

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **BECCLIS MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Beccles

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124822

Headteacher: Miss C A Douglas

Reporting inspector: Marianne Ellender-Gelé  
2348

Dates of inspection: 10 – 14 June 2002

Inspection number: 244870

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Middle deemed secondary

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 9 - 13

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Castle Hill  
Beccles  
Suffolk

Postcode: NR34 7BQ

Telephone number: 01502 713195

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs A Dyer

Date of previous inspection: 16 April 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2348	Marianne Ellender-Gelé	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed?
9545	Kevin Greatorex	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
11830	Jonathan Banks	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
3691	Philip Mason	Team inspector	Art and Design Design and Technology	How well are the pupils taught? Efficiency and learning resources
32164	David Belsey	Team inspector	English	
3695	Michael Lovett	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and Communication Technology	
10916	Kewal Goel	Team inspector	Science Equal Opportunities	
12957	John Stout	Team inspector	Geography History	
12008	David Bray	Team inspector	Music	
19858	John Follett	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs	
11684	Frances Le Pla	Team inspector	Religious education	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Beccles Middle School is an average size middle school serving the 9 to 13 age range. It has 438 pupils on roll, with a fairly equal number of boys and girls. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (30 percent) and those who have a statement of special educational needs (6.6 percent) is well above average. Twenty-two pupils are currently part of the designated special unit, called the Area Support Centre (ASC). They are integrated in the mainstream school, but also receive special care and provision in the ASC. Special educational needs in this school range from moderate difficulties in literacy to severe emotional, behavioural, physical and learning difficulties. Almost all pupils are of white British heritage and only one receives extra support for English as an additional language. Standards on entry into Year 5 are below average. The social backgrounds of pupils are diverse. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals (14 percent) is average. On balance, more pupils than average come from homes where income is low and from wards recorded as having high levels of social disadvantage. The school also has on its roll seven children in the care of the Local Authority and some live in the local Children's Resource Centre. Over recent years the school has had some difficulty in recruiting teachers. At the time of the inspection, some lessons were covered by supply staff and three teachers were on a temporary contract.

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

This is a good school, particularly effective in preparing pupils well for their further studies in Year 9 at the local High School. Pupils are enthusiastic about their lessons, in which they show very good attitudes to their learning. Both they and their teachers work hard and teaching is good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Other key staff, with leadership and management responsibilities, fulfil their roles well and are very committed to improving the school further. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and the leadership of the ASC are very good. Financial resources are managed very effectively. The school gives good value for money.

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

- Progress is rapid in art, French, music and physical education in all years and in English and mathematics in Years 7 and 8. Progress and standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are very good in Years 5 to 7.
- The progress and provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good.
- The headteacher provides very good leadership.
- Teaching is good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their learning. They behave very well and relationships at all levels are very good.
- The school seeks to include all pupils and treats them fairly and equitably. Teachers and staff provide very good role models and promote strongly principles of equality of opportunity.
- The high quality physical environment is warm and secure; it contributes positively to the wellbeing, health and safety of all pupils.

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

- The marking and day-to-day assessment to help pupils improve their work further.
- The monitoring of academic achievement and use of data to track pupils' progress and inform the next stage of learning.
- Challenging opportunities for pupils to practise higher order skills, including homework.

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

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

The school was last inspected in April 1996. Since then, improvement has been good. Although Year 6 test results remain below average, they have improved year on year. Standards have been at least maintained in all subjects and in information and communication technology (ICT) they are much improved. Teaching is now good overall, although homework is not used well enough to extend learning.

The needs of more able pupils are now addressed better in a wide range of subjects. Senior staff, heads of year and most co-ordinators of subjects have embarked on a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluating key aspects of the school's work. Staff changes, however, have at times hampered actions resulting from monitoring activities. The on-going refurbishment programme to the accommodation has had a very positive impact on the quality of the learning environment. Instances of poor behaviour are now very rare. Many parents believe that the school has improved since 1996 and inspectors agree.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
English	E	D	D	E
Mathematics	E	E	E	E
Science	E	C	D	E

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

Since the previous inspection, results have risen in English, mathematics and science. The overall trend has been in line with the national trend of improvement. Boys do better in tests than girls in science and mathematics. Standards of work seen during the inspection were better for most pupils than test results indicate. This is because the school has a larger than average proportion of pupils with special educational needs, and levels of social deprivation are not reflected accurately by the free school meal indicator. Pupils achieve well and make above average progress during their four years at the school. The school set itself appropriate targets for 2001, which it achieved in English, but not in mathematics. Action is being taken to improve results further and targets set for 2002 are very challenging.

In other subjects, by the end of Year 6 standards of work seen are in line with the national average and are above average in art, music and physical education. In ICT, standards are well above average. By the end of Year 8, standards are average, except in some aspects of design and technology. They are above average in art, music and physical education. Progress in Years 7 and 8 is good.

In all years, standards of literacy are sound. Pupils listen attentively, enjoy their reading and demonstrate a good understanding of what they are reading. Weaknesses remain in writing, particularly in spelling. Speaking skills are above average when pupils leave school at the end of Year 8. Standards in numeracy are sound in mathematics, but are not sufficiently developed across subjects. In a few subjects able pupils underachieve because some activities are too easy for them. Pupils who have special educational needs make very good progress and achieve well by the end of Year 8.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy being at school and want to learn.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils act responsibly. They are very polite and helpful. In formal situations, like assemblies, they are impeccable. Exclusions are used appropriately.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are very good. Pupils mature quickly and look after each other well. Older pupils demonstrate good levels of independence and readily help those in need of support.
Attendance	In line with the national figure for authorised absence. Above average for unauthorised absence, mostly due to the long-term absences of three pupils.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 5 and 6	Years 7 and 8
Quality of teaching	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.*

The quality of teaching across all years is good. It leads to effective learning for pupils in the great majority of lessons. Over one-fifth of the teaching was very good or excellent. Teaching was at least good in almost two-thirds of lessons seen. In almost all other lessons the quality of teaching was satisfactory. However, in a small proportion of lessons (about one in twenty), there were weaknesses sufficient to make them unsatisfactory. No teaching was judged poor. Teaching of pupils who have particular learning difficulties is very good.

Good teaching was seen in all lessons across year groups in art and design and in music. A high proportion of good teaching was also seen in Years 5 and 6 in history, information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, physical education, personal and social education and religious education, and in French, geography, history and physical education in Years 7 and 8. Excellent teaching was seen in individual lessons in French, history and mathematics. In these lessons the quality of pupils' learning was impressive. Teaching in English and mathematics is good and in science it is sound. In all subjects, pupils learn well, particularly when they are given opportunities to think for themselves and engage in practical activities. The strengths of the good or better teaching are: the high level of teachers' subject knowledge, the effective use of appropriate methods matched to pupils' needs and the very good planning of learning activities. The few weaknesses occur mostly when pupils are not clear about the tasks set, the teacher dominates the lesson and the management of behaviour is too weak. Overall, homework does not contribute sufficiently to pupils' learning. Skills of literacy are taught well in most subjects. Skills of numeracy are reinforced effectively in mathematics, but are not sufficiently practised in other relevant subjects. Information and communication technology is taught very well in Years 5 to 7, but is not used sufficiently in Year 8.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There is good coverage of national curriculum subjects as required, but not all subjects include sufficient teaching of ICT in Year 8. Coverage of personal, careers, sex and health education is limited. The range of extra-curricular activities and outdoor opportunities is good.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. Provision for pupils on the SEN register and for those in the ASC is very good. Classroom assistants support pupils very well in class. They work effectively with the specialist teachers.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Provision for moral and social development is good. Provision for spiritual and cultural development is sound. Cultural diversity is not sufficiently promoted across subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well overall. Procedures for encouraging good behaviour and eliminating bullying are very good. Heads of year monitor pupils' welfare and personal development very effectively. The use of assessment information to inform curriculum planning and monitoring of pupils' academic progress are aspects to improve.

The school works well in partnership with parents. It provides regular newsletters and curricular information. Good opportunities are provided for parents to discuss their child's progress annually. Reports are helpful and easy to read. They provide appropriate information on pupils' progress.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides very good leadership. She leads staff with determination and has clear views on relevant key priorities. The acting deputy headteacher, subject co-ordinators and heads of year provide effective leadership. The special needs department, including the ASC is led and managed very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Well. The School Improvement Plan contains appropriate actions. Governors are involved in strategic direction and hold staff to account. They keep themselves well informed and take an active interest. Funding is managed very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Evaluation of national test results is good, as is the evaluation of teaching and learning by senior staff. Not all heads of subjects and heads of year use data well to raise standards and track pupil progress.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Money is used appropriately for the benefit of pupils and effective steps are taken to obtain the best possible value from contracts and suppliers. Teachers are well qualified. Learning resources are adequate and accommodation is very spacious and well maintained. Specialist staffing has been difficult to recruit in some subjects.

On balance, staffing, accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is attractive, the site is well looked after and pupils have access to very good outdoor areas. Staff changes are managed effectively by senior managers and governors.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Only a quarter of parents returned the questionnaire and fifteen attended the meeting for parents before the inspection.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their children like school.</li> <li>• The school is easy to contact and teachers are always willing to talk to parents as needed.</li> <li>• Teachers expect children to work hard.</li> <li>• Teaching is good overall, and children make good progress.</li> <li>• The school helps children become more mature.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework.</li> <li>• Staff changes.</li> <li>• Behaviour.</li> <li>• The school does not work closely with parents.</li> <li>• Parents are not well informed about progress.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with the positive views of parents and confirm that staffing shortages have had a detrimental impact in some areas, but the school is doing its utmost to manage the situation and the quality of provision is good overall. Inspectors confirm that homework is not used sufficiently to extend learning. There is no evidence to support the view of some parents about behaviour. Behaviour is very good. There are many opportunities to discuss pupils' progress; reports to parents are regular and informative. The school makes much effort to work closely with parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

##### **Standards on entry**

- 1 Standards in literacy and numeracy skills of pupils entering Beccles Middle School in Year 5 have been below average in recent years. Whilst there are able pupils in the current Year 5, overall results in reading and mathematics scores taken on entry into Year 5 are below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is above average and well above average for those who have a statement of special educational needs.

##### **Performance in National Curriculum Tests**

- 2 At the end of Year 6, results in the 2001 national tests were below average in English and science, and well below in mathematics. Based on the average, since the previous inspection, results have improved steadily in English, mathematics and science, matching the national rising trend. In mathematics, discontinuity in staffing has affected recent results. Improvement in English is particularly significant for girls, whilst boys perform better than girls in science and mathematics. The difference between boys' and girls' results matches the national difference in English, but is wider than the national figure in mathematics, although the gap narrowed in 2001. Results at higher levels (Levels 5 and above) remain below county and national figures in mathematics and science, but improved significantly in English to reach the national average in 2001.

##### **Performance compared with similar schools\*\***

- 3 Results taken at the end of Year 6 in 2001 were well below average when compared with schools with similar proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal. Beccles Middle School is in a group of nine Suffolk middle schools with lower than average attainment scores on entry into Year 5. When compared with these other middle schools, results compare favourably in English and science, but not in mathematics. Inspection findings confirm that pupils make steady progress overall in Years 5 and 6. At the end of Year 8, almost all pupils move to the local high school. Whilst there are no national comparative tests results at the end of Year 8, Year 9 results of Beccles Middle School pupils demonstrate that they achieve very well at age 14 in the three core subjects.

*\*\* Similar schools are grouped according to the proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals. Beccles Middle School serves an area with above average levels of social disadvantage. It has a larger proportion of pupils with special educational needs, a special unit for pupils with severe learning, physical and emotional difficulties and has a number of pupils from the Children Resource Centre for children in the care of social services. Consequently the national comparison, based on free school meals, represents the school unfavourably.*

## Standards of pupils currently in the school.

- 4 In **English**, standards are average at the end of Years 6 and 8. Current Year 6 pupils have improved their reading rapidly to reach expected levels. Writing standards have also improved, but at a lower rate and remain below average, due to inaccurate spelling. There is little difference between boys' and girls' attainment. Pupils speak confidently, are able to express their ideas orally and support their points of view with clearly articulated arguments. They use a wide range of vocabulary. In Years 7 and 8 pupils make good progress and, by the end of Year 8, attainment matches the national average in reading, writing and listening, and is slightly above average in speaking. There is marked progress in writing, where pupils show an ability to organise writing appropriately to suit a particular audience and purpose, and to use mature vocabulary. They write creatively. They progress well in speaking and develop their listening skills further.
- 5 In **mathematics**, standards are average by the end of Year 6 and are better than past test results indicate. Standards in algebra are good, and progress overall is steady across all aspects of mathematics. The rate of progress improves in Years 7 and 8 and is good overall, particularly for able pupils, as exemplified by the good results achieved by Beccles Middle School pupils in the Year 9 national tests taken at the high school. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in all years.
- 6 Standards in **science** are average at the end of Years 6 and 8. Pupils make steady progress in all years. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls. Able pupils are keen to ask questions, they organise their work well and spell new scientific words correctly, but they underachieve due to lack of challenge in some of the work set. Less able pupils can make simple predictions and can use fair testing in simple contexts. They achieve well.
- 7 In **other subjects**, by the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in information and communication technology (ICT). They are above average in art, music and physical education and are average in all other subjects. Considering the starting point, progress is at least steady in all subjects and good in art, French and physical education. Progress is very good in ICT and music. At the end of Year 8, standards are at least average in all subjects and above average in art, music and physical education. Progress is good in art, French, music and physical education. It is satisfactory in all other subjects.
- 8 Standards in **literacy** are satisfactory. The National Strategies are used well to raise standards across subjects. The skills of speaking, listening, reading and sharing ideas with others are developed effectively. Spelling remains, too often, inaccurate. Appropriate vocabulary is known and pupils have a sound grasp of the language needed to succeed in different subjects. This is most noticeable in English, geography, music and science. In some subjects, like history and English, reading skills are strong. Pupils write well in English, history, geography and science in particular. There is good work in mathematics, linking problems in words to symbols. Pupils can research and select information well using ICT and the library. They read critically in Years 7 and 8, speak and discuss issues confidently, and their written work shows increasing competence to match expected standards at the end of Year 8.
- 9 Standards in numeracy cover a similar range to the national picture, but a higher than usual proportion of the average and below average Years 5 and 6 pupils have difficulty in recalling multiplication tables. These pupils are uncertain about strategies for

mental processes that would give them easy routes to calculations or approximations. High attainers, particularly in Years 7 and 8, are highly competent in manipulating numbers, decimals, percentages and fractions. They recall key facts quickly and accurately, and are beginning to build up a range of strategies for mental arithmetic, approximation and estimation. Pupils use their numeracy skills adequately in other subjects when required, but they are given few opportunities to do so.

### **Pupils with special educational needs**

- 10 Pupils on the special educational needs register achieve well across the school. They make good progress and this is due to the high quality of the support they receive, both in the Area Support Centre and when supported by learning support assistants in class. This is especially true for the development of their literacy and numeracy skills.

### **Performance and progress of boys and girls**

- 11 Across subjects, there is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls. The difference in standards reflects the national difference, although it is more pronounced in art and design and in design and technology where girls do better than boys.

### **Performance targets**

- 12 The targets set in 2000 and in 2001 for results in Year 6 tests in English and mathematics represented realistic expectations of improvement. The school met its performance target in English, but the 2001 target was not met in mathematics. The targets set for 2002 are appropriate in English considering past results, but are very challenging in mathematics.

### **Parents' comments**

- 13 The great majority of parents who expressed an opinion in the questionnaire indicated that they believe that their children make good progress at the school. However, they expressed concerns over staff changes, particularly those affecting Year 6 in 2001. The inspection found that pupils make steady progress in Years 5 and 6 and good progress in Years 7 and 8. Findings also confirm that staff changes, whilst managed very well by governors and senior managers, have hampered improvement.

### **Progress since the 1996 inspection**

- 14 Results in national tests have risen since the last inspection in line with the national rising trend. In all other subjects, standards and progress have been at least maintained and have improved in art, geography, history, French, information and communication technology, music, religious education and physical education. More able pupils now achieve well overall, although they still underachieve in a few subjects and in their homework because of lack of challenge. Pupils with special educational needs now make very good progress.

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

- 15 Pupils' very positive attitudes, very high standards of behaviour and the very good relationships are strengths of the school and have a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning.

### **Attitudes**

- 16 Pupils have very positive attitudes to the school and their work. They show great enthusiasm for what they are asked to do and apply themselves very well to their activities. This was demonstrated in the great majority of lessons, for example Year 8 pupils in English were fully engaged and applied independent thinking to their work on fox hunting. They reflected well on this issue, exemplified their arguments and gained much deeper understanding through high levels of commitment. Pupils sustain good levels of concentration because teachers plan discussion activities that challenge and motivate them. They take great pride and enjoyment in producing good work and are keen to share their results with others, as demonstrated by the Year 6 pupils wanting to share their poems describing Lowry's paintings. The great majority of parents say that their children like school.

### **Behaviour**

- 17 Behaviour is consistently very good. Some parents expressed misgivings about the standards of behaviour in school but these concerns are not supported by inspection evidence. When they come to school, in assemblies, at lunchtimes and at playtimes, pupils demonstrate very high standards of behaviour, as in assemblies where pupils' behaviour was impeccable during the presentation on 'heroes'. Pupils move around the school in an orderly manner and have a clear understanding of the standards expected of them. In lessons, behaviour is very good and almost all pupils conform to the high expectations even when not closely supervised. Pupils were allowed to watch part of an England World Cup Football game during their lunch period. While they became highly excited as they watched the game, they very quickly settled in a very mature manner at the end of the match. However, in the isolated lessons where teaching is unsatisfactory a very small number of pupils display disruptive behaviour.
- 18 Exclusions are frequent for a school of this size but reflect the insistence that continuously unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. During the inspection there was no evidence of bullying, oppressive behaviour or lack of respect for school property. Pupils say that they feel very secure at the school.

### **Relationships**

- 19 Relationships in the school are very good. Pupils form very constructive relationships with each other and with adults. They work co-operatively together, demonstrating that they will listen with interest to each other and will try to understand the other person's point of view. This was shown by Year 6 pupils during the discussion on dangers in the environment. Pupils show genuine pleasure in the achievements of others, as demonstrated by the spontaneous applause for the singers in assembly. Virtually all pupils act in a mature and responsible way. They consistently demonstrate patience, tolerance and understanding for others.

## **Personal development**

- 20 Pupils' personal development is good. The school provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils to show initiative and take responsibility and they demonstrate that the trust is well placed. Pupils make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development as they perform jobs within the classroom and around the school. As they progress through the school they are trusted with greater degrees of independence and respond well to these opportunities. For example, older pupils help Year 5 with their reading. They act as chairperson and secretary to the school council. All pupils are active in fund raising activities.

## **Attendance**

- 21 Levels of attendance at the school are close to the national average. Unauthorised absence is above average, mostly due to the long-term absences of three pupils. The great majority of pupils attend regularly and are encouraged to do so by the staff. For example, attendance contributes to the counting of "good days" for pupils. Pupils are punctual and many arrive early. They come happily to school ready to learn, enabling the school to make a prompt and efficient start to the school day. Despite the school's efforts to encourage attendance, many of the absences are due to parents taking holidays in term time.

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

- 22 The quality of teaching, as observed in lessons, across all years is good. It leads to effective learning for pupils in the great majority of lessons. Oral feedback by teachers is good and helps pupils understand their strengths and where they need to improve. Written feedback and the impact of homework on learning are aspects to improve.
- 23 Across the school, over one-fifth of the teaching was very good or excellent. Teaching was at least good in almost two-thirds of lessons seen. In almost all other lessons the quality of teaching was satisfactory. However, in a small proportion of lessons (about one in twenty), there were weaknesses sufficient to make them unsatisfactory. Teaching quality is broadly similar across year groups. No teaching was judged poor. The picture of teaching quality is closely matched to the national pattern recorded in the most recent report on national standards in education.
- 24 Good teaching was seen in all lessons across year groups in art and design and music. A high proportion of good teaching was also seen in history, information and communication technology, mathematics, physical education, personal and social education, religious education in Years 5 to 6, and in French, geography, history, physical education in Years 7 and 8. Excellent teaching was seen in individual lessons in French, history and mathematics. In these lessons the quality of pupils' learning was impressive.

## **Good teaching**

- 25 Where teaching was at least good, it exhibited a combination of a number of the strengths listed below. In these lessons, pupils made evident progress in their learning and they were challenged to reach suitably high standards for their prior levels of attainment. As a result, they achieved well.

- 26 Teachers had a good knowledge and understanding of their subject. They conveyed their own commitment to learning through lively presentations, which engaged pupils' interest.

*In art across years, the teacher's knowledge and enthusiasm enabled pupils to grasp and apply principles of art movements from seventeenth century Dutch art to abstract expressionism.*

*In a Year 5 PE lesson, detailed teacher knowledge of sprinting action enabled pupils to improve their starting technique.*

*In a Year 7 geography lesson, very clear explanations enabled pupils to understand the characteristics of the upper course of rivers and use geographical terms such as source, channel and erosion.*

- 27 Lessons were well planned. The teaching was based on well-considered objectives for what pupils would learn, and resources and time were well-matched to the teachers' intentions.

*In a Year 6 RE lesson, a carefully planned sequence of teacher and pupil activities enabled all to understand the importance of the Torah in Jewish worship.*

*In a Year 7 French lesson on leisure activities, teacher modelling of language, whole class speaking and paired discussion enabled pupils to link sound with meaning effectively.*

*In a Year 8 English lesson, the teacher used a number of short class and paired tasks to teach emotive writing and then to write with feeling on the topic 'Chocolate should be banned'.*

- 28 Teachers used effective methods, which were well matched to the purpose of the lesson. These enabled all pupils to be fully involved and they saw the point of what the teacher intended them to learn.

*In a Year 5 history lesson, an actual nineteenth century local family case study was used to explain population migration to major cities, providing good development of pupil's chronology and enquiry skills.*

*In a Year 6 ICT lesson, teaching used demonstrations, paired discussion and individual practical activities using computers to teach techniques for producing a PowerPoint presentation.*

- 29 Teachers had suitably high expectations. Lessons took account of the different learning needs of pupils and they were challenged to take the next step in learning whatever their starting point.

*In a Year 6 science lesson, the teacher set a lesson on chromatography in the context of a forensic challenge. This enabled pupils to understand a complex scientific concept rapidly and then experiment effectively in separating a mixture of coloured inks.*

*In a Year 8 music lesson on film music, the teacher set and achieved high expectations when pupils composed short atmospheric compositions using harmony and textural effects.*

- 30 Pupils were well managed and there are positive relationships. Teaching held pupils' attention that encouraged all to maintain concentration. However, when attention lapsed or there were incidences of inappropriate behaviour, the teacher handled these with authority that was seen to be fair and commanded pupils' respect.

*In a Year 5 mixed ability mathematics group, teaching ensured a calm and attentive atmosphere when pupils worked out a classification method for triangles. Pupils co-operated well in individual, group and whole class activities because the teacher had established clear codes of classroom conduct.*

*In Year 6 design and technology, teacher management enabled all pupils to learn and practise a number of skills effectively as they joined textile materials together to make pill-box hats, including using sewing machines for the first time.*

### **Excellent teaching**

- 31 In a small number of lessons, teachers demonstrated the characteristics of good teaching set out above, but also used advanced skills that inspired pupils. In these lessons, learning was accelerated and pupils learnt even more quickly than would normally be the case. Teaching challenged pupils by the ambitious expectations set and they responded well. There was a sense of anticipation and exhilaration in the classroom.

*In history, the depth of questioning and the excellent range of teaching skills enabled all pupils to progress very well to higher understanding, such as in the lesson on Medieval Realms. The work of the learning support assistant ensured very good progress for pupils with special educational needs.*

*In mathematics, topics were presented in such an encouraging and stimulating manner that all pupils felt curious about the next issue and how they should address it. A rich range of activities engaged all pupils.*

*In French, the teacher placed excellent focus on oral work at the beginning of the lesson. This led to very good individual practice on the topic of “free time and leisure”. The teacher promoted participation of all pupils and high expectations led to rapid progress.*

### **Satisfactory teaching**

- 32 In almost one-third of lessons the teaching was sound. These lessons had neither notable strengths nor significant shortcomings. In many of these lessons the pupils were attentive and activities were undertaken sensibly. Often these lessons were too dominated by the teacher and there were few opportunities for pupils to use their imagination or initiative. While pupils lacked strong motivation, the teaching enabled them to make steady progress.

### **Unsatisfactory teaching**

- 33 In the few lessons where teaching was unsatisfactory significant weaknesses outweighed positive features. These resulted in pupils under-achieving and the pace of learning was insufficiently rapid. Unsatisfactory teaching in lessons was mainly associated with three factors:

*Pupils were not sufficiently clear about the task set and, whilst willing to try hard, they were not able to make real progress and in some cases became frustrated or bored at their lack of success. There were instances where lack of clarity stemmed from the teachers’ lack of security in subject knowledge.*

*Lessons were dominated by the teacher and pupils had little opportunity to make personal contributions. This resulted in pupils being insufficiently challenged in their thinking, and as the lesson progressed they lost enthusiasm.*

*The teacher did not manage behaviour well and tolerated an unacceptable level of chatter as the lesson progressed. Pupils who wished to work were disturbed by the lack of self-discipline of others and the teacher was unable to impose the norms for learning expected at the school.*

## **Homework and its use to extend learning**

- 34 Parents were not happy about the homework set and inspectors confirm that this aspect of the school's work needs improvement.
- 35 The school publishes a timetable for homework and many teachers set work to be completed out of school. Overall, the nature of homework tasks set is too undemanding, especially for higher attaining pupils. Much of the homework set during the inspection, and observed in the review of pupils' work undertaken during the year, was to complete work started in class or to give further practice to reinforce pupils' knowledge or skills. Homework too rarely provides pupils with opportunities to find out new information or apply their understanding in new situations. Many pupils, particularly in the older age range, are capable of tackling homework that develops over a number of weeks that would challenge them to apply higher learning skills, such as investigating topics and recording information they find themselves. This is especially the case in mathematics and science. Some extended pieces are undertaken in English, such as writing short dramatic pieces in Year 8 for younger pupils to perform, and presenting topic work in geography. These approaches can be used more widely. The school homework policy is too undemanding of older pupils in art and design, design and technology and music.

## **Learning**

- 36 The effectiveness of pupils' learning is closely associated with the quality of teaching they receive, as described above. Where the teaching is of good quality or better, pupils concentrate well and readily engage in activities. Very good teaching inspires pupils' enthusiasm and they are willing to tackle new learning with confidence. Where the learning is satisfactory, pupils sustain steady effort but are often too dependent on the teacher guiding them through the next step that they have to take to make progress. In the few lessons where learning is unsatisfactory, pupils have little idea about what they can do to improve their work further and the concentration often falters.
- 37 Strong features of pupils' learning in lessons where teaching is of good quality are:
- the thoroughness with which pupils gain skills and knowledge in subjects;
  - consistency in the pace to their work, which is often rapid, particularly in English, French, music and physical education;
  - independence in thinking out how to apply what they have learned, especially in art and design and physical education;
  - a willingness to learn new things for themselves, rather than expecting to be told; and
  - good relationships with others in the class, so that they help each other learn, for example when they work in small groups or pairs.

A combination of these positive learning features was observed in approximately three-fifths of lessons observed during the inspection.

## Teaching of literacy and numeracy across subjects

- 38 Teaching of literacy across subjects is satisfactory. In English and history, strong teaching promotes a wide range of writing styles, use of vocabulary and reading strategies. In many subjects, subject specific vocabulary is displayed on walls and in some it is used well to improve pupils' understanding, such as in science. All subjects provide at least sound, and often good support for speaking, listening and sharing ideas. Some subjects, particularly English and geography, effectively support good writing skills and English and history promote good reading skills. There is some effective work in mathematics linking problems in words to symbols. The National Literacy Strategies in Years 5 to 8 are applied well to provide teachers with planning and teaching skills to support literacy across the curriculum. These are developing strengths that can now be shared across all subjects.
- 39 The teaching of numeracy is given appropriate attention in mathematics lessons and the National Strategies form the basis of the scheme of work. All teachers use the advised, three-part lesson structure. Starter activities are well established. End-of-lesson plenary sessions are held. Though these are not as good as the starters, several good ones were seen and teachers are continuing to improve their skills and methods. There is virtually no evidence of teachers using the Numeracy Strategy in other subjects to reinforce pupils' skills with number. The use of number in other subjects is rare and mostly superficial, such as keeping the score in physical education, and measuring and weighing in design and technology. One example of good work was the correct production of a temperature-time graph in science.

## Teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs (SEN)

- 40 The teaching of SEN pupils is very good. Pupils learn very well, both in mainstream lessons and in the Area Support Centre (ASC). SEN staff have a very good understanding of individual pupils' needs. All subject teachers know the pupils who have special educational needs and are aware of their targets. In most cases they take these targets into account and organise different tasks and materials to meet these needs. Where pupils are supported in lessons, support is usually planned well by the subject teacher. This enables the learning support assistant to work alongside the teacher effectively and help pupils make good progress; for example in science, pupils with severe learning difficulties were accessing the full content of the lesson on chromatography thanks to appropriately adapted resources. Since the previous inspection, good progress has been made in ensuring that subject teachers make use of individual education plans (IEPs). IEP targets are monitored well and progress towards achieving these is reviewed regularly in a process that involves all subject teachers.

## Marking and day to day assessment

- 41 The school's policy is clear and covers well the most important aspects of marking work, including the need for oral comments during lessons in order to help pupils to make progress. In practice, however, subjects do not have a sufficiently consistent approach to marking. There are some very good examples. In history, work is marked regularly, national curriculum levels are used consistently and targets are set for learning. In music, helpful oral comments are often used to help pupils understand how they are doing and what can be done to improve. This is also the case in other subjects. There are, however, important shortcomings. Many of the marking activities are not consistent across all classes, and are not always effective across and within subjects. In English, there are examples of very good marking, but not consistently by all teachers. This difference in approach by individual teachers means

that marking is not sufficiently effective, particularly in physical education, information and communication technology, mathematics, religious education, art and design and technology.

### **Progress since the previous inspection**

- 42 There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching from the standard reported in 1996. The substantial proportion of unsatisfactory teaching (18%), observed in the previous inspection, has been reduced to only 6%. In 1996, only a very small proportion of lessons was judged to be of very good or excellent quality (3%). Now 22% reach this standard, which is a significant gain. Overall, good progress has been made in raising the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. The quality of homework and marking require improvement.

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

- 43 Pupils have a satisfactory quality and range of learning opportunities. The school meets the statutory requirements effectively, although the overall teaching time is below the recommended amount and there is no plan to increase it. The school's aim of providing a caring environment with high expectations is reflected well by the curriculum.
- 44 There is a good range of courses to meet the needs of all pupils in Years 5 and 6. All the national curriculum subjects are provided and some are taught by specialist teachers. This range is extended to include religious education and personal, social and health education (PSHE). French is taught from Year 6, a year before required, giving pupils a good start in learning a foreign language. Pupils also have lessons in information and communication technology (ICT), enabling them to develop computing skills for use in other subjects. Pupils have some opportunities to take drama after school and through aspects of English and humanities. These opportunities are planned in schemes of work and the school is aware of the need to develop drama further. In Years 7 and 8, the range of courses is satisfactory. Pupils continue to have lessons in ICT in Year 7 but the use of computers in a range of subjects is not sufficiently widespread in Year 8. There is too little time to cover the programme of PSHE satisfactorily in Years 7 and 8, but the school is aware of this and is reviewing its provision.

### **Strategies to develop literacy and numeracy**

- 45 There are satisfactory strategies for planning literacy across subjects. English provision is good and most subjects use information and communication technology effectively to develop literacy skills in Years 5 to 7. Curriculum planning to support writing, reading and research, particularly in English and history is good. The training of teachers in literacy has helped them to develop schemes of work to support the planning and reinforcement of literacy skills in lessons, for example focus on key words and guidance for writing and reading. Across subjects, planning for higher order skills, such as sustained reading and substantial pieces of writing to challenge able pupils, remains limited, although there are a few examples, such as Year 8 pupils writing plays for Year 7 pupils to perform. Planning for the

reinforcement of numeracy skills across subjects is yet to be addressed by the school. Strategies to develop numeracy in mathematics are good, but there are fewer opportunities than usually seen for pupils to develop their numeracy skills in other subjects.

### **Special educational needs**

- 46 All pupils with special educational needs have access to the whole school curriculum and a full range of extra-curricular activities, although the take up by pupils of extra-curricular activities is not monitored. The SEN co-ordinator organises support very well to ensure full access to the curriculum. Planning a range of tasks and providing suitable materials are strengths across all subjects, in particular in French, geography, history, physical education and science. Consequently, pupils make good progress. Support in class is targeted well to those pupils who need it and in subject areas where pupils' weaker literacy skills would not permit them to access the curriculum effectively without the support and intervention of well briefed learning support assistants. Pupils also play their part, respecting their peers who have special needs, and helping them to learn.
- 47 There is good access to the curriculum for all pupils. The school devotes great efforts to include them all in all school provision. This reflects the school's aims and ethos very well.

### **Extra-curricular provision**

- 48 Opportunities provided for participation in extra-curricular activities are good. Parents and pupils value the wide range of activities and believe that there is something of interest for everyone. There is a good range of sport-based activities, which includes collective games such as football, and individual activities such as gymnastics and athletics. Inter-class competitions seek to engage all pupils. There is also a good range of clubs to support other subjects. These include a homework club, a School Council and sessions to give gifted and talented pupils extra challenge in English, mathematics and French. The provision of music clubs, such as choir and orchestra, is good. There are frequent and popular clubs for developing computer skills. Performances, including music, dance and drama are held every year. Pupils also benefit from the provision of a good range of excursions and residential experiences, such as a visit to France in Year 7, visit to the Sainsbury Art Gallery at the University of East Anglia and beach study in Walberswick. An out-of-school hours learning project in drama and in fitness and health enriches existing opportunities.

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

- 49 The school has developed a satisfactory programme for PSHE and citizenship with the local high school. Currently, the programme makes insufficient contribution to pupils' personal development. It is satisfactory in Years 5 and 6 but not in Years 7 and 8. The programme does not include everything it should cover in sufficient depth, for example, education about sex and drugs and awareness about careers. The programme is not rigorously monitored to ensure consistently high quality teaching. Form time at the end of the day is not used uniformly well. There are different themes for each day, which are sometimes well developed, but use of this time is patchy and overall it does not contribute effectively to a coherent programme to support pupils' personal and academic development.

## **Community links to the curriculum**

- 50 Satisfactory use is made of contributions from the community to aid pupils' learning through music, sport, church activities and fund raising events. For example, Year 8 pupils take part in a hospital fête and visit old people in a local Day Centre. Several businesses participate in a Modern Languages Day and the East Anglian Daily Times newspaper is involved in a project in Years 5 and 8. There are, however, insufficient co-ordinated opportunities for pupils to develop their learning related to the world of work.

## **Curriculum links with educational partners**

- 51 The school has good links with other middle schools and the local high school. There are effective liaison groups in the local "pyramid", with representatives from local schools, for every subject. The groups have worked well together on planning pupils' experience so that they make good progress through their programmes of study, particularly when pupils move to Year 9. Links with lower schools are in place, for example Year 4 pupils keep their exercise books into Year 5 to reinforce continuity, but not all subjects ensure that pupils build well on previous learning. The local high school is a specialist technology college and this has had a positive impact on curriculum provision particularly in some aspects of art and design, design and technology, mathematics and science.
- 52 Since the previous inspection, the range of learning opportunities has been extended to include better access to computers in Years 5 to 7 and the National Curriculum for history and geography is now covered in sufficient depth. The PSHE programme needs further development in Years 7 and 8.

## **Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall.

### **Spiritual development**

- 53 The provision made for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies make a strong contribution to spiritual development through providing time for reflection. For example in an assembly on the theme of 'Heroes and Heroines', pupils were encouraged to think of ways they might 'find the hero inside themselves'. In some Year 7 classes, valuable opportunities for spiritual development are created during form time when pupils work on their 'reflection diaries'. Religious education lessons provide good opportunities for spiritual development through reflection on topics such as 'How did the world begin?' and 'Who am I?, What will I be?'. In these lessons, pupils recognise that values and attitudes influence them and form part of their personal identity. In history, pupils begin to develop understanding of others' lives through their empathy work on the plight of mill children in the industrial revolution. Across many subjects of the curriculum such as art and design, English, mathematics and science, opportunities for reflection and consideration of the deeper meanings of life are missed. Across the school, opportunities for reflection during form time are not consistently taken.

## **Moral development**

- 54 Provision for the moral development of pupils is good in many aspects of school life. Staff set good role models through the relationships they establish with other adults and pupils. They clearly demonstrate by their work, words and actions that there are principles that distinguish right from wrong. Moral development across subjects is stronger than spiritual development. In religious education, pupils discuss rules for living and in physical education, playing fairly and by the rules of the game is taught. In history, there are opportunities to consider issues such as the morality of the use of the guillotine in the French Revolution. Assembly themes such as 'Persecution' and 'Tolerance' provide opportunities to consider moral issues. Outside lessons, there are good opportunities for pupils to show a moral concern about the needs of others less fortunate than themselves by organising fund raising activities for charities such as UNICEF and the National Children's Home.

## **Social development**

- 55 Provision for pupils' social development is good. Art and design, information and communication technology, mathematics, music, and physical education effectively develop collaborative skills so that pupils work together in pairs and groups. Visits, such as the residential trip to Aylmerton Field Studies Centre, as well as extra-curricular activities such as drama workshops and sports, provide good opportunities for social development. Pupils in Year 8 have the opportunity to mix with younger pupils in Year 5 by helping with their reading practice. The School Council provides opportunities for pupils in all years to become actively involved in whole school projects, such as improvement to the school grounds. Younger pupils in Year 5 have an opportunity to take on responsibility when they look after the new pupils during the day they make their visit to the school. Social development within the wider community is demonstrated when pupils entertain the elderly and help out with the local hospital fete.

## **Cultural development**

- 56 Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils are introduced to the work of historic, modern and contemporary artists in art lessons. In history, pupils learn about how cultures are shaped by events through time. In French, a "Languages Day" and a visit to France provide opportunities for cultural development. Events such as African Jigsaw and One World Day, provide opportunities for pupils to learn about other countries. In a few areas of the curriculum there are opportunities for pupils to experience the life and culture of non-western nations. Music covers some Indian and Calypso material and in art and design, pupils study African and Oriental masks. In religious education, pupils study Judaism and Islam but not eastern religions. In other subjects opportunities are often missed. The school does not prepare pupils well enough for life in a culturally diverse society.
- 57 Policy documents lack clear statements on how the school seeks to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Subject areas have not yet addressed these aspects in their documentation and the absence of a clear policy means that they are not planned systematically into schemes of work or monitored.
- 58 Since the previous inspection, provision for moral and social development has remained a strength. Although provision for spiritual development is satisfactory overall, inconsistencies remain. The promotion of pupils' awareness of cultural diversity is an aspect to address.

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

### **Promoting and monitoring personal development**

- 59 The school provides appropriate support and guidance and very effectively promotes the welfare, health and safety of its pupils in a warm, caring and secure environment. This atmosphere encourages pupils to learn and develop as individuals. Many parents believe that the school is helping their children become mature. Inspectors agree. Staff know pupils' personal needs well and have a very clear idea of what to do to help, thus enabling them to offer effective counselling and support. In addition, learning support assistants effectively support pupils with particular needs. The school has employed a full-time Home-School Support Worker who helps pupils experiencing problems and works with their parents. Her work has prevented the likely exclusion of several pupils. Staff show great concern for the well being of pupils and a range of measures exists to promote personal development, for example through the use of class time with younger pupils. Form tutors are sensitive to the needs of the pupils and heads of year monitor pupils' personal development closely.

### **Promoting and monitoring attendance**

- 60 The school continues to have effective systems to monitor and promote attendance. Registers are marked speedily, correctly and efficiently at the start of the school day and after lunch. All absences are properly noted and contact made with parents to explain the absence. The system for aggregating the attendance totals is done manually and makes accurate checking difficult, but overall daily information on attendance is good and absences are followed up rapidly.

### **Promoting and monitoring good behaviour**

- 61 Procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and good behaviour are effective. The discipline policy focuses rightly on rewarding good behaviour as well as having consistent sanctions. The positive management of behaviour is successful thanks to the high levels of commitment of staff. The school rules are clearly exhibited throughout the school and are known by all pupils. The consequences of unacceptable behaviour have been made clear and are readily accepted. The behaviour policy is consistently applied by all members of staff who were seen to pre-empt incidents of possible misbehaviour with firm, calm intervention, maintaining good control. Exclusions are used in extreme cases only. Pupils value and respond well to the systems of rewards and class commendations.

### **Promoting and monitoring health, welfare and safety**

- 62 Child protection issues are handled effectively. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and are aware of the need for vigilance and the steps to take if suspicions are aroused. The designated senior member of staff responsible for child protection procedures is known to all staff. Health and safety is promoted effectively in the school. Site inspections are conducted at regular intervals to identify and remedy potential hazards. All staff are safety conscious and watch for the security of the children. They work hard to maintain a secure environment in which the wellbeing of pupils is promoted effectively.

## **Promoting and monitoring pupils' academic progress**

- 63 The well written assessment policy has recently been reviewed and updated. Many aspects of the information included in the policy are very good. The school is starting to use a variety of strategies to assess pupils' attainment and progress, such as the use of assessment sheets, which include information on some aspects of a pupil's prior attainment. A sound range of data is entered onto a central database, which includes information about attainment at the lower schools, results of spelling tests and national tests. The range and quality of data available is good. This information is presently stored on one computer and is not widely available for staff, although they are encouraged to consult a printed copy available in the staff-room. Overall, use of assessment data is limited and does not yet have a sufficiently strong impact on improving attainment and tracking the progress of pupils over time. There is still a mismatch between some teachers' assessments of pupil attainment and nationally expected levels. In Years 7 and 8, portfolios of pupils' work are collected as exemplars, for example in English and religious education, to seek to improve the consistency and accuracy of teachers' assessment. Such good practice has yet to influence outcomes in all areas of the curriculum and for all pupils.

### **Use of assessment**

- 64 The use of assessment information to guide curriculum planning is under-developed. Too few subjects use assessment information to analyse strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance in order to target particular skills or gaps in understanding. An exception is English where plans have been adjusted in order to target identified areas for improvement, such as writing and spelling, and in mathematics results from tests are analysed to improve standards. However, this sound practice is still limited and is an aspect to improve.
- 65 Target setting is starting to be used in a few subjects. In French for example, the process of target setting is effective. However, in most subjects targets are too general and do not focus sufficiently on how to improve a particular aspect of learning. This area, highlighted in the previous inspection report, requires further improvement.

### **Assessment of pupils with special educational needs**

- 66 Assessment procedures for pupils with special educational needs are good. There are good systems for identifying and assessing pupils, which start with good liaison between the school and the contributory lower schools. Records and accurate information are then passed on to the main high school. Pupils on the special educational needs register have individual educational plans, which are reviewed regularly by all staff, and learning support assistants are involved fully in this review process. The annual review procedures comply with the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice requirements, both in the timing of reviews and the reporting to parents on progress towards targets. All staff are provided with information on pupils' targets and in many subject areas these are used well to inform lesson planning.
- 67 Since the previous inspection the good features in the monitoring and promoting of pupils' personal development, welfare, health and safety have been maintained. The issues identified in monitoring academic progress have been addressed in part.

Staff changes have slowed developments in this area, particularly because some heads of subject and heads of year are new to the school. Consequently this aspect needs further improvement.

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

- 68 Most parents are very supportive of the school and confirm that it has many strong features. Almost all those responding to the questionnaire agree that their children like school. They believe that the school expects their children to work hard and they feel that the school is helping their children to become more mature and responsible. They also believe that the teaching is good and that their children are making good progress. Inspection evidence confirms these positive views.
- 69 Some parents responding to the questionnaire expressed reservations about the range of activities provided by the school outside lessons but these reservations are not supported by inspection findings. The school provides a good range of extra curricular activities and trips. Whilst parents expressed disappointment at the cancellation of a Year 8 residential trip, it was rightly done for safety reasons due to staff changes. This residential is planned again for the Autumn term 2002 in a different centre more suitably matched to the educational aims of the visit.

### **Contribution of parents to their children's learning**

- 70 The contribution of parents to their children's learning at home and at school is in line with most similar schools. Parents were concerned about the quality of work that their children were expected to do at home. Inspectors agree, particularly for able pupils, because of too much emphasis on low-level tasks. Parents and other adults are encouraged to involve themselves in the life of the school and a number continue to respond positively. They help in the classroom and around the school as well as on the school trips. In addition parents are supportive of the work that their children are expected to do at home. The Friends of Beccles Middle School has recently been revived under new officers and the school has had to try very hard to get parents' involvement. The school values highly the contributions made by parents that enhance pupils' learning and personal development.

### **Information to parents**

- 71 Information to parents is good overall. Parents have very good access to teachers. As well as the day-to-day opportunities provided through the school's easy access policy, parents are welcomed to attend curriculum information meetings and special school occasions. In addition, formal consultation meetings to discuss their children's work are arranged each term. The school prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents are informative and meet statutory requirements. The school issues a newsletter each term for each year group that gives much detailed information about forthcoming events and areas of study. The curriculum sheets explaining to parents what is to be studied and how they can help their children are very good. Reports to parents contain much good information about what the pupils know and can do. The tick boxes are useful in providing information about effort and grade work levels. While they contain appropriate targets and pupils' own evaluation of their achievements, they do not always report sufficiently on the progress that the children have made.

- 72 The school's involvement of parents of pupils with special educational needs is good. Information about pupils' progress is provided regularly and parents are encouraged to attend review meetings and actively support their children's learning. There are regular opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress at meetings during the year and the co-ordinator is readily available for parents who wish to discuss any issues with her.
- 73 Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Reports to parents are now informative and are written for all subjects studied. The positive features identified in 1996 have been maintained and partnership with parents is now good.

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

- 74 Leadership and management at the school are good. The headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher give clear direction, ably supported by governors who are increasingly involved in strategic management. The leadership provided by heads of subject and heads of year is supportive and good overall, although the impact of their actions is not yet evident in all areas, mostly due to their recent arrival at the school.

### **Leadership**

- 75 The headteacher, appointed just before the previous inspection, demonstrates very good leadership. She has managed staff changes effectively and has addressed with energy and commitment all the issues identified in the previous report, with success achieved in most areas. She gives determined leadership; a good example of her effectiveness is typified by her ability to raise the quality of teaching and learning through a programme of lesson observation and mentoring of new staff. As a consequence, teaching has improved overall since the previous inspection and the proportion of good and very good teaching has risen. The headteacher has a collaborative and supportive style and has acted upon the advice and well-targeted support provided by the Local Education Authority. The acting deputy headteacher, whilst only recently in post, supports staff well and shares the headteacher's vision for school improvement. She has clearly delegated responsibilities and is already having a positive impact on aspects of school improvement, such as curriculum planning and development, leading heads of subjects and ensuring good professional development for staff. The senior team has implemented and managed the National Literacy Strategy well and ensured that provision across subjects is at least sound, with good liaison with partner schools. The management and planning of the National Numeracy Strategy is less effective and remains underdeveloped across subjects.
- 76 Members of the senior team are linked to subject departments and effectively hold co-ordinators to account. Heads of subject and heads of year provide good support and leadership to their teams, particularly in the monitoring of pupils' welfare and personal development. The monitoring of pupils' academic achievement is an area to improve, particularly in linking whole school targets, subject targets and individual pupils' targets to raise attainment further. There is also a need to remedy the wide variation in the use of form time and of homework as a learning opportunity. Subject improvement plans indicate that co-ordinators have identified appropriate areas for development. Senior managers take note of these to inform whole school improvement planning. Current priorities are appropriate to meet pupils' needs and improve further the quality of education. Leadership of special educational needs is excellent. Leadership is at least good in almost all subjects. It is sound in science, but in mathematics leadership has suffered from staff discontinuity. The new

leadership in design and technology is yet to have an impact on standards and achievements.

### **Governing body**

- 77 Governors have close and well established connections with the school, fulfil their responsibilities very well, and work in partnership with the headteacher and staff. Almost all statutory requirements are met, except that there is no daily collective worship. A few policies are under review or in draft form to match revised changes in national policies, such as the equality of opportunity and race equality policies. Governors are involved directly in some aspects of provision, such as leading assemblies and supporting pupils who need help with their literacy skills. Governors have a wide range of experience and feel well equipped to hold the school to account, ask pertinent questions of senior staff and seek to improve provision further. For instance, they analyse closely outcomes of decisions, consider staffing issues and their impact, debate curriculum matters well and use specific funding to support key priorities.

### **Financial management and learning resources**

- 78 Financial planning and management are very good. The school has assessed carefully the implications of likely future changes to the intake pattern in considering the developmental needs of the school for the next five years. It has matched current spending appropriately to priorities set out in the school development plan. The costs of new initiatives are carefully analysed and recorded. The school holds an appropriate level of reserve funding to cover unforeseen teacher costs that may unexpectedly occur. It holds a realistic level of finance carried forward from the previous year in a renewals fund and a list of priorities for spending has been created by school management and governors' finance committee. Spending patterns on different aspects of the school are broadly in line with schools serving a similar age range. Last year there was a higher proportion of spending on learning resources and premises than average, in line with the school's development priorities. There is a slightly favourable staffing ratio, which reflects the greater proportion of pupils with special educational needs than average. The school has been very successful in budgeting to enable improvement in two important aspects of provision over a number of years for the benefit of pupils' learning. A rolling programme of refurbishment has significantly improved the quality of the learning environment and pupils now have good access to ICT equipment. The school meets the government target for the number of pupils per computer. Planned expenditure in these two areas this financial year is intended to enhance provision further. The school has also invested resources to make the premises accessible for pupils with mobility difficulties. Funding for pupils with special educational needs is used appropriately and effectively.
- 79 The bursar provides good quality financial information. The governors' Finance Committee takes a full part in setting the budget and regularly monitors spending patterns during the financial year. Governors make appropriate use of benchmarks provided by the LEA to compare the school's spending with those of similar size and characteristics. They can justify why spending patterns differ from norms. The Finance Committee has appropriate procedures for assessing best value when placing contracts, such as those for catering, cleaning and grounds maintenance. It can clearly demonstrate that its decision to change cleaning arrangements to an in-house contract has resulted in savings to the school and an improved service due to greater flexibility of personnel. New technology is used well to support budget management and school administration, with key personnel having received

appropriate training. However, attendance monitoring is still based on a manual system. Governors are fully aware of their financial accountabilities. Specific grants are used appropriately for the purposes provided; for example, the Area Support Centre, staff training for the Government's curriculum initiatives and performance management. Financial administration is carefully managed. The school has not received an audit by the LEA for over three-and-a-half years. The most recent audit demonstrated that sound principles and operations of control were in place and since then the school has acted on the minor areas for improvement identified.

- 80 Learning resources are deployed effectively. Subjects have sufficient books and equipment and in a number of subjects the overall levels of resources are better than usually seen for schools serving this age range. In art, ICT and special educational needs, the quality of provision is judged to be very good. The range and number of books in the library is lower than seen in other schools and during the period of the inspection it was not widely used by pupils for reference during lessons, breaks or lunchtimes.

### **Staffing**

- 81 The inspection confirms parents' concerns over staffing, although the school has worked very hard to recruit teaching staff and manage changes effectively with minimum disruption to pupils' learning. At the time of the inspection there were a few posts filled by temporary staff on short term contracts. This has necessitated some teaching by non-specialist teachers in some subject areas, for example in English, science, mathematics, geography and physical education. Other staff, including learning support, administrative and technical staff, provide good support to teachers and pupils. The school is on schedule with the implementation of performance management, although again staff changes have hampered the programme and some new subject co-ordinators have not yet had an opportunity to observe teaching in their area.
- 82 Opportunities for staff development for teachers are good and have a high priority. Evaluation of the impact of such opportunities on learning is limited. The joint training undertaken with local schools, particularly with the high school, which has technology status, is an example of positive practice. A day on "accelerated learning", in January 2002, enthused staff and provided a common impetus to develop joint professional working. There are also appropriate professional development opportunities provided for non-teaching staff. There are no newly qualified teachers currently in the school, but there is an appropriate induction programme for all staff new to the school who are mentored well and given good support. Learning support assistants and the special needs co-ordinator are provided with very good professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge.

### **Accommodation**

- 83 Accommodation is good. The school is welcoming and provides a pleasant learning environment. There are sufficient permanent classrooms and specialist areas such as laboratories and design and technology areas. The art and design room provides a very good environment for learning with its two spacious work areas and stimulating display of pupils' work. There are good facilities for physical education including a good-sized hall, which is used for indoor activities. Outside, one of the quadrangles has been landscaped so that it creates a pleasant social area for pupils. Accommodation in ICT and music is too small for the size of the classes that use it. The library is well organised but too small for a school of this size. The school is

aware of these shortcomings and plans are in place to improve the music area and the library.

### **Progress since the previous inspection**

84 Progress since the previous inspection has been good overall, although unexpected staff changes and difficulties in recruitment have hampered progress in some areas. The previous report identified seven key issues for action, and progress on each one is as follows:

- Key Issue 1: The quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6 has improved and is now good.
- Key Issue 2: Attainment and provision for able pupils is sound overall, but in a few subjects and in homework they are still not sufficiently challenged. Across subjects, able girls and boys are treated equally and there is no significant difference in their progress.
- Key Issue 3: The overall quality of teaching has been improved and in all years teaching is good.
- Key Issue 4: The monitoring of pupils' work is now in place. However, the consistency of the monitoring, the quality and use of information gathered from the monitoring process need further improvement across subjects.
- Key Issue 5: Provision and teaching of ICT show significant improvement and are now very good in Years 5 to 7. More use of ICT in subjects is required in Year 8.
- Key Issue 6: Senior and middle managers are engaged in a wide range of monitoring activities, including teaching. Staff changes have hampered the monitoring schedule, although the headteacher is very aware of strengths and areas to improve at the school.
- Key Issue 7: The role of subject co-ordinators has been revised and they are now clear about their leadership and management responsibilities.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

To improve test results, raise standards and the quality of learning further, the governors, headteacher and staff should:

1. Improve the day-to-day marking of work and assessment by:
  - Making accurate use of the national curriculum expectations and levels in all subjects;
  - providing more written information to pupils on what and how to improve,
  - and engaging pupils more in the evaluation of their learning.

*See paragraph 41 and relevant subject paragraphs.*

2. Monitor academic progress by:

- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in pupils' achievement across all subjects;
- improving further the setting of specific targets for pupils,
- and using assessment information and data to inform planning.

*See paragraphs 63 – 67.*

3. Provide challenging work for pupils to practise higher order learning skills by:

- Agreeing strategies to develop pupils' independent learning skills;
- improving provision for able pupils in a number of subjects identified in part D of this report,
- and making better use of homework to extend learning.

*See paragraphs 32 – 36 and relevant subject paragraphs.*

Other aspects for further development include:

- the range and quality of provision for pupils' personal, social and health education in Years 7 and 8; (*see paragraph 49*)
- and the application of numeracy skills across subjects. (*see paragraph 9*).

## AREA SUPPORT CENTRE

- 85 The provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), within the school's Area Support Centre (ASC), is very good.

### Strengths

- Excellent management and leadership of SEN by the SEN co-ordinator.
- Very good support for pupils in the ASC from teachers and learning support assistants.
- Pupils make very good progress towards their targets.
- Pupils experience a curriculum which enables them to be integrated within the mainstream when appropriate progress is made.

### Areas for improvement

- Ensure all subject areas consistently plan and use resources to cater for the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure planning and preparation for the new SEN Code of Practice continues.

- 86 The school's ASC is a Local Education Authority designated unit which caters for the special educational needs of up to 25 pupils in the local area, across all years in the school. Currently there are 22 places allocated and all pupils have a statement of special educational needs, mainly for moderate learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties and autism.
- 87 Pupils in Years 5 and 6 in the ASC are taught separately by ASC teachers for English, maths and humanities. In all other subjects they are integrated into mixed ability groups and taught by subject teachers with the support of learning support assistants (LSA). In Year 7 pupils are integrated more fully into most subject areas, but are still given more specific teaching in smaller groups with other pupils with special educational needs. In Year 8 pupils are integrated fully into mainstream classes and given well targeted support through the provision of learning support assistants or smaller groups where appropriate.
- 88 Whilst it is inappropriate to make judgements against national expectations for pupils with special educational needs, almost all pupils across all years groups make very good progress and achieve well in relation to their specific need. This is due in the main to the good level of supportive teaching they receive, both in the ASC and when they are supported in mainstream lessons across the school.
- 89 The SEN staff have a very good understanding of individual pupils' needs and in all ASC lessons teaching is at least good. Pupils, particularly those who present emotional and behavioural difficulties, are well managed by staff. Work is appropriate to the needs of individual pupils and LSAs are used well by class teachers to enhance learning. The ASC teachers make good use of ICT programmes, for example SuccessMaker, to support the development of literacy and numeracy skills. These are having a very positive impact on progress in literacy and numeracy levels and on increasing the self-confidence of pupils in the ASC groups. Pupils generally respond well when given opportunities to take some responsibility for their learning. For example in a Year 5 and 6 English lesson pupils were given a good framework for writing their own short stories. The teacher and LSA support used an appropriate ICT software package and pupils were able to make good progress in presenting their own ideas to others in the group.
- 90 The behaviour of most pupils with special educational needs, when taught on a one-to-one basis or in small groups, is good. Pupils in the main relate well to their

teachers and LSAs, they usually work enthusiastically and are keen to make progress. Their collaborative skills are particularly good and the pupils in the ASC are often supportive of each other. For example in a Year 5 and 6 English lesson one pupil who was having difficulty in reading out loud to the rest of the class was helped by his partner prompting him so that he successfully completed the reading accurately. The school has also recently made very good arrangements to enable a Year 5 pupil in a wheelchair to join the school and benefit from the individual support the ASC can provide.

- 91 Pupils with special educational needs have good access to a full curriculum. The organisation of teaching for ASC pupils is on the whole well planned and timetabled to ensure pupils are not deprived of their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. Most of the teaching for Year 7 and 8 pupils is planned and delivered by a subject specialist. This means that pupils in the ASC receive a very similar curriculum to other pupils, but with different tasks, or more intensive support, in order for them to understand the work and consolidate their learning. For example in a Year 7 geography lesson, pupils were studying the causes, consequences and prevention of flooding in Bangladesh and through good, sensitive teaching and LSA support were able to make good progress in their geographical understanding of the impact of flooding in this part of the world. They were covering and learning the same skills as all the other pupils in their year group.
- 92 Pupils in the ASC have statements of support and IEPs which are reviewed regularly by all staff, and LSAs are involved well in the process of information gathering. The Annual Review procedures comply with the SEN Code of Practice requirements, both in the timing of reviews and the reporting on progress towards targets. Targets are invariably specific in their success criteria so pupils' progress can be well tracked. All staff are provided with information on pupils' targets and in many subject areas these are used well to inform lesson planning.
- 93 The leadership and management of the ASC are excellent. The special needs co-ordinator is an experienced teacher who deploys her staff very effectively and efficiently to meet the needs of all pupils in the ASC. She provides very good advice and guidance to all colleagues on providing or developing different material and resources to meet the needs of pupils in their classes. The provision of the ASC base in a central part of the school provides a room for working with groups of pupils, as well as a central base for teaching resources and pupil records. The recently acquired network of computers in this area is used well to improve literacy and numeracy skills.
- 94 The areas for development from what was, overall, a positive report from the previous inspection have been addressed well. In classes where there is no LSA support, subject teachers are now more aware of the needs of all pupils and use a wider range of activities and resources to meet these needs. Teachers and LSAs manage pupils well, particularly those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Planning between teachers and LSAs is now improved, enabling LSAs to be better informed about the work to be covered so they can better support pupils in the lesson. IEPs have been improved and targets are now more specific and enable staff to measure pupil progress against these targets. The provision of ICT is much improved and very good use is being made of appropriate ICT resources to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The curriculum for ASC pupils is very appropriate and allows them to be integrated into the mainstream when they make progress. These improvements represent very good progress since the previous inspection.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	111
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	4	20	46	34	7	0	0
Percentage	4%	18%	41%	31%	6%	0%	0%

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. [When the total number is substantially less than 100, add] Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one [two, three, etc] percentage point[s]. [Where the total is close to or greater than 100, use only the first sentence.]

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils on the school's roll	438
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	63

Special educational needs	Y5 – Y8
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	29
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	134

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	13
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

### Attendance

Authorised absence

%
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Unauthorised absence

%
---

School data	6.6
National comparative data	6.3

School data	0.7
National comparative data	0.4

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	52	48	100

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	30	27	44
	Girls	36	27	42
	Total	66	54	86
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	66 (67)	55 (62)	86 (86)
	National	75 (75)	71 (72)	87 (85)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 4 and above	Boys	29	31	31
	Girls	35	31	35
	Total	64	62	66
Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above	School	64 (56)	63 (64)	66 (72)
	National	72 (70)	74 (72)	82 (79)

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

### Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	437
Any other minority ethnic group	

### Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	43	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y5 – Y8

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	23.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.8

### Education support staff: Y5 – Y8

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	256

### Deployment of teachers: Y5 – Y8

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.9
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### Average teaching group size: Y5 – Y8

Key Stage 2	23.1
Key Stage 3	22.4

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Financial information

Financial year	01-02
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	£
Total income	1,256,620
Total expenditure	1,265,286
Expenditure per pupil	3,007*
Balance brought forward from previous year	35,735
Balance carried forward to next year	27,069

\* This figure is above average because it includes funding for pupils in the Area Support Centre.

## Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	12
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	9

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2.2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3.2
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	438
Number of questionnaires returned	114

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	30	59	7	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	38	54	6	2	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	19	44	24	4	9
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	49	22	2	3
The teaching is good.	28	59	4	2	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	49	16	4	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	46	37	8	4	5
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	46	52	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	26	47	20	4	3
The school is well led and managed.	30	48	3	5	14
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	55	4	2	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	24	45	10	4	17

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

### ENGLISH

Overall, the quality of provision in English is good.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good, particularly teaching methods.
- Planning is detailed and precise.
- Learning is effective.
- Leadership is strong.
- Pupils enjoy English.

#### Areas for improvement

- Results in the national test at the end of Year 6.
- Assessment practices and tracking pupils' progress.
- Monitoring and sharing the existing good practice.

- 95 Results in the national tests have risen steadily and were maintained in 2001. Pupils enter below average in Year 5, they make steady progress but results remain below average in the tests. Results at higher levels (Levels 5 and above) are close to the national average and show significant improvement. In reading, pupils reach expected standards in the Year 6 tests. Writing also improves, and results are close to the national average. Handwriting is satisfactory, but spelling is below average. There is little difference between boys' and girls' attainment in comparison with national results. Teacher assessment in 2001 matched closely pupils' national test results.
- 96 Current Year 6 pupils are achieving better than past results would indicate and attainment is in line with expectation. Pupils show sustained improvement in reading, and sound improvement in writing and spelling. They speak confidently and are able to express their ideas and support them. They present points of view well in discussions. Pupils enjoy a range of reading and can select information for different purposes, although they do not always reflect critically enough on their reading. Pupils improve their handwriting and use a wide range of vocabulary. They produce imaginative poetry and creative writing. In Years 5 and 6 pupils do not always listen to each other sufficiently well. Progress is sound overall, but spelling and punctuation need further improvement.
- 97 In Years 7 and 8 pupils make good progress, particularly lower ability pupils. In Year 8, attainment matches expected standards in reading, writing and listening, and is slightly above expectation in speaking. There is marked progress in writing in Year 7. Pupils show an ability to organise their writing to fit audience and purpose. They use an increasingly mature vocabulary, but writing is not always sufficiently developed. They progress well in speaking and discussion and develop their listening skills. Pupils enjoy independent and critical reading and improve inference and deduction skills. Reading non-fiction is limited. Spelling improves, but still has too many inaccuracies and use of more complex punctuation is hesitant. In all years pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

- 98 Teaching is good overall and leads to effective learning. Teaching strengths lie in the good planning to structure learning and in the accurate matching of activities to pupils' needs. This enables all pupils to achieve. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils so that they understand them. Lessons are organised into teaching sequences to make learning clear and explicit with the teacher using a wide range of methods. For example, a Year 8 lesson involved whole class and pair discussions, vocabulary listing and short pieces of writing, guided reading and writing. Pupils are supported and challenged to build on what they already know and can do. The fast pace challenges and sets high expectations, such as in a Year 6 lesson where pupils discussed a range of poems, explored imagery and language and used these to tackle a range of appropriate tasks. Across all lessons time is used productively. The good emphasis on the use of language promotes better choice of vocabulary in speaking and writing, as in a Year 7 and a Year 8 lesson where pupils learnt how to use a wide range of language to persuade and convince. This emphasis also supports inference in reading, as in a Year 7 lesson where pupils identified the implications of a writer's choice of language. Good relationships and good management of behaviour lead to pupils contributing positively. Where teaching is less effective, but still sound, there is less focus on language and insufficient use of guided reading and writing. This leads to pupils not having as many challenging opportunities in the lesson. In these lessons, planning is too simple and ends of lessons are a little rushed, leading to pupils being less clear about what they have learned. Homework is insufficiently set and pupils lose opportunities to extend and enrich their learning in Years 7 and 8. Marking of pupils' work is sometimes excellent when it includes encouragement, advice and specific targets, but this good practice is too inconsistent.
- 99 Pupils display positive attitudes to their work and enjoy English. They are keen to ask and answer questions and to share ideas with others. Pupils work hard and behave well. They appreciate the range of activities and the productive and effective use of time in lessons. They particularly enjoy library lessons, using ICT and hearing each other's writing read out in class. They listen to advice and act on it. Their desire to do well to improve writing, read widely and speak confidently, contributes to the successful teaching and learning.
- 100 The subject is led and managed well. The recently appointed co-ordinator has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve test results and to further improve teaching and learning. She has worked hard to produce guidance, examples of effective practice and initiatives in such a short time. Good schemes of work are in place, new resources are effectively deployed and the subject development plan has appropriate priorities. Strong teacher teamwork is being developed in which good practice in planning, teaching and marking is promoted. This is already having a discernible impact on pupils' learning. Recent initiatives that are most successful include use of ICT, spelling and reading programmes, shared planning and teaching methods and a focus on writing. The Local Education Authority support for English is being used effectively to improve planning and teaching. Excellent displays of pupils' work and other guidance are often used in lessons to reinforce learning, particularly the use of language to improve writing, as seen in the guidance sheets used in Year 8 and the useful vocabulary displayed on classroom walls. ICT is developing effectively, particularly the use of the reading review web site and to support basic skills for lower ability pupils. Some provision for drama is planned through English. However, more work is now needed to develop drama further, particularly to use the expertise of recently appointed teachers who are drama

specialists. The use of assessment to inform planning and to set targets for groups and individual pupils are areas to develop, in line with the good work done in the analysis of writing in Years 5 and 6.

- 101 English has made good progress since the previous inspection. Year 6 test results are still below average, but current Year 6 work shows improvement. Better presentation of work and use of ICT contribute to higher standards. Accommodation is now adequate. The library stock has been upgraded and is used more productively. Teaching in Years 5 and 6 is now at least satisfactory and often good. There is some good practice on systems to support assessment, marking and monitoring pupils' progress, but this aspect of the department's work needs further development to ensure consistency across years and groups.

## MATHEMATICS

Overall, the quality of provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- The improvement in pupils' attainment from the beginning of Year 7 to the end of Year 8, and subsequently shown in the Year 9 tests taken at the High School.
- The good, with some very good, teaching and learning.
- The good range of activities that help pupils learn mathematics.
- Pupils' very good attitudes.
- Monitoring and evaluation carried out by the subject leader.
- Year 5 teachers' collaborative planning of the mathematics course.

### Areas for improvement

- Rectify the lack of continuity in the leadership and management of both mathematics and numeracy across the curriculum.
- Improve the national test results of Year 6 pupils.
- Use the attainment levels in the National Curriculum as benchmarks for the standard of work in lessons, so that pupils know how well they are doing, and that teachers can motivate them to reach higher levels.
- Increase the amount and quality of homework.

- 102 When they start at Beccles Middle School, pupils' attainment is well below average. Pupils make progress at about the same rate as pupils with similar starting points elsewhere. Consequently, results in the national tests at age eleven are well below average and have been so for the last three years. The results over three years indicate that boys are about one term behind boys nationally, and girls half a year behind girls nationally. In 2001, results for girls improved and the gap narrowed slightly. In 2001, teacher assessment did not match results in the national tests.
- 103 The standard of work of pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 is better than the test results indicate and is in line with standards nationally. Work in space and shape is strong. Pupils can readily describe and classify features of different types of triangle, including properties of symmetry. A good standard of work was observed in algebra. Average and high attaining pupils are able to translate problems expressed in words into algebraic statements using the correct symbols and format. They search for patterns, check results and present their findings clearly. Most can identify missing terms of a numerical sequence, and some can find the  $n$ th term. Lower attainers can find relationships between two variables, such as the number of arches in a bridge and the number of building blocks needed to build the bridge. Most pupils have a

sound command of the number system, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of whole numbers. Gifted and talented pupils can do this with decimals, which is above average for their age. Some lower attainers and most of those with special educational needs have not yet memorised multiplication tables of 6,7, 8 and 9, which holds back work that requires such knowledge. Taking account of their difficulties, pupils with special educational needs make good progress with both number and mathematics.

- 104 By the time they leave at the end of Year 8, pupils have made faster than average progress, as shown by the local authority's assessment results. This is confirmed by the national tests taken in Year 9 in the local High School. Pupils formerly at Beccles Middle School attain national average results. This represents good progress from ages 11 to 14, significantly above the national rate for pupils with similar starting points. Teachers mostly have high expectations for pupils' understanding. High attainers in Year 7 are beginning to understand division of fractions, which is usually Year 9 work. Average ability pupils have completed accurate work on the equivalence of decimals, fractions and percentages, and on the theory of angles in quadrilaterals. The work on geometry through Year 8 has led gifted and talented pupils to achieve what is more usually found in Years 9 or 10, including angles on parallel lines, angle properties of circles and Pythagoras' Theorem. Middle ability pupils can solve equations, calculate the probability of a combination of two events and understand well how to present different types of data in appropriate types of graph. Pupils in a lower set are beginning to understand the difference between discrete and continuous data.
- 105 The quality of teaching and learning of mathematics is good overall, because strengths considerably outweigh weaknesses. On the whole, mathematics is taught by good and very good teachers who have much skill in planning lessons, managing pupils and designing interesting and effective learning activities. One lesson used two card games played by pupils in pairs where they had to match mathematical relationships expressed in words to their correct algebraic forms. This led to much helpful discussion to solve problems and the learning was effective, mixed with fun and competition. In another, pupils were given several sets of data and several types of graph. Their challenge was to improve understanding of how different types of data could, and more importantly should, be graphed, which they accomplished very well. For much of the work, teachers' knowledge and understanding of mathematics is perfectly adequate for, and often exceeds, that needed for the topics being covered. ICT is used too little in teaching and learning mathematics. A good, but rare, example is the use of spreadsheets to explore how to display different types of data correctly in appropriate types of graph. There are three aspects for improvement in the teaching :
- there is little evidence that teachers talk to pupils about the standard of the work they are doing in relation to national curriculum levels;
  - homework is frequently a fairly modest piece of work and not designed into the teaching programme as a specific learning activity – in contrast with the good activities used in class;
  - and on occasion, teachers' subject knowledge is not strong enough to diagnose the difficulties pupils may have, or to recognise intermediate steps that some pupils need to go through in order to understand something.
- 106 Pupils almost universally respond very well in mathematics lessons, leading to good learning and achievement. Their behaviour is usually very good. They are keen, willing workers who maintain concentration throughout lessons. Proceedings are conducted in a friendly yet businesslike manner, with a high degree of mutual respect

between pupils and adults. Distractions are rare and occur when the teacher misjudges pupils' capabilities, has not prepared sufficient for them to work on and explanation is unclear.

- 107 Leadership and management of mathematics and numeracy have had good features. However, they have suffered from discontinuities owing to periods of time without a mathematics co-ordinator, so are currently unsatisfactory. At the time of inspection, the headteacher was acting co-ordinator. She is the only teacher with a formal qualification in the subject. Nevertheless, there is a clear aspiration to raise standards. The quality of teaching and planning for the subject are being sustained by the goodwill and high level of general competence of non-specialists, for example, the collaborative planning by the Year 5 teacher team and the imaginative teaching by several other staff. However, improvement work is constrained. For example, the school has not yet held the recommended training for numeracy across the curriculum, an aspect which is itself a weakness. Investigation into why the test results at age eleven are well below the quality of work in class has been curtailed and inconclusive. The very good monitoring and evaluation analysis carried out by the former co-ordinator has led to some action but has not been sustained. Targets set for the subject appear to have been too ambitious. Although pupils on the borderline of reaching the national standard of Level 4 are given additional help, and consultants have assisted the school in implementing the national strategies for mathematics and numeracy, the actions taken to reach the targets are unconvincing.
- 108 Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The most able pupils are now working at an appropriately high standard and there is more challenge in the majority of lessons. Test results at age eleven remain well below average. Pupils' response to lessons and pupil-teacher relationships are both much better. There is better planning of units of work, but the need to remind pupils of how well they are doing and how they might improve continues. Progress from ages eleven to thirteen is now good.

## SCIENCE

Overall, the quality of provision in science is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, interest and concentration are very good.
- Relationships at all levels are very good.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding is good.
- Teachers share learning expectations with pupils effectively and explain ideas clearly.
- Learning is managed well.

### Areas for improvement

- Quality and use of assessment in planning and tracking progress.
- Teachers' expectations, especially of more able pupils.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department.

- 109 Results in the 2001 tests were in line with the national average. Over the last three years there has been a substantial improvement in the number of pupils achieving expected standards at the end of Year 6. Results at the higher levels (Levels 5 and above) are well below average. Boys do slightly better than girls in the tests. Teacher assessment in science is not sufficiently close to national results. In comparison with similar schools, results are below average.

- 110 Standards of current Year 6 pupils are in line with expectation. Pupils make steady progress in Years 5 and 6, with no significant difference in attainment and progress across the four national curriculum attainment targets. Able pupils organise their work well, but in most other pupils' books there is some incomplete work. In Year 5, pupils know the basic parts of plants and their functions. Able pupils have developed some understanding of photosynthesis. In Year 6 pupils can apply their knowledge of chromatography to identify patterns. They know that materials are made of particles. More able pupils are keen to ask questions and spell new scientific words correctly. Most pupils understand simple food chains and properties of light and sound. They can draw simple line graphs, with support. Pupils make sound progress, although there is some repetition of work because of insufficient liaison with the local lower schools. Pupils' literacy skills are developed well through appropriate guidance for writing, a list of scientific vocabulary and good emphasis on basic literacy skills.
- 111 Standards of attainment by the end of Year 8 are in line with the national expectation. Work in books is often neat, well presented and complete. At times, work lacks technical detail. By the time pupils leave school, most have developed their knowledge and understanding of energy transfer and laws of thermodynamics. More able pupils can explain the difference between frequency and pitch. They know the processes of circulation and digestion. However, able pupils lack the ability to investigate and analyse scientific problems using a wide range of variables. Less able pupils can use a microscope safely. They can make simple predictions and can use fair testing in simple contexts. Pupils can organise and present their results in the form of line graphs. Progress in Years 7 and 8 is sound.
- 112 Teaching and learning is satisfactory with some examples of good teaching seen. The strength of teaching is teachers' good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Teachers ask well-directed questions of pupils of different abilities and praise their responses. Consequently pupils are very keen to contribute in the class. Planning is clear with explicit learning objectives, which are shared with pupils. Teachers maintain a brisk pace. For example in a Year 6 class, pupils were given an exciting and challenging scenario for chromatography investigation. Pupils with special educational needs, who had very low prior knowledge, made good observations to solve the mystery. Consequently they learnt well. Teachers mark work regularly. They acknowledge pupils' attempt, record what pupils understand or what they need to do to improve further, although these targets are not always specific enough to ensure improvement. Relationships are very good and respectful. As a result, pupils are well behaved. They show interest in their learning. Occasionally time in the lessons is out of balance and the plenary session is rushed. Too little homework is set or it is not used to extend pupils' knowledge, skills and capacity for independent learning. This is particularly the case of homework set for more able pupils who lack challenge. The use of ICT is planned in the schemes of work, but this has been done only recently. Therefore, the impact of ICT on teaching and learning is limited.
- 113 Pupils are generally very well behaved. They listen attentively to the teacher and to contributions made by other pupils. They are often keen to participate in class discussions and ask questions to clarify their understanding. Pupils relate to each other and teachers very well. They are courteous and respectful.

- 114 Overall leadership provided by the co-ordinator is sound. He has written schemes of work for Years 5 and 6, but these do not include systematic use of ICT. He supports other members of the team in planning, but there is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and insufficient links with lower schools. For example, systems for ensuring consistency of judgements on pupils' standards of work in the department are limited. The school has had difficulty in recruiting science teachers over the last year. The department is well resourced.
- 115 The department has made moderate progress since the previous inspection. Pupils' behaviour has improved. The department has acquired a number of computers, data logging devices and programmes. Differences between teacher assessment and test outcomes and the attainment and test results of able pupils are issues to address.

## ART AND DESIGN

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

### Strengths

- Standards when pupils explore and express visual ideas.
- Imagination, especially when pupils apply pattern, texture and colour.
- Pupils work with good levels of independence.
- A very broad range of materials and techniques for creating visual images.
- Enthusiastic teaching engages pupils' interest and endeavour.
- The rich learning environment stimulates pupils' observation and enquiry skills.
- ICT is being used well for research, and for exploring and manipulating images.

### Areas for improvement

- More regular use of sketchbooks for recording personal observations and collecting visual information.
- Providing pupils with written feedback so that they know how to improve their work.

- 116 By the end of Year 6, standards are above those usually seen. Pupils have good skills in exploring and recording natural and made forms they observe. They interpret visual information with a strong sense of imagination when developing visual ideas. They have above average skills in working with a very wide range of two- and three-dimensional media. Pupils work on a variety of scales and are not intimidated when drawing or painting on large sheets of paper. This is seen in Year 5, when they experiment with different types of marks and lines and express themselves with vigour and fluency. A strong feature of pupils' work is their sense of imagination, such as when they build card sculptures in Year 5 or design fantasy houses in Year 5. They have a good knowledge of the work of artists and architects from different periods and know the characteristics of a diverse range of art movements. They extend their understanding well by personal investigation, including the use of ICT reference sources, and incorporate ideas they have studied into their own work. For instance, their line and mark-making compositions in Year 5 are influenced by abstract, expressionist artists such as Jackson Pollock and Arshile Gorky. The forms and images of masks created in Year 6 stem from their enquiry into ethnic images used in African and oriental countries. Pupils use a strong sense of pattern and colour to create depth in their paintings, as in compositions of an underwater landscape in Year 6.

- 117 By the time pupils leave the school, standards are higher than average. They maintain the good progress that they have made in Years 5 and 6. In Years 7 and 8 pupils widen and deepen their experiences of recording and creating visual ideas, and in applying technical skills when making art. Pupils develop a strong feeling for texture, such as in Year 7 when they record observations of shells, bark, roots and seed-pods using pencil, chalk or ink. They then use wire, tissue and scrim (bandage) to produce large sculptural forms, interpreting their previous observations. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of artists is broadened in Years 7 and 8 and what they learn is used well in developing visual ideas. This is seen, for example, in work on self-portraits that convey more about themselves than what they look like. After studying artists, such as David Hockney, Peter Blake and Marc Chagall, pupils produce carefully worked representations with collage backgrounds. Particularly strong compositions are created by pupils in Year 8 following investigations of the still life paintings of artists such as Pierre Bonnard, Vincent Van Gogh and Fernand Léger. The thoughtful compositions they produce using images of vases and plants, have strong use of colour, which has been applied with a higher level of technical ability than usual for this age. Pupils of all abilities achieve well throughout the Years 5 to 8. The work of higher attaining girls exhibits a very good depth of analysis and visual enquiry before they commit themselves to a final piece. While these characteristics are less evident with boys, many produce work that is directly expressive. Pupils who have special educational needs, including those from the Area Support Centre, make good progress. Across the age range, students are developing good levels of competence in using ICT for enquiry, mark-making, composing and manipulating images.
- 118 Teaching of good quality enables pupils to learn rapidly across all years. It is based on a strong knowledge and understanding of art and design together with a deep personal enthusiasm. As a result, pupils are inspired to tackle new ways of responding and representing visual ideas, and to experiment in different media. Units of work are well planned as a progressive programme across the four years. This enables pupils to build on previous experiences and expand into new ways of looking at the visual world. In lessons, teaching clearly explains what pupils are expected to undertake without narrowing outcomes prescriptively, and pupils know how to proceed. Resources are used especially well to support pupils' learning. The art room environment is full of items of visual interest that promote pupils' awareness and enquiry. Materials and equipment are well-organised so pupils can access them easily. This is an important factor that encourages them to learn with greater levels of independence than usual. Pupils are encouraged to use appropriate vocabulary and key words on display. Teaching is increasingly using ICT to enable pupils to investigate and form visual images. Boys respond especially well to learning, using the opportunities provided. Older pupils' experiences are insufficiently extended by homework, for example, using sketchbooks regularly for drawing from observation and recording visual information. Teaching provides very good feedback to pupils on their progress in lessons through regular verbal dialogue. It also creates good opportunities for pupils to participate in peer group evaluations. However, because they do not receive regular written assessments, some students are unsure of the standard they have achieved or how to improve work further. Currently, they only receive a written comment and personal target for improvement at the end of each year.
- 119 Pupils are keen and eager to learn in art lessons. They are open to new and different ways of working and are ready to experiment with visual ideas. Work is tackled well on a variety of scales. The art room is an industrious, if occasionally noisy environment, in which pupils learn at a good pace. They become increasingly

reflective about their own work and show respect for others' ideas and how they express them. Many pupils gain a sense of achievement in having their work displayed in the art room and around the school.

- 120 Art and design is well managed as a single teacher subject. The scheme of work is thoughtfully planned to develop pupils' experiences. It successfully builds on their prior learning and provides a good preparation for work after transition to high schools. The subject development plan seeks to enhance further pupils' experiences, for example by giving them access to artists in residence. Accommodation is spacious and used extremely well. The subject makes a strong contribution to the school's aim to encourage high standards and to display these to the wider community.
- 121 Since the previous inspection, standards in Years 5 and 6 have improved considerably. Pupils in all years now have a good experience in working in three dimensions. Teaching now introduces pupils to a wide range of artists, craftworkers and architects. Behaviour is much improved. An aspect that requires still further work, identified in the last inspection, is the provision of written feedback to pupils as a result of teacher assessment.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- Pupils understand and use a sound approach when designing products.
- An appropriate range of making skills is taught.
- ICT is being successfully incorporated into designing and making.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards in designing, graphic presentation and the finishing of products made.
- Assessment gives insufficient feedback to pupils on how they can improve.
- There has been weak subject co-ordination over a lengthy period.
- Schemes of work have not been written for a number of units.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to handle, discuss and evaluate products.

- 122 By the end of Year 6 standards are only just satisfactory. Pupils have a sound understanding of how to develop a specification for a design brief and they use appropriate terminology; for example, when drawing spider diagrams during the designing of a purse or wallet in Year 6. Their attainment in sketching ideas and drawing simple design plans is average, as when they make a plastic key fob in Year 5. However, pupils' investigation and research skills are limited and standards are below average. They rarely review or handle products that could help them broaden the range of their design ideas. Pupils learn an appropriate range of making skills using card, plastics, textiles and food. Attainment varies widely across classes. Average standards were observed when pupils were making a mini-light in Year 6, but standards were below average when pupils used stitching techniques sewing seams for textile flags in Year 5. In food technology, Year 5 and 6 pupils from the Area Support Centre were observed following a recipe to make scones successfully and then conducted a basic evaluation, which represented sound achievement.

- 123 In Years 7 and 8, standards are barely satisfactory and there are wide variations in pupils' standards in different aspects of the course. Pupils can write out criteria for their designs in appropriate detail. They develop a satisfactory understanding of different graphic methods that can be used when drawing their design ideas. As in earlier years, investigations into the products they design are limited and pupils rarely observe or handle a range of existing products. Many pupils are capable of presenting graphic information to higher standards, especially higher attaining pupils. Some pupils, mainly girls, are fluent in sketching imaginative ideas, for example when designing a message pad in Year 8, but their research, drawing of final ideas and presentation of folders is well below their capability. Practical skills using materials are variable. For example, in Year 7 pupils make small boxes for different purposes to a good standard and they demonstrate average capability when machining the seams of pill-box hats they have previously designed. However, their skills in applying surface decoration are often poor and the finishing-off of their work detracts from an otherwise acceptable product. The below average standards seen in pupils' design folders in textile and food technology are partly explained by the staffing difficulties that have been experienced by the school over a number of terms. Pupils show average capability in applying ICT skills when using graphics programs and downloading information from the Internet. Across all years, many girls produce more interesting designs and more accurately made products than boys. As with other pupils, those with special educational needs are often capable of higher standards in developing and presenting their designs.
- 124 Teaching was satisfactory in almost all lessons observed during the inspection. Most lessons seen involved students undertaking making activities rather than designing. Overall, teachers have good personal capability for working the specific materials used in teaching. However, in the few lessons where they work outside their specialisms pupils' standards are insufficiently high. Individual lessons are soundly planned and most start with clear objectives so pupils know what they will learn. Teaching expectations are sound when pupils learn how to use tools and materials. They are insufficiently high when pupils are designing. Their learning is constrained because there is not enough emphasis in teaching on producing graphic work of quality or presenting design folders to the best possible standard they can achieve. Not all work on display is well-mounted and some is of insufficiently high quality to provide pupils with information about the high standards to which they should strive. Most work is chosen to provide contexts that are relevant, such as designing wallets or purses in Year 5 and healthy food for a school canteen in Year 8. However, a few topics are unappealing and do not excite pupils' imagination, such as a flag in Year 5 or vegetable soup in Year 7. The routine assessment of pupils' work is a weakness of teaching. In pupils' design folders most work is marked with ticks but in many there is only the occasional brief comment. Too little guidance is given to pupils on how they can re-direct their efforts to achieve higher standards. ICT is being used increasingly to support learning.
- 125 The large majority of pupils work hard and they say that they enjoy working with tools and different materials. They are less enthusiastic about designing and planning activities. Pupils have very good attitudes when work involves computer applications, particularly boys, including the computer-aided design and manufacture unit that has been recently introduced in Year 8. Most pupils work well together and they are co-operative in accessing and clearing away equipment. A few pupils, mainly younger boys, demonstrate silly attitudes, such as calling out and giving inappropriate responses to questions and this detracts from the learning atmosphere in some lessons.

- 126 A new design and technology co-ordinator joined the school at Easter and has conducted a realistic appraisal of subject strengths and aspects that need developing. Previously, subject co-ordination has been unsatisfactory and has failed to secure a sufficiently cohesive programme in which learning builds progressively across different experiences. Not all activities are supported by a scheme of work. There is a satisfactory range of resources and good liaison with the local high school. The local high school has supported teachers in promoting ICT applications in design and technology as an out-reach function of its specialist Technology College status. The satisfactory subject accommodation is in need of re-decoration to bring it up to the very good standard in most other areas of the school, and it has been appropriately identified as a priority by the governors.
- 127 Since the previous inspection, progress has been unsatisfactory, partly due to temporary and non-specialist staffing and partly to insufficiently strong subject co-ordination. Staffing and co-ordination issues have only been resolved this term. Construction skills have improved in resistant materials but finishing is a weakness. ICT is now being soundly used to support learning. However, the below average standards of design skills when pupils generate ideas and record information graphically remains an important issue still to be addressed. Higher attainers, in particular, are still not achieving sufficiently high standards.

## GEOGRAPHY

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good.

### Strengths

- An atmosphere of commitment to improvement.
- Effective teaching and learning in Years 7 and 8.
- Good classroom working relationships.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs.

### Areas for improvement

- The quality of teaching in Years 5 and 6, particularly the setting of objectives for learning.
- The range of topics covered in the subject.
- Quality of resources, including ICT.

- 128 Attainment overall at the end of Year 6 is in line with the standard of work in similar schools. Pupils can use the resources provided by their teachers to answer questions about the places they are studying, but the work in their books does not show sufficient evidence of them working on their own investigations and enquiries. They have a sound knowledge of places including their local area. Their work on the Lake District helps them to begin to understand patterns of weather. Learning about mountains gives them a sound knowledge and understanding of ways in which places can be affected by people and how we need to look after our environment. Gifted and talented pupils are often set the same work as others, so do not always make sufficient progress. Pupils with special educational needs are well catered for, with appropriate activities enabling them to make good progress. Pupils make good progress in developing their literacy skills in geography. There is a good quantity of work in their books, including answering questions and more extended writing. For example, in Year 5 they write about the landscape of St Lucia. There is less

opportunity to develop numeracy skills. The only work seen was where pupils had been drawing climate graphs in connection with their work on the Lake District. There is little evidence of pupils using ICT to support their learning.

129 Overall pupils make a little better progress in Years 7 and 8, so that by the time they leave the school, they achieve national standards. They have sound enquiry skills showing evidence of an ability to work more independently. Fieldwork in the local area helps them with this. They have a sound knowledge of places in different parts of the world, including France and Bangladesh. Work on earthquakes and coasts helps them to understand the way in which the natural landscape is formed. They gain a sound knowledge of the hazards in the natural world through their work on river flooding. Where pupils are provided with appropriately challenging activities they make sound progress; for example, in understanding the causes of levels of economic development in countries in different parts of the world. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and therefore make good progress. All pupils benefit from plenty of opportunities to develop their literacy skills. Their books contain a lot of writing, with some particularly well written accounts on Bangladesh and development issues. There is less work in numeracy than is normally seen. This is also the case with the use of ICT. There is some use of the internet to find out about places, and some use of computers to enhance the quality of presentation of their work, for example on earthquakes.

130 The standard of teaching is mostly good, but with some shortcomings in some lessons in Years 5 and 6. In these lessons, teachers do not have a sufficiently secure understanding of the requirements of the subject, and so lessons are not always well planned and expectations of the pupils are too low. For example, in a Year 6 lesson the teacher set an activity to investigate the landscapes of Spain. This was a sound attempt to develop pupils' enquiry skills, but the task was too broad and many pupils did not understand how to do it. The teacher provided a help sheet for the less confident learners but some were held back by their inability to read it. Consequently pupils did not learn well; they did not concentrate on their work or try hard. Other lessons were more effective. For example, in a Year 5 lesson, the teacher used a map well to talk to the pupils about the landscapes of St Lucia. She showed the pupils how to write labels to attach to their own maps, and although some pupils spent too long on the activity, it helped them with the development of their literacy skills, and they did gain a sound knowledge of the island. Teaching in Years 7 and 8 is generally more effective. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on rivers the pupils worked hard throughout the lesson. The teacher was a subject specialist with a good understanding of geography. The lesson was well planned so that pupils were clearly focussed on learning about the features in the upper course of a river. A well-chosen video provided exactly the right amount of information, and sheets with geographical vocabulary helped pupils with new words. The teacher provided very good guidance on writing a geographical description. As a result the pupils' behaviour was excellent and they all tried hard. The teacher encouraged the pupils to make good use of their planners to draft out their work. By the end of the lesson, therefore, attainment was a little above average. Pupils could describe accurately the features of the river valley, making good use of specialist vocabulary. Some were also able to go on and explain the erosion processes shaping the landscape. Overall pupils' work is marked regularly, but there is still some inconsistency in the quality of the marking. Some teachers provide very good guidance to their pupils on how to improve.

- 131 The attitude of the pupils is generally good, but this does depend on the lesson. On the whole pupils are well behaved and try hard. They can be relied on to work with concentration and effort and clearly enjoy their geography. A small number of younger pupils, particularly in Year 6, lack concentration and this affects their progress.
- 132 The leadership and management of geography are good. The co-ordinator works hard to support other teachers, and there is a real sense of a commitment to improve further the standards of attainment in the subject. He is aware of the need to make some revisions to the schemes of work, particularly to provide further support for teachers in Years 5 and 6.
- 133 The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards of attainment have improved. The standard of teaching has improved, although there is still some inconsistency. Pupils enjoy a wider range of activities, including fieldwork. There is now some good work on assessment in geography. There still needs to be better use of ICT and homework to extend and complement the work in school.

## HISTORY

Overall, the quality of provision in history is very good.

### Strengths

- A very high standard of teaching.
- A strong sense of value of the subject.
- Very positive relationships.
- A very good attitude to learning by the pupils.
- A strong focus on developing literacy skills.
- Effective organisation and management.
- Excellent support for pupils with special educational needs.

### Areas for improvement

- Make pupils more aware of their learning targets in lessons.
- Further developments in ICT to support learning.

- 134 Attainment at the end of Year 6 is in line with standards seen in similar schools. Pupils have a sound understanding of chronology, and can identify how life has changed in the United Kingdom over time. Work on the Victorian era, Tudor times and the twentieth century gives them a sound knowledge of events and key people in history. They can use successfully historical sources, including stories and pictures. They can answer questions about the past, and retell events in their own words. Gifted and talented pupils make sound progress, and have a good knowledge and understanding of history. For example, their work on the Second World War gives them an understanding of the roles of men and women in wartime. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Excellent support enables them to make significant progress in achieving their personal targets. Pupils gain valuable literacy skills in their history lessons, where they can read and listen to stories, and write about the past. There are fewer opportunities to develop numeracy skills in history lessons, but where pupils have the chance they use these skills well, for example when looking at population statistics in cities during the Industrial Revolution.
- 135 Pupils continue to make sound progress in Years 7 and 8, so that by the time they leave the school, they achieve standards similar to those seen in other schools. They

extend their understanding of chronology, and can now make good links between events which occurred at different times in the past. They have a sound knowledge of life in the past from work, for example, on the Medieval period and the French Revolution. They make effective use of source materials, and are beginning to show their ability in comparing different ways in which the past is represented to them. They write well. Their books contain a lot of well-structured accounts about the past. Gifted and talented pupils make good progress. For example, written work in their books shows a good knowledge of the causes of the Black Death, and understanding of what it must have been like at the time. Pupils with special educational needs continue to make very good progress. Excellent support enables the pupils to work effectively. In one lesson, for example, the pupils successfully analysed an old map to gain an understanding of life in a village like Beccles in the Middle Ages. Much of the work in history helps the pupils with their literacy, with many lessons focusing on skills of reading and writing.

- 136 The standard of teaching overall is very good. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and lessons are well planned. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on the French Revolution, the teacher asked the pupils to compare the lives of Marie Antoinette and Princess Diana. He provided good detailed information about their lives, and explained the task very well, so that pupils understood exactly what to do. They worked together very effectively, reading the information carefully, and making notes of significant events. In the following class discussion, they showed a good understanding of the lives of the two people, and the political background against which they both lived. By the end of the lesson therefore, they all gained a good understanding of the events of the French Revolution. They could also explain the purpose and the importance of studying the past, to understanding the modern world. Teachers have a good knowledge of the needs of the pupils in their classes, and so can manage their learning effectively. For example in a Year 5 lesson on Victorian Britain, the teacher was very sensitive to the needs of the pupils. He created an atmosphere of calm, in which pupils felt comfortable, valued, and wanted to learn. He provided carefully prepared resources for all pupils, including sheets to help the less confident learners, and an extension task for the gifted and talented pupils. Some pupils also benefited from very caring support from the teaching assistant. All pupils therefore took an enthusiastic part in the class discussion, and tried hard throughout the lesson. So by the end of the lesson, they all gained a sound knowledge of how cities in Britain grew during the early part of the nineteenth century. Teachers choose appropriate activities and resources. For example, in a Year 6 lesson on the 1960's, the teacher allocated different aspects to groups of pupils, and provided carefully selected books and assignment sheets for them to work with. They were therefore able to find out for themselves about the music and fashions of the Sixties, and of how society changed during a very short period of history. A further strength of the teaching is the high standard of marking. Teachers check the work regularly, so that pupils know their strengths and understand how to improve. The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning is limited.
- 137 The attitudes and behaviour of pupils is excellent. They are attentive in lessons, and try hard in all aspects of their work. They take part with commitment and concentration. Their books are in very good condition, an indication of how pupils care about their work in the subject.

- 138 The leadership and management of history are good. The co-ordinator has made a significant contribution to ensuring the subject is taught well. He supports the other teachers effectively so they work together well as a team. There is a strong sense of commitment to improvement. He has a good understanding of the requirements of the subject and is aware of the importance of reviewing the curriculum and making further use of assessments to adjust the way in which history is taught.
- 139 The department has made good progress since the last inspection. Standards have improved because of improvements in the standard of teaching, including making use of a more effective marking policy. Pupils benefit from a wider range of activities, which make appropriate demands on all of them. Gifted and talented pupils now make good progress.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Strengths

- There have been considerable improvements since the previous inspection.
- Pupils make very good progress in Year 5 to 7, resulting in high attainment.
- There are many strengths in the teaching.
- A reference folder of pupils' work at each attainment level of the National Curriculum exemplifies standards very well.
- There is plentiful, modern computer equipment and excellent access to the Internet.

### Areas for improvement

- Pupils' ICT learning in Year 8 is patchy; the cross-curricular approach does not ensure all pupils receive similar opportunities in ICT.
- The method of assessment relies too much on pupils' own view of what they have learnt and there is little evidence to track what they have achieved in the past.
- Pupils' knowledge and skill in handling information using ICT are not as strong as in the other ICT topics.

- 140 Pupils make very good progress in ICT in Years 5, 6 and 7, largely because they have a well-taught lesson each week, which is provided for half-classes in Years 5 and 6 and full classes in Year 7. This is supplemented by increasing use of ICT in subjects. There is no difference in the progress of boys compared with that of girls. Some less able Year 5 pupils, including several with special educational needs, used a design program appropriately to produce their own layouts for an 'ideal art classroom', having first visited the art room to explore important features. Year 6 pupils have become highly competent with the presentation software 'PowerPoint', and made their own slide shows, suitable for an audience of Year 5 pupils before they start at this school. For more able pupils, this work was of very high quality. It included digital photographs, video clips that the pupils had made, and soundtracks they had recorded. The text was written and presented carefully so that it was suitable for nine-year-olds, simultaneously demonstrating literacy skills and the ICT requirement for work produced to be 'suitable for the audience'.
- 141 Year 7 pupils have learned how to make a sequence of instructions to control movement. They solved a problem where the computer simulated visually a crane repetitively laying girders to construct a bridge, by creating sets of control instructions and testing them. The more able users of ICT then translated the instructions into flow-chart form using another computer program. In Year 8, because there is no

regular ICT lesson, progress varies between pupils and classes, depending on whether or not the teachers of other subjects include ICT topics. As an example of this, one Year 8 class has made very good progress in learning how to make slide-show presentations on computer in religious education lessons. They combined text with graphics and sound, having browsed the Internet to locate appropriate source material from web-sites about Aboriginal culture and beliefs about the Creation Story. Most pupils learnt how to create a technical link from their presentation directly into the source material on relevant web-sites. Not all Year 8 classes have experienced this excellent example of using ICT across the curriculum. Similarly, in mathematics, some Year 8 classes use spreadsheet software to explore graphs and pie-charts, but others do not use ICT for this topic.

- 142 Standards by the end of Year 6 are well above average. This also applies to Year 7. Pupils have considerable skill in using many types of computer software, and standards are high in using ICT to communicate information in various forms, control movement, model or simulate events and use the Internet. Pupils are not so well advanced in using ICT to handle large amounts of data. They are beginning to be able to judge when it might be appropriate to use ICT for a task and when other methods might be better. By the time they leave the school at the end of Year 8, current pupils' attainment varies. For some it is well above average in some aspects of ICT, but there is inconsistency across the curriculum and across classes. Although there is some high quality work, the gaps mean that standards in the current Year 8 are only just satisfactory.
- 143 Teaching of ICT is good and has many strengths. Teachers are well-organised and enthusiastic, and manage pupils very well. The ICT co-ordinator has very good knowledge of the subject, and teachers of other subjects are improving their ICT skill by participating in the national training programme. Learning is achieved consistently well because lessons are carefully planned and structured into clear sections. Pupils know what they have to do and what they are expected to learn. Activities in lessons have rich variety. They include quickly accessing e-mail at the start, initial instruction, some paired discussion and problem-solving, followed by the main activity.
- 144 Teachers make very good use of technology that allows them to use one computer to take over the display screens of the whole class for the purposes of demonstrating a new piece of work. The same technology, augmented by microphone and ear-piece headsets, enables the teacher to monitor each pupil's computer, and give individual guidance or instruction. It is used effectively in plenary sessions, during which pupils can show their work to the rest of the class and talk about it. This provides opportunity to reinforce the learning. A point for improvement is that pupils could be asked to listen to one-another more carefully at this point, and make constructive comments. Standards of work are assessed by pupils keeping their own records on a computerised list of what should be achieved at each level. This does not include any judgement of the quality of their work, and it is often not possible to check whether or not the pupil has actually achieved what they say. Assessment of the Year 8 work across the curriculum is assisted by the very useful reference file of assessed work, but an effective system of collating these cross-curricular assessments has yet to be implemented.
- 145 Standards and learning are greatly enhanced by pupils' attitudes towards ICT. Pupils show much enthusiasm for ICT. They are attentive, work quickly and concentrate throughout the lesson. They are keen to do well, they ask questions and seek help when they need it, and often assist one another. They show creativity and independence when designing presentations or sequences of instructions. Often

they take cues from other pupils' work and this stimulates further development of their own. Behaviour is very good, pupils respect and care for the equipment. Lunchtime and after-school use of computers is very popular amongst boys and girls equally; staff freely give their time to supervise these extra sessions.

- 146 Progress since the previous inspection has been considerable. Equipment and coverage of the curriculum have improved enormously. Teaching is better, standards are better, and the subject clearly motivates pupils to do their best. The issues remaining to be resolved are to establish a curriculum for Year 8 that all pupils receive, and to implement a more secure assessment system. Nevertheless, the headteacher and subject co-ordinator have both led the recent improvements effectively and there is clear commitment to further progress.

## FRENCH

Overall, the quality of provision in modern languages is good.

### Strengths

- Pupils' attitudes towards learning French are good and relationships are positive.
- Management is good and leadership is very good.
- Teaching is good.
- Assessment is used well to plan ahead.
- Reading skills and the reading scheme are very good.

### Areas for improvement

- Speaking and writing beyond set contexts, for more routine use and for an audience.
- The use of ICT to improve language skills.

- 147 Pupils begin learning French in Year 6, a year before they have to. By the end of Year 6, standards are as usually seen after one year of study. There is a wide range of attainment and the emphasis is mostly on listening and speaking. A few high attaining pupils are fluent and confident. Middle and lower ability pupils understand the basic language covered reasonably well and, although they need support, they can say basic phrases competently.
- 148 By the end of Year 8, attainment is at least in line with what is usually seen and some pupils are above expected levels. Listening is good and reading standards are particularly good; pupils answer set questions well and some pupils can say quite long sentences accurately. However, pupils do not develop conversations enough and few speak French routinely in class. Able pupils write accurate extended passages, using a variety of tenses and vocabulary. Middle ability pupils get the message across clearly, but with grammatical mistakes. Pupils of lower ability need much support to construct sentences. Pupils achieve well overall and progress is good. Gifted and talented linguists are provided for well through extra sessions and in independent reading but are not always fully challenged in lessons, despite the teachers' good efforts to meet the wide range of needs in mixed ability classes. A few pupils, adjusting to a temporary teacher, show some reluctance and loss of momentum. Boys' achievement is close to girls'. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

- 149 Teaching is good overall. It is always at least satisfactory with many good and some very good or excellent features. Teachers sustain their use of French well, checking to make sure pupils understand. Activities are well planned and organised, giving pupils a healthy variety of learning styles. The best ones engage pupils actively in the learning and this helps them to gain confidence. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, the teacher led the pupils through a variety of tasks at a brisk pace, expertly providing support and challenge. Pupils joined in enthusiastically and so improved their ability to speak and write about future activities. Pupils enjoy learning, apply themselves well to the tasks and develop their language skills well. Teachers achieve a fine balance between whole class practice and intensive speaking practice in pairs. They are firm and calm, managing pupils' behaviour well, apart from a few occasions where low level chat or undisciplined calling out are not sufficiently controlled. Activities are very well organised but leave little room for pupils to develop conversations and speak French routinely in class. Teachers have begun to use computers to improve language learning; for example, to re-draft letters or develop reading skills. However, there is room for further development to make more effective use of ICT. Homework is set and marked regularly. It builds on work in lessons but there are few comments to help pupils to do better. In one Year 8 lesson, pupils benefited greatly from a superbly planned reading scheme. Pupils were able to help themselves to reading materials carefully matched to their interest and level, with extra support where necessary. They used dictionaries to look up words, noted their meaning, kept track of their progress and recorded simple comments about whether they liked each reader or text. Everyone knew what to do and got on with it. This was exemplary practice.
- 150 Attitudes and behaviour are positive. Most pupils join in willingly and are keen to learn. They are co-operative and behave sensibly, apart from in a few instances. Relationships are good except in a few lessons where there is some loss of motivation.
- 151 The French co-ordinator gives very clear direction and management. She leads by example, showing commitment coupled with a shrewd sense of priorities, which bodes well for the future if a permanent teacher can be found to join her for next term. Assessment is a significant strength. Levels of achievement are consistent and moderated with other middle schools. A portfolio of a sample of pupils' work is collated and used well to moderate standards. Assessment information is systematically collected and analysed to spot which skills need developing further and this has led to plans to improve them. However, this does not always mean that pupils are clear about what to aim for next in lessons. The visit to France boosts Year 7 pupils' interest in language learning and gives them a brief cultural experience.
- 152 There has been good progress in most areas identified in the last inspection, most strikingly in the use of assessment. However, there is still room for improvement in the use of ICT and in developing pupils' ability to speak and write French beyond set contexts.

## MUSIC

Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good and has several very good features.
- The attainment of pupils in all year groups is above average.
- Pupils have very good listening skills.
- Attitudes and behaviour are good.
- The department is led well and there is a strong ethos of improvement.

### Areas for improvement

- Developing the use of ICT to broaden musical styles and improve learning further.
- Using more clearly focused learning objectives for planning.
- Improving the size and quality of the accommodation.

- 153 The attainment of Year 6 pupils is above average. Given the below average literacy skills of pupils on entry to the school, they achieve very well. They have a good understanding of chords, note clusters and musical elements that affect the expressive nature of a piece, for example rhythm, melody or effective use of instruments. Pupils can sing quite securely in two parts and have very good listening skills. They are able to listen well to each other's performances and to recorded music played to them to illustrate a particular point. The attainment of Year 8 pupils is just above average. Pupils have a good sense of style and their knowledge of music is well-developed. Listening skills are very good.
- 154 Teaching is good in all year groups. There are several aspects that are very good. For example, lessons are well organised, pupils are managed well, listening skills are developed well and expectations are high. Lesson planning is effective and schemes of work are detailed and thorough. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils were asked to compose pieces which depict the story of Scott's exploration of the Antarctic. They managed this task well and developed pieces that had convincing use of style and moved beyond the use of 'sound effects'. This topic provides an effective bridging project with the High School. Good use is made of specific vocabulary in lesson planning. In the actual teaching of lessons these terms are not used enough in order to reinforce their potential for developing secure technical vocabulary. Pupils learn well and make good progress. They maintain learning throughout lessons and develop skills effectively, for example playing keyboards effectively from Year 5 to Year 8. Pupils in the Area Support Centre make good progress.
- 155 Pupils have good attitudes to music. They are positive and many are enthusiastic. They behave well and remain on task even when given the opportunity to carry out more extended work in small groups and without direct teacher supervision.
- 156 The department is well managed and led. There is a strong ethos, high expectations and appropriate priorities for development. The accommodation for music is limited. The size of the main teaching room is too small for practical sessions. The school acknowledges this and is developing plans to improve the room. The time allocation for music is slightly below average. This is managed effectively because lessons are organised very efficiently and the pace of lessons is often good. Although planning is effective, learning objectives are not always clearly focused and made obvious to pupils, especially in Years 7 and 8. Several topics have effective assessment criteria and feedback to pupils on how to improve learning is often effective. The department has a rich programme of visiting artists and participation in community music events.

Although the department has access to ICT resources, such as computers, this area is relatively under-developed at all levels. Pupils use computers for research, but not sufficiently to create, manipulate and refine sounds using a range of musical styles and genres, especially in Years 7 and 8.

- 157 Since the last inspection improvement has been good. The attainment of pupils is now consistently good, all pupils make good progress and teaching has improved. Accommodation remains a problem, but the school is addressing this issue.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in physical education is good.

### Strengths

- The use of good teaching methods and activities to raise standards.
- The good leadership and management provided by the subject co-ordinator.
- The amount and quality of subject specialist teaching.
- The positive attitude pupils have towards the subject.
- The support given to non-specialist teachers.
- The good range of, and appropriate time allocation for, activities.

### Areas for improvement

- Develop assessment procedures to link more closely with the subject attainment target.
- Create opportunities within the subject teaching to promote pupils' ICT skills.
- Improve resources to better cater for the differences in the age and ability of pupils.

- 158 By the end of Year 6 almost all pupils have developed skills and knowledge to a level which is comparable with what would be expected for pupils of their age. Some are achieving, above this, particularly in athletics and rounders, and overall standards of attainment are slightly above the national average. Progress is good, both in acquiring and developing practical skills, as well as developing a knowledge and understanding of the need to exercise and the benefits this has for a healthy lifestyle. Many pupils are starting to develop their skills in observing others' performance, evaluating it and providing suggestions on how this performance might be further improved.
- 159 The good progress continues across Years 7 and 8 so that by the end of Year 8 there are many competent performers in a range of activities and, overall, pupils are attaining at a level which is above the national average. Pupils develop further a good knowledge and understanding of fitness and health, many can identify the major muscle groups in their body, know why they need to warm-up before exercise, and can suggest appropriate activities to do this. They are also becoming more confident in their observation and evaluation skills. For example, in a Year 7 girls lesson focusing on developing discus throwing techniques, most pupils observed their partner's technique and were able to make good and accurate comments on what their partner needed to do to improve further. Whilst there are no significant differences between the attainment of boys and girls, boys are generally more confident at developing their practical skills and girls are generally better able to observe and reflect on others' performance and explain in more detail how this might be improved.

- 160 Teaching across all years is mostly good. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally good and the three subject specialists undertake most of the teaching. Their enthusiasm for physical education is very effective in fostering and retaining pupils' interest in the subject and the subject co-ordinator provides good and effective practical support to non-specialist colleagues who contribute to the subject. They set suitably high expectations, especially of acceptable behaviour and levels of concentration, they support pupils well and employ good teaching methods to aid pupils' learning. For example in a Year 8 lesson on developing rounders skills the teacher used a very good range of small skills practices to build up pupils' bowling and fielding skills. These were also very effective in developing pupils' tactical knowledge so they learned to decide when to throw to first, or fourth base, when taking on the role of backstop. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very positive and this is a particular strength of the subject's provision. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported, often provided with different equipment, and are encouraged to make good progress. Teachers make good use of more able pupils to demonstrate a particular teaching point and lead warm-up activities with the rest of the class and they make good progress. There has been some use of a video camera to aid pupil analysis of performance in dance and gymnastics. There is however a need to develop the use of ICT to aid pupils' learning in the subject still further. There is also a need to develop the procedures for assessing pupils' performance and the use of this assessment information to further plan the curriculum.
- 161 Pupils on the whole display very positive attitudes to their work. They are able to respond accurately to teacher questioning and they display good collaborative skills. They generally work with enthusiasm and their behaviour is invariably good. When off-task misbehaviour does very occasionally occur it is usually swiftly and sensitively dealt with.
- 162 The subject co-ordinator works hard for the benefit of the pupils in the school and leads by example. He gives good support to colleagues teaching physical education, especially non-specialist teachers. Whilst the facilities and resources for learning are generally good, the hard court area is in need of resurfacing and more resources are needed to cater for pupils of all ages and abilities.
- 163 The curriculum offers pupils the opportunity to experience a wide range of activities. The three main subject teachers, who also have management responsibilities within the school give of their time generously and, together with other colleagues and with good parental support, offer a good programme of extra-curricular activities accessible to all, regardless of ability. This has led to some good achievements by school teams and individuals in a good range of local, district, and county level competitions.
- 164 The department has made good progress since the previous inspection. Teaching overall has improved. There is better planning and support for non-specialist teachers. Apparatus and equipment are now in a better state of repair. The implementation of the schools' behaviour policy by subject teachers is having a positive impact on improving behaviour and there is now better engagement made of more able pupils to demonstrate skills and to lead warm-up activities.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of provision in religious education is satisfactory.

### Strengths

- Teaching is good.
- Teachers have very good working relationships with pupils.
- Pupils enjoy the subject.
- The subject provides good opportunities for pupils' personal development.
- There is strong leadership of the subject.

### Areas for improvement

- Standards achieved by able pupils in Years 7 and 8.
- The use of information gained from assessment to match teaching and learning to pupils' needs.
- The use of questioning in lessons to encourage pupils to think more deeply about their ideas
- The further development of ICT to enhance pupils' learning in religious education.

- 165 Across Years 5 and 6, pupils make steady progress so that by the end of Year 6, they attain standards that are in line with the expectations of the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus. Pupils have a sound knowledge of the key features of the religions that they have studied. In lessons, pupils in Year 5 can describe the main features of a church and they know about some of the ways in which they are used during Christian worship. By the end of Year 5, pupils are able to identify the communities they belong to and describe the things that bind them together. They can recognise the symbols of major faiths such as Christianity. In their work on Judaism, pupils in Year 6 can describe the ways in which Jewish people show respect to the Torah and explain why it is important to them. Pupils are able to reflect on their own experience and recognise what influences their own lives. In their work on rules for living, pupils in Year 6 are able to give their own ideas about important rules in their own lives. They can talk about the value of having rules and recognise that for many people, the Ten Commandments provide important rules for living.
- 166 In Years 7 and 8, most pupils continue to make steady progress and by the end of Year 8, achieve satisfactory standards that are in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus. In lessons on the topic 'Growing up in Christianity', pupils in Year 7 show a sound knowledge of the main events and teaching in the life of Jesus. They understand the way that festivals during the Church Year celebrate events during the life of Jesus. By the end of Year 8 pupils can describe the main beliefs and practices of Islam and understand why events such as going on Hajj are so important. In their work on 'Questions about Life' pupils show that they are able to reflect on their own views about topics such as 'How did the world begin?' and recognise that there are many possible answers to the big questions in life.
- 167 Across all years, pupils with special educational needs make good progress because work is often adapted to meet their needs and they receive effective in class support. Gifted and talented pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not make as much progress as they could because they are not developing sufficient depth in their understanding of the important beliefs and concepts on which religions such as Christianity and Islam are based.
- 168 Teaching is good overall and leads to effective learning. A strength of the teaching lies in the good planning and organisation of lessons. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils so that they know what they are expected to do by the end of the lesson. Good

lessons contain a variety of well-organised activities that interest the pupils. For example in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher gave the pupils four activities to do whilst working in groups. They had to use video, Bibles and books from a resource box to find out important information about the life of Moses. The teacher prepared the pupils well and gave them guidance sheets so that everyone could cope with the task. She briskly moved the pupils on to new activities throughout the lesson so that by the end everyone had completed the task. Teachers are willing to try out new methods, and resources enhance learning. In a Year 8 lesson, a teacher used ICT to help pupils learn about Aborigine beliefs on the origins of the world. This approach really captured the interest of the pupils and they were able to present what they had found out through a PowerPoint presentation. Relationships with pupils are very positive. Teachers successfully create an atmosphere of mutual respect in which pupils feel confident to share their ideas and experiences with the rest of the class, for example in talking about their own beliefs and values. When the teaching and learning are less effective, the pace of the lesson is too slow and teachers do not challenge the pupils to think in real depth about the topics being covered. This was seen in a Year 7 lesson when the teacher missed the opportunity to use questioning to encourage pupils to think about why they had chosen a particular commandment as the most important one and consider whether or not everyone would agree with them. Homework is rarely set and this means that valuable opportunities for pupils in Years 7 and 8 to extend and enrich their learning are lost. Marking of pupils' work sometimes gives encouragement but, across all years, there are too few comments about how standards can be improved.

- 169 Pupils display positive attitudes to their work. They are keen to ask and answer questions as well as share ideas with the rest of the class. Pupils work hard during the lesson and are well behaved. They listen well to each other and show a good sense of mutual respect for others' beliefs and feelings. This was evident in a Year 8 lesson when pupils confidently shared their views about the origins of the world with the rest of the class.
- 170 The curriculum appropriately focuses on an in-depth study of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, in line with the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus and agreement between local schools. However, the thematic units provided in the Suffolk syllabus do not give pupils enough opportunities to broaden their knowledge through learning about other faiths such as Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism. Through regular opportunities for pupils to consider moral issues such as 'rules for living', and think about their personal response to questions such as 'Who am I? What will I be?' the subject provides good opportunities for spiritual, moral and social development.
- 171 The subject is well led and managed. The recently appointed co-ordinator has a clear view of what needs to be done to improve the subject and has worked hard to implement several new initiatives in a short space of time. There are detailed schemes of work in place which use the Suffolk 'Themes and Schemes' programme and give good guidance to the large team of non specialists who teach the subject. More work is now needed to ensure there are sufficient opportunities provided in Years 7 and 8 for more able pupils to extend and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the material covered. A good start has been made to develop procedures for assessing pupils' work and progress in the subject. Further work is now needed on using the information gained from assessment to aid the planning of lessons and set targets for individual pupils. More work is needed on developing opportunities for pupils to use ICT in the subject so that the success of recent initiatives with a group of Year 8 pupils is built on.

- 172 The school has made good progress since the last inspection. Teachers' expectations of younger pupils have risen and are now appropriate. Standards in Years 5 and 6 have improved and are now satisfactory. The quality of teaching is more consistent and is now good. Lesson planning has improved and is now a strength. A system of assessment has been developed and there are procedures in place for monitoring pupils' progress throughout the school. There are now appropriate arrangements to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in the subject.