleven-year-old pupils make good use of a range of geographical vocabulary such as *route*, *key* and *meander* and use such terms correctly in discussion. They have knowledge of a much wider world than their immediate locality, and can talk confidently about capital cities in all continents. They have a sound grasp of the relative distances of, for example, Berlin, New York and Sydney. Pupils carry out independent research, using a range of resources, including the Internet, most effectively. For example, they understand how Rutland Water came into existence, have good recall of factual information relating to it and show mature appreciation of its unusual and special nature. They also made good use of their visit to this locality to enhance their knowledge and understanding. Although pupils across the attainment range annotate maps correctly to identify significant features and make quite extensive use of independent writing to record the results of their research, there is very limited evidence of pupils' use of other forms of recording, for example graphs and charts.
85. At thirteen, pupils have detailed recall and a mature understanding of the differences and similarities between places they study. They draw maps to show significant physical and human features and can interpret data, for example relating to climate, in order to draw conclusions. They understand ways in which geographical change, for example migration, can affect the lives of people living through it, and most pupils have written most convincingly about a topical environmental controversy in India. All pupils understand the factors effecting settlement in a variety of locations around the world and in their own locality. Pupils use a wide range of methods of recording their knowledge and understanding, including graphs, charts, note-making and extended writing. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when the extension of learning for higher-attaining pupils in written and diagrammatic forms was a key issue for action. They have appropriate map skills and all pupils can use grid references correctly. In discussion, all pupils explain and justify their opinions clearly and confidently, using a good range of geographical terminology.
86. Pupils' express great interest in their study of geography and regard it as being of considerable significance to them. They show interest in and respect for the way other people lead their lives and are quick to spot similarities as well as differences. They have a very mature appreciation of the concept of 'culture' and realise that geographical knowledge and understanding is one way of appreciating the culture of other parts of the world.
87. The subject is well managed by the recently appointed co-ordinator, although she has very little time for the work. There is extensive subject documentation, including a policy, planning in the long, medium and short term and a scheme of work, which is split into a series of topic sheets. Although much of the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is done on an informal basis and is recorded according to the methods favoured by individual teachers, a good start has been made on introducing a common programme of assessment and recording. There is now at least one common geography assessment test in each year group except Year 5, although

these are not generally marked using National Curriculum levels. Older pupils have a 'transfer folder' which is used to provide information at the time of their transfer to their next school. These contain assessments by the pupils themselves of all their geography topics, but they do not give any indication of National Curriculum levels. There are good resources for geography, including a wide range of videos. However, there is little use of computers in the subject, apart from some word-processing, and this represents insufficient progress since the previous inspection when the planned use of information technology was a key issue. Pupils find geographical field trips particularly useful and rewarding, but the range is limited.

## **HISTORY**

88. Pupils reach above-average standards at eleven and thirteen, and those with Statements of Special Educational Need make very good progress. Pupils' sense of time is developing well throughout the school, and the range and depth of their historical knowledge and understanding are often impressive. Pupils possess good interpretative skills, which were considered to be a weakness in the last inspection, and show confidence when undertaking historical enquiries. There are no significant differences in the standards achieved by boys and girls. The high standards noted during the last inspection have been maintained.
89. The quality of learning ranges from satisfactory to very good, and is good overall. Pupils are very productive, work at a good pace, sustain their concentration and are able to think and learn for themselves. They can record their knowledge in a wide variety of styles including extended writing assignments. High-quality individual and group projects are produced, including an excellent study of the local experience of World War 2 through a project which brought pupils into direct contact with American Air Force Veterans. The poetry written by pupils in the context of this work made a very good contribution to literacy as well as to their imaginative understanding of the topic. Speaking and listening skills are well-developed, and teachers build pupils' confidence through an excellent range of opportunities to say what they think. Learning is enriched by a comprehensive programme of visits, and pupils really enthuse about the regular historical re-enactments built into their work. These make important contributions to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
90. The quality of teaching is good overall, and never less than satisfactory. In about four in five lessons it is good or very good. There is little difference across the year groups. The range of teaching strategies has been widened since the last inspection. Planning is good, with clearly stated objectives. Regular changes of activity keep the pupils actively involved and build on their enthusiasm. A wide range of sources is used to enable pupils to make valid historical deductions. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject at all levels and set high expectations to promote learning. The skilful use of question and answer techniques provides opportunities for pupils to listen and question one another. The use of very good pictures as source material in a lesson about Roman Civilisation was an effective way of demonstrating the achievements of a past culture. In a minority of lessons, teaching was satisfactory, but work was not matched closely enough to the needs of either higher or lower-attaining pupils in the class to ensure good learning for these pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are taught well. Teachers make good use of computers in some lessons, but this is not consistent.
91. The co-ordinator provides very good management and leadership, but has few opportunities to monitor teaching and give personal support to temporary and non-specialist teachers. This limits the quality of learning in lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than good. Clear priorities and curriculum guidelines have been

established, and there is a well-planned and comprehensive scheme of work. Pupils' work is regularly assessed and helpful advice is given to improve performance. Resources are good, and have been improved since the last inspection, but homework is not consistently set across all classes. Excellent displays reinforce pupils' intelligent use of correct historical terminology.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

92. Pupils reach above-average standards at eleven and thirteen. This is the result of recent improvements in provision for the subject, and represents a very good advance on the position at the time of the last inspection. Progress in ICT is never less than satisfactory, and is good for pupils with special educational needs. Standards are now in line with those that pupils should be reaching. They are enhanced by well organised computer clubs at lunchtime, in which all pupils take part. The school makes particularly careful provision to help those who do not have computers at home.
93. By the age of eleven, pupils can use a wide variety of software well. Ten-year-old pupils understand the concept and use of databases, can plan and write a database, and enter data with a good level of proficiency. Eleven-year-olds make very good use of publishing software to produce a book on 'Monsters', each group merging good quality text they have written with their very well drawn images from a paint programme. Pupils have good operating skills with computers.
94. The standards reached by the oldest pupils in the school are also above national average levels. They understand the concept of a web site, and can choose and use appropriate software to plan a site, write web pages and add hyperlinks with a high degree of skill. The information presented on each page is of a good quality; clipart and scanned images are always appropriate and give good support to well-written text. The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' moral and social education and to their literacy skills through the many opportunities to write at length and to draft and redraft their work.
95. Teaching and learning are good overall, and never less than satisfactory. Good to very good teaching took place in three fifths of lessons during the inspection. Pupils are managed very well in all lessons, and expectations for behaviour are high. Very good question-and-answer sessions, that really stretch pupils' thinking, are the most consistent strength in the teaching. In the best lessons, teachers plan very well, present the work in exciting contexts, set clear time targets for the completion of tasks and have high expectations for the quality of pupils' work. This ensures that pupils very quickly learn new skills, are very productive, work at a good pace, and understand very clearly what they are doing. In a minority of lessons, pupils are allowed to work at a rather slower pace, and the purpose of the work is not entirely clear. When this happens, learning is barely satisfactory. Pupils' attitudes in ICT lessons are very good and their behaviour is excellent.
96. The leadership of the newly-appointed co-ordinator is very good, and the department now has the capacity for considerable improvement. Resources are very good and there are ambitious plans to expand the computer facilities still further. This is the result of very good financial planning, and is a very effective response to the point for action raised in the last inspection report. There are, however, insufficient books in the library for pupils to use to develop their skills away from the computers. Pupils have ready access to the Internet for research and electronic mailing. There are too

few opportunities for pupils to practise skills learned in ICT lessons in other subjects. The school has a programme in place to redress this.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

97. Pupils study French between the ages of eleven and thirteen, and reach standards which are well up to those expected for their age. They are used to hearing teachers speak French and usually understand what is said. When answering questions or performing role plays, most pupils speak with good accents. However, they do not routinely speak French themselves to communicate with their teacher or each other. Most pupils copy accurately, and write sentences or short paragraphs using reference materials. The oldest, high-attaining pupils can produce almost two pages of continuous writing which, although mainly based on repeating and adapting a given pattern, includes some personal contributions of their own. They also make up short poems which are imaginative and amusing. Pupils learn new vocabulary conscientiously in their homework, and reach good standards when this is tested.
98. Pupils make good progress during lessons and over the longer term. They sometimes spend a single period mainly revising and consolidating language which they have already met, but such lessons increase their fluency and confidence, and are legitimate stepping stones in the department's thorough and well thought-out scheme of work. As nationally, girls achieve better than boys. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in relation to their learning needs, and work at a similar rate to the rest of their group. However in their first term of French, when classes are taught as mixed ability groups, some high or low attaining pupils are not achieving all they could in some lessons.
99. Behaviour is very good. Pupils are keen to perform well in class, and work responsibly, both individually and in pairs. When an inspector asked them unexpected questions in French, most pupils answered appropriately and seemed pleased to do so. At the beginning of one lesson for twelve-year-olds, several pupils spoke naturally to the visitor in French. Just occasionally, pupils use French spontaneously in class for real communication. They should all do this more often.
100. All teaching observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory, and in three quarters of the lessons it was good or very good. Both part-time specialist teachers are well-qualified linguists, and use a wide range of suitable activities and materials in their teaching. Non-specialist teachers manage pupils well and sustain a good pace of work, but their spoken and written French is not always fully accurate. All teachers conduct lessons mainly in French. The best lessons are planned in great detail so that pupils move forward smoothly in small appropriate steps. Where teachers adopt a more broad-brush approach to planning, problems sometimes ensue. For example, some pupils made basic mistakes when asked to write sentences of their own without sufficient oral practice to prepare them for this.
101. The recently appointed subject co-ordinator has already made good progress in identifying areas such as work with computers, assessment and independent reading which need to be developed. An attractive specialist teaching room has just been established. There is good curricular liaison with the upper school and parallel middle school who all share the same scheme of work. French is also enhanced by a well supported annual educational visit to Normandy. Interest in French and other modern languages is promoted throughout the school by a variety of well-run lunchtime clubs.

102. The last inspection report identified significant weaknesses in French. These have now either been remedied, or else are clearly improving. Many pupils could still use French more actively, but most do now feel challenged by what teachers ask them to do in lessons. Standards overall have improved significantly and are no longer below average.

## MUSIC

103. Standards are above average at eleven and thirteen, and pupils achieve high standards of performance in extra-curricular activities and in concerts. There has been an improvement in the standards in performing and composing since the last inspection, and in provision for higher-attaining and gifted and talented pupils, all of whom learn very effectively. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons.
104. Pupils throughout the school experience a range of musical activities and make good progress in gaining confidence as performers, both vocally and instrumentally. Eleven-year-olds understand the way simple chords are formed, and use them in short compositions. For example, pupils in one lesson knew the notes required for the chords of D, E and A minor and played them securely on tuned instruments, showing a good sense of pulse. Ten-year-old pupils during the inspection improvised confidently in the pentatonic scale. Pupils suggested an idea for a phrase, and all the class played it, with individual pupils improvising short sections between the repeated phrases. In a lesson for the oldest pupils, they made their own raga, in connection with their work on Indian music. They composed the melodic shape and then improvised around the note patterns and added a drone. They evaluated their own performances and suggested ways that their work might be improved. Some pupils used simple notation to record their ideas.
105. Pupils have very good attitudes towards the subject. They are always well-behaved and listen attentively to music. Pupils aged nine to eleven work co-operatively on tasks and are careful when handling the instruments. Pupils in the eleven to thirteen age range share ideas when working on compositions and appreciate each other's performances. Pupils are very responsive to extra-curricular activities.
106. Teaching is good overall, and at times very good. Teachers use their own musical skills to aid pupils' understanding, and this has a positive effect on learning. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure that listening, performing and composing tasks are well-integrated, and that work is practically based. For example, in a very good lesson, the teacher gave a detailed explanation of the way the song, *Ever So Lonely*, had been composed. As a result, twelve-year-old pupils understood how they might use voices, instruments and improvisation in their compositions to convey an atmosphere of calm, reflection and meditation. The marking of written work for pupils aged eleven to thirteen does not always identify ways for pupils to improve. There is at present little use of computers in teaching and learning music.
107. The co-ordinator provides good leadership for the subject. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. Pupils are frequently involved in assessing both their own and each other's work. There is very good provision for extra-curricular music. This enables over 200 pupils from both sites to join together for rehearsals and performances. The provision includes a large choir, a chamber choir, an orchestra, a band and a string quartet. Over 150 pupils receive instrumental lessons provided by teachers from the Northamptonshire Music and Performance Service. There is a high demand for these



lessons, and a waiting list. Instrumental teachers offer good support to extra-curricular activities. The previous report highlighted the need to monitor and evaluate the impact of additional music tuition on the standards achieved across the school. This issue has been successfully addressed and pupils' progress is regularly evaluated. Pupils have performed at a variety of venues including the Oundle Festival of Music and Drama and at the Rodolphe Stahl Theatre, for the school production of the musical, *Oliver*. Pupils enter Oundle's Young Musician of the Year competition, and some have gained places in one of the county orchestras. Pupils have taken part in carol services at St Peter's Oundle and at Kings Cliffe school. Musicians have visited the school in connection with the Rock and Pop Initiative for thirteen-year-old pupils. Accommodation is satisfactory, but a new music block is planned for the Oundle site which will contain practice rooms and a recording studio. Resources are good, and include tuned percussion, keyboards and multi-cultural instruments.

108. Music makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Inspection evidence confirms parents' view that music is a strength of the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

109. Standards are above-average at eleven, and broadly average at thirteen. This is similar to the pattern noted during the last inspection.
110. Pupils aged nine to eleven develop a good range of ball skills and can control effectively the force, speed and direction of the ball while passing, dribbling and invading. They understand how these skills can be used in a real game, and understand and can apply the rules and tactics of team games. For example, a group practising netball could organise their tactics and interpret the rules independently in order to play a well-organised and enjoyable game. All pupils can plan, evaluate, revise and perform a series of balances linked by effective steps and movements, using the planning process to produce a smooth and polished performance. Pupils are supple and have control over body shape, with many showing developing balletic skills in the presenting their routines. All pupils are very confident in the water and virtually all are on course to achieve the national standard of swimming 25 metres by the age of eleven. Most can swim considerably further. They use a strong front crawl action and breathe well. Pupils at all levels of attainment evaluate their own performance and that of others realistically and diplomatically, making effective use of this process to refine and improve their work.
111. Pupils in the eleven-to-thirteen age range build appropriately on their skills and use an appropriate range of techniques to control the ball and enhance their overall performance. For example, most pupils when playing basketball use more than one kind of stop before taking and dribbling the ball, and can use diagonal sprints to enhance their manoeuvrability. In netball, most pupils track the player they are marking satisfactorily, although some lack the necessary speed and agility to do this effectively. Although pupils know the theory of shooting, many find it quite difficult actually to score goals. Pupils understand the importance of warming up sufficiently and use appropriate exercises to do this, for example realising that jogging is a more effective way of warming up than sprinting. Pupils make very effective use of the opportunity to evaluate their own performance and that of their peers by offering support and advice and apply this advice to improve their own performance.
112. The attitude of pupils towards physical education and their behaviour in lessons is always at least satisfactory and in nearly all lessons it is good. Some very good and

excellent attitudes were seen. Pupils nearly always approach their activities with enthusiasm and great energy, and are prepared to attempt new or more challenging skills without self-consciousness or embarrassment. This attitude is promoted by the helpful and supportive response of pupils towards the attempts and difficulties of others. One physically handicapped girl was assisted in making good progress in 'marking' her partner by the willingness of other members of the group to work at her pace, offering encouragement and advice. The effort and energy which pupils put into their work has a very positive effect on progress. Pupils put thought into their work, answer questions carefully and ask questions in order to improve their performance, for example pupils warming up for a basketball lesson asked questions in order to ensure that they were doing this in the most effective way. A few older pupils show less enthusiasm in lessons, especially when the pace is rather slow or they are unable to see the purpose of what they are doing. When this happens, pupils fail to make sufficient progress. The positive attitude of pupils is similar to that seen during the previous inspection.

113. All teaching seen was at least satisfactory and nearly all was good. This represents a slight improvement since the previous inspection. Some very good and excellent teaching was seen. Teachers make clear explanations and make good use of the demonstration of skills, either themselves or by pupils, to ensure that pupils know what is expected of them. They make effective use of challenging questioning and pupils respond by thinking hard about their work and making progress in their understanding. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of progress, hard work and behaviour and make these expectations explicit, promoting a spirit of endeavour and perseverance in pupils. A particular strength of teaching is the very effective use made by all teachers of warm-up exercises in order to enhance pupils' performance and promote safe attitudes to physical exercise. A further strength is the regular opportunity and encouragement which is given to pupils to evaluate their own performance and that of their peers, which has a very positive impact on pupils' understanding of their own progress and on their motivation to progress further. Nearly all lessons have a good pace, which maintains pupils' interest and motivation. On the few occasions where the pace is less challenging, pupils show less commitment to succeed.
114. The management of the subject is satisfactory. There is a new, updated policy for physical education and the subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. A new scheme of work is being produced. This scheme of work offers a wide variety of activities, especially of team ball games, but the time allocation to each of them is, of necessity, rather brief, and there are fairly lengthy gaps between the time slots devoted to each activity. This means that pupils picking up an activity after a long time lapse have forgotten many of the skills previously learned, and too much time has to be devoted to revision before moving on. The co-ordinator has no opportunity to monitor or support the work of colleagues during lesson time and so is unable to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum. There has been some progress towards setting up assessment procedures for the subject, but there is no consistent format and this limits continuity in learning. Facilities for physical education are good. There are extensive playing fields which, at the end of a long period of extremely heavy rainfall, remained well drained and usable and on both sites. The gymnasium on the King's Cliffe site is of a good size, and that on the Oundle site, although a little small, is adequate. There are good changing and showering facilities, although on the Oundle site these become cramped when several classes are using them simultaneously.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

115. Eleven-year-olds reach broadly average standards, while standards at thirteen are better than those expected in the local Agreed Syllabus. There has been good improvement in provision religious education since the last inspection, when the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus were not being met. While the school has been unable to recruit a specialist co-ordinator for the subject, the senior management of the school and the governors have ensured that this key issue from the last inspection has been properly addressed, and religious education continues to be featured appropriately in the school's development planning. The subject's policy document has been re-written and provides an informative picture of the school's approach. Schemes of work have been revised, and properly compared to the demands of the Agreed Syllabus. The school now complies with statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education.
116. Pupils aged nine to eleven make sound progress, and those aged eleven to thirteen, good progress in the subject. This compares well with the previous inspection when standards were mainly below expectations. The quality of discussion work is consistently good. Pupils are encouraged to participate and express their personal thoughts, opinions and beliefs. They do this with security, whatever their personal level of ability, as a result of the high levels of mutual trust and respect between teachers and pupils. Consequently, the contribution of the subject to the pupils' personal development is very good. Pupils' response to the work is good, and often excellent among twelve and thirteen-year-olds. This makes an important contribution to their learning.
117. Religious education has made a positive, and valuable, contribution to the improvement in the school's provision for teaching pupils about other cultures. Provision for the teaching of the major world faiths is good. For example, nine-year-old pupils are developing a good understanding of Hindu beliefs concerning reincarnation. They are able to suggest, and appreciate, that the concept of Dharma might include duty to God (worship) as well as duty to family. One higher-attaining pupil contributed the observation that 'Karma is what people do and Dharma what they should do!'
118. The quality of teaching and learning during the inspection was never less than satisfactory. It was satisfactory overall, and at times good, for pupils aged nine to eleven, and good overall, with some very good and excellent teaching, for those aged eleven to thirteen. Although there are no subject specialist teachers for religious education, teaching in all lessons showed a positive commitment to the subject that engaged pupils' interest and gave them clear understanding of their own learning. Expectations and relationships with pupils are good. The most successful teaching links religious ideas very well with pupils' own experience. How, for example, would twelve-year-olds remember a classmate who had left the school? How does religious belief change people's lives, particularly when they encounter prejudice? These issues are related both to twentieth-century life, and to Biblical times through consideration of the experience of the Israelites in Egypt. The learning in these lessons makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' moral, spiritual, cultural and social development.
119. On the other hand, there are too few strategies for assessment and for setting targets for improvement. Learning in some classes for pupils aged nine to eleven is hampered by worksheets that do not allow pupils to express their own ideas, so that teachers have limited evidence of what they have understood and what they have not.

120. Co-ordination is undertaken by a deputy headteacher, who gives good leadership on a day-to-day basis, and seeks advice from the local authority advisory service when required.